



OUR WONDERFUL WEEKEND AT AVILA BEACH

By Noel Lesley Pugh

One sunny weekend late in July 2004 I had an offer I could not refuse: friends asked me to join them for a weekend trip to the nude beach known locally as Avila Beach. Avila, also known by the locals as Pirates Cove, is located about 150 miles north of Los Angeles on the California coast, just outside the city of San Luis Obispo (a.k.a. "SLO").

It has been quite a few years since I visited that beach, and I wondered if I could still scale the path down the cliff. A few years ago I had knee replacement surgery, and I now suffered with an arthritic ankle, but my friends assured me the path had been re-built in recent years and was now far gentler than I remembered it. So, putting my trepidation aside, I accepted their offer.

The journey up highway 101 was uneventful, and we made it to SLO in about 2 ½ hours.

Before going to the beach, we decided to stop at the clothing-optional Sycamore Spa Resort, located only a few miles from the beach. None of us had ever been there before, and the day of our visit the owners were holding a "garage sale," selling off old resort furniture from storage such as chairs, massage tables, and other bric-a-brac. We were able to take a tour of the grounds. We were impressed by its peaceful ambiance, the leafy bridge that crosses the entrance road, the many private hot tubs, and the delightful chalets. It would have definitely been worth a weekend getaway with a wife or friend

From Sycamore we drove only about two miles further to get to Avila Beach. We parked on the grassy knoll at the top of the cliff, took our beach gear out of the car, and started down the trail to the beach below. A dirt path veered down to the right for the first two-thirds of the trail, with the last part comprised of steps dug into the cliff. It was a much easier hike than the one at More Mesa, north of Santa Barbara (where I have visited often). My fatigue as I finally touched the sand was not nearly as bad as I imagined it would be before I made the trek.

It was a hot day on the beach after the coastal cloud cover burned off. The sea was calm, and its cool temperature provided a nice relief from the heat. The waves were small and easy, just the way I like it.

The dozens of seals that call the beach their home fascinated us. A large group of them initially covered a large group of rocks a few yards from shore, but the tide eventually came in and covered the rocks, so they played out their diving skills along the beach.

When we arrived, there were a couple of dozen other nudists on the beach. They had put up a volleyball net and a group of them played later in the day. I understand this is a weekly tradition.

Also, there was a fair sprinkling of younger women, presumably from the University at SLO. Unfortunately there were also quite a large number of "looky-loo" men on the beach, also admiring the women. I always find these creeps annoying – like unwanted flies at a picnic.

For a few moments I entertained the thought of going over and demanding they remove their clothes also, but the beach regulars just ignored them, so after awhile I did too. The beauty of the beach, heat of the sun, and the rhythm of the waves took me away from such mundane concerns.

Later in the day, I observed a group of teenage men and women, probably students, but this group was still in their bathing suits. Probably on a nude beach for the first time, I thought. I overheard them teasing and daring each other to impress the girls by "stripping off." A few of the guys eventually summoned the courage to remove their pants, but they were obviously uncomfortable, and went to great pains to always hold their garments between themselves and the girlfriends. I hope they return to the beach again to get over their shyness so they can experience the great feeling of wind, sand, and water on a body without clothes that we nudists all take for granted.

As you can probably tell, we really enjoyed the day. Although taking a trip there and back to Los Angeles consumes an entire weekend, I recommend you come up and visit Avila Beach.

An important note for visitors: there are no toilet facilities on the beach or on the cliff, nor do lifeguards protect the beach.

For years, Noel Lesley Pugh lived at Elysium Fields, the nudist resort and growth center in Topanga, CA as their resident caricature artist and massage therapist. He now lives in Simi Valley, CA.
