

Easy to like San Diego

By Charles Clines



My wife and I recently celebrated our wedding anniversary in San Diego and first impressions of the California city were so good that it was difficult to pack up and leave.

I mean, what's not to like? We were staying on the beach at the Ocean Park Inn at the Pacific Coast area and could watch surfers and dolphins from our room's balcony. Between us and the ocean were a sandy beach and boardwalk. The boardwalk is something I'd like to bring here and transplant nearby.

It's a wide walk that attracts runners, walkers, cyclists, skaters, and skateboarders. It's busy from before dawn to way after sunset. I'm not sure how far the boardwalk goes, but it went about a half-mile one way and at least two the other. On three mornings, I jogged about a mile and a half one way and come back. The temperature in the mornings was just below 60, so short-sleeves and shorts were all that were needed. The temperature eventually would rise to just past 80 degrees, and that's just about the way it always stays, according to San Diego residents. As I said, what's

not to like?

When running, I would watch the wet-suited clad surfers lining up in the water while waiting for the waves. Every now and then, a school of dolphins would bob past the surfers. The water temperature was about a chilling 60 degrees and, yet, there were some swimmers and surfers who weren't wearing wet suits as the day warmed. I shivered just thinking about getting in the cold water when I waded a couple of times to knee level.

Anyway, there are condos, rentals and restaurants on the other side of the boardwalk. The only drawback to running on the walk was making sure a cyclist didn't ram into you from the back. I never saw a collision, but none of the cyclists voices a warning about passing on the right or left. Many of the cyclists probably are tourists because there are several places to rent bikes, as well as surfing gear.

So, when running, try to stay in as straight a line as possible and be sure to look behind you if you decide to move to the right or left or turn around.

Another thing that I noticed was how many faster runners there were on the boardwalk. There were many who appeared to be in at least the 7-minute a mile or faster range. Not that that is extra fast, but there were many males and females of all ages who would be speeding back and forth on their training runs.

Of course, running on the boardwalk is not why a person goes to San Diego. There are many things to do and see. Nearby our hotel were mostly restaurants, including one that's supposed to be the best Mexican restaurant in San Diego -- Fred's. It was about four blocks from the hotel, but we never made it there. We did find a nice place just about 100 yards from our hotel and on the boardwalk -- the Green Flash. It featured happy hour \$3 pints and, on Thursdays, has very tasty \$1.50 tacos at the bar. The name comes from an alleged phenomenon about seeing a green flash as you watch the sun set in the ocean. Maybe that just depends on how many drafts you've had because we never saw a green flash.

We were only a block away from the bus stops, which made renting a car unnecessary unless you are in a hurry more than we were. We rode the bus to Old Town, which has museums that provide an interesting look into the history of San Diego. At Old Town, there are connections to the trolley system that can take you to just about anywhere you'd like to go. We went to Maritime Museum and rode a tall sailing ship, the Lynx, all day. That was the highlight of our trip. There were three sailing ships and the crew recreated a few battles by firing their guns at each other several times during the sail. I even got a chance to fire a musket.

One of the more interesting things was the echoing of the guns when they were shot while aiming toward downtown. Also, it was amusing about how many car alarms blared because of the gun's blast.

We also took a ride to downtown and were told that most of the high rises there are condos. I didn't ask how much they might be, but we did find a price for one on the boardwalk that looked nice. Now, if we can scrap together about 5 million, we could have a good view of the ocean. Himm, wonder how hard it is to get a mortgage loan these days?

We did miss out on visiting the renowned San Diego Zoo, the Wild Animal Park and Sea World, but you can't do everything in five days. So, we'll save those for next time.

If you are thinking about taking a vacation to San Diego, you could do a lot worse than staying where we did. The Ocean Park Inn has several rooms facing the ocean, has a heated pool and spa, and provides a continental breakfast. You can make your own waffles, and they are good, especially when returning from a run down boardwalk. Also provided are a 24-hour juice machine and coffee machine. It's not a luxurious hotel, but quite good and is a great location.