

Seven Days In September

BY JOE KELLY

PHOTOS BY GREG KIRCHEM, JOE AND GINNY MCQUEEN, AND TIM ASHCROFT

Seven Porsches and 13 club members took advantage of great fall weather to explore lesser-traveled Northern California byways and visit the famed Benbow Historic Inn. The group included Joe and Ginny McQueen, Bob Ellis, Greg and Kaylene Kirchem, Bill and Peggy Munson, David and Deirdre Lee, Tim Ashcroft and Mandy Chao and Joe Kelly and Nancy Orr.

The first stop was southwest to Weaverville via Highway CA-3 through farmland and twisty roads in the Trinity Alps. After lunch, we headed west on CA 299 to the coast and US 101. Turning south, we passed through Arcata and Eureka. Once reaching Fortuna, we headed through the ancient redwood forests. We then left 101 to enter Garberville and the Benbow Inn.

This historic Inn was built in 1926, and it is nestled on the banks of the Eel River. The Inn features the charm and splendor of yesteryear. Most of us enjoyed large “king terrace rooms” that featured over-stuffed chairs,

tables and a terrace overlooking the garden and the river. Most evenings started off sharing wine and stories on our terraces, then off to dinner.

The Benbow location allowed us to select from among drives to several areas of interest. One was to Shelter Cove and its delightful black sand beaches. While walking along the beach, David Lee stopped to study an object a few yards offshore. It was a Gray whale spouting in the shallows! A stroke of luck yielded a lifetime story. Another drive took us to the 315-foot-tall Chandelier Drive-Through Tree. After inspecting the six-foot



wide opening, we gave it a try and carefully drove through. Back at the Inn we enjoyed dinner alfresco on the patio and told stories of our travels. After three nights at the Benbow we departed northward through the Avenue of the Giants (another Redwood forest) with stops at another drive-through tree and the Humboldt visitor center.

Our route home took us onto CA 36 eastward to CA 3 then north to CA 299. Highway 36 and sections of CA3 had been freshly paved and offered a great, hundred-mile-plus Porsche driving experience. We stopped at Hayfork along CA3 for a soda or ice cream. Then it was on to Redding, where we enjoyed dinner at Cattleman's Steakhouse. We shared more stories, including wedding anniversaries and Bill Munson's Carrera 4 turning over 100,000 miles on the trip.

The next day we all headed home, but Joe Kelly and Bob Ellis were not ready to quit, so they enjoyed an enthusiastic drive on the twisty Cow Creek Road and spent the night in Roseburg.

The trip was wonderful. We each drove over 1400 miles with no car-related issues. The camaraderie among thirteen friends was like attending a Porsche high school reunion. We will remember and talk about this trip for years. ■

