

Taking Charge



Let's hope you're not following our cliffhanger like Dallas and the shooting of JR Ewing because instead of a big reveal this month, we decided to give ourselves a more time to mull it over until year's end. And Emma got thrown a curve ball with her moving plans as well, so she's thinking about plan B and C.



Emma is here visiting us this week and wanted to send you all a note, "Hello MP, I miss running in the neighborhood and seeing all the friendly neighbors! My moving plans have hit a slight bump; the company I work for decided to let me move only to Ireland or Germany. After spending the past five months with my heart set on (and a pre-approval from my company for) southern Europe, I am not losing sight of that goal and still plan to move at the end of the year!"

When the calendar turned to September, we headed down to California. Just over the border from Oregon, we explored the Redwoods, came across a large group of elk, went to the beach, listened to the calls of seal and sea lion covered giant rocks, and toured around the coast.

From there, we moved into California wine country. First stop, Petaluma as a jumping off point to Russian River, Healdsburg, and Sonoma. Emma came to visit for some tastings, a visit to the original Williams-Sonoma (restored to the original 1950's hardware store it started out as), and a hike in Muir Woods with Jenn. From there, we moved to the Woodbridge/Lodi area which used to grow all the "cheap" wine grapes,

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but now has some specialty grapes that will only grow in that area with the cool breeze that comes from Tahoe down the Truckee River.

After wine country, it was time to say goodbye to Cali and head towards our “biggest rock” of the year, the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta! We were off to Williams, AZ, a small town south of the Grand Canyon that we just love. While there, Jenn and Emma took a day trip to Page, Horseshoe Bend, and Antelope Canyon.



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Side Trip: Antelope Canyon

Jenn and Emma got to Horseshoe Bend at 5:30am to be there before sunrise, and what a view! If you can see the tiny colored dots near the river on the first page of this article, those are kayakers who camped at the bend overnight. After that early hike, they refueled and made their way to Lower Antelope Canyon. The upper canyon hike is accessible, flat, and in-and-out, but the lower canyon has many stairs and tight spaces. You enter at the top and hike through to the end of the canyon. With a Navajo guide, they saw breathtaking landscapes and natural sculptures, shaped by millennia of water, wind, and sand. They stood next to views that you've seen on your PCs and Macs as screensavers or on the cover of National Geographic. At the end of the hike with their Navajo guide, they thanked Mother Earth and Father Sky for the beautiful memories and images they took with them.

- JENN, SUSAN & EMMA MITCHELL

