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Backpacking through Big Sur

Matthew Faust

California State University, Monterey Bay

Chad Ghiron

California State University, Monterey Bay

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Backpacking through Big Sur

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Juanita Darling

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By: Matthew Faust & Chad Ghiron

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Big Sur

Introduction:

On a nine-day backpacking trip through Big Sur the two of us, Matt Faust and Chad Ghiron, CSU Monterey Bay Journalism students, explored and learned what makes the area so unique. Before we left on our trip we had to develop a few research questions to keep in mind while backpacking. These questions were; how does backpacking affect the human body, does geography affect style of writing and what are the hazards of backpacking? Along with our initial research questions we came up with a few more while on the road: How does travel influence writing, what are the challenges of backpacking and how does travel affect the economy and environment? With these research questions we felt it important to explore the history of artists that inhabited the Big Sur area as well as the history of Big Sur itself.

While we were on our nine-day trip heading down south a few answers to our research questions became very obvious. We found that tourism has had a negative effect on the Big Sur area in respect to its economy and environment. The economy of Big Sur has been forever changed, making both supplies and housing more expensive and pricing the locals out of their homes. “The area used to be a place for artists and hippies to live and get away from the world they rejected but now the world they rejected has shown up, moved in and made Big Sur their home,” said Bryan Fitzgerald a 62 year old Big Sur resident. “We are being priced out of our home... I have had friends how have had to move because they could not afford it (housing) anymore.”

Environmentally, Big Sur has suffered from the amount of tourists who have made the trek to this sought after destination. While walking down the road for only five

minutes we managed to pick up two grocery bags full of garbage. This helped us realize the extent of the problem. Another thing hurting the area is the amount of cars driving up and down Highway 1. They have had a negative impact on Big Sur, creating more pollution in the ground water, soil and air.

We also found out first hand that backpacking is very hard on the human body as we both had to deal with injuries as well as fatigue along the way. We also realized travel and geography does affect a persons writing in either a positive or negative way depending on the type of experience you are having, because of our positive outlook on life we managed to keep an optimistic edge to our writing.

Literature Review:

California has some of the most diverse terrain in the United States. The area that we concentrated on our capstone was the central coast of Big Sur. We wanted to learn more about the area of Big Sur and all of its aspects that it contained. We decided to backpack ninety miles through Highway 1 from Point Lobos to San Simeon.

Most of the sources that we used included works from Kerouac and Ginsberg who were highly influenced in the Big Sur area during the Beat Generation. We also used internet sources that were credible that helped us understand the geography and locations that we were traveling through and how they are affected by tourism. In these books the writers use their travel accounts to help influence their writing about the areas of their travel. These books contain passages of personal struggles and life altering decisions that they take. They are seeking the America and the land in which they are surrounded by.

In "*California Secret Heart*," Robert Stone describes the Big Sur coastline and the vast inland region. In the section, Stone relates Big Sur to the rest of the California

region and talks about what makes this land so unique compared to Southern California and Northern California. Here he gives examples how the people helped preserve the land. The problem with the article is that he does not talk about who the people are and where they originated, or what the area offers and the history of the land. These need to be more thoroughly examined when we work on our capstone.

Before we left on our journey we wanted to develop questions that will help us with our research which were; how does backpacking affect the human body, does geography affect style of writing and what are the hazards of backpacking, how does travel influence writing, what are the challenges of backpacking and how does travel affect the economy and environment? We also wanted to learn about the history, writers, and artists who lived in the area.

- **History:**

Big Sur, California has a very extensive history which dates back before the 1500s. The first people to inhabit the area were three aboriginal American tribes: Ohlone, Esselen, and Salinan. In 1542, Juan Cabrillo led the Spanish mariners up the central coast through Big Sur. Two centuries later, in 1770 Gaspar de Portola and Father Junipero Serra helped colonize the area by building the missions. The tribes were forced into changing their ways of life by the orders of Father Serra and the other Europeans. Disease and mass labor eventually destroyed all the tribal communities from the European colonies. The rest of the tribal communities assimilated with Spanish and Mexican ranchers in the nineteenth century. (Henson and Usner 264-267)

In 1821, Big Sur became apart of Mexico due to the independence from Spain. Later on, in 1834 Mexican governor José Figueroa granted a nine thousand acre ranch in

Big Sur to Juan Bautista Alvarado. Captain J.B.R Cooper became fulltime owner of the ranch. Cooper Cabin was built and is still the oldest building in Big Sur. In 1848 after the Mexican-American War, California became part of the United States. Pioneers settled into Big Sur, because they were promised free 160-acre parcels. Many of the local sites are named after some of the settlers from this period like; Pfeiffer, Post, Partington, and McWay. Due to its Anglo-Hispanic heritage the settlers mixed English and Spanish and called their new home "Big Sur". (Henson and Usner 270-274)

The Big Sur gold rush era of the 1860's changed it's geography due to the cutting down of the coastal redwoods by lumbering companies. Big Sur had a much higher population due to the jobs that were available during the time, but it did not last forever, because of the fallout of gold and fire that burnt the community to the ground in 1909. Since there were no efficient road systems built at the time, transportation was very difficult through the area. Horseback or wagon was the most common way, but still was a hazardous way of travel. There were a couple ship landings that were built in Big Sur, inside coves. The most popular ship landing was the Bixby landing, where now Bixby Bridge stands. These landings were the best way to transport goods and others from Monterey to Big Sur.

In the 1920's there were only two homes that were built in Big Sur that had electricity which were conducted by water wheels and windmills, but everyone else lived without power in their homes till the 1950's when connections to the California electric grid were established. In 1937, Highway 1 was finally built and took eighteen years to be completed with help from the New Deal funds President Franklin D. Roosevelt set in place. This open stretch of road was a gateway for Big Sur's economy and transportation

to the outside world. Local residents fought to keep Big Sur land from being further developed. The Monterey County government won a court case that banned billboard use on the highway in 1962.

Big Sur, California later became a home to centers of study and contemplation like; a Catholic monastery “New Camaldoli Hermitage”, which was founded in 1958, and the Esalen Institute, a workshop and retreat center was founded in 1962. Big Sur became influenced by its new bohemian reputation, which it still remains today. This area of Big Sur today is populated with about 1,500 inhabitants. This population has a wide diverse mix of: settler and rancher families, artists, writers, and wealthy home owners, and vagabonds. (Henson and Usner 276-277)

- **Artists:**

Big Sur has been a very big draw to many artists of all types over the years. In literature there have been such names as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Henry Miller, Hunter S. Thompson, Robinson Jeffers, and Richard Brautigan. Photographers in Big Sur were people such as Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, and in the music world the Beach Boys, Bob Dylan, “Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young,” and Jon Baez all were very influenced by the Big Sur area and had many different songs which either were recorded in Big Sur or was about parts of the area. Even contemporary artists such as the Thrills, writing songs named “Big Sur” find the area to be a large inspirational drive in their work. (Lash)

Jack Kerouac, one of the most famous writers in the 20th century wrote his darkest and most self-reveling novels while staying in a friend’s cabin in the wilderness in Big Sur. The novel was called Big Sur and because of Kerouac’s fictional non-fiction

approach toward writing was about a writer struggling to get over his alcoholism and move through a nervous breakdown. The writer lives a happy, contemplative life of simple pleasures, until he starts craving the company of others, which ends up driving him back to the city.

Henry Miller a novelist, poet, and photographer has both a school and a library named after him in Big Sur. "If anyone embodies the spirit and true nature of Big Sur it would be Henry Miller," said Maria Johnson a visitor to the Henry Miller Library in Big Sur. "His was just so experimental with his photography and writing." With his free expression and sexually charged photography there was no surprise when people started to criticize him for his art and his actions. Big Sur was one of the few places where he could be free to do what he wanted and at the same time be accepted by the rest of the people around him.

There were also many different novelists and poets which wrote about the area. Poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Robinson Jeffers wrote many different poems about Big Sur and Richard Brautigan a novelist whose most famous novel was "Trout Fishing in America" wrote and lived in Big Sur for many years of his life. Even people like Hunter S. Thompson were drawn to the Big Sur area where he lived for many years.

Edward Weston, notably the most famous photographer to work in Big Sur spent many years taking some of the most amazing photos of the Big Sur area to date, especially considering he was shooting on an old camera and had to produce everything in the field. Some of Weston's more famous works come from Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" where he illustrated the poetry with his photography.

There have also been many different musicians that have been highly influenced by the Big Sur area such as the Beach Boys. The Beach Boys loved the Big Sur area and spent much time in the area writing and recording their album “Holland.” And Bob Dylan and Jon Baez both lived in Carmel Valley and played many times down in the Big Sur area. So, what makes Big Sur such a draw to people who are artistic?

- **Travel on Economy and Environment:**

Mass tourism has had a negative effect on many different places in the world due to the pollution and over population, “The ravages of tourism are particularly evident in Hawaii, a once-beautiful island now disfigured by countless skyscrapers. Six-lane motorways cater for over 300,000 cars and, during the season, a jet with a cargo of tourists arrives every 10 minutes (Goldsmith, 2006).” We found this fact very evident in Big Sur as well, cars would past us about five or more at a time every minute or so. Even though Big Sur has a very large untouched and protected stretch of land with very strict building codes the amount of tourist that go to the area just for a beautiful drive has and will continue to have a negative effect on Big Sur, such as landslides, ground water pollution and litter in the area.

Not only does tourism hurt the environment but it also can hurt the economy of the area. “With the coming of mass tourism, land values increase, often so steeply that local people find themselves unable to buy a house (Goldsmith, 2006).” In Big Sur this is also very evident, the old artistry and mystery of Big Sur is slowly big chased out and turned into a destination for the yuppie, bourgeois American. “Big Sur has become a popular retreat for people who made money in finance and technology (Jones, 2007).”

Even though tourism has its negative affect on the environment and economy of the local areas there are ways in which you can help minimize your affect.

There are ways to protect areas such as Big Sur while you are visiting, such as sustainable tourism, or green tourism. “Prizing authenticity over relaxation, a growing cohort of travelers is practicing sustainable *tourism*--an extension of the socially conscious trend that began with ecotourism in the 1980s (Schulte, 2006).” Other ways you can help the area is to make sure you are giving to the community directly through ecotourism and not to a big corporate hotel or tour company. “Now it (Ecotourism) has evolved to a more sophisticated approach that benefits the environment and the regional economy while allowing travelers to experience the local life (Schulte, 2006).” Also in New Delhi there are tours, which their profits go right, back into the community. “A nonprofit group in New Delhi charges tourists for guided walks through the railway station, to raise money for the street children who haunt its platforms (Lancaster, 2007).”

- **Backpacking:**

“Backpacking is a combined sport of hiking while carrying clothing, food, and camping equipment in a pack on the back. In the early 20th century backpacking was primarily a means of getting to wilderness areas inaccessible by car or by day hike. It subsequently became associated with general touring by foot in urban as well as wilderness settings. Types of packs range from the frameless rucksack to the contour frame pack, with a frame of aluminum tubing and often a waistband that transfers most of the pack's weight to the hips.” (Britannica Concise, par.1)

Camping and backpacking go hand in hand with one another. The history of backpacking originated in the early 1700's around the time of the American Revolution,

soldiers would camp around their fort waiting for battle. This style of camping is considered a recreational activity even to today. Before the 1700's there was backpacking and camping, but it was in other terms called "living", where people lived in the wilderness. But for the recreational use it was founded around the 1700's era and continues to be an extreme style of life.

This recreational activity became very popular back in the late 1960s-1970s where westerners traveled to Europe, Asia, etc, due to the decrease of Airfare prices and was made accessible for anyone to adventure out and discover the world. This low cost living is what gives this style of travel its extreme edge. This is a way for an individual to become one with his or her cultural surroundings and adapt to the environment in which they are hiking through.

"Camping takes many forms. In the 19th century American naturalist and explorer John Muir would set off into the woods with little more than a sack of food and a journal in which to write his thoughts. In the early 20th century American conservationist and philosopher Aldo Leopold paddled a canoe and rode horseback through the wilderness of the Midwest while taking notes for his books, including *Game Management* (1933) and *A Sand County Almanac* (1949). The works of Muir and Leopold, as well as writings by Americans Edward Abbey and Henry David Thoreau, have inspired others to spend time in the wilderness." (Encarta Encyclopedia, par. 3)

- **Writing:**

Writers traveled to Big Sur for many different aspects, but for most they all shared one common reason, which was because of sanctuary from the outside world. During the Beat Generation artist and writers shared common bonds of interest and

drifted from the norms of the typical social construct. These people shared a Zen Buddhism way of life with expression of sex, music, and recreational drugs to help influence their way of life. The 1950s Beat Generation eventually gave way to the Hippie Generation, which continued in a similar path.

Back in the 1960s Nepenthe's, which is now an upper class restaurant in Big Sur use to be a gathering place for these people to construct their work by writing, painting, and playing music as one. These communes of people were strongly influenced by one another's work at the facility. The same building stands today, but is no longer the same refugee sanctuary, as it once was known as. (Henson and Usner 276-277)

We noticed that the geography affects a person's style of writing during travel. Writers sometimes use travel to help influence their writing because of the environment and its characteristics give motivation to write. Geography plays an important role on writers and has helped produce some of the world's best literature through its influence on the author. Geography opens up people to new ideas by looking out at the world and discovering new places and ideas in which the people of that area live around.

We used the geography of Big Sur to help our writing. Since our capstone is on the area, we used backpacking to see the coast through a different lens. While on our travels we would stop every couple of hours and look around and use all of our senses to take in all of the information and place it on paper so that we could remember how we felt and all of its surroundings.

Methodology:

On our nine-day backpacking trip we used journalistic interviewing to better understand Big Sur, its economy, its environment and the locals themselves. Also

because we were not able to talk to everyone in Big Sur we also used participant observation to further our learning of the area and the people. We used these methods as well as research to further our understanding of the project at hand.

We also examined newspaper articles in the Monterey Library and looked at findings on travel writings and interviews with locals in Big Sur over the past 30 years to help relate to our project. We got primary and secondary sources of historical literature about Big Sur that will help us discuss the events that took place, which affected the culture.

In addition, we looked through Discovery and Travel Magazine and looked at examples of writing from their magazines to help us create our own style of writing and developing our own travel writing. Tour guide brochures and maps of the coast helped us with our journey through the rugged terrain of Big Sur. By using the library database like: LexisNexis, and EBSCO Host; we will find information on articles and primary sources that we were able to use.

Body:

We have both driven down Highway 1 multiple times and have seen it from a passenger's perspective by vehicle. But what we did not realize was all of the other aspects that people truly were missing while driving. While backpacking we discovered that our senses were more influenced and in tune with the environment. We noticed and smelled things that people would have usually just passed by and not think much of it. We were able to meet with locals and travelers in the area and interview them.

We discovered through communication with locals that the economy in Big Sur is helped and hurt by the amount of tourism that comes through. Our sources that we used

gave us most information about the history and geography of Big Sur. It also provided information about backpacking and people who have traveled in the area in the past. But for the journalism aspect we discovered information that you couldn't find in books. Since the Big Sur economy was all around us we were able to understand who tourism and locals go hand in hand to make Big Sur the vacation spot that it is today, for better or worse.

We discovered that some of the problems about researching Big Sur is that most of the information is about travel and were to vacation. There was information in which we mentioned earlier, but the real information came from our travel. We were able to understand the people and the place through our own eyes.

Throughout our trip in Big Sur, we noticed that a major problem with the tourism in the area was the disposal of trash properly. We were able to discover trash all along Highway 1 that had been discarded by means of littering. "For the past twenty years, we have had more trash than ever... people don't realize that this is our home and we take pride in our area," exclaimed 62 year old, Big Sur local Bryan Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald is a resident of Big Sur and has lived there for the past thirty eight years and has seen Big Sur change from its original artistic beauty to it's now sought after tourist destination. We noticed trash like a broken prosthetic leg, bottles, cigarettes, glass, clothes, and wrappers; these were all found by the side of the road on the highway.

From the 50's to 60's life in Big Sur was considered easy living, a place where people could go and get away from the world they disliked. Now however Big Sur is no longer the same place; generations have passed and new ages of people have inhabited the Big Sur area. These so called "yuppies" (aka. The Upper Class) have moved into the

area from Carmel Highlands to Gorda, with their multi million dollar estates. The increase of upper class people to the area has caused many problems for Big Sur and its locals: first it has forced the property tax to increase tremendously and second with the new money entering Big Sur property costs have gone up. Both of these reasons are why most of the hippies and vagabonds have had to move elsewhere. Due to this movement, local business prices increased like: gas stations, general stores, restaurants, and tourism. Gas was the major import that increased in the Big Sur area, which was over a dollar difference compared to normal gas prices in Monterey.

Backpacking was the major component which made our capstone so unique from others. There are three main components of backpacking in which we studied: How it affects the human body, style of writing, and the hazards which it involves. People have been traveling by means of backpacking for centuries. "History is filled with examples of soldiers camping out, as at Valley Forge during the American Revolution (1775-1783), and of nomadic peoples throughout the world who move their campsites from place to place." (Encarta Encyclopedia, par. 1) This common source by foot has a most effective way to find answers which we were looking for. By leaving today's technology of rapid transportation of plane, trains and automobiles, traveling by foot will give us more in depth view of our outside surroundings and encourage us to adapt to our surrounding environment of the Big Sur Coastline.

Backpacking affects the human body in many different ways by means of physical and mental abilities, for instance, "When we refer to simple miseries, we mean those "ailments" that start out very small and annoying, but that, if left alone, will make a trip miserable. We should always pay attention to what our bodies tell us. Noticing these

small annoyances and taking care of them early can make the difference between an enjoyable and rewarding trip and sheer misery... Preventing blisters is the most important first aid (Fife, 2000).”

Our motive was to be placed out in the wilderness with only the necessities in the backpacks for survival. The constant moving on the road with our weight and the additional forty pounds of backpacking equipment put a tremendous amount of pressure on our bodies. We received soars, blisters, cuts, and aches on our feet which is typical for backpacking. “You don’t need to train with the intensity of a marathoner before your trip but try to train for a few weeks prior to leaving. Your regimen should include three components: flexibility training, resistance training, and cardiovascular training (Harvey, 1999)

Not only is backpacking a physical endurance but mental as well. One must maintain an open mind and great sense of humor while traveling. A great mental state of being is the right way to be set on a trip, because there is always room for disaster or conflict which causes a great amount of stress which can be overcome by the right mindset.

Backpacking like any other physical activity it has its dangers which can cause harm to someone if not careful. Some of these hazards/ dangers that we came up with were: animal attacks (snakes, bears, boars, mountain lions, and insects), weather/geographical conditions, health issues, strangers, food/water supplies, etc. “The ‘Pack light Philosophy’ emphasizes a never-ending commitment to **(1)** scrutinize packing habits in order to fine-tune minimum packing needs and **(2)** aggressively seek out the smallest, lightest-weight, highest-quality gear available to satisfy those needs.” (Backpacking

Lightweight Ltd.) We prepared for the worst conditions and situations that might come our way on the trip. We carried a first aid kit that contained snake bit treatment, Iodine water pills, and basic medical equipment. But still there was always room for injury or conflict on the road.

Conclusion:

There are many elements that make Big Sur, California different than any other on the west coast of the United States. The geography and location play the most important role due to central coast scene and neighboring rural counties of Monterey and San Louis Obispo. Its vast coastal rocky cliffs and tide pools and the Ventana Mountain wilderness with hidden hot springs and overflowing waterfalls that touch purple sand beaches.

While backpacking the ninety-nine miles stretch on Highway One, from Point Lobos to San Simeon, we were able to discover the essence of this protected land through our own eyes. Walking gave us the opportunity to see sites and hear new sounds we hadn't been able to tune our ears into before as well as the many different tastes of the outdoors and open sea air that engulfed us as we set out on the open road. Not only did the physical characteristics of the trip influence us but our own mental characteristics. These characteristics opened our eyes and gave us our creativity to write our capstone.

Through our encounters with locals and tourists we have become able to understand how the people play an important role with Big Sur's economy. Communication and body language were the main characteristics that we looked for in individuals. We noticed that every person we came in contact with throughout our journey was never the same as the last person. Every local was different from the next

and they all shared their views, ideas, and philosophy about life. Talking to tourists traveling through Big Sur was unique due to the fact that we meet people from all over the world.

Big Sur is a diamond in the rough trapped on the Central Coast that makes the area well known for. If Big Sur were to be developed and changed into a city with shopping malls, parking lots, housing, then this area would be like all other urban areas in California. But due to Big Sur's preserved coast, this beauty will be untouched by conglomerate America to be left for our children's future to enjoy and discover. This hidden oasis of the central coast has made its mark with travelers and secured its place on the map.

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Article:

Big Sur

At 7 a.m., with seven days and 90 miles to go, the sun just began to peek out making the water of the Carmel Bay glisten as it shown onto the rocky cliffs of Point Lobos State Reserve as they disappeared into the rough waters. The morning wind felt chill on our face and the packs heavy on our backs. Two friends had just dropped us off minutes before and we were on our way down Highway 1 toward Hearst Castle in search of the true essence of the mysterious Big Sur.

The trip was for us, two Cal State Monterey Bay College students, to explore and learn more about the Big Sur area first hand while hiking the 90 miles of coastline between Point Lobos State Reserve in the Carmel Valley and the Hearst Castle in San Simeon. An ironic side note, in the fifth century, between 401 - 500 there was a group of ascetics called Stylites would stand a top pillars to be closer to God and protest the lifestyle which was happening at the time in the Syrian Desert, the most famous of these people being Simeon Stylite or better known as San Simeon.

The idea for our trip first came while sitting in class one day, talking about what had made up the most important parts of our college careers: friends, adventures, the ocean, music. Than it hit us everything we felt was important about our college career had some how managed to get back to Big Sur. So we made our plans and set our dates.

We wanted to find out what made Big Sur so much of a draw for so many different people. In the heart of the second largest dope-growing community in California hemmed between the beautiful Monterey Bay and Southern California, a place where artistic back-to-the-land hippies and rednecks have created a hybrid culture of the new

age crystal worshipping and alcohol fueled xenophobes, there is one of the biggest tourism draws on the west coast, outside of Disneyland; confrontation seems inevitable.

While on the trail we met up with people from England, New York, Washington, and many self-proclaimed “Last Vagabond of America.”

“We had heard about how beautiful this area (Big Sur) was and seen pictures;” said John Sumter, as he looked over at his wife, Veronica. “So we thought it would be a good ideal to make it to California one last time before the baby.”

Tourists now a days follow the same footpath set by such artists as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Henry Miller, Hunter S. Thompson, the Beach Boys, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez who spent much time in Big Sur and some eventually made this beautiful and mysterious places on the California coastline their home.

We were on the road, our feet melting into the hot pavement and the midday sun beating into our already sun burnt faces. We turned the corner to see for the first time on foot the massive stretch of land known as Big Sur. We are out of our minds, our friends were right; there was no way we could do this hike we thought, finally realizing the extent of what we had gotten ourselves into. The road seemed to draws on forever, weaving in and out of the mountains, and finally disappearing into a white haze, which fogged our vision right next to Andrew Molera State Park.

Without a watch or phone to tell us the time we were forced to live much like the aboriginal people of Big Sur would have, by the sun. The first people to inhabit Big Sur were three Native American tribes: Ohlone, Esselen, and Salinan. They lived and hunted peacefully in Big Sur until in 1770 Gaspar de Portola and Father Junipero Serra helped colonize the area. Disease from the European colonies and mass labor eventually

destroyed all the tribal communities. So with about 15 miles behind us, and the sun edging toward the west, we took a detour down to the oceanfront for a rest and some food.

Walking down a path normally isn't something either of us seem to struggle over very often, but when the trail is falling off into a bed of rocks and shallow water while having 40 plus pound packs on our backs, simple things such as jumping over problem areas seemed to become a bit harder. Arriving at the rocky coast at the end of the trail was worth all the efforts, we watched as the waves broke on the shore making a wall of white water, filling and overflowing the tide pools.

People drive through Big Sur and never end up seeing what the coastline really has to offer, they stop at the big spots, take a few quick snap shots, while all the time missing some of the most amazing site to be had.

While walking a stretch of road to get from one trail to another we watched as cars and trucks with no more than one or two people came screaming past at 50 mph barely missing us, but more importantly missing some of the most impressive sites in the world, which lay no more than a few feet from their passenger side door and just inches from us. We enjoyed the view of the hillside dropping straight into the rocky shore where waves broke and the wildlife buzzed in the warm afternoon sunlight.

Big Sur and its surrounds area has been known world wide yet it still manages to keep it hidden artistry away from the corporate world in which most of us live and we were just happy to be able to take our trip and live what most will never.

Before we started on our journey we went to Outdoor World and got the bare essential that would help us. We packed our backpacks with: a tent, sleeping bags, one

small Coleman burner, cooking/ eating utensils and plates, knife, hatchet, clothes, toiletries, flashlight, camel back, lighter, dehydrated backpacking food, and small emergency kit. The night before we left on our trip we double checked all of our equipment and made sure that were not missing anything. We knew once we left out the front door there was no turning back for any other piece of equipment.

At Monastery Beach we lifted our packs onto our backs and felt their weight pull on us. We felt the pressure for the first time on our feet, and the coldness on our breaths as we headed up Highway 1.

After making it up the first hill we realized that this trip was going to be a long one for the both of us. We had walked for an hour and we were past Point Lobos State reserve an Ocean front sanctuary where seal come to pup and were entering into Carmel Highlands.

By late morning we had moved out of Carmel Highlands and were headed towards Garrapata. We stopped along the way to rest for a bit and enjoy the ocean view. After a few more miles we decided it would be nice to hike down into the tide pools and relax for an hour and think about our first half of the day.

The wind and waves cooled off our tired and aching bodies down in the pools. We headed further on the road and by noon we had already traveled 13 miles to the Rocky Point restaurant. We climbed down to a spot off the side of the road to eat our lunch. Our feet ached, backs sweaty, and hungry for food we finally relax. We notice that Bixby Bridge was in our far site and we decide it was time to keep moving before sundown.

Before the bridge was ever built, Bixby use to have a port where vessels use to pull into port to deliver and pick up goods in the Big Sur area. In the 1800s there was no

Highway 1, so the best way for transportation was either by foot or by animal. This dock allowed business and communities in the Big Sur area to thrive and help cut time on travel to and from Monterey or San Louis Obispo. In the mid 1990s the port was taken out and was later replaced with the well known highway which expanded through the mountainside and ending in Andrew Molera. A couple years later the Bixby Bridge was built to join one side of the sheer cliffs of the rocky coastline to the other. After crossing Bixby we headed up the road, which was the hardest part.

After three hours of hiking we made it too Lighthouse Point and continue on. Andrew Molera State Park was only another six miles away and we thought we would be able to reach it before dark.

Finally making it to Andrew Molera State Park and walking up to the kiosk the ranger welcomed us into the park with a friendly hello and an encouraging smile after we told him how far we had gone that day. We chose our campsite, paid the money, and said our goodbyes.

The campsite, after a long day of hiking, was absolutely beautiful and wonderfully peaceful. There were no cars allowed in the campground, so all campers had to hike in to their site. This gave the site a sense of quietness so you could enjoy the tranquil sounds of the running stream and the chirping birds. The campsite was just what we needed; they provided restrooms, a cupboard, a picnic table, and a fire pit. We set up camp and made some chow.

The whole campground was empty except for one other person. The young man named Alex; he was a couple years older than us and seemed like a nice enough person.

After sunset, all three of us decided to make a fire and enjoy the rest of our night where Alex decided to talk away about himself.

The next day, we woke up and headed five miles down the road to Pfeiffer State Park. We keep moving down the road and listened to the sounds of nature and felt the warm sun blistering on our faces, and the tall redwood trees stood as giants looking down on us. The “S” turned highway veered in and out of trees gearing us toward our new campsite at Pfeiffer. We located ourselves in 201; there was no one else who occupied the park except for ourselves and the site was right on the river next to “The Gorge.” We spent our whole day playing and swimming in the Gorge at Pfeiffer, enjoying the sun and the ideal that we would not have to walk anymore for the rest of the day. We headed back to our campsite to set up dinner and start our fire. That night we spent just drinking and eating till 3 a.m. until we passed out knowing tomorrow was going to be a long day. But with the sounds of the running water to lull us, we were out.

It was day three and we were tired, Matt had blisters all over his feet and somehow had seemed to cut the bottom of his toe. Wrapping his feet with gauze bandages to ease the blistering process that had devoured his feet, Matt explained that he has bad luck... it's a family curse.

At Pfeiffer we were able to take our first showers since we left home. We basked in the goodness of the hot water, while noticing this was definitely a luxury. After getting dressed and packed we headed out.

Hiking up Highway 1 we noticed how far we had traveled and to our dismay we also noticed we were not even half way done. We moved up the hill and stopped at a general store off the side of the road. With the major cut and blistering on Matt's foot we

could not continue walking, so we decided that the best way to get anywhere was to hitchhike. We stood on the side of the road and throw our thumbs out in the air waiting for someone to see our sign and pull off and give us a friendly lift. We waited for two hours and no sign.

While we waited for a hitch, “The Last Vagabond of America”, whose name was Brian, came into contact with us. We introduced ourselves and offered the malnourished, bearded man some food. He explains that he had been traveling the past five years and had started in Michigan. His clothes had rips and tears, and he stunk of foul body odor, which seemed to linger in every direction. He seemed to enjoy our conversation, as if he had not talked to anyone in years much like if he had been stranded on an island.

We enjoyed the company and played the waiting game some more. Two dreadlock hippies in an old beat up Isuzu Trooper with a huge “Peace Sign” on the back window finally picked us up, offering a ride to the vagabond as well. The hippies explain to us they were only heading a little way down the road to Esselen, but any distance was worth it. We reached Esselen, which was our halfway point of the Big Sur Coastline on Highway 1.

“Big Sur draws people in like a breath,” said Lucas Brentwood, one of the many alluring people we meet while walking the extensive stretch of Big Sur coastline. “If you are the type of person which is drawn to Big Sur, even if you go away for awhile you will manage to find your way back.”

After we had been dropped off, we decided to keep on moving because the sun was coming down over our heads and we knew that we only had about two or three hours left of daylight before we were stuck in the pitch black. We headed up the long and

windy road towards our next destination, which was the town of Gorda. We shuffle our soar and aching feet upward and feel the weight of our packs resisting us to push ourselves.

After a long three hours of walking, we reach our destination and found ourselves having to sneak into a small campsite, because we had \$5 left and couldn't afford the camping fee. We decided to stay at the campsite and play the waiting game, praying that we would not be cited. After a few hours of hanging out and setting up camp we decided to pass out and start fresh the next day. Crawling into our four by six foot tent with the little amount of space that the tent provides we manage to make our sleeping arrangements and lay back and listen to the call of the wild while dozing off to sleep.

The temperature began to drop more and more throughout the night and was close to the freezing point of 33 degrees outside. We knew tomorrow there might be a chance of showers or heavy rain because of what the weather service had stated on the television a couple of days earlier before we left.

The tapping of rain and hail on our tent woke us at around 5:00 a.m. We moved in and out of sleep about three or four times before we noticed that our tent had taken on water. Startled we got up and out of our sleeping bags very quick to realize everything was soaked: our clothes, our sleeping bags and our food. Grabbing our equipment we geared ourselves for the nearest shelter, which were the public restrooms. After we made a couple of trips back and forth to gather our belongings we decided start packing.

Our plan was that we needed to get on the road and keep moving to find the next town for shelter. We rung out our tent, sleeping bags, and other material and packed our

bags. We threw our ponchos on us and were rain ready to head out of the campsite on to Highway 1. We started out on the road up the hill towards Lucia, the next town.

The wet pavement, green hills, and white-capped ocean gave beautiful scenery for us while hiking down the road. The sound of rain tapping against our jackets, made it very peaceful for us to enjoy our travel and see Big Sur in a different way.

We walked 15 miles down and had reached our destination of Lucia and found a campsite to set up our tent. The town of Lucia was a small economic whole in the wall of the Big Sur, which caters to the ongoing tourism to fill up and grab a bite to eat. Since the rain had limited our ability to continue to travel we decided to break and relax in our tents for the rest of the day. We wanted to rest properly so that we could continue strong for the following day and put the miles under us. We talked and thought about what people were doing back at school and about our warm beds with heat. The days was at its end and were ready to challenge tomorrow's hike.

We woke up at the crack of dawn and headed out of camp towards Hearst Castle. Our packs were decreasing in weight every day because of the amount of food and water intake. We were finally coming to an end of our trip. We made it down another six miles and decided to take a rest. We opened our gear and wrung out everything in our pack to make sure we were not carrying any additional wet clothing.

Continuing down the road we hiked for another five hours and decided that we should find a place to set camp. We pulled off the side of the road and found a flat area in the brush that would fit us well. We knew that this was a little crazy that we were sleeping off the side of the road.

It became dark and we decided it would be a good idea to use as little light as possible so that we were unnoticed by others. The sounds of cars passing by the screeching of the tires around the turns made us fringe. The light of morning peered through our tent and woke us. We did our routine of packing and heading out on the road.

Hearst Castle was very close by and we knew that it would only take till late noon to get there. “Do you guys want a lift?” asked Janis Cohen, a 30-year-old high school teacher, from New York, who was on her way down Big Sur to pick up her husband in Burbank.

Cohen said she decided to drive through Big Sur instead of taking the 5 Freeway or 101 because, “I have never been to Big Sur, but only have read about it and seen pictures through magazines and books... I love it here,” explained Cohen. As we drove we saw Big Sur through the eyes of a motorist and understood what people were missing while driving.

We had reached Hearst Castle and were dropped off at the campsites by the beach. The only distance, which we had to travel, was another 10 miles down the road to San Simeon. We decided to find our campsite, unload our things and head to Hearst Castle to take some photos.

We woke up the following morning and tracked the last 10 miles down the road and noticed that it was “Tour de California,” the largest bicycle race on the West Coast. The police had blocked off the entire road so that the cyclist would pass by. We had front row seats and were so excited, because it felt like we were celebrating our final conquest.

How We Got Our Story:

For our capstone, we wanted to do something creative that would make our project stick out compared to everyone else's. We sat around and contemplated about what would be a great capstone and how it would contribute to our emphasis in Journalism in the Humanities and Communications Department at CSU Monterey Bay. We decided to use the area that we live in as inspiration towards our capstone. We both love Big Sur and have been there multiple times and know the area quite well. Big Sur was one of the last remaining headlands and protected areas on the west coast that is widely known for its vast beauty.

We have both traveled by car and have seen all of the main stops through the area on Highway 1. We thought it would be a great idea if we backpacked on Highway 1 through Big Sur and use our journalism skills and interview people about the area and get our research developed. Being able to use backpacking as apart of our capstone made the topic, "Backpacking through Big Sur," more interesting and will catch the reader's attention.

We knew by doing this type of capstone would give us a high opportunity to possibly get our article published by a magazine. In the future we would be able to use this Travel Documentary for future job sources for a backpacking or travel magazine.

HCOM Senior Capstone

Digital Poster

Backpacking Through Big Sur

Matt Faust & Chad Ghiron

Journalism

Juanita Darling

Abstract

Our Capstone features the mystery and beauty of Big Sur while we take a nine-day trip along its coastline to discover the true essence of the area. Big Sur has been a tourist destination for people all over the world for many years and we went to understand the effects this tourism has on the environment



Key Findings

There are many elements that make Big Sur, California different than any other on the west coast of the United States. The geography and location play the most important role due to central coast scene and neighboring rural counties of Monterey and San Louis Obispo. Its vast coastal

and economy. This travel documentary will help shape the way us as individuals picture Big Sur and how history and todayâ€™s research of the people who inhabit the area. We have addition questions and research which we will be adding in our capstone and writing a magazine article, which will show our travel account.

Project Context and Contributions

Why Big Sur?

Big Sur is a well known and still untapped site for many people in the world. These few remaining preserved



REPLACE THIS IMAGE

Photos by: Chad Ghiron

rocky cliffs and tide pools and the Ventana Mountain wilderness with hidden hot springs and overflowing waterfalls that touch purple sand beaches.

While backpacking the ninety-nine miles stretch on Highway One, from Point Lobos to San Simeon, we were able to discover the essence of this protected land through our own eyes. Walking gave us the opportunity to see sites and hear new sounds we hadnâ€™t been able to tune our ears into before as well as the many different tastes of the outdoors and

headlands of the west coast provide unique beauty for tourism and local community to see the unknown, and to experience a world they have only read about in magazines and novels.

In our project we will be backpacking from Point Lobos to Hearst castle on a 38 mile journey through the Big Sur country. Along the way we will be keeping a running written and digital journal, while taking photos of the vast and diverse landscape.

This documentary will be shown through the eyes of two young college student as they

Research Questions

1. How does travel journalism and creative writing effect the local environment, social and economic aspects of the area?
2. Which writers have used Travel Journalism and creative writing to help influence their work?
3. How does backpacking effect the human body and what role does it play in writing?
4. Does the geography effect the style of writing and type of people visiting the sites?
5. What, if any, are the negative effects of travel writing on the local political, social and economical views.

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open sea air that engulfed us as we set out on the open road. Not only did the physical characteristics of the trip influence us but our own mental characteristics. These characteristics opened our eyes and gave us our creativity to write our capstone.

Through our encounters with locals and tourists we have become able to understand how the people play an important role with Big Sur's economy. Communication and body language were the main characteristics that we looked for in

figure out life and explore the history and social aspects of todays new world in the new setting of the undiscovered region.

We hope our project will intrigue other student in the future to continue our research so that they can give the outside world a real understanding of the Big Sur Coast.

The Big Sur headlands manage to still be to this day a large draw to adventurers and outdoors men alike and we as student are hoping to capture the essence and love for this area they share.

School 1999

Henry Miller Library. 5 Oct 2006 <<http://www.henrymiller.org>>.

Jones, Finn-Olaf, New

individuals. We noticed that every person we came in contact with throughout our journey was never the same as the last person. Every local was different from the next and they all shared their views, ideas, and philosophy about life. Talking to tourists traveling through Big Sur was unique due to the fact that we meet people from all over the world.

Big Sur is a diamond in the rough trapped on the Central Coast that makes the area well known for. If Big Sur were to be developed and

Project Format

The format of our capstone project will be done in a unique way which will example our Journalism concentration in the HCOM department of CSU Monterey Bay. The capstone project will entitle a 25-30 page capstone thesis about "Big Sur" and a 9 page magazine article, which we will be sending to Backpacking and Travel Magazine. We will have a slideshow with about 300 pictures that we will have taken during our trip through the area. Our backboard will show our destination and trail map in which we took.

Potential market:

1. Travel
Channel Mag

changed into a city with shopping malls, parking lots, housing, then this area would be like all other urban areas in California. But due to Big Sur's preserved coast, this beauty will be untouched by conglomerate America to be left for our children's future to enjoy and discover. This hidden oasis of the central coast has made its mark with travelers and secured its place on the map.

2. Student
Traveler

3. Backpacking
Mag

Evidence

On our nine-day backpacking trip we used journalistic interviewing to better understand Big Sur, its economy, its environment and the locals themselves. Also because we were not able to talk to everyone in Big Sur we also used participant observation to further our learning of the area and the people. We used these methods as well as research to future our understanding of the project at hand.

We also examined newspaper articles in the Monterey Library and looked at findings on travel writings and interviews with locals in Big Sur over the past 30 years to help relate to our project. We got primary and

secondary sources of historical literature about Big Sur that will help us discuss the events that took place, which affected the culture.

In addition, we looked through Discovery and Travel Magazine and looked at examples of writing from their magazines to help us create our own style of writing and developing our own travel writing. Tour guide brochures and maps of the coast helped us with our journey through the rugged terrain of Big Sur. By using the library database like: LexisNexis, and EBSCO Host; we will found information on articles and primary sources that we were able to use.