



The Oaks at Ojai Spa and Hike Trip Notes
November 11-20, 2016

Highlights

- The World is Flat? NOT! – California people think and act differently. It's hard to imagine that I was a California girl through my young teens. Now I find their blue-green-algae-eating over the top but I appreciate that they mostly look better than many mid-west folks. Will California really succeed from the U.S.?
- Spa food is NOT for me. Drinking shakes does NOT count as eating. NO bread doesn't cut it and even giving up so much good stuff, hiking about 50 miles in 5 days, I gained weight. Back to bread and the East Coast.
- The hiking started out really hard, eased off, then ended with a 15 or so mile hike up 4200 feet of elevation gain. I had to work really hard to keep up with young cousin and 40-year old other hiker.
- That's my mini-suite in the above pictures and it was very nice. Bird-of-Paradise blooming on my private patio. A huge Jacuzzi that I never used.
- The drought has added to the brown dry look of the area. It's sad. It takes away the love of long showers.
- Spending time with my Cousin Cheryl from San Luis Obispo was the main incentive to go.
- Weather was wonderful. It might start out at 33 degrees and end up at 87 degrees but always it seemed okay. I couldn't hope for NO rain since they needed it so badly, but in fact the rain held off and on my departure from LAX it poured.



Cheryl is skinny. Shall I hate her? She's a pretty calm and good sort and I feel grateful to spend time with her and get this invitation. She had been at this Spa before, and also with her daughter Jenny.

Hiking

There were only three of us being led by a hot-shot wilderness hiking leader. You'll find Carol's bio below. We thought we were in pretty good hiking shape so when faced with the first full day of 87 degrees heat, we voted to do the second day's tougher hike on the first day. After hiking from 7am to about 4pm, maybe 14 miles, I was doubtful I'd get through the week; thus I was relieved to hear Guide Carol explain to another hiking guide that many of our trails were washed out. We spent the

day scrambling over boulders, scurrying through the brambles, spooked at the aftermath of avalanches with huge drop offs, sliding down mud banks, trying but unable to avoid all the poison oak, and sloshing through streams.



This was a good part of the trail on our first day. That wall was to climb over. I must find a picture of the mud wall we had to slide down. Slosh into a mud pile to cover our shoes.



Cold at start, hot later. Our morning 'cocktail' was EmergenC with some other stuff I declined. Maybe those California Girls look so good because of their cocktail stuff whereas I go for the Brandy.



Thank heavens Carol guessed that we needed to wear long pants despite the heat later in the day as we scrambled and we worked to avoid poison oak.



Taking flight

Guide Carol had this tricky way of taking pictures that made us look like we were taking flight. My trainer has been known to say that I can't jump high enough to kill a bug, and while he is totally correct, I do look a couple inches off the ground. But not like Cheryl or Victoria, my fellow hikers.



I like my shadow better. I'm the one with the big backpack.

Poison Oak

It's rampant. I'm extremely susceptible. I was careful. I was unsuccessful. Guide Carol has some degree in homeopathy so I let her take me to the health food store and agreed to whatever she said. Did it work? I only had small weepy blotches so maybe so. Me who won't take even regulated medicines! I remembered a huge poison oak outbreak in 2009 that went systemic and required steroids, cortisone shots, and still much discomfort.

Eating on the Run?

We'd be given a gallon zip bag at 5 or 6am and it contained our breakfast and our lunch. We'd have one of these icky shakes to start, then stop at around 9am for breakfast, then stop later for lunch. There might be a couple muffins, two boiled eggs, a pint container of a quinoa salad with chicken for me and tofu for the others (vegetarians or vegans), lots of cut fresh vegetables, a couple containers of chickpea hummus (I love hummus but not the beet red hummus), an apple, a couple tangerines and maybe a bit of chocolate bark. Carol would pull out EmergenC drink to fix and offer up some granola type bars. Since it was so dry and no water sources while out, we'd carry at least 100 ounces of water, plus a 700ml frozen bottle to keep our food cool.



Victoria's very healthy body was trained to sweat, so I claimed she would 'do her laundry' whenever we stopped by hanging out her shirt to dry.



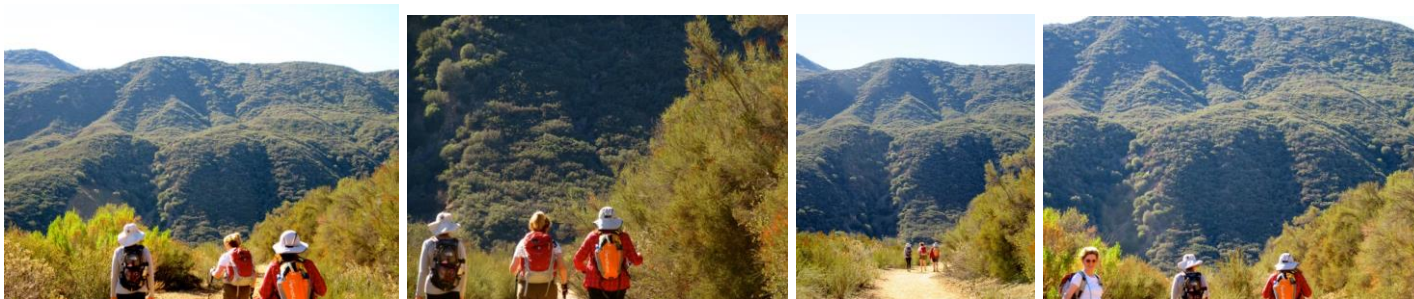
This day we walked the upper ridge and spent much time naming the rocks. Can you guess what we named this pair of bumpy rocks? Then we had to lay down under a huge rock overhang to see the petroglyphs.



Wednesday's hike couldn't have been more opposite from the first day's hike. Leisurely and though some elevation, it was easy, and it included Carol's little dog named Bodie. There was even some greenery though we couldn't figure out how.

The Last Day – a Very Full Day

Sixteen miles? 4200' of elevation gain if you include climbing the fire tower which we did? But it was one of my favorite hikes with no scrambling and no beating ourselves up through the brambles. This hike gave me a little bit of confidence that I might make it up Yosemite's Half Dome with my nephews in June. When Carol announced that she'd never gotten anyone up that mountain anywhere near my age, I sure glowed. Or was that the sweat that was glistening?



What? We have a 15-16 mile day and over 4,000 feet of elevation gain and we still climb up the fire lookout? It's like why did the bear go over the mountain? To see what he could see. Or why you go up because it's there.



The three hikers holding each other up, or claiming togetherness, and the guide with great balance.

Carol the Photographer and Guide

At the end of the day, Carol would send us a plethora of pictures from our day. We were thus freed from the need to carry a camera.

Ojai the Town

Such a sweet town, closest to Ventura, closest airport Santa Barbara, and full of health nuts. It even has a kombucha (description follows) bar which I sampled but probably won't seek it out again. Ojai is surrounded by mountains, is on a different east-west/north-south



positioning so gets nice breezes and the mountains light up in pink at sunset. One afternoon we had a tourist treat and visited a potter, a dress designer (more on that) and an olive grove that produced their own only-first-press/fresh-picked olive oils.

One day we hiked an upper ridge called Sulphur Ridge looking down on Ojai. There were rich estates mixed with squatters in an old bus.



Most of the above pictures were gifted by Carol. Now some of mine:



Sunset at Meditation Mountain and this sweet dog sharing a moment with master. That rock face was far too challenging for me to consider going up, and down, and especially since it was to a waterfall and a swimming hole. Victoria and guide Carol did it and that's Carol's harness to get people up to it. Then the famous mud wall that we had to slide down and into a mud hole.



Starting our longest hike meant getting to the trail head at 5:45am and using headlamps. I was ready for the easy tourist sites in Ojai a couple days later and my investigation included a historical walking tour and a stop by a Kambucha bar where I sampled a flight. Here's downtown which is within the block of the spa shown here from the far corner.

What is Kombucha? Only a non-native California would ask! I asked. "Kombucha is any of a variety of fermented, lightly effervescent sweetened black or green tea drinks that are commonly intended as functional beverages for their supposed health benefits. Kombucha is produced by fermenting tea using a "symbiotic 'colony' of bacteria and yeast" Per Wikipedia.

Ojai the Dress Designer - <http://www.lovinadesigns.com/>

Greta was a breath of fresh air. We visited her home for a look at what we'd see later at the Spa of her fashion show. Her designs are like art with everything being one of a kind, flowing poncho flouncy type wearables. Best of all she would have her designs modeled on a young hot 16 year old, and then take the same item and model it on her much older and much larger body.

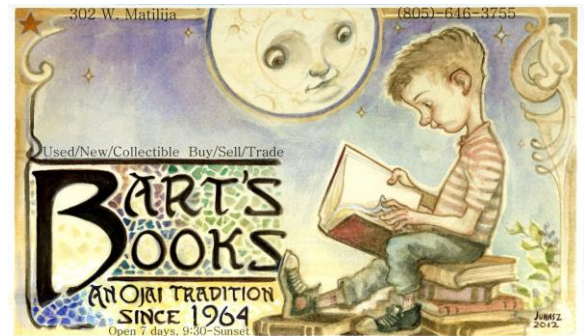
Tom would have wanted many of her items yet I knew that I have kimonos, ponchos, and art haoris (little boy kimonos) galore and don't wear any of them. So I resisted but sure loved the \$2500 flouncy wrap that must have come from Greta Garbo and a bedroom scene.



Ojai with the only known outdoor book store

Ojai – Bart's Books with honor system in the largest outdoor book store known. Of course I went. Of course I purchased a few used books. www.bartsbooksojai.com

In fact, I'd just tried to purchase online another of Lynn Cullen's books (Twain's End, Mrs. Poe, and The Creation of Eve) and was unable to find what I wanted but there it was at Bart's Books, used and for a song.



Los Angeles

I'd half expected to meet marathon friends but they were off doing 100 miles elsewhere so I took the "grand tour" all day bus tour of Los Angeles to review sights I've seen but many of them not for years.

Did you know that John Wayne, despite being about 6'5" only had size 5 feet? Proven on the walk of stars outside the Chinese theatre, and confirmed with his bio. No wonder he walked with an odd gait. Below is a link to that story as well as the proof.

Missive as sent home from LA the first day:

I spent a full day touring Los Angeles by bus and some walking. A lot of it was repetitious from other trips I previously made but I decided to do it since many of the sites had been years ago.

No one needs to tell us that today is much different than past years. There were Trump protesters in the LA streets maybe numbering 8000. Highways have been closed and in order to get to the downtown area we had to do a circuitous route with many side streets. That wasn't so bad because it encompassed new areas for me.

We came upon an area that first made us think they were filming movies which is fairly common in Los Angeles. It looked like hugely unique giant flatbed trucks holding two military looking jeeps each. It quickly became obvious that it really was a military looking situation just in case it was needed with the protesters. Heavens but could we have a Tiananmen Square here? Our world is in uncharted territory. It was hard to think about this being entertainment but rather a sign of the times.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-live-major-anti-trump-protest-police-brace-for-5th-day-of-anti-trump-1478966603-htmlstory.html>

Me? I'm wearing a safety pin. And if you don't know what that is I suggest you look it up and realize how simplistic it is; how complex the issue; and know that I certainly realize I should be doing more than just wearing a safety pin.

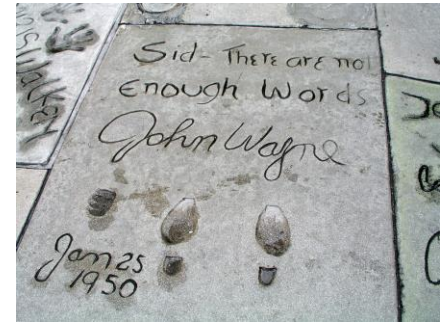
I'm sorry to report that some of those protesters even admitted to not voting or having voted for a third-party.

Tomorrow I'm off to what should be quiet Ojai California and hiking in the mountains.

PS. This is from my tour bus company advertisement today. With my additions and pictures.

THIS IS THE MOST COMPLETE TOUR OF LOS ANGELES, WHERE YOU WILL SEE ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ATTRACTIONS PLUS MUCH MORE.

HOLLYWOOD - Where the stars live and work in the movie and television capital of the world and the Home of the Academy Awards. Such the world of costumes and foreign tourists it was a mob scene.



MANN'S CHINESE THEATRE - See the footprints and handprints of your favorite movie legends. Did you know that John Wayne despite his 6'5" height had a size 5 foot? That may well have been his reason for his odd walking gait.

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/31337/where-did-john-wayne-get-his-walk>

KODAK THEATRE - Crown jewel of Hollywood and home of the Oscars.

WALK of FAME - View over 2000 stars on Hollywood's greatest boulevard. I'm told that when you have the honor of the star, one must pay \$35,000. I wonder who is paying for the hacking job on the Donald Trump star. He is in the company of the good the bad and the silly to include Donald Duck and Bugs Bunny.



HOLLYWOOD SIGN - See the most popular sign in the world.

BEVERLY HILLS - Home of the rich and famous. And tour buses!

SUNSET STRIP - Playground of the stars. See the chic and trendy shops and restaurants. Not to mention so much traffic that we couldn't traverse much of it.

RODEO DRIVE - See where the stars shop in many exclusive boutiques like Giorgio Armani, Gucci, Chanel and Bijan. In the early days, only those properly dressed were allowed in the shops. That all changed when Howard Hughes, in his poor man looking clothes, was denied entrance. So he promptly bought the shop and the surrounding area and threw out the offending owner.



FARMERS MARKET and THE GROVE - Famous for its unique shopping and eateries where you can stop and eat lunch. Such as my barbecue sandwich. Any excess time I had here are used in the Barnes and Noble as I wasn't too fond of the crowds. There was an airstream trailer promoting Tesla cars with this series of little kiddy Tesla cars.

OLVERA STREET - Los Angeles was born here in 1781. Very near was one of the sides of protesters. They missed the live Mexican music and dancers on the Square where I didn't want to leave.

MUSIC CENTER - Where Broadway meets L.A. See three theaters, Walt Disney Concert Hall, water fountains, plazas and more. I would like an excuse to return, stay downtown, and get into the concert hall.



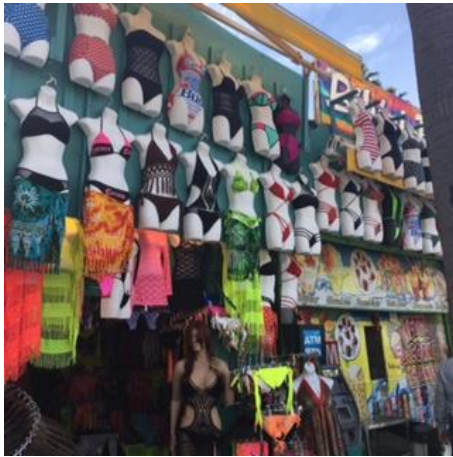
WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL - Home of the L.A. Philharmonic.

CIVIC CENTER - One of the largest government centers in the country.

CHINATOWN - Where East meets West.

MARINA DEL REY - The world's largest man-made small boat harbor.

FISHERMAN'S VILLAGE - Unique for its shops and restaurants along the waterfront.



VENICE BEACH - See roller skaters with guitars and muscle men and women pumping iron at the busiest beach in L.A. Not only did we see a number of the canals with beautiful homes, but we walked on the beach with lots of eye candy. Not to mention many homeless type people who are now allowed to live in their tents provided they keep the area clean.

Of special interest and worthy of my researching later, was a unique school downtown with architecture worth comparing to Guggenheim. It is said to house school children with top intellectual abilities.



It's Thanksgiving and I'm home

A favorite race director from my Montana 10,000' elevation marathon says it so well – why we can all be grateful for having been born under this sky. Here is Sam: *I've missed a couple weeks of writing. Just didn't have it in me. I tried several times. The theme of the Greater Yellowstone Adventure Series (GYAS) has always been about hope, the future, turning corners, and making ourselves and the world a better place. Ain't been feeling it. I've gone through several rounds of emotions from despair to sadness and am finally moving towards hope. There was a big miss a couple weeks ago. A very large group of Americans obviously felt left out, left behind, missing in the dialogue of the country. Hopefully, the new administration will sail the Good Ship America to calm and peaceful harbors where those who have missed out will get something tangible in the end. We can only wait and see and perhaps we should also pray in whichever manner that happens for each of us. We, and not just Americans, are in this together. It's up to us to turn corners and make the world a better place.*

In my opinion, America is already, and has been for a long time, a great nation. We're not without problems and big misses, but the idea that we're somehow off kilter and getting everything wrong is wrong. There is no better day than today, Thanksgiving Day, to recognize this essential truth. Despite a variety of dysfunctions, I hope you can all take a minute, or maybe do so while you're going for a run, to consider what you have to be thankful for.

Itinerary

Fri Nov 11

10:00am Depart Newark EWR via UA#333
1:00pm Arrive Los Angeles LAX

Hotel has small café for food ordering

Hotel Hyatt Place at LAX airport – 2 nights
750 North Nash Street, El Segundo, CA 90245 Tele 310 322 2880

Sat Nov 12

8:55am VIP Tours of California – 6 hour Grand Tour - Tele 310 641 8114

Los Angeles and Hollywood tour - Begin your day in Beverly Hills with a stroll down Rodeo Drive and see where the stars shop in some of the most impressive boutiques in the world! Next you can continue finding great deals with a stop at the world famous Farmer's Market at the Grove. This is a great place to grab a bite to eat! Our last stop of the day is in Hollywood where you will have time to see more sights like the Chinese Theater, the Walk of Fame and the El Capitan Theatre. Plus, on your tour, you'll drive the world famous Sunset Strip and Melrose Drive and get shown our amazing HOTSPOTS: see how the biggest names in Hollywood live, work, and play!

Sun Nov 13

Noon Smart Shuttle Tele 805 482 0202 for 3pm check in and 6pm dinner

Hotel: The Oaks at Ojai – 6 nights (Cheryl has 5 nights?)
122 E. Ojai Avenue, Ojai, CA 93023 Tele: 805 646 5573 <http://www.oaksspa.com>

The Oaks at Ojai is an all-inclusive destination spa. The Oaks is a peaceful, healthy fitness retreat offering guests everything from guided hikes into the mountains, to aquatic workouts under the warm Southern California sun, and winding down the day with calming restorative yoga. The Oaks provides a casual, welcoming environment in the unique town of Ojai, known for being franchise-free and foot-friendly.

Mini Spa Suite booked: Located in the garden area behind the pool, these are deluxe rooms with private patio entry. One king or two queen beds. The bathroom has a spa tub and separate tiled shower. There is also a refrigerator and safe.

Hiking in evening and for 5 days ending at noon on Friday – I booked one additional night

From website: http://www.oaksspa.com/Hiking_Packages - As the season changes, Hiking Packages with Carol are a delightful and vigorous way to re-vitalize the inner beauty within us. The hikes are designed to connect us back with nature and with our deeper peaceful and more humorous self. Challenge and pace will respect the terrain and move with the rhythms of the group. Participants should be comfortable with distances of ten miles.

Unlike any other hikes offered at The Oaks, this special and inclusive experience is offered only to qualified people. The group is small and intimate so that you are assured full attention and fun! The additional fee for the hike week is \$800 and for the weekend, \$500. (Our Room Rates). Please check the proposed itinerary below and review Carol's extensive credentials - we think you'll see why this is a hiking enthusiast's dream getaway!

With a group of three or more, Carol will create a customized hiking adventure package. This means the distance, type of terrain and dates are customized for your group.

Food is always included with these hikes, either served at The Oaks or carried with us. Depending on weather and the group, the hikes described may be subject to change. Please note: Poison Ivy is a plant very common to the California trails. Though we plan on educating you and avoiding this plant, if you know you are sensitive, please wear long pants for extra protection.

5 DAY - 50 MILE SAMPLE ITINERARY

Below is a list of possible hikes that may be part of the Wellness Hiking Week. Food is included with these hikes. We bring breakfast and lunch on applicable days. Every morning we meet at 6 a.m. for chakra energy exercises followed by a vegan shake at 6:30 am with an aim to be on the trails by 7:15. Fabulous saltwater foot baths at the end of each hike day followed by dinner at 6:00 pm. (Our 5 Day Packages include a free spa treatment credit and a second treatment at 1/2 price!)

Sunday,

Check-in is at 3PM. Feel free to arrive earlier to explore the property. We will have a meet and greet in the Lobby at 3:30 PM. After checking packs and dietary requests for the kitchen, we will drive to the base of Meditation Mountain and do a mini hike, meditation and simple yoga session to get to know each other as we watch the sun set. Dinner is at 6PM each evening.

Day One: Monday

9 to 10 mile hike. This is an Easy to Moderate trail to get us acquainted with moving as a group. We will move along rolling hills with lower elevation gains as a startup for the week.

Day Two: Tuesday

10-12 miles. A challenge hike. This is a long day with challenges in balance and endurance. Expect spectacular views and challenging terrain. Good shoes a must for balance in wetter conditions along the river and have something comfortable if you plan to swim. A fun filled adventurous day!

Day Three: Wednesday

8 to 10 miles. A wonderful hike of diverse terrain. This is a half-day hike. We will return to The Oaks for lunch and meet again at 1PM for an Olive and Art Tour in Ojai. Back in time for 4PM yoga.

Day Four: Thursday

13 to 15 miles. Climb to the top of Ojai Valley! Expect elevation gains of 3800 to 4200 feet. An all day hike with wonderful views.

Day Five: Friday

5 to 10 miles Surprise Hike! We'll return to The Oaks by 11:30 am for those who need to check out at noon. After vacating your room at noon, you are welcome to stay for the afternoon and enjoy the classes or relax.

MEET YOUR GUIDE - Carol Janelle, WFR RYT CCH

Carol is a Wilderness First Responder, who has received many years of training in outdoor leadership. Her love of combining wilderness adventures with yoga, breath work, and contemplation opens heart awareness and fosters new energy in the mind, body and soul. Carol is a Registered Yoga Therapist and A Certified Classical Homeopath who believes being in Nature is one way to draw us back to our authentic self. Carol holds degrees in natural health and Biochemistry with special interest in diet and behavior, specializing in super foods for optimal health. Her secret in making these hikes magical: HUMOR, compassion, adventure, spirit and fun with a healthy respect or

the individual while acknowledging our connection with each other. Carol is the mother of two and a new grandmother! Feel free to contact Carol at Cjanelle818@gmail.com or 805-302-1794.

Q&A

How long is the program? Five nights and six days.

Is the hiking package free with my room or is there an additional charge? In addition to your room charge which will vary with your choice, the five day hiking package charge is \$800 and the three day is \$500. This covers transportation as well as your hiking and outdoors expert.

Is food included? Absolutely. The Oaks is a refined sugar and salt free healthy food establishment. We serve poultry, fish and vegetarian cuisine, but no red meat. We are happy to work with your dietary needs and requirements. And we are not the food police! If you would like to bring your dietary favorites for your backpack, please feel free!

Getting there? Details for airports and ground transportation can be found here.

What should I bring? Plan on good trail shoes, sun hat, sun screen, poles if you prefer and a backpack that works for you. We recommend a 3 liter water bag such as a Camel pack.

What if I don't want to do every hike? We respect your judgment. We will encourage you to go to your limits and beyond but at any time you feel the need to rest, you have that option. However hikes are not prorated should you decide.

What if I have to cancel my visit to Ojai? No less than 2 week notice is required to have your Hiking Package AND room deposit refunded.

Can I bring my cell phone? The Oaks at Ojai is a Cell Free Zone in public areas. We do offer limited FREE Wi-Fi. Some of the areas we hike will be out of range of regular cell service.

Accommodations? The Oaks offers rooms for single or double occupancy. Rates vary depending on size.

Sat Nov 19

2:00 pm Smart Shuttle from Ojai to LAX terminal to arrive 2 to 2 ½ hours later

Hotel Hyatt Place at LAX – 1 night

Sun Nov 20

2:00pm Depart Los Angeles LAX via UA#1807

10:17pm Arrive Newark EWR

Contacts

Carol Janelle – cjanelle818@gmail.com 805 302 1794

Elizabeth Horton – elizabeth@oaksspa.com

Ojai – Bart's Books with honor system in the largest outdoor book store known.

www.bartsbooksojai.com