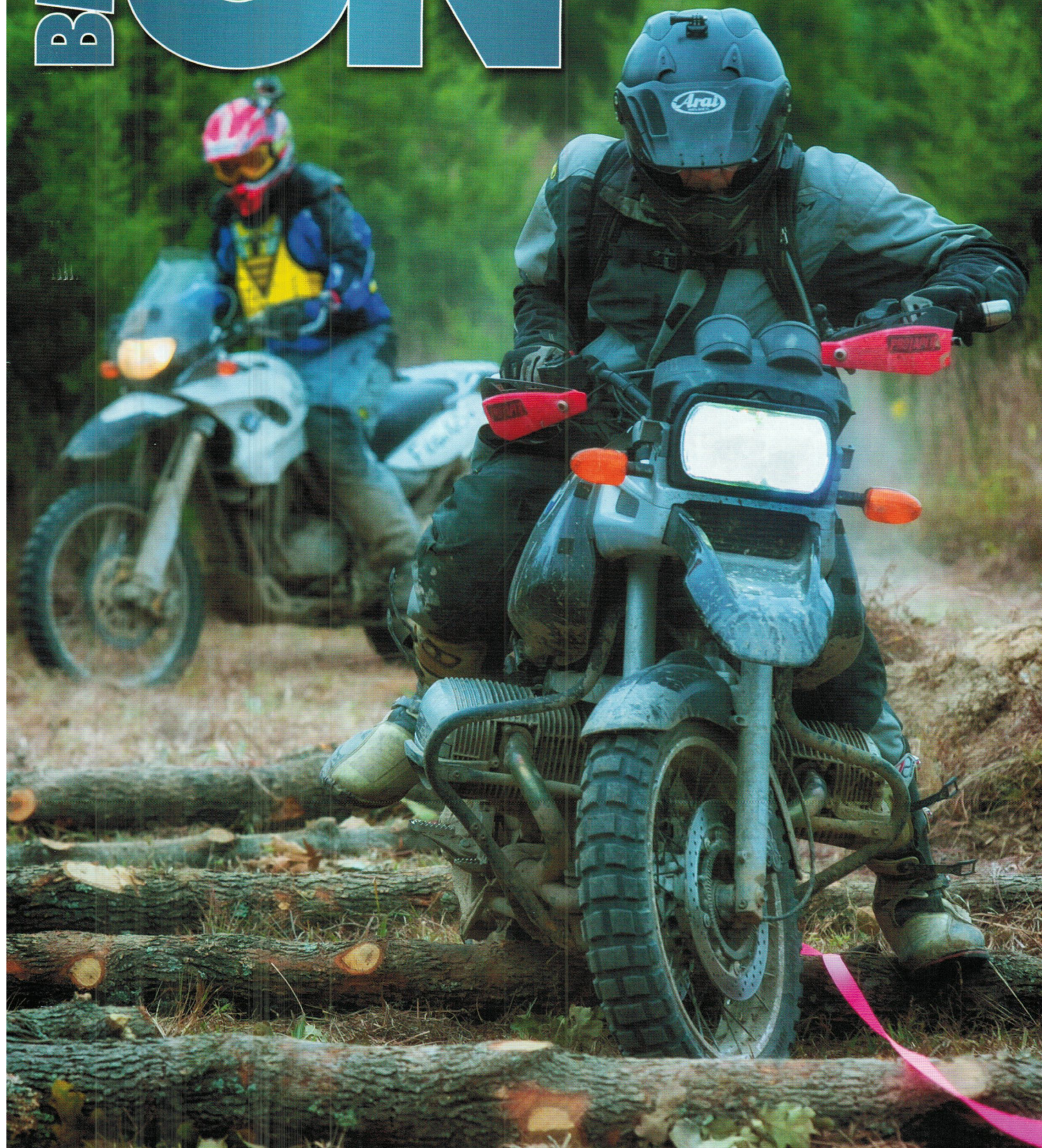



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TWO-UP IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Through the Twisties and Naked Ladies

My husband, Jamie Anthony (#84815) is an Iron Butt qualifier, and if it were up to him, we'd be riding cross-country two-up on his BMW R 1200 GS, but my limit for sitting on his bike is three hours, which is why we've flown to San Francisco from New York City and rented a BMW R 1200 RT. We're on a five-day motorcycle adventure which begins by crossing the Golden Gate Bridge toward Mendocino County, and our final destination before turning around will be the Giant Redwoods of Northern California.

Jamie would have rented a GS (he loves his), but he chose the touring bike so I'd be super comfortable—and I am. Two years ago, one of my first two-up rides with him was the Tail of the Dragon in Deals Gap. Back then, twisties intimidated me, but now I can't get enough of them and I love endless turns on the road to Muir Woods. One minute we're riding past glittering views of the Pacific, and the next we're doing hairpin zigzags through the sun-dappled forest while breathing in the heady aroma of fresh earth and pine needles.

There's only one problem: we don't arrive in Muir Woods until 11 a.m., and this being a huge tourist destination, there isn't a space in either parking lot. No problem, because

we've both been to Muir Woods in the past, and they'll be more than enough redwoods to make up for it on Avenue of the Giants. We turn around, drive back up the hill and turn off onto an equally twisty route through oak woodlands and still more drop-dead views of the Pacific on our way to Mt. Tamalpais. From the summit at 2,571 feet we can see the hills of Marin County, San Francisco, the Bay, and Mount Diablo, so high up it feels as though we're seeing it from a plane.

We ride back down the mountain and head up Route One, passing fields of cows and horse farms and sometimes whiffing the pungent odor of a dairy. The day is cloudless, the scenery bucolic, and the bike hums along almost silently. The RT is lighter and smaller than the BMW K 1600 GTL Exclusive we rented last year in Bavaria, but there's still plenty of leg room, plus heated seats and heated hand grips. Jamie pushes it to 120 mph to test it and finds it very responsive and quick. The accelerator is wire technology, and Jamie doesn't have the tactile feel he's used to. We also sit lower than on his GS, so he has to acclimate to the lower position when cornering. Still, it's an extremely comfortable super-smooth ride.

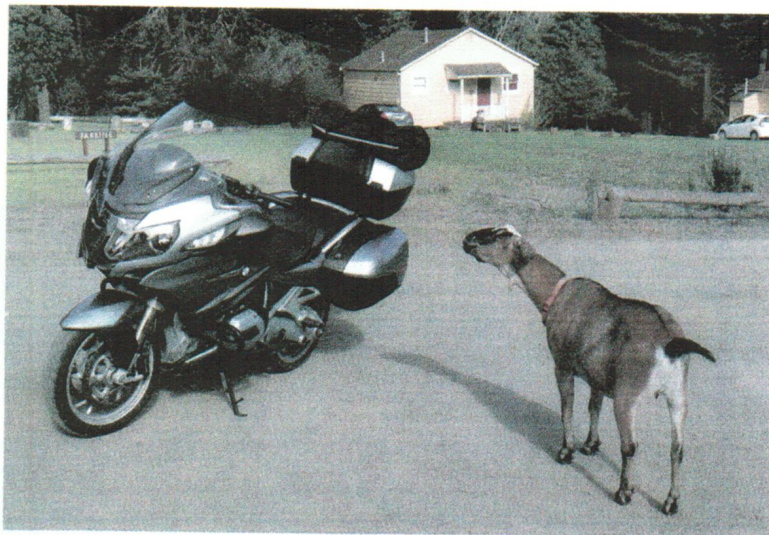
**Words and photography by
Margie Goldsmith #197529**

At a roadside joint in Tomales Bay called Hog Island Oyster Co. where we stop for lunch, there's a sign that reads, "Unattended children will be given lunch and a free puppy." Nothing, however, is free for adults there. A couple of salads, oysters and a few beverages costs almost \$75. Yikes! Still, we're happy sitting in the sun, looking out at the sparkling Pacific without a cloud in the sky. From the upcoming weather forecast, it looks as though we won't need rain gear the entire trip. Back on the road, we stop again in Bodega Bay where Hitchcock filmed *The Birds*. We also try the clam chowder outdoors at a deli picnic table in Fisherman's Cove, where lunch would have been much cheaper.

Our home for the night is Mar Vista near Anchor Bay in Gualala (pronounced WA-LA-la), a nine-acre 12-cottage complex. A sign at the beginning of the driveway says "SLOW, CHICKENS AT PLAY," and it's not a joke; we pass the henhouse with 130 chickens of all varieties. Further up the driveway there's an organic garden with

dozens of different vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers. As Jamie parks the bike, Lola, a friendly goat, trots over to check it out (there's also a pygmy goat named Professor Higgins).

Our cottage has a cozy living room, well-stocked kitchen (including oil, salt and pepper), dining area and a bedroom whose window looks directly at the thick forest. We're instructed to leave a small chicken-shaped wire basket outside the door if we want just-gathered eggs. There's also a larger basket for picking fresh vegetables and herbs from the garden. We're beat, even though our total mileage for the day has only been about 150 miles. We're



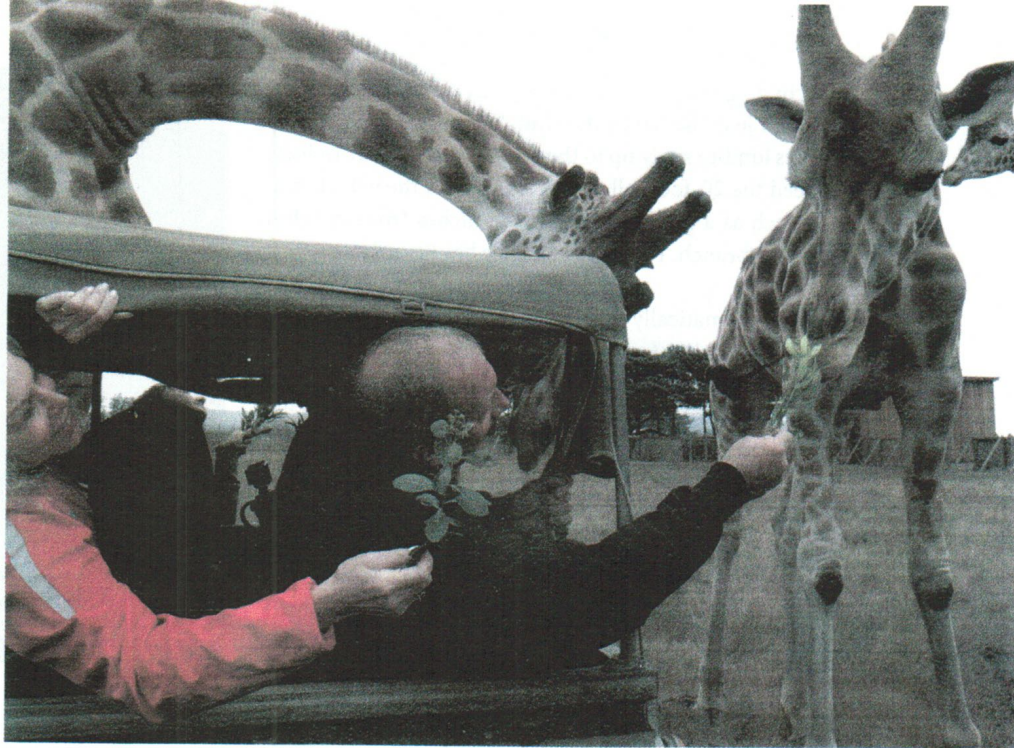
Above, Lola, the resident goat at Mar Vista Cottages in Gualala, California, admires the BMW R 1200 RT. **Below**, Cliffs sweep to the ocean near The Inn at Newport Ranch.

too tired to even walk across the street and down the path to the beach, or get back on the bike and find a restaurant for dinner. Instead, we hang out our wire basket for fresh eggs, go into the garden and pick tomatoes, green peppers, scallions and herbs. Dinner is a delicious fresh vegetable omelet.

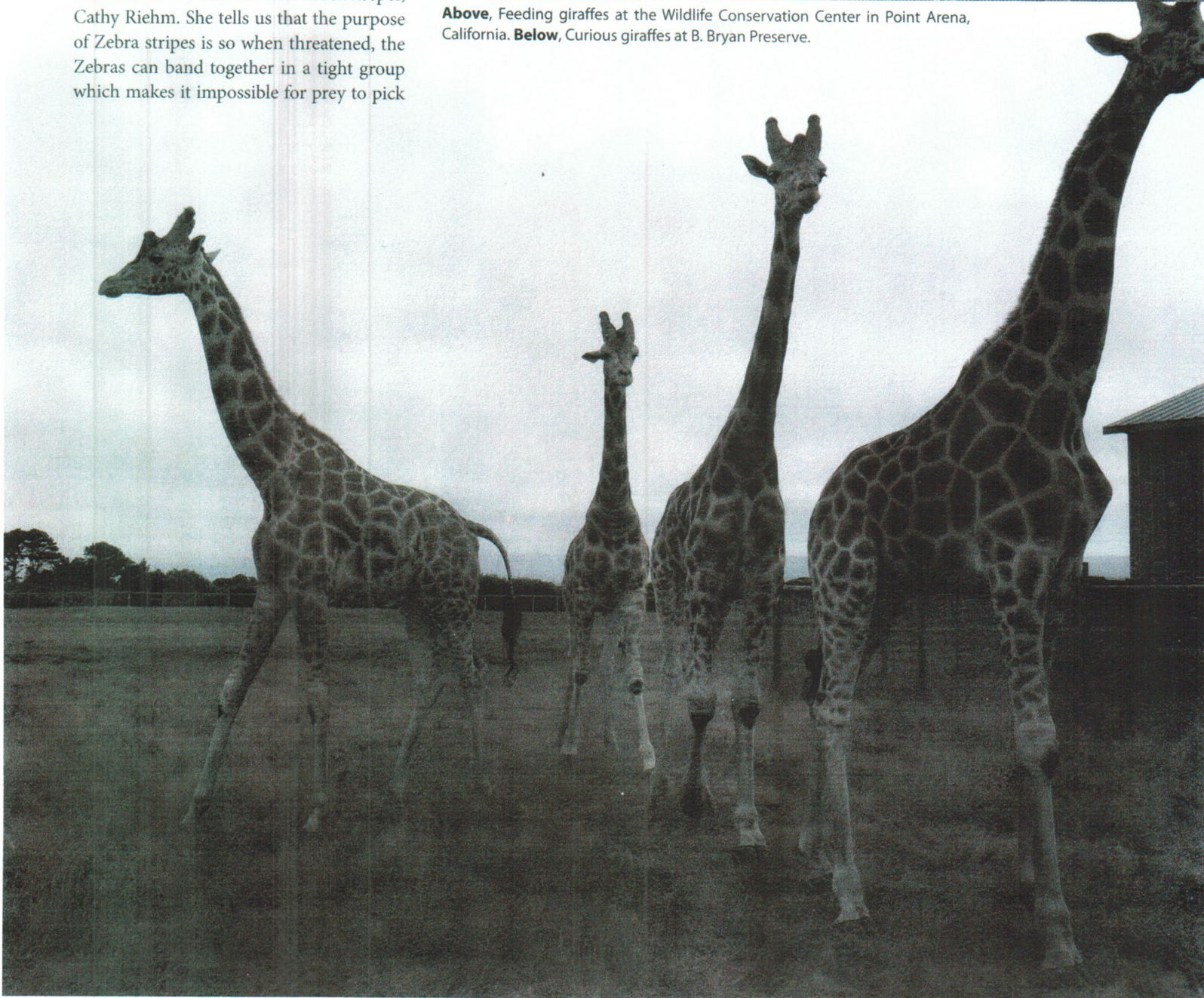


Some motorcycle riders come to Northern California to do nothing but ride the twisties, of which there is no shortage, including the famous "Serpent to the Sea" Route (141 miles of curves on Highway 36 from Eureka to Chico). But California also has a stretch of coastline completely isolated from the rest of the state with no roads. Known as the Lost Coast, we've booked a flight-seeing tour to see it, but the flight has been cancelled because of aircraft maintenance issues. No worries. Mendocino County has plenty of other things to do, including pristine beaches, hiking trails, and plenty of wineries—but antelopes and zebras and giraffes? Yes, at the B. Bryan Preserve, an African Wildlife Conservation Center in Point Arena, just a short ride from Gualala.

We join an open Land Rover safari led by the Center's vet tech and hoof stock keeper, Cathy Riehm. She tells us that the purpose of Zebra stripes is so when threatened, the Zebras can band together in a tight group which makes it impossible for prey to pick



Above, Feeding giraffes at the Wildlife Conservation Center in Point Arena, California. **Below,** Curious giraffes at B. Bryan Preserve.



one off. Rothchild's giraffes are one of the most endangered species in the world with just 700 left in the wild. She takes us into a field and five females lumber shyly up to the vehicle. Cathy gives us leafy branches to feed the 20-foot tall girls. I lean out of the vehicle and hold out a branch as a giraffe puts her face inches from my chin and scoops up the branch. For a second, I see her 18-inch long blue tongue.

The cliffs drop dramatically into the Pacific, and the surf pounds against the rocks at Point-Arena, a national monument as of last year. We take a short hike along the headlands and are mesmerized by the powerful sound of the ocean. A small museum, formerly the light keepers' house and built in 1896, houses a gigantic Fresnel lens and objects recovered from a nearby shipwreck. There's also a 115-foot Lighthouse, the tallest on the Pacific Coast, which visitors can climb, but our bike is calling us, so we continue north on the coastal twisties.

The scenery changes constantly from golden fields of hay swaying in the wind to forest groves and then jagged cliffs. Often we see



rows of pink Belladonna Lilies, called Naked Ladies because in the spring the plant has only green leaves. In summer, the leaves drop off and pink flowers appear on the naked stem. We ride past little one-horse towns such as block-long Westport with the smallest post office in America (about the size of a small closet), and a general store whose front porch includes one gas pump permanently set at \$5.00 per gallon.

Left, Belladonna Lilies, known as "Naked Ladies" bloom everywhere in Mendocino, California. **Below,** Endless headlands and cliffs plunge to the ocean near The Inn at Newport Ranch.

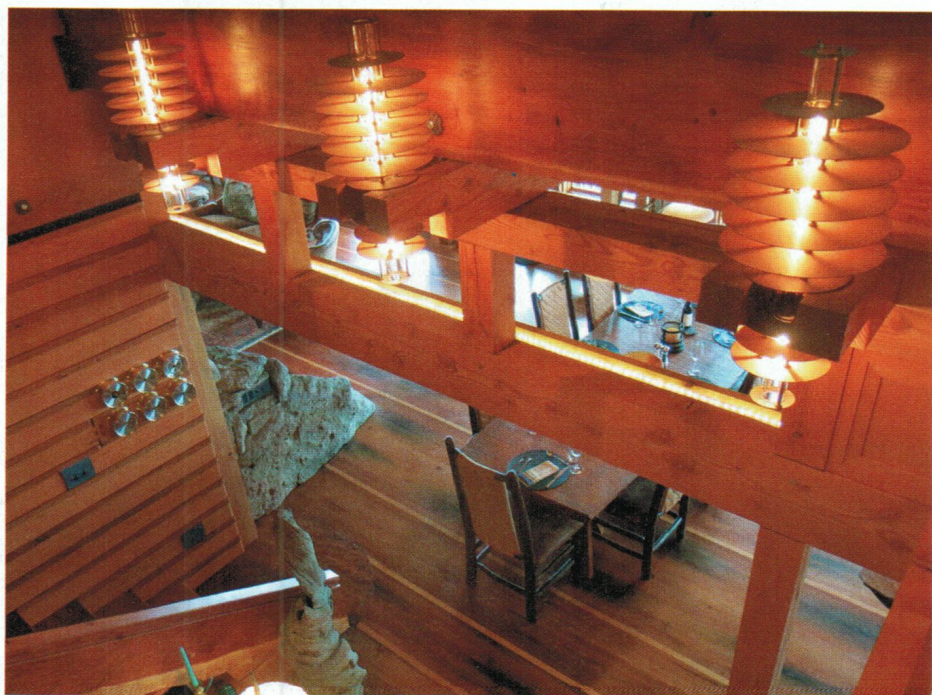
Our new accommodation for the night, and I mean brand new, is the Inn at Newport Ranch just outside Fort Bragg. So far, only three guest rooms have been completed, and Jamie and I are the first overnight guests. Newport is a town that sprung up around lumber. A chute from the top of the headlands would transport the logs down to a waiting ship. (If you look over the edge of the cliff, you can still see the remnants of the old chute). In 1885, lumber operations were moved to Fort Bragg and Newport became a ghost town – that is, until 85-year-old Vermonter Will Jackson saw an ad in the Wall Street Journal for 839 oceanfront acres in Mendocino. Jackson flew out in 1986, fell in love with the land, and has since bought more acreage, so he now has 2,000+ acres. He waited eight years to obtain building permits but has just built the most drop-dead gorgeous architecturally-designed inn I've ever seen: every inch has been meticulously planned by two architects from Vermont. Everything is redwood: the floors and tables, the bar and even the headboards.

You can peer through the huge glass windows or sit on the wraparound porch or walk to the headlands to spot seals and whales in the ocean. The Redwood Suites (four suites with hot tub, ocean views, kitchenette and living room area) are

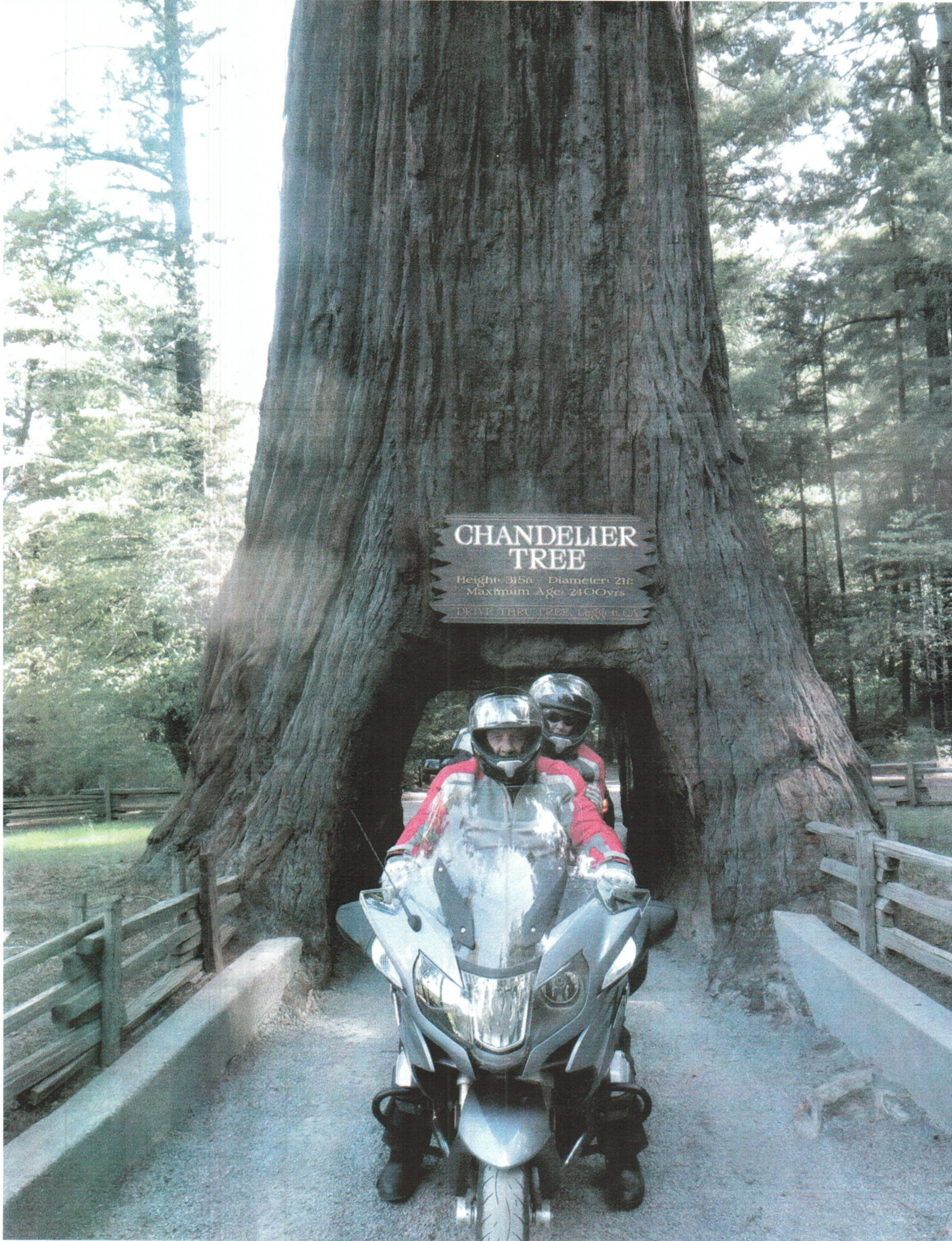
presently being constructed and the Inn will have a hard opening this January. Owner Jackson is sparing no expense and expects the Inn to last 500 years. He escorts Jamie and me on an ATV redwood safari up and down the hills of his property, through the redwood groves, to a quarry, then to the top of the mountain where he plans to build a two-bedroom guest accommodation with unending views. We go back down through a field where black and white cows graze among wildflowers and then to where a herd of cattle are grazing before returning to the Inn.

The Inn at Newport Ranch is not the type of place where you want to eat and run, but that's exactly what we do the next morning because we're anxious to get up to the Redlands. We head for Leggett and the famous drive-through 2,400-year-old redwood tree, 325 feet tall and 21 feet wide. Sure, it's touristy to drive through, but how can we not, especially on a motorcycle? Next stop: the 31-mile Avenue of the Giants, a shady road with 51,222 acres of redwood groves.

There are hardly any cars and no motorcycles today on this most famous road, probably because we intentionally chose to come to Northern California when kids are back in school. Pulling off the road and looking up at these ancient trees is a meditative and humbling experience. The air is



The view from the second floor of The Inn at Newport Ranch, near Fort Bragg, California.



CHANDELIER TREE

Height: 315ft Diameter: 21ft
Maximum Age: 2400yrs

DRIVE THRU TREE, LEGGERS, CA

fresh, the smell is woodsy, and it's absolutely silent. When we finally get back on the bike, I'm glad I'm the passenger and not the driver because I'm free to look out on both sides as well as straight up to the canopy of trees.

Going back down Highway 1, we stop for hamburgers outside at the Chimney Tree Grill. Opposite the picnic area is a huge tree with a sign, THE LIVING CHIMNEY TREE, FREE. This 78-foot-high redwood caught on fire in 1914, but only the center burned and the tree still lives. We walk through into a hollowed-out space that's about 12 feet wide and where we can look straight up the inside of the tree.

I never tire of riding the coastline. The headlands have miles and miles of jagged borders and vista turnouts where we can stop and admire unending Pacific Ocean views. We also have ocean views at our next hotel, the Heritage House in Little River. It was here that James Dean stayed while filming *East of Eden* and where *Same Time Next Year* was also filmed. Our spacious ocean-view room has floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors which open onto a terrace above a little cove where we sit and listen to the waves lapping gently against the rocks. There's also a trail along the coastline where every two feet, the view is better than the last.

Every hotel in which we've stayed makes us want to sit outside, sip a glass of wine, enjoy the views and not budge, but unfortunately, there's no henhouse or vegetable garden, so we tear ourselves away to drive to dinner. Wild Fish is the only fish restaurant between Little River and Bodega Bay, and we dine there on fresh oysters, coconut and jumbo prawn soup, and albacore with

organic heirloom squash and tomatoes as the sun sets over the Pacific from our ocean-facing table.

It's our last full day, and we're driving down the jaw-droppingly beautiful Route

stunningly gorgeous Mediterranean compound, The Madrones, has four tasting rooms on property where we can try Drew Family Cellars, Bink, KNEZ and Signal Ride vintages.

This is the first time our accommodation is not ocean-facing, but it's equally magnificent. We sit happily in the garden on comfortable lawn chairs near the apple and pear trees watching the hummingbirds flit from flower to flower. Designer Jim Roberts, who calls himself "the groundskeeper" created The Madrones twenty years ago as his home and office. Seven years ago, he built tasting rooms, added a restaurant, and turned the space into an opulent nine-room retreat. Our huge accommodation has the plushiest pillows and a bed you want to never leave. Jim Roberts has filled the space with beautiful Asian antiques, including a huge Buddha above the TV.

Unfortunately, tonight The Madrones restaurant, Stone and Embers, is closed for dinner, so we drive five miles to Table 128 at the Boonville Hotel and choose a table outside beneath the trees. The restaurant is very relaxed, and we're served family style and prix fixe. There are no substitutions, but it doesn't matter. The first course, a delicious green bean salad with onions has the best goat cheese I've ever tasted. I ask the waitress where it's from and she says it's from a goat farm down the street. "You can't throw a rock without hitting a goat or a sheep," she says.

As we drive back to our hotel, happy and satiated, I look up at the full moon and then, right below the moon, I see the Big Dipper—a perfect ending to our Northern California journey. ☺



Above, This 78-foot-high redwood tree in Phillipsville, California, caught on fire in 1914, but only the center burned. **Left,** Jamie and Margie Goldsmith ride through the famous 2,400-year-old redwood tree in Leggett, California. Guests can walk inside through a bright red door.

128 which connects the Mendocino Valley to the wine country. One minute we're steering through twisties, the next among shady redwood groves, and then alongside Anderson Valley's verdant vineyards from Navarro to Boonville. While we like to consume wine, we don't like to stop and taste at every winery. Fortunately, we don't have to because our final accommodation, the

Why fly and ride?

We flew to San Francisco and rented our motorcycle from Eaglerider San Francisco BMW and Honda (www.eagleridersf.com) who offer a choice of 10 BMWs. Choosing our itinerary was the toughest decision: Northern California coast to the Redwood Forest, Grand Canyon, or Yosemite? We decided on the Northern Coast because of Mendocino County and the Giant Redwoods. By flying to California from NYC, we didn't have to take the time for a multi-day cross-country trip. Eaglerider is only ten minutes from the San Francisco International Airport. You can arrive at the airport, pick up your BMW, and be on the road by early afternoon. Leave your luggage in their storage facility, and when you return the bike, you can go directly to the airport. Helmets are included and jackets are available for rent. Each BMW motorcycle is fitted with the mount for Navigation V GPS units (also available for rent).