

## Our unforgettable road trip



Last March and April my husband Stephen and I drove 2000 miles along the coast and then inland through the desert from San Francisco to Vegas, stopping at ten different destinations en route.

We stayed at tiny fishing resorts with quaint names like Half Moon Bay. The views we saw driving along the Big Sur were stunning. One of our most enjoyable experiences was being able to eat freshly caught fish and seeing seals and sea otters at close hand.

The real highlight of our trip was spending a day in Monument Valley, 92,000 acres of land on the Arizona-Utah border owned by the Navajo Indians.

We took an hour and a half hour jeep ride with a member of the Navajo tribe. This park with its iconic rock and sandstone structures has often been used as a movie location and our guide pointed out landmarks from films we had seen. How the West Was Won, Easy Rider, Back to the Future, Forrest Gump and 2001 A Space Odyssey are just some of the many Hollywood blockbusters that were filmed there.

The sights and scenery were just out of this world. In fact, it was like being on a lunar landscape but in the desert. Just

talking about it does not do it justice so I'm including with this one of our photos so you can get an idea of the breath-taking scenery.

On our way to Monument Valley we had one of those unexpected experiences that end up making a holiday extra memorable. We stopped off at a gas station for petrol. When we walked inside we saw that the whole place was filled with memorabilia and wall to wall photos of James Dean. It turned out that his last purchase of an apple and crisps – had been at a gas station on that site just minutes before he crashed his brand new Porsche car into a Ford Sedan at an intersection just down the road. He was 24.

The ultimate purpose of our trip was to meet up in Vegas on my birthday with my cousins who had travelled there from Phoenix and also to see my 95 year old cousin, the last surviving member of that generation of my father's family.

For my Phoenix cousins a trip to Vegas is what for us would be a trip to Brent Cross or Intu. It's where they go for shopping and to see shows. They knew their way around and introduced us not only to one of the best (and also probably one of the most expensive) steak meals we have ever eaten but also demonstrated to us their knowledge of the Vegas casinos enabling us to gamble successfully for the first time in our lives.

I'm so pleased we did this trip when we did. These memories will have to last because we may not be able to have a holiday like that for many years to come – or possibly even ever again.