

# California dreamin' on such a winter's day

By DAVID CAMPICHE  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

**M**id-morning and Big Sur, an expanse of California's central coast, remains moody. A thin stratum of clouds huddles low on the Pacific horizon. Intermittent sun rays hurl tendril-like flashes of intense light upon sheer faceted cliffs, rocky spires and lacy wave tops 1,000 feet below.

As the weather changes aggressively before our eyes, clouds, the color of a dirty martini, blanket the surf, skirmish between god-hewn forces and nature's rock titans — between ocean and sky and terra firma. I stand before the landscape in awe and offer a single Buddhist salutation: "Be! Be!" And prayers roll on like waves churning off the Pacific.

California State Route 1 snakes along the coastline, feigning and twisting and dodging like a springbok sprinting ahead of the jackals. Anxiety paws at the stomach, and then plunges into the depths below. Here, the surf ebbs and flows. Patterns appear heaven-sent, pulsing, weaving, dancing — my oh my!

And when was the last time I stood awestruck before the hand of nature?

I take a deep breath, let my mind recede into lovely memories. Was that on our own Oregon Coast, and just last month? Was that Depot Bay or high on Neahkahnie Head, or standing on a bluff above Ecola State Park? Or possibly, this same magic happened while I wandered through an ancient cedar grove on Long Island. Our own heartland is full of surprises and delights.

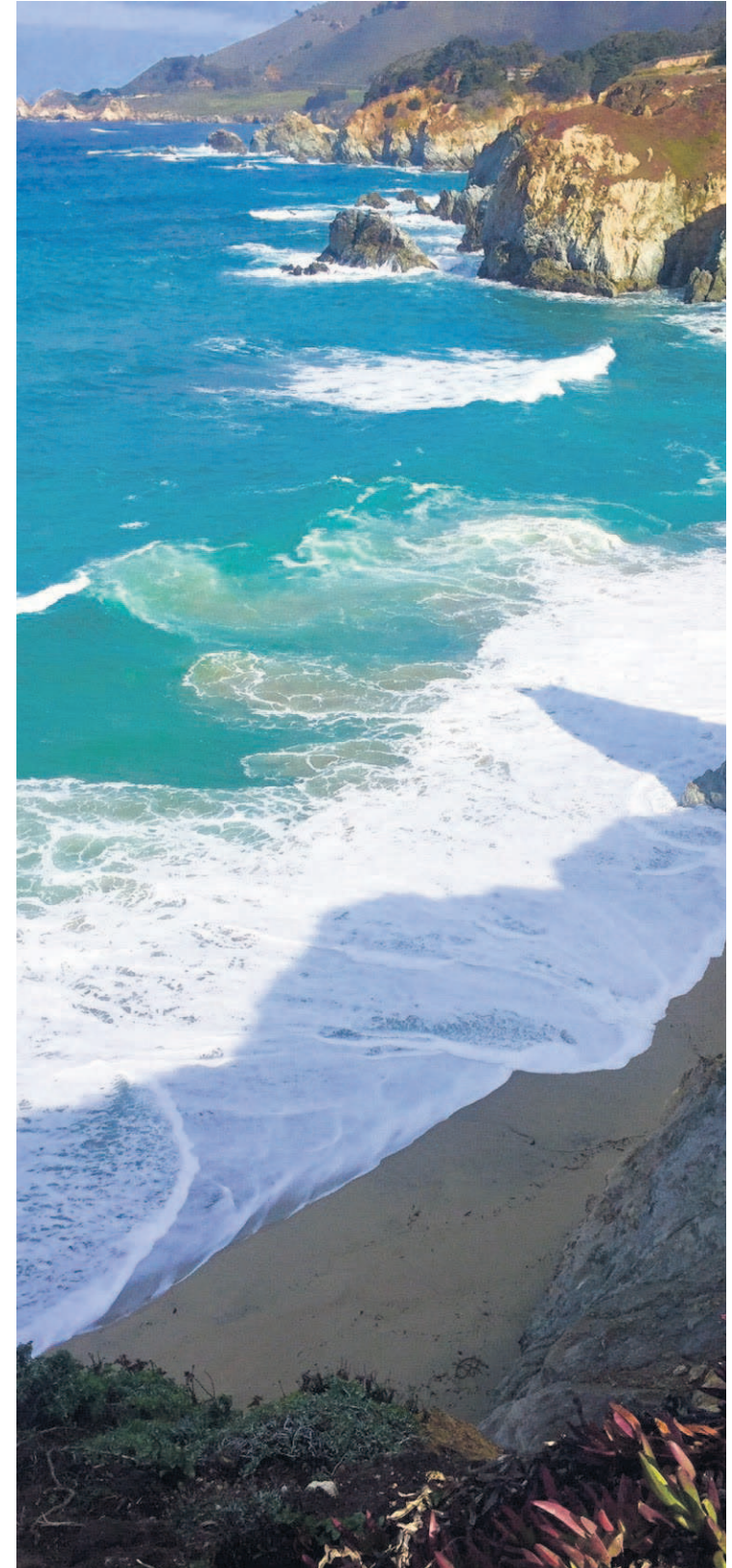
But I was humbled, in some form of meditative reverence, for those white-hatted combers at Big Sur, dashing upon ocean-sculpted rocks and igneous stone islands, buried and then unburied by tide and storm and wind-song currents.

## The way we are

This is to say, where we live is blessed with dabs, dashes and pockets of landscape we might define as paradise. And in saying that, we must be forever reminded of our responsibility to protect those holy vistas. Those redwoods. Those Western cedars.



A roughly 1,000-year-old redwood



Big Sur on the central California coast

DAVID CAMPICHE PHOTOS

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