

15-SECOND RULE

The one thing you should do every day to stay healthy

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ON TAP

Comedian Tom Green returns with a new routine (and a new beer)

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Globe Life & Arts

TRAVEL

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Diamond in the rough

To reach the next big Californian destination, drive north from San Francisco, past manicured wine country and into the jagged coasts and post-hippie charms of Mendocino



ALEC SCOTT MENDOCINO COUNTY, CALIF.

We are standing on a grassy plateau, on pale cliffs high above the Pacific, looking down at a semi-circular cove that boasts a pier stretching out into the sea. Given that this is California, they call our perch merely bluffs. The landscape is heroic here in Mendocino County, three-plus hours of curvy coastal driving north of San Francisco. Inland are mountains and steep valleys with wide rivers. Up from them are redwood groves and increasingly renowned vineyards. But a first trip need not venture so far: It should focus on – and revel in – the coast.

And that's what we're doing. Here on the clifftop are red networks of seascape strawberry plants and tiny blue-and-yellow Douglas irises – and cows. Locals long ago scotched plans to put a nuclear facility on these headlands, precariously close to the San Andreas fault. I toss a pebble off the edge, and it takes four Mississippis to land – some bluff. A few surfers ply the moderate waves below, and a fishing skiff

arrives to unload the day's catch at the dock.

This part of Mendocino County is having a moment – Obama has just declared these lands, the Stornetta Public Lands, a National Monument and, in part for that reason, the New York Times has advised readers to visit, rating these bluffs and the nearby town of Point Arena as among the top destinations for 2014. For now, the sea-side county retains a rough post-hippie charm – both the coast and what's on shore are more ragged, less manicured than the wine counties of Sonoma and Napa just south of here.

We run into only a few other hikers as we walk along the cliffs, past a couple of small waterfalls carrying spring runoff into the sea. The coastal stone is soft enough – sedimentary, with slate and sandstone in the mix – that here the Pacific plays sculptor, carving tall sea stacks and arches. In the shelter lent by a small island, harbour seals bob in the surf, their blubbery heads all facing the sun.

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At 35 metres, the Point Arena Lighthouse is the tallest on the U.S. West Coast.

K.J. SCHOEN/GETTY IMAGES

MUSIC

The re-education of Sarah McLachlan

After a series of struggles, the Canadian icon is back with a new album. Loss and suffering, she says, are 'inevitable'

MARSHA LEDERMAN
VANCOUVER

Sure, she lives a charmed life, but boy, things got rocky for a time there for Sarah McLachlan. In the space of a few short years: a divorce, the death of her father and a split from her long-time manager.

"All the male anchors. Every one of them. All at the same time," she tells me in an interview at her West Vancouver home. "So it was interesting – the next couple of years of just sorting through that: Who am I now? And where am I at? And what am I going to do with this?"

She's Sarah McLachlan, so what she did was write an album. *Shine On*, out May 6, deals with death, heartbreak and loss – and surrendering to new love.

During a candid sit-down in her house – all windows and wood, with a grand piano nearby, and a little toy one under it – McLachlan talked about a midlife crises, parenting challenges, her own parents' bad marriage and the debacle that was the *Lilith Fair* revival in 2010. Dressed in camo-pants and a tank top, she was nursing a painful leg – a tennis injury suffered in Hawaii the previous weekend with her boyfriend, former NHL star Geoff Courtnall. (See charmed life, above.) Even in pain and about to head to an MRI, she appeared genuinely happy and relaxed – in contrast, I suggested, to how she seemed when *Laws of Illusion* came out four years ago.

Yes, she agreed. "I'm a whole lot happier and I'm a whole lot wholer, too." She cites the title of a Michael Ondaatje novel to illustrate how she's feeling: *Coming Through Slaughter*.

"We get to our 40s and it's inevitable: You can't help but experience loss and suffering. ... The recognition of the process of life is very much in this record," says McLachlan, 46. "It's what we do with it. That's where we really find out who we are – when we have to push up against something that's really hard."

The album, dedicated in part to her father, opens with a euphoric female-empowerment anthem, *In Your Shoes*. "You are stronger than their hate," she bellows. She began writing the song about bullying – McLachlan was ostracized as a kid – but it transformed into an ode to Malala Yousafzai, the teenaged Pakistani girls' education activist who survived a Taliban assassination attempt in 2012. Listening to the lyrics, though, it's hard not to think of McLachlan's own recent history: "Time for you to walk out, walk in your own shoes. Lay down your footprints wherever you choose. Leave it all behind and move on; you are your own woman."

McLachlan and drummer Ashwin Sood split in 2008. They have two daughters, now 12 and almost 7.

McLachlan, Page 2

FROM PAGE 1

Mendocino: Here, the Pacific plays sculptor

» Out on the open sea, humpbacks blow spume as they pass by on their way to the Arctic, but, alas, none breaches the surface. Beyond, on a headland, sits the Point Arena Lighthouse, a classic model that, at 35 metres, is the tallest on the American West Coast.

The fact that Point Arena hit No. 3 on The Times' annual travel list makes some of the 449 locals belly laugh. Twenty per cent of the county's residents live below the poverty line, and the town has two types of establishments: old-timer hangouts and the glossy joints that newcomers and weekenders prefer. (There are two grocery stores for instance, one with organic bulk food and artisanal olive bread, the other serving mainly packaged national brands under bright lights.) One afternoon, a dad leaves his young children, including one in a stroller, unsupervised on the sidewalk while he pops in for a pint at the rough-and-tumble Sign of the Whale. Nearby, a renovated vaudeville theatre (built in 1929) screens operas from the Lincoln Center and highbrow dramas from Britain's National Theatre.

Robert and Jill Hunter, a husband-and-wife team, run Uneda Eat. The tiny space was an old butcher shop, Uneda Meats, and they blacked out two letters. Robert is a self-taught chef, and some well-thumbed, spattered-upon cookbooks fill a shelf above our table. On the wall facing us is a vertical installation of succulent plants and a small screen playing muted nature films.

The food is polyglot – much inspired by the couple's recent menu-supplementing sabbatical in Southeast Asia – and the moist, salty meat falls off a pork rib that has been soaked in a soy-accented marinade for 72 hours, and cooked over low heat for a day. It's done *sous-vide*, of course, the mode of the moment.

Toward the end of the meal, I look up and see zebras nickered silently on the television – a good-enough prelude to the next day's visit to a breeding farm for rare and endangered African hoofed animals. Frank and Judy Mello own and run the B. Bryan



Heritage House, an old inn that reopened after a four-year renovation, offers a particularly spectacular view of the Pacific Ocean. ALEC SCOTT

Preserve. She is originally from Louisiana, but she doesn't draw – she has too many jokes, too much information and conservationist passion to toss out to speak slowly.

Roaming about the moderate acreage are three species each of rare zebra and antelope and five of the last 670 remaining Rothschild's giraffes in the world. "They're teenaged males, so their barn reeks. The five bumps on their heads are called ossicones," Mello informs me. She delineates the hierarchy in an all-female kudu antelope herd and, as if on cue, they all turn, show us their ample rumps and urinate. "That's rude, girls!" Mello shakes her head.

"You know, I tell my Daddy, if he'd only given me a llama at age 12 as I'd asked, I'd have got it, this bug, out of my system," she says.

Further up the coast sits the posher, already discovered Mendocino, an old logging and lum-

ber-processing town, prettied up by the artists who flocked here in the midcentury – a Bohemian migration that inspired the McGarrigle sisters' musical tribute, *Talk to Me of Mendocino*. The town is curiously reminiscent of a seaside hamlet in New England or the Canadian Maritimes – and lots of settlers came here from both areas. (It masqueraded as a fictional Maine town, Cabot Cove, in Angela Lansbury's 1980s show, *Murder, She Wrote*.)

Fancy carpentry and one-off detail distinguish many buildings – and it's one of only four towns in the United States named as historical landmarks. A Masonic lodge has, for reasons best known to the fraternity, a redwood statue on its cupola of a winged Reaper standing behind a fair maiden carrying an orb and wheat sheaf.

In a cove south of Mendocino, I go sea kayaking with Craig Comen, an eco-minded guide,

former pro surfer and sales rep for Patagonia. Comen mixes paddling pointers with gossip about the curious habits of the peleagic cormorants nearby. He points out a dark layer at the top of many cliffs – native middens, the detritus of their former seaside encampments – and draws my attention to the modernist-inspired mansion of a pet-food magnate who flies his plane in some weekends.

Standing ready to receive the jet set is a gussied-up group of cottages around the Heritage House, an old inn on a particularly spectacular seaside site. The 1978 film *Same Time, Next Year*, starring Alan Alda and Ellen Burstyn, was shot here. It tells the story of an adulterous pair who meet annually for dirty (and increasingly soulful) weekends with each other amid bright chintzes, busy wallpapers and dark-wood antiques.

But when Heritage House re-

opened last fall after being closed for four years, such decor was gone. Our suite has been thoroughly Zenned. Now, its neutral sofas, pale sisal rugs and slate-tiled bathroom make what is outside the window pop with colour. Clumps of bush lupines, flowering purple in front of a red fence. The grey-green ocean with its violent white surf. Caramel cliffs lit up by the setting sun.

On our last evening, after watching the old movie streaming on a hotel channel devoted to it, we go out and breathe in a nightcap of fresh salty air and stand silent under a sky bright with stars. The familiar huntsman Orion is barely discernible in this throng. Same time next year? If only.

The writer travelled courtesy of Visit Mendocino. It did not review or approve this article.

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IF YOU GO

WHAT TO DO

Stornetta Public Lands – the newly declared National Monument – can be accessed from the parking lot next to Point Arena's City Hall (51 School St.), and the hike is a gentle one, with panoramic views of the coastline from tall bluffs. Amateur Darwins can theorize about the origins of the many species of plant and animal trapped in the pools at low tide on **Moat Creek Beach**, just south of Point Arena.

Visitors cram into an old Land Rover on the **B. Bryan Preserve** to see and learn about the rare zebra, antelope and giraffe that live and breed here. \$30 for adults, \$15 for children. 130 Riverside Dr., Point Arena, bbryanpreserve.com

The **Point Arena Lighthouse** has 144 steps winding to its top, where if it's whale season you'll often see breaching humpbacks. The attached museum has the massive Fresnel lens that once turned up top, assorted Pomo Indian artifacts and tales of shipwrecks and Japanese submarine sightings past. Admission \$5; 45500 Lighthouse Road, pointarenalighthouse.com

A side-trip up the Anderson Valley via Route 128 winds through cathedral-tall redwoods to some up-and-coming wineries. Farmers tend to favour organic and biodynamic methods for their pinots and dry gewurztraminers. Top choice: **Phillips Hill Winery**, with tasting rooms in an old apple-drying barn – with Boontling, a local dialect, on the labels. 5101 Route 128, Philo, phillipshill.com

Craig Comen's **Kayak Mendocino** takes paddlers from

the beach at Van Damme State Park into caves and through treacherous passages. \$60 for adults, \$40 for kids; kayakmendocino.com

WHERE TO STAY

Coast Guard House Historic Inn, run by ebullient Philadelphia transplant Mia Gallagher, has had a chic update, but it still knows and nods to its nautical past – choose the Flag Room. Rooms from \$160. 695 Point Arena Wharf, Point Arena, coastguardhouse.com

The newly renovated **Heritage House Resort** has cottages dotted around its sloping coast-side property. Rooms from \$225. 5200 N Highway One, Little River, heritagehouse-resort.com

WHERE TO EAT

The onion-domed wood buildings that house **St. Orres** restaurant – and a hotel – pay tribute to the Russians who came to this coast in the 19th century. Dishes with mushrooms foraged from nearby woods are a particular forte. 36601 Highway One, Gualala, 707-884-3335, stores.com

Uneda Eat. Californian-Asian fusion in an informal setting, with children most welcome. \$50 per person, without alcohol. 206 Main St., Point Arena, 707-882-3800, unedaeat.com

Wild Fish is a rarity among all the cheery coastside chowder houses, a truly ambitious (and accomplished) fish-focused restaurant. \$60 per person, without alcohol. 7750 N Highway One, Little River, 707-937-3055, wild-fish.com

Alec Scott

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