

San Vegas / Las Diego

Copper-Silver-Golden State 1000-mile whirlwind weekend drive. By Tyson Hugie

A 1000-mile one-way drive from Phoenix can take you to a lot of places: Butte, Montana; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Dallas, Texas; or Medford, Oregon, for example.

Or for just a weekend, San Diego is a popular dash, about 700 miles roundtrip, as is Las Vegas, about 600. But how about a triangular two-in-one weekend dash through our whole backyard?

Who RSVPs to a birthday party in one state and a bachelor party in another on the same weekend and still attends both? You're looking at him.

The good news is that it feels amazing to go from the awe-inspiring 54th floor of the Cosmopolitan on the Las Vegas Strip one day, to sweet-smelling, picturesque Mission Beach in San Diego the next.

The adventure started after work on Friday, with two of us heading to Las Vegas, Taco Bell crunchwrap supremes in hand, in my 2013 Acura ILX. The drive takes about four and a half hours through the picturesque yet barren reaches of US 93. We arrived just in time to join the rest of our gang for a bite to eat at Buffalo Wild Wings before venturing out on the town.

I can assure you, what happened in Vegas that night will stay in Vegas. Well, I take that back. The group text message with eight people in it became a dumping

ground for all the photos and videos from that night's debauchery, and they will forever live on in the memory bank of each participant's phone. Las Vegas Boulevard—The Strip—is home to some 62,000 hotel rooms. Tourists are out on the streets 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is seriously no end to the available entertainment, and we got our share of it.

On Saturday morning, we pulled our acts together in time for brunch at Guy Fieri's Vegas Kitchen and Bar, home to some of the best nachos you'll ever have—"trash can nachos," which basically come out in a big tin can that gets dumped on a plate in the center of the table. Trust me, they were amazing.

Three of us hit the road by early Saturday afternoon for the next chapter of our road trip weekend: a bachelor party in Southern California. The drive was a breeze, with 95 percent of it on southbound I-15. We stopped briefly in the middle-of-nowhere town of Baker, California, home to the World's Largest Thermometer—134 feet tall, indicative of the highest temperature ever observed in nearby Death Valley. It was only 67 degrees at the time of our visit.

In typical fashion, traffic was slow-and-go the closer we got to the Los Angeles

area, but as dusk settled in, we cranked the iPod and karaoked to classics like Chumbawumba's "Tubthumping" (a song now 20 years old!) to pass the miles.

Motel 6 on 2nd Avenue in downtown San Diego, primitive but predictable, was our resting spot for Saturday night. We had just enough time to freshen up before heading to dinner and a night out on the town at Oxford Social Club in the Gaslamp District. I felt like a true A-Lister there: VIP entry, reserved seating and the owner himself coming over to shake our hands. The lights and music raged on as we celebrated the upcoming wedding of our friends until the wee hours.

What California trip would be complete without a stop at the beach? My phone told me we were a mere 14 minutes from Mission Beach, so we saddled up in the ILX and went to check it out. The smell of a fresh sea breeze and the sound of crashing waves will never get old. We wandered north along the sand for a little while before looping back to meet the rest of the gang in Little Italy for brunch at a spot called Prepkitchen.

The final leg of this epic weekend journey was the stretch of Interstate 8 that links San Diego with the Phoenix area, an oft-desolate road that runs parallel to the Mexican border. Kyle took the wheel from the halfway point in Yuma onward, which was great. By then I finally welcomed some time with my eyes off the road.

The bad news is that coming back to reality bites. Hard. ■

