



BY GREG ARAGON

Greg's Getaway

Following a Lighthouse to Pacifica, California

The Northern California coast in winter is a hauntingly beautiful black and white painting of fog, mist, sun, wind, rain, clouds, mountains, beaches, and big waves crashing upon rocky beaches.

A friend and I escaped to the region recently, and discovered a hidden cove masquerading as a town called Pacifica.

Our getaway began at the Best Western Lighthouse Hotel, where we checked into a room overlooking the ocean, close enough to taste the salt air, and feel the rumbling of the waves.

Billed as the only hotel sitting directly on the ocean in the San Francisco area, the Lighthouse features 97 rooms and 20 suites (many

with ocean views). Amenities include a pool, Jacuzzi, fitness room, and a classy on-site restaurant called Portofino. The place, which sits on pier stilts, also offers free wireless Internet and free parking.

But the hotel's biggest asset is its prime location on Rockaway Beach, steps from the water, and surrounded by thousands of acres of state-protected hills, evergreens, wetlands, and hiking trails.

The trails, visible from our room, were so inviting that after unpacking, we put on boots and followed one as it wound beside an estuary, up a mountain and led to numerous rocky outcroppings high above the raging sea.

After exploring numer-

ous hidden coves and crags of the coastline, we left the trail through a grassy meadow and found a walking path back to the Lighthouse. Next to the hotel we found Rock n Rob's, where we enjoyed old-fashioned hamburgers, fries, and chocolate shakes.

After lunch, we wandered around the quaint shops and boutiques of Rockaway Beach, which were relatively empty because of the season. In Hoffman's Fine Wine & Spirits, I bought a six-pack of locally-brewed pale ale. We then looked into a Segway tour of San Francisco.

For our next adventure we drove a mile up Highway 1 to Sanchez Adobe, a site that was occupied from pre-historic Indian times until becoming a historic landmark in 1953. Throughout time, the site has been home to an Indian village, a mission farm, a cattle ranch, a San Franciscan mayor, a general, a hotel, a speakeasy, and an artichoke warehouse.

Back at the Lighthouse Hotel, we relaxed in the Jacuzzi before a seaside dinner at Ristorante Portofino.



The Best Western Lighthouse Hotel sits directly on the beautiful, foggy beach in Pacifica, CA.
- Photo by Greg Aragon

Specializing in seafood and contemporary Italian cuisine, Portofino serves up great food and probably the best views in Pacifica.

At a table overlooking the foggy bay, we listened to live guitar music and sipped merlot. For appetizers, we had Greek salad and shrimp cock-

tail. We then enjoyed spinach and pasta, filet mignon with porcini mushrooms, salmon and prawns in rich cream sauce, and cheesecake.

After dinner, we strolled along the windy beach, watching giant waves pound the rocky shoreline.

For more info on visiting

Pacifica, visit: www.pacifica-chamber.com. For more info on staying at Best Western Lighthouse Hotel, visit www.bestwesternlighthouse.com, or call (800) 832-4777. The hotel is currently offering special "getaway" packages, such as "Romance by the Sea," and "Stay and Play."

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