

Travel Tidbits #1

Calistoga - Before & After

Begin your visit to Calistoga at the spectacular **Reno Air Races and Air Show** -- Sept 12-16.

Six classes of aircraft compete. The featured class is primarily composed of modified WWII fighters with speeds to 500 mph.



Albuquerque's **International Hot-Air Balloon Festival** begins October 5 - 4 days after the close of the 2007 Fall National. This presents an ideal opportunity to attend both and perhaps Oatman, Las Vegas/Laughlin, Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, and Shiprock as well.

Albuquerque's Festival is the biggest with approximately 1000 balloons and the best as the prevailing winds allow the balloonists to overfly the RV parks and return to the launch area.

A "Rolling Rally" is being organized to travel from Calistoga to Albuquerque.

Albuquerque hosts many conventions so has developed an itinerary of good restaurants; I am partial to those in Old Town.

Visit NorCal's website at:

http://www.norcalaca.com/rallyinfo/2007_Sep/2007_Sep_RallyInfo.htm

Travel Tidbits #2

Enroute to Calistoga; Route 66 Ghost Towns

Oatman, Arizona - "Donkey Town"

Route 66, built beginning in 1926 to connect Chicago to Los Angeles – actually Santa Monica – connects many abandoned towns as witnessed by "Cars". For more than you probably want to know about Rt66, see:

<http://www.legendsofamerica.com/66-Ghosts.html>

Oatman, between Kingman, AZ and Needles, CA is one of the more interesting.



Donkeys, turned loose when the mines closed, have become the town's beggars.

The Oatman Hotel housed many celebrities, including Clark Gable and Carol Lombard on their honeymoon.

Bagdad, CA

In its heyday, Bagdad had a population of 600, now only the Bagdad Café remains. It was the seat of a 1988 movie with Jack Palance and features movie memorabilia, in addition to reasonable food.

Bagdad is not on the maps. The Café is on Route 66 east of Newberry Springs which is near Barstow.

Travel Tidbits #3

Basque Restaurants Enroute to Calistoga

Basque restaurants are only available in the far West so an introduction may be of value to visitors enroute to such places as Calistoga.

The Basques immigrated from the Pyrenees Mountain region along the French-Spanish border and settled in Western America where they became sheep growers and restaurant operators. The Basque population is most prominent in Nevada and Idaho, but California's is by far the largest.

The most famous establishment is John Ascuagua's Nugget hotel-casino in Sparks (Reno) Nevada.

All the Basque restaurants with which I am familiar follow the same format. One enters through a prominent bar. You are typically seated at long tables. All the meals are family style. Your only choice is the main course; however, most will serve soup and salad only. Lamb is always featured and is likely the best choice. Wine (red) is poured and soup/salad may be served before your order is taken.

My favorites are:

- *The Martin Hotel* - Winnemucca, NV
- *The Nevada Dinner House* - Elko, NV
- *The Star* - Elko, NV
- *Biltoki's* - Elko, NV
- *Woolgrowers'* - Bakersfield, CA
- *Louis' Basque Corner* - Reno, CA

Travel Tidbits #4

Mexican Restaurants Enroute to Calistoga

When visiting California one has expectations of eating at authentic Mexican restaurants.

However, it has been my experience that most of our restaurateurs confuse authentic with fiery. Fortunately, I have found a couple which use spice for great flavor only.

Domingo's

Boron and Tehachapi, Calif.

The restaurant in Boron is small, but so is Boron. Boron is now a small quiet village, but had been quite active as a port on the 20-Mule Team borax-haul road. Remnants of the vehicles can be found here. Domingo's is located on *20-Mule Team Road*.

The Tehachapi location is larger, but is well off the Interstate and is more difficult to locate.

Don Juan

Palmdale, California

Don Juan offers fine Mexican dining and atmosphere.

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Travel Tidbits #5

Surprise Eateries Enroute to Calistoga

Harris Ranch & Inn

Coalinga, California

The Harris Ranch is an oasis on the barren Interstate 5; it is famous for its fine steaks and large parking lot.. The Harris family members have been farmers and ranchers in California for more than 100 years.

Pea Soup Andersen's

Santa Nella & Buellton, CA

Andersen's began as a small café in the early 1900s; pea soup soon became its specialty. Their recepies and the Idaho-grown peas are available for sale, but the results are not the same.

The Shack

Snyder, Texas

The shack was a very pleasant surprise. When you enter The Shack you step back about a hundred years in time – and the food is good with friendly service.

La Posta

Mesilla (Las Cruces) New Mexico

La Posta is housed in the old post office building of Mesilla. It offers good food and service in a facility with immense character.

Mesilla, founded in 1848, is one of the older towns of the West and appears to be unchanged from the days when Billy the Kid was tried in its courts.

Travel Tidbits #6

Calistoga - Wheel Service Enroute

A wheel polishing crew hangs out at Flying J's Eloy (between Tucson & Phoenix) station. Last year their fee was \$5/wheel and they did good work.

They are not sanctioned by Flying J.