**What does it cost for Peaches, Plums, and Nectarines?**

**How a trip to Oakland never made it to Oakland!**

Emily came to visit, swiped the Honda and went around exploring. She then wanted to visit some friends in Monterey and the Bay Area. I could fly up to Oakland, get the car, and then go on to Sacramento to visit Bob Sugar and then drive back to LA. Emily could then fly from Oakland back to Boston. This would save Emily a trip back with the car and save me the drive halfway with the car. None of this turned out the way it was planned.

**Flight to Oakland:**

The reservation is from LAX to Oakland for a Friday night on Delta. The price was a reasonable $110 one-way. I drove off at 3 PM and made it to Flyaway by 3:30 PM. The bus then gets stuck in a Southbound 405 traffic jam and does not get to the airport until 5 PM. I forget to print the boarding pass in advance, and the plane that I thought was at 5:30 PM is really at 5:20 PM. I get the boarding pass printed at the airport, rush though security, and get to the gate very close to the security area 10 minutes ahead of departure time. This is not good enough! The door is closed and there is no one at the gate. The next flight to Oakland is booked. Well, how about San Francisco? Delta can do that, but I miss the next two full San Francisco flights and get on one that is late and leaving at 7:30 PM. All is not lost, there is a great vegetarian friendly restaurant in the Delta terminal (Number 5 at LAX) named “Lemonade”.

**San Francisco Airport in San Bruno:**

I get there and find out that Emily is in San Francisco anyway, but has found a great street parking spot and does not want to give it up. Besides, San Francisco is expensive. I think I can get a local motel to pick up for the evening. I think wrong. All the local motels are booked. How about renting a car and going to find one? Hertz has vacancies. The only way to get there is to take the Air Train. I hustle across the street and then three escalators up. The train goes to some building miles away, and then opens the doors to reveal many rental counters, all adjacent. The line at the Hertz counter is like 40 people. The line at National is like two people. National wins, but just barely; someone from Taiwan was trying to get a free rental car. The rental car costs $40 but there is a mandatory $20 Air Train charge. It still takes 30 minutes to get the car and escape from the airport. Sure enough, all the motels in San Bruno are full as are all the motels down El Camino Real that have no signs. Finally, I see a vacancy sign up on the hill to the right of the road. Welcome to the Bates Motel; well actually, the Bel-Mat, but the clerk is straight out of the movie. This place was built in the 1940’s and never upgraded. The motel was at least mandatory non-smoking and only $60. I went back to SFO in the morning and Emily picks me up at “Kiss 'n Ride“, which is really far away from the rental turn-in location. This airport is BAD.

**Fort Mason in San Francisco:**

After a long trip across San Francisco, picking up Emily's friend along the way, we all get to the Art Fair and Fort Mason. This is a former military embarkation port that has been redone as an artist area. Parking space was hard to find. We liked the food at the Yucatan tent in the parking lot. Emily and friend walked off into the sunset, I got in the car and turned out of the parking lot into a forced traffic jam which requires that the car must cross the Golden Gate Bridge. Sears Point at the north end of the bay is having a car race, so I detour across the Richmond Bridge, missing Oakland.

**Brentwood… east of Oakland, west of Stockton. Not the one near UCLA.**

Bob Sugar called and could not meet me for the weekend since he had volunteered to man the beekeeper exhibit at the California State Fair. I missed the turn to the northbound 510, cut across Berkeley on Ashby and headed over the hill. The BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) now goes all the way to Antioch in the middle of the new freeway. There is actually a room on a Saturday night at the non-smoking Holiday Inn Express ($140). They forgot to abolish smoking around the pool and everywhere else on the property. The Orleans restaurant in downtown Brentwood is very authentic, but too spicy. There is a fruit grower organization that lists all the farm stands and you-pick places in the area. There are about 40 of them. It is stone fruit season. The first place is not on the farm list, but has a nice hand-made sign along the side of the road. They have delicious tree-ripe Elberta peaches, Cling peaches, and ordinary purple plums for 85 cents a pound. The next stop has yellow nectarines, white nectarines, and white peaches for $1 a pound. Finally, the Farmer's Daughter has today's white corn at $3 for six. Somehow, the car gets loaded with 110 pounds of fresh picked fruit.

**Drive back on Interstate 5==**

Driving south from Brentwood, there are the traffic heavy towns of Byron and Tracy, and after what seemed like a long time, there is an entrance to get on the Interstate 5. The average speed is 80 MPH to Los Angeles. The trucks want to go 65 MPH in the right lane, the cars want to go as fast as possible (like 90 MPH) in the left lane. There are traffic jams passing the trucks. When I get back home, half of the fruit is sliced and frozen; the rest are eaten fresh. The Elberta peaches and yellow nectarines as well as the white nectarines are all delicious. Most people do not know what juicy tree-ripened fruit really tastes like. Fruit goes into salad; yellow nectarine crisp with oatmeal topping; white nectarine pie; and the best one, Cling peach pie. The tree in front of the house is producing a huge crop of Asian pears this year.

**What is the cost of a peach?**

This was the comment: “So pretty much...  you spent lots of money on the airplane, a rental car, and hotels, to fly up to San Francisco just so you could buy fruit as you drove the car that Emily didn't need back? I guess that could be interesting. Probably more fun than sitting at home. I'm slightly interested though... Please do the math for the trip and tell me to overall cost of a peach?” Adding everything, including parking, bus, and gas: $4 for a peach. WORTH IT!