

Happy Easter!



Great Escape #54 (Easter 2008)

March 23, 2008

Dear Friends,

Greetings from **Ramona Canyon RV Resort in Ramona, CA.**

Whether you got up for sunrise services or slept in, we wish you a very pleasant Easter day.

We have only been at Ramona Canyon for less than a day so we don't know enough yet to tell you about this park. We do want to share two other remarkable properties with you. They were very different so we will contrast them and call this travelogue, "A Tale of Two Cities." Let's start with **Outdoor Resorts Motorcoach Country Club in Indio, CA.**

Oh my goodness, we have never seen an RV park as luxurious as this one. It could well be the best in the nation! There may be one in Florida or Texas as elegant, but we are not sure. No doubt we have already offended the park developers. They only refer to this property as a motorcoach country club, and sure enough, it is. Would you like to visit here? Okay, but let's establish the ground rules. You must have a class A motorhome of 30 feet or more. It doesn't matter how nice your trailer, 5th wheel, or class C motorhome may be, it won't get through the beautiful electric iron gates manned by security personnel in suits and ties. Oh, are you pulling a trailer, like we do, behind your motorhome? Well, the trailer won't get in either. They made us take our trailer to a gated storage lot a couple of blocks away. Happily, our motorcycle was welcome. Oh yeah, rich boys and their toys are the heart and soul of this park. We did not have the only beautiful BMW motorcycle here. You might be thinking that it would be fun to drive your car through and see this motorhome Garden of Eden. No way, Jose. If you want to take a tour, you will do it in a golf cart with a guide.



A shot of the golf course with concrete golf cart path. 85% of the course is over water.

This is a very large park, oops, we mean country club. It has over 400 spaces, oops, we mean lots. Of this number, all but 21 are already sold. Yes, these are actually deeded lots with electricity, water, sewer, phone, cable TV, and natural gas. Yep, you heard us, there is actually natural gas piped to every lot. How else can you properly heat your hot tub and personal swimming pool? Residents also pipe gas to their patio fire pits.

But, we're getting way ahead of ourselves. The title of this travelogue is, "A Tale of Two Cities." What do you mean that title has been used? And what's the difference? He's dead. Besides, most of you only look at the pictures so we didn't think you would catch us anyway.

When you last heard from us, we were in **Winterhaven, CA** at Pilot Knob RV Resort. Yeah sure, when they use the title "resort" you know it will cost you a few extra bucks, but when they call it a "country club" it will be more than a few bucks. At any rate, we left Pilot Knob and drove to **Indian Waters RV Resort** in Indio, CA. We stayed there a couple of weeks and gave two seminars called, "**Funding Your Retirement and Protecting Your Nest Egg**." We are happy to report that the seminars were well received and that we gained new clients. Since we have described Indian Waters in previous letters, we will offer no further park details here. We did have the pleasure of our friends, **Bonnie and Al**, visiting us from the San Francisco peninsula. We also enjoyed a visit from our wonderful RV friends, **Earl and Virginia**. While Earl and Virginia were at Indian Waters, we took an afternoon off work and went to the **Palm Springs Follies**. This was the second time we've gone, and it was just as much fun and entertaining as the first time. We highly recommend this show. What a great life we lead! Shortly before we had to leave Indian Waters, a lovely Monaco motorhome with a motorcycle and car moved into the space across the street from us. On our last day, we met **Jim and Peg**, who are a very interesting couple from North Carolina. They aren't doing a simple newsletter like we are, they actually do a television show! The shows are all downloaded via computer so you can watch them at your own convenience. You can check out their website at: <http://www.americanrver.com/> We wish that we could have spent more time visiting with Jim and Peg, but we will just have to hope our paths cross again. We also enjoyed visiting with the occupants of the coach next door to us, **Bill and Adele**. Because Bill is Swedish, we got a great tip on buying pickled herring at Costco, but haven't done so yet. Now that will be revisiting our childhoods since we are both half Swedish.

At last, back to the topic at hand. Leaving Indian Waters, we drove directly to an interesting little town called **Lytle Creek** at 3200 feet in the San Gabriel Mountains. We went to Lytle Creek to visit

Mountain Lakes which is a very old and lovely camping area. It is a big park that accommodates RVs of all kinds as well as tent campers and a few bold individuals that slept in the back of their pickup trucks. Mountain Lakes is a membership park and you can buy a membership and then camp very inexpensively. You become one of the members, but you do not own a specific space. We can't give you the details as we didn't have time to visit the sales office and take the tour. We got in for a week via one of our Western Horizons affiliates, Resorts of Distinction (ROD).



The upper, trout lake at Mountain Lakes Park.

The park has two lakes, one stocked with trout and the other stocked with catfish. As you might imagine, a lot of campers fish. There is a very nice general store, a nice bar and restaurant, good laundry facilities, mini golf, a beautiful swimming pool and hot tub for adults only, and a second pool for families with children. All in all, it's a rather delightful and peaceful mountain camping experience. While here at Mountain Lakes, we had a nice visit with **Tom and Julie** from Winchester.



Our motorhome, trailer, and motorcycle at Mountain Lakes.

A tale of two cities? You bet! Mountain Lakes is only about 90 miles from Outdoor Resorts Motorcoach Country Club, but what an extreme difference in location and style. A remarkable contrast indeed. Let's start with the cities. Lytle Creek is a very small and poor community about 8 miles up a canyon from I-15 near Fontana, CA. It's a good paved road up the canyon, but a few miles past the village it just turns into a very narrow, rough, rocky jeep trail that we suspect goes up the back side of Mount Baldy. On the road just below Mountain Lakes are two bars. The lower bar has sandwiches and the upper bar has a restaurant and store. Most of the locals hang out at the upper bar which includes the Scotland Store and Melody's Cafe. These are very old and historic businesses. The food in the cafe is limited, but the portions are large and the prices are extremely low. For example, on Tuesdays Melody's serves all-you-can-eat spaghetti with meat sauce and garlic bread for \$2.99. On Thursdays the fare is three very large tacos with rice and beans for \$2.35. On the regular menu it's hard to spend more than \$6 or \$7 for a full dinner. Even at that price, we had to split the dinners because they were so large. So, the two bars and cafe are the only eating or drinking establishments in the entire community.

On the other hand, the motorcoach country club is located in Indio, CA. Now, Palm Springs, Palm Desert, La Quinta, Indian Wells, Indio, etc. are all rather wealthy, large and warm desert communities that all blend together. Yes, these communities do have a poor, a middle class, and a very wealthy component. Lytle Creek, by comparison, is rather poor.



A well developed patio above this motorhome's dock at Motorcoach Country Club.

The lots at Motorcoach Country Club are unusually large. The smallest is about 40 feet wide by 115 feet deep. The spaces at Mountain Lakes are generally very small. Many can just barely accommodate a truck camper. None were big enough for us to back our trailer and motorhome into without unhooking the trailer and shoving it around by hand. The streets in the country club are wide and paved and can easily handle a 45 foot motorhome pulling a car. The roads at Mountain Lakes are very narrow and many turns have large granite boulders on the corners. Take a corner a little too sharp and your rig will certainly sustain serious damage. It would be possible to get a 40 foot motorhome into Mountain Lakes, but very few spaces to choose from.



The catfish lake at Mountain Lakes.

The fact of the matter is that we have enjoyed both Mountain Lakes and Motorcoach Country Club.

The country feel of Mountain Lakes was just delightful, at least until it snowed. Some days were lovely with a high temperature of 75 degrees and other days were miserable at 40 degrees and windy. It looks like we arrived a little too early in the season to make the most of Mountain Lakes.

There are huge differences between the population of Lytle Creek and the lot owners of the country club. In general, the men of Lytle Creek are wearing work clothes and work boots and are dirty. They are loud, boisterous, and rowdy. They tend to combine shots with beer and get drunker than skunks and smoke continuously. The men at the country club play golf and tennis and sip fine wine. The women at Lytle Creek are poorly dressed and addicted to tobacco. The women at the country club are well dressed and addicted to cell phones. The temptation to go on with these comparisons is hard to resist, but in the name of good taste, we will curb our peculiar humor.

You probably have developed a reasonable feel for Lytle Creek and Mountain Lakes, so from here on we will concentrate on the Motorcoach Country Club as it is so incredibly unique.



A waterway at Motorcoach Country Club. The name of the nearest boat is "Sotally Tober."

The first thing you notice when you enter the country club is the landscaping. It's unbelievably beautiful and perfect everywhere you look. The flowers are gorgeous and the lawns are green and beautiful. The second thing you notice is cleanliness. There is no dirt. There is no dust. Every inch of this resort is paved or planted. When the desert wind blows, there is virtually no dirt in the air. The third thing you notice is the cleanliness of the residents and their equipment. Every motorhome, car, motorcycle, boat, and golf cart is spotless. Apparently, when an owner rolls into the park, the first thing they do is have one of the many Mexican detailing companies wash and wax everything they own. It's common to see two trucks and six Mexicans detailing everything on the owner's lot. In all seriousness, there were only a couple of dirty coaches in this entire complex and one of them was ours. The fourth realization is the sheer quantity of extremely upscale luxury coaches. Million dollar coaches are very commonplace. We have never seen so many Newells, Marathons, and Prevosts. The top of the line Monaco Beaver looks like a poor relative compared to these really serious 45 foot super luxury coaches.



An owner's lot with casita, patio, and infinity swimming pool.

Okay, so a typical member of Motorcoach Country Club rolls in with a new 1 to 1.5 million dollar coach pulling a new luxury automobile and bringing a high end golf cart. Then they buy a lot. Plain Jane lots with no improvements other than a level concrete pad and a beautiful lawn will cost between \$160,000 and \$500,000. Now the fun begins. Since they own the lot, they immediately begin the improvements. At the very least is a \$50,000 casita with toilet and shower, stove, refrigerator, microwave, granite counters, washer and dryer, and air conditioner. Now comes the shaded patio (called a "pergola") and very upscale BBQ complexes. If you have a lot with a walled privacy backyard, you may of course want a swimming pool and hot tub. If your lot is on the golf course, then you will probably live without the pool. Ah, but what if you're on a waterway? Then you can do all of the above developments plus build a second patio system down around the dock. Hey, are you getting the idea that there is serious money being spent on these lots? You better believe it. We looked at one gorgeous resale lot that is up for sale at \$1.2 million. Our salesperson/guide has a website with the available lots listed. If you want to see more, go to:

<http://www.kdjmotorcoachlotsales.com/>

Well, if you live on the waterway, you absolutely must have an electric boat tied up at your private pier. After all, this country club has two miles of absolutely gorgeous navigable waterways. Hey, anybody can take their golf cart to the on premise upscale restaurant and bar. But, it's so much more elegant to take your boat to the restaurant. If you would like to stay here, the country club does rent spaces. You can find more information at their website:

<http://www.motorcoachcountryclub.com/main.php> We stayed here for free (except for \$10 per day storage fee for our trailer) by printing a coupon from their website for a complimentary 5 night stay. The coupon was only good through March 31, 2008, and it looks like this promotion is no longer active. Perhaps management will run the coupon again next winter.

While at the country club, we enjoyed a visit from **Ric and Becky** from Palm Desert. Ric and Becky publish a magazine and website with money-saving coupons for nice discounts in this area. You can see the magazine and get coupons from their website at: <http://www.americansaver.com/>



A couple of luxury lots on one of the waterways.

We opened this travelogue by saying, "oh my goodness, we have never seen an RV park as luxurious as this one." We were stunned when we rolled in. We were in a state of complete disbelief. We couldn't understand why anyone would buy a million dollar coach and then spend at least another half million to park it here for the winter. If you haven't yet figured it out, there are owners here who have spent 3 million dollars on equipment and lots to park an RV. Our first reaction was disbelief. After a couple of days of looking around, we thought it was all crazy. By the fourth day we looked at a nice little unimproved \$300,000 lot on the water. It was starting to seem reasonable. Fortunately, the terms were terrible and our sanity returned. Now we are back to reality parked at Ramona Canyon RV Resort. But, I don't think we will ever forget the five nights we were parked at Outdoor Resorts Motorcoach Country Club. Golf or tennis, anyone?

Until next time, home is where you park it.

Chuck & Donna (and Annika)
(530) 524-5020

Travel Plans:

Ramona Canyon RV Resort, Ramona, CA	3/22 to 4/3
Not sure	4/4 to 4/9
Charleston Peak RV Resort & Winery, Pahrump, NV	4/10 to 4/24