

The Great Tidepool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA
by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)



LANDING SPOT

Some people arrive by chance. Not my wife and I. Our decision to settle in Pacific Grove was the product of design. And careful comparison. And existential epiphany.



Way back in December 1995, Amy and I were a couple of twenty-something newlyweds who were living in our native Chicago. We pondered the road ahead and wondered (amid the numbing cold of a Windy City winter): What's out there? Suddenly gripped by madness, I turned to Amy and said simply, "How'd you like to quit your job, scrape up a down payment on an RV and travel around the country for a year? I'll try to write a book about it."



To my amazement, she replied, even more simply, "Sure."

So we hit the road, piloting a 34-foot Winnebago (we called it the Rolling Stone), trailing a Saturn behind it (the Day Tripper) and embarking on a search for virtue in America. Actually, we turned it into a literal search, visiting tiny hamlets like Love (Virginia), Pride (Alabama), Wisdom (Montana), Hope (Mississippi), and Harmony (California). I did, indeed, write a book about it. A few years later, *States of Mind* very briefly (like, for an hour) rose as high as #2 on the Amazon.com bestseller list, behind only a Harry Potter tome.

Darn wizard.

But our magical journey was more than a literary quest. It became a 48-state search for a home. We had a feeling that we wanted to relocate, to escape our bubble, to explore possibilities. So over 314 days and some 35,000 miles, we sampled a full helping of the American Experience, visiting Disneyland and Graceland, Gettysburg and Williamsburg, the Alamo and Appomattox, Monticello and Hearst Castle, Dupont Circle and Times Square. We tasted dim sum in San Francisco, fresh guacamole in San Antonio, barbecued ribs in Kansas City, grits in Tuscumbia, crawfish po'boys in New Orleans, shrimp gumbo in Savannah, crab cakes in Baltimore, and lobster in



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Maine. We marveled at the White Sands of New Mexico, the Black Hills of South Dakota, the Green Mountains of Vermont, gray whales, redwoods, Yellowstone and the House of Blues.



And most important, along the way we developed criteria for what we wanted out of a place to live. We decided we wanted good weather (remember, we're from Chicago), friendly people and a family community, a walkable town that seemed exotic yet without pretension, a locale somewhat off the beaten path but not too far from a world-class city. We wanted scenery. We wanted serenity. And maybe it wouldn't hurt if it had a literary pedigree, too.



So we found a place where my favorite author and his marine scientist pal used to stare into tidepools and ponder the human condition. Out of all the places where we could have settled, we chose Pacific Grove, California. And maybe it wasn't a choice after all. As John Steinbeck once declared, "We do not take a trip; a trip takes us."

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