



Coast Range Chronicles 18: “Clarity”

by

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The cove is on the north coast. To surf it you must first hike through Sitka spruce and grand fir forest. The trail becomes overgrown and requires some bushwhacking. It feels strange to bushwhack in a five millimeter wetsuit and booties.

But the landscape is spectacular, worth the hike regardless of surf. It’s the best of both worlds: waves and trail, surf and turf.

The wave itself is not great. It has a strange wobble to it. The cove is not the type of spot where, as you hike toward it, you think: it’s gonna be firing. It’s rarely firing. But you usually have it to yourself.

It’s sharky, even for that stretch of coast. Wind often blows onshore. Rain is frequent and torrential. The water is frigid and murky, the current hard to read. Buoys hover in the double digits for weeks and months at a time. The wave maxes-out easily. During winter, you’re usually waiting for the buoys to go down, not up.

The cove is not magazine material. It's not a place for high-performance surfing. There are no pro surfers within three hundred miles.

The cove is about personal discipline. It's about introspection and observation. Because when you're surfing alone and there's swell and current and rain and toothy predators, if things go wrong, you have nobody but yourself to deal with it.

But sharks and drowning are low percentage affairs. Those melodramatic concerns dominate the mind but can, except for rare cases of bad luck, be conquered in the mind. What grab no mental headlines but must be constantly confronted are the frigid water, foul weather, difficult paddle, swirling current, and treacherous rocks.

There is no channel. Nobody will tow you through the lines of whitewater. Nobody will read the current for you. Nobody will rub your belly and blow warm air up your ass. If the ocean spansks you there is nobody to blame but yourself.

But if things go well there is nobody to praise but yourself. Nobody did it for you, nobody saw you do it, and nobody cares but you. In a world of finger pointing and creepy narcissism, in this place there is clarity of accountability.

That is what the cove offers.