

Sanctuary Beach

by Jake Barnes

From time to time, my wife and I like get away from the workaday world. We book a room either at a lodge at Bodega Bay, where Hitchcock filmed *The Birds*, or on the ocean just north of Monterey.

The place on the ocean is a sanctuary for endangered animals and plants. At some point I always ask my wife if she would like to see if we can find a legless lizard. It is a rare and protected species. The lodge is above the beach, and the protected areas are roped off. From each of the units you get to the ocean shore via winding trails.

When I bring up the lizard, my wife smiles and raises her eyebrows.

We eat, sleep, play Scrabble on our iPads, and go down to breakers at sunrise and sunset. The sunset is spectacular. The last time we were there we met a couple from Wisconsin on the trail, and we took photos of them with their camera, and they did the same for us with ours.

In the morning the surf was up, and huge waves pounded the shore. I got up early and went down to the beach. Tiny birds skittered back and forth before the crashing waves, risking life and limb, finding goodies to eat I suppose as the water reached its fingers well up the shore, then retreated.

I took a photo of the tableau with my back to the sun. My shadow melded with sky, surf, sand, and the busy birds. I trudged up the hill against the grain. I kept slipping in the powdery sand.

The first day we had lunch at a tiny Greek restaurant on the main street in Carmel. It was noisy, but the food was excellent. The next day we visited the Aquarium. The place was crawling with school kids. They ogled the undulant jellyfish. They held up their iPhones and took pictures. In another section of the building there was a little island that was home to local birds, and I finally got to

see an Oyster Catcher after years and years of being on the lookout for the elusive creature.

We ate at the Greek restaurant again the next day. There were too many people in a small space. We pretended to be deep in conversation. I couldn't hear her; she couldn't hear me. Nobody could hear us. We held hands and whispered sweet nothings.

