

Pompeii Exhibit, La Brea Tar Pits, 29 September with Dave and Elsie: We waited until the traffic died down a bit before starting our 20 mile trip across Los Angeles to the La Brea Tar pits and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). We got underway about 9am in Dave and Elsie's spiffy new Toyota Prius Hybrid. After about 30 minutes the familiar outline of the LA skyline appeared and we knew we were getting near to our destination.



When we arrived the Pompeii exhibit at LACMA had not yet opened so we strolled through the park that has been constructed around the original La Brea Tar Pits. The tar pits are the result of underlying oil deposits that seep to the surface through cracks in the rock layers. This photo on the right is typical of several that we saw. The tar is also called asphalt, like the material used to make road surfaces. In some places it appears to be water and perhaps that is what lured prehistoric animals to the pools that trapped them. The animals were drowned in the asphalt and sealed away from oxygen so they were preserved for as long as 40,000 years. Eventually the volatile components of the tar were lost and the tar, containing the animal remains, became solid so that archeologists could find and remove them from the hardened tar.



Pit 23 (P23) was under active archeological work and had a sign that explained the procedure for finding and taking the animal fossils from the hardened tar.



Behind the sign were large covered boxes waiting for the careful extraction of whatever fossils they may contain.

There were several statues around the park grounds depicting some of the prehistoric animals found in the pits. This one was a giant ground sloth that a little child has found just right as a place to rest for a moment.



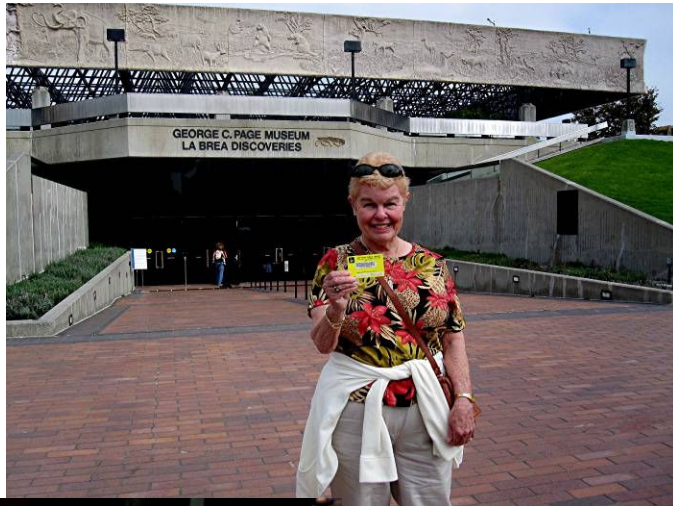
In other places giant mammoths have been placed around the tar pits to illustrate that they populated this area at one time. The most dramatic of these showed a mammoth trapped in the asphalt while the rest of the family was at risk of being caught themselves as they reached out.



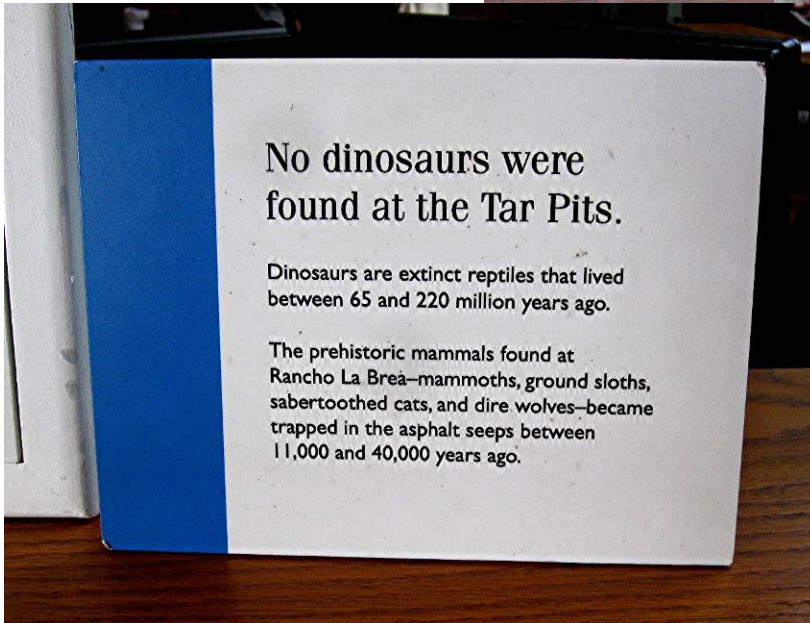
The Tar Pits and the LACMA Pompeii exhibit are very popular and on the day we were there a great many school children were taking field trips to the sites which are located next to each other in downtown LA. This lineup of school buses gave us a clue that we would see lots of young folks soaking up the information and enjoying the site.



Our wandering eventually led us to the George C. Page Museum that contains wonderful displays of the fossils that have been taken from the tar pits over the last 150 years. Barbara decided this was the time to bring out her trusty library card to document its visit to the site.

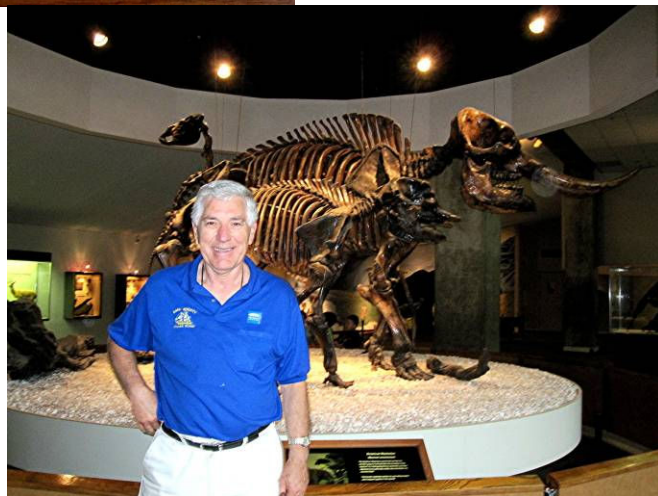


We went into the George C. Page Museum and as we bought our ticket saw this note which shoots down a common misconception that the pits contain dinosaurs.



We were impressed by the wonderful way the fossils were displayed with informative notes. Some examples of impressive exhibits are shown in the following pictures

The Tar Pit fossil is the one without a shirt.





There was a huge display of the Dire Wolf skulls that have been found in the tar. Apparently the wolves traveled in packs and would attempt to eat animals trapped in the tar. In some cases most of the wolf pack became trapped at one time during one of these feeding events.

These Saber Toothed Cats made an imposing exhibit.

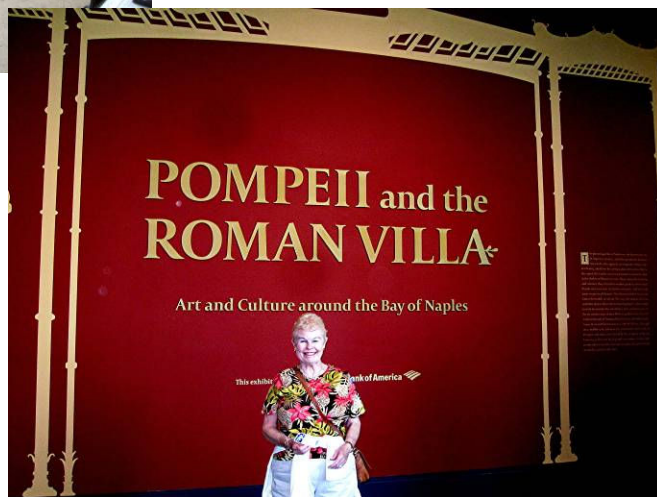


Not only mammals but birds were also caught in the sticky tar pits, where this extinct Condor fossil was found.



In this facility called "The Fishbowl" Page Museum technicians are carefully cleaning fossils and assembling the skeletons for display.

We finished our tour of the George C. Page Museum and walked the short distance through the park to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to see the Pompeii exhibit. Somehow Barbara's library card got into the picture. Unfortunately, no photographs were allowed within the exhibit. However, we can attest to the beauty of the sculptures, wall frescos, and tile mosaics that were on display.



We visited the Pompeii site in Italy several years ago and at the time we were told that the most valuable of the artifacts retrieved from the ash covered town were in the museum in Napoli, Italy. The exhibit we saw today was a portion of the Museum Pompeii collection in Napoli. We felt privileged to finally see some of the best art work from that ancient time that was preserved when Mount Vesuvius covered the city of Pompeii with ash in 79 A.D..

After completing the tour of the Pompeii exhibit we drove back to San Pedro and on to

Long Beach harbor the old Queen Mary cruise ship has been converted into a hotel. Self guided tours of the Queen Mary are offered at a cost of \$21.50. We thought the price was a little too high and decided to pass up the opportunity in favor of just walking around and taking pictures from the outside. In the picture on the right, a Russian Scorpion Class submarine can be seen nestled under the bow of the Queen Mary. Tours are also possible of the Russian submarine but we passed by that one also.



As passengers of the Holland America ships Amsterdam and Maasdam we have frequently enjoyed the luxurious accommodations of the lounge area known as "The Crows Nest". Today while viewing the Queen Mary we couldn't help noticing the facility high up on the forward mast of the Queen Mary shown in the picture on the right. This "Crow's Nest" shown here served as the location of the hardy sailor lookouts who kept the ship safe before the advent of radar.



We left the Queen Mary Hotel area and drove a short distance to Long Beach city where there was a nice collection of restaurants and shops known as Shoreline Village. From Shoreline Village it was possible to get some good photographs of both the Queen Mary and the Holland America ship Ziederdam, which was docked nearby. In fact, the Ziederdam was at the dock position where we expect to find the Amsterdam tomorrow when we board for our cruise. Here is a picture showing the Queen Mary with the three orange colored smokestacks and the much larger Ziederdam docked behind her.



It was time for Happy Hour so we headed back to San Pedro and our room in the Crown Plaza Hotel. Dave and Elsie had brought a bottle of wine with them that our mutual “Foodie” friend, Jan, had recently given them for just such a special occasion. We gathered in Dave and Elsie’s room and pulled the cork on a great bottle of Pinot Noir from the Hinman Vineyards of Oregon. We toasted good friends and the good life we are privileged to have.



After our Happy Hour celebration we tramped down to the hotel lobby and inquired with the staff about a good Mexican Restaurant that we could go to for dinner. The lady at the desk suggested that we try a restaurant called “The Green Onion” which was less than two blocks away from the hotel. We walked over to the restaurant and were rewarded with a superb selection of Mexican dishes. This was a restaurant we would recommend to anyone passing through or staying in the area. We had the waiter take a picture of our happy group with our fine meals spread before us.



These festivities pretty well wound down the day and we turned in for the night. Tomorrow will be busy with a planned trip to Hollywood where we will visit some of the favorite tourist sites that we haven’t seen for many decades. After the Hollywood visit Dave and Elsie will drop us off at the Cruise Terminal in Long Beach for the long awaited check-in.

