



# In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>



## Hello to Family & Friends

I found a spot somewhere around Venice, maybe east of Venice, I'm not sure, but it was safe and quiet.

Today is the oddball stuff to the northeast of Beverly Hills. Once I had everything else sorted into areas, these were the items that were left.

The famous Santa Monica Pier above. It took awhile to find parking since the first two streets from the waterfront, for a mile in each direction, do not allow street parking. I finally found a spot about five blocks north and three blocks east.

A 'lot of movies have scenes which were filmed here at the pier. I could have sworn **SUDDEN IMPACT** with Clint Eastwood and Sonda Locke was filmed here using the merry-go-round as the climactic shoot-out sequence, but after spending several minutes searching on my phone, I guess it was a pier in San Francisco.

It was pretty empty first thing in the morning and the pier is also home to Pacific Park amusement park. Nothing was running when I was there, and even though I have a free pass for 'all the rides I want, all day long', I wasn't really interested. More kiddie stuff than anything else.

Day 51  
Saturday,  
February 22nd

Santa Monica  
To  
Venice

Weather  
50's to 60's Sunny

## In Search of Eldorado

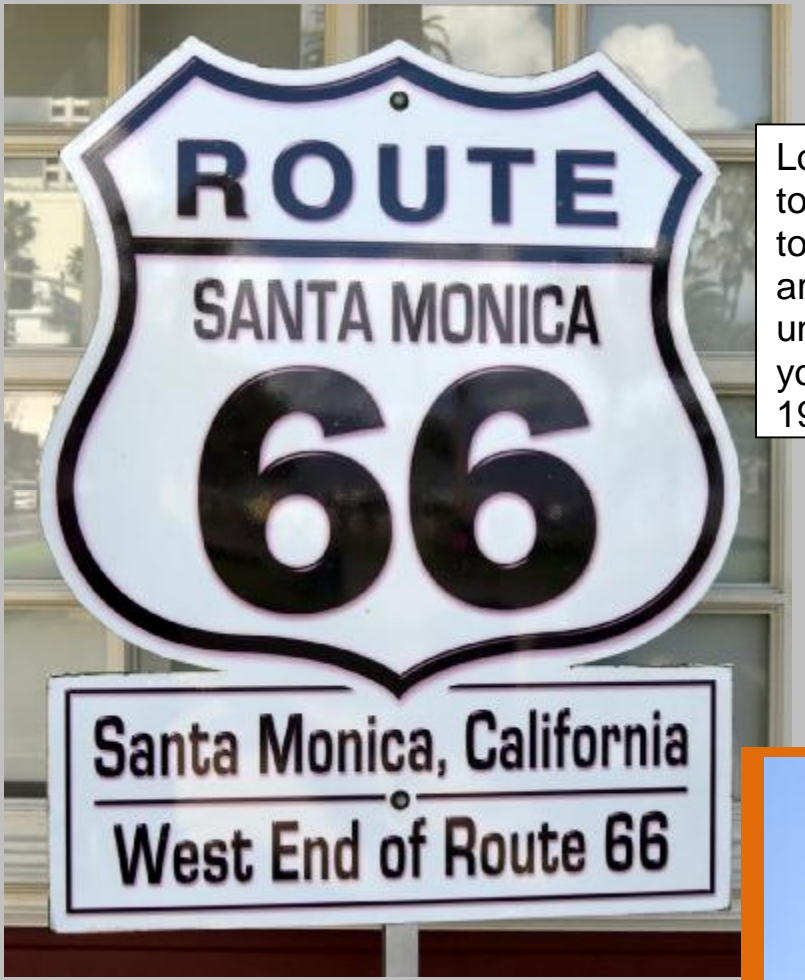
By Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,  
A gallant knight,  
In sunshine and in shadow,  
Had journeyed long,  
Singing a song,  
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—  
This knight so bold—  
And o'er his heart a shadow—  
Fell as he found  
No spot of ground  
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength  
Failed him at length,  
He met a pilgrim shadow—  
'Shadow,' said he,  
'Where can it be—  
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains  
Of the Moon,  
Down the Valley of the Shadow,  
Ride, boldly ride,'  
The shade replied,—  
'If you seek for Eldorado!'



Look at what else I accomplished. It only took four or five years, but I finally made it to the west end of Route 66. I could turn around here and stay on the same road until I hit Chicago. Pretty amazing once you think of that being a possibility in the 1920's.

I've probably mentioned in the past that I like architecture and wanted to be an architect when I was in my teens. I did not have The Getty Villa on my list until I noticed it on Google maps a couple days ago. Free – ok. Just up the coast – ok. A Villa – maybe it's something like the Hearst Castle. You guessed it, I did no other research except for price and location.



# J. Paul Getty and His Villa

An American billionaire who made his fortune in oil, J. Paul Getty (1892–1976) was fascinated by ancient Greece and Rome. Born in Minnesota, he traveled widely throughout his life and visited archaeological sites around the world. He owned homes in Los Angeles and in Italy, and spent the last decades of his life in England.

Well really, when you hear the word Villa, what do YOU think of? A house? Or an art gallery?

## J. Paul Getty, the Collector

J. Paul Getty (1892–1976) began collecting classical antiquities in 1939 while living in Rome. He set out to acquire not only works of exceptional quality but also those with illustrious histories, criteria that



Getty at Sutton Place, Surrey, 1960s

similarly guided his pursuit of Old Master paintings and European decorative arts, currently displayed at the Getty Center. In a span of four months, Getty assiduously visited museums, art dealers, collectors, and archaeological sites in and around the Eternal City, evaluating artifacts and investigating their past. Most of his earliest purchases were marble sculptures. As the scope of his interests broadened, he added

mosaics, bronze and terracotta statuettes, frescoes, pottery, coins, and glass to his collection. In the last phase of his activities as a collector, Getty's passion for the classical world culminated in the construction of this building, modeled on an ancient Roman villa.

Cruising up the PCH enjoying the sun and the cool ocean breeze....I missed the turn to the Villa. It's very short notice. In fact, as I was leaving I heard a car squeal the brakes and almost miss the turn also, and I had an RV. Turn around, pull over, check the map, turn around, make a turn, pull over, check the map, turn around, and park. The Villa is free as I mentioned earlier, but parking is \$20. I planned on riding the bike up there since pedestrians are not allowed. I geared up and rode 100 yards to the entry kiosk where the attendant told me to lock my bike up over there and take the shuttle. You're kidding me right? I put the bike back on the RV and walked to the shuttle stop.

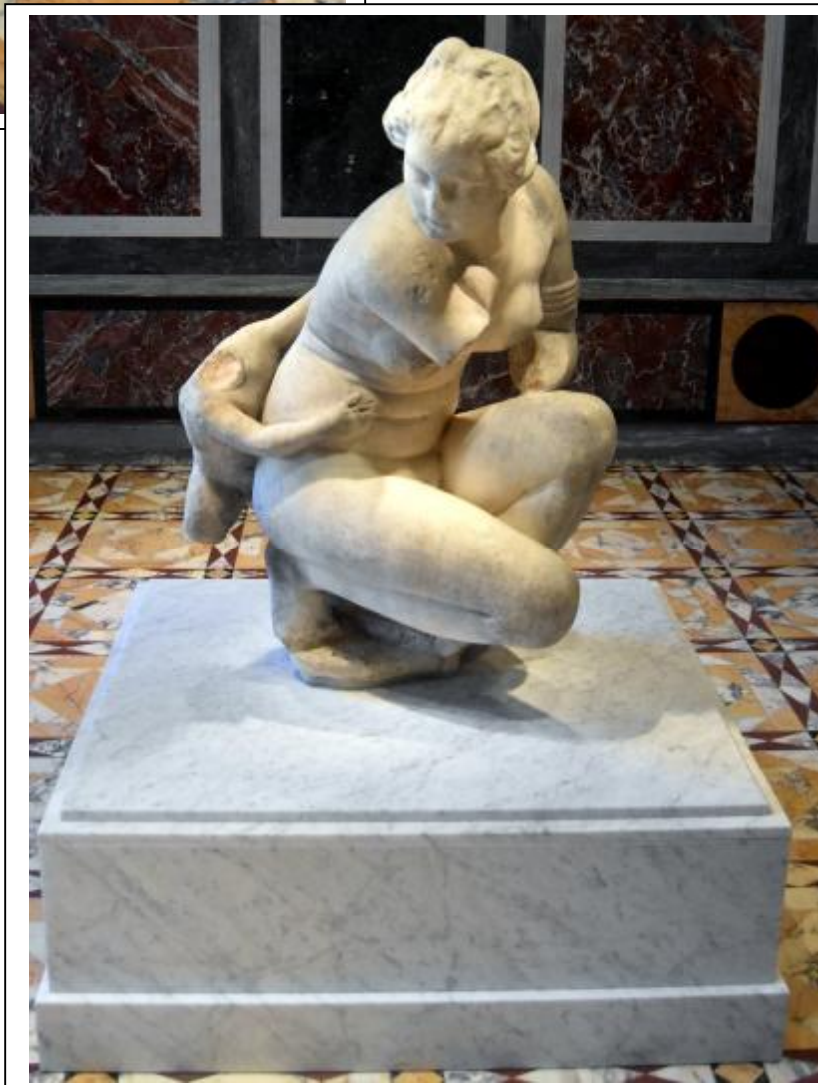
## Hall of Colored Marbles

Once I picked up a map of the facility I began to wonder where the house is. I finally figured out it was just the artwork, although the building that houses the artwork IS something special.



The Crouching Venus on the right. This Villa had two floors with so many rooms on each floor you absolutely need that map to know where you are. Several times I walked into a room I'd already visited.

Alright, there are a lot statues, sculptures, sarcophagi, vases, pottery, friezes, busts, jewelry and mosaics, there must be two or three thousand pieces here. Since I am NOT a big art guy I took a few pics of what I found interesting, but I probably took more of the building itself.





Another Venus



### Sarcophagus with the Life of Achilles

Roman, made in Athens, AD 180–220

Marble

The lid of this monumental sarcophagus shows a man and a woman, representing the deceased, reclining on a couch. Their unfinished faces would have been completed and individualized at the time of purchase. Three episodes from the life of Achilles, the greatest Greek hero of the Trojan War,



decorate the sides. On the front, Achilles drags the body of the Trojan hero Hector around the walls of Troy. On the right panel, Odysseus discovers Achilles hiding among the daughters of Lycomedes. On the left, Achilles prepares for battle.

This goes with the sarcophagus above. They were really short back then, this sarcophagus is only about 66 inches long.

I include this one of Mithras because He and His religion are described in Mary Stewart's Arthurian Trilogy and those are very good books. Ouch on the scorpion!



### Mithras Sacrificing a Bull

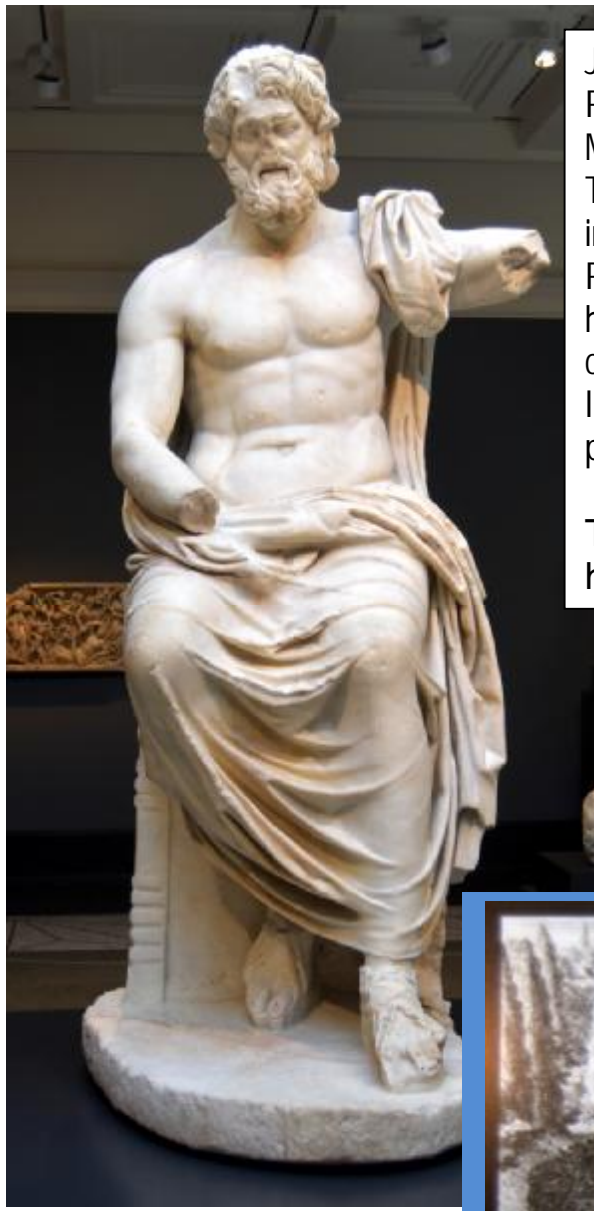
Roman, AD 150–200  
Gray marble

The worship of Mithras, a Persian solar deity, was popular throughout the Roman Empire from the late second century AD onward. The iconic image of this cult shows Mithras slaying a bull. As the

god pulls back the head of the beast to cut its throat, a dog and a snake drink the blood spurting from the wound, while a scorpion bites into the bull's testicles.

There were rooms I walked into, took one look around, and walked out, like pottery and jewelry; then there were others, like this one, where every piece was incredible.

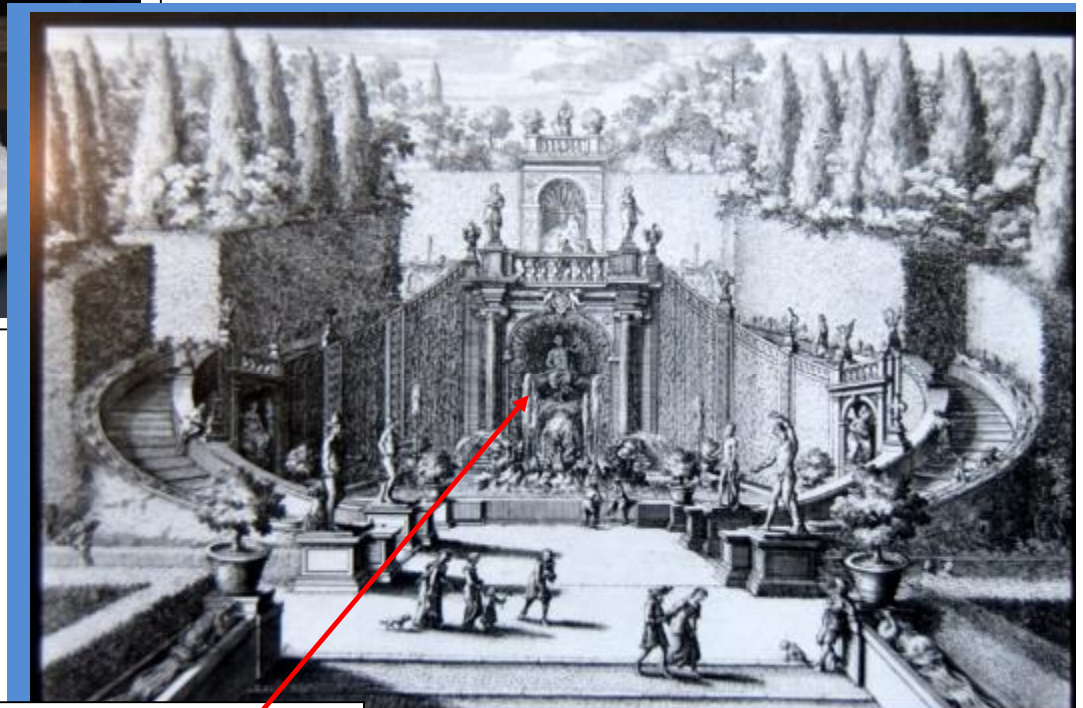




Jupiter  
Roman around 199 BC  
Marble

This monumental statue of the god Jupiter enthroned was discovered in the 1500's on the grounds of the imperial estate at Tivoli, close to Rome. He once held a thunderbolt on his lap and a long scepter by his side. By the 1570's, the statue served as the decorative centerpiece of the Fountain of the Dragon at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli. In 1781 the work was sold to James Hugh Smith Barry and became part of his sculpture collection at Marbury Hall in England.

The photo was out of focus so the facts are recounted here.



The statue decorated the central niche of the Fountain of the Dragon at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, near Rome.

The Getty Research Institute

This is the Inner Peristyle. Basically an inner courtyard. With the doors open the cool breeze was super refreshing.



And this is the Outer Peristyle from ground level.....



....and from the upper level. This space is as long as a football field.



Looking down one of the side colonnades of the Outer Peristyle



Above is the Outer Peristyle looking towards the Villa. I guess you can tell what my favorite area was.

Right - The most elaborate tile roof I have ever seen.

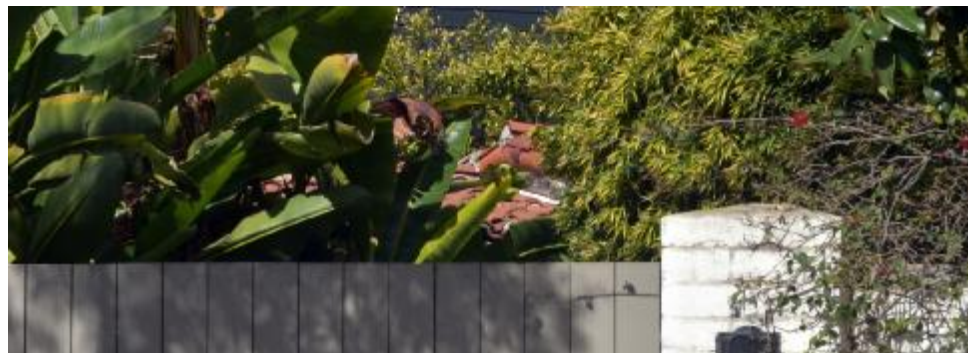


I believe this greek style amphitheatre was added after Getty's death and was not part of the original plans.



This was a fantastic view....and it would make a fantastic photo, if not for the ticket booth in the middle of the Roman road below. Through the V in the trees is the Pacific Ocean, it looked a lot better in real life.

I spent a short time there. Once again it would take all day to read all the plaques and look at every piece of artwork. But I had other pressing matters to attend to.



12305 5<sup>th</sup> Helena Dr. In this red tile roofed bungalow, Marilyn Monroe met her end. Theories abound. Was she murdered? Was JFK involved? Did JFK visit her here? Did the Secret Service clean up the site before the police were called? Nothing has ever been proven other than that she committed suicide in 1962. But I thought it was interesting. Recommended by Roadside America.

The story here is why I wanted to find Marilyn Monroe's crypt. I was not a big fan of hers. This is from the Vintage News:

Little is known about Poncher — by all accounts, he was a successful businessman and entrepreneur who provided for his family and lived until the grand age of 81. The story goes that back in 1954, when Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn were going through their divorce, the Ponchers met DiMaggio at the Regency Hotel in New York and it was decided to buy the crypt above Marilyn situated in Pierce Brothers Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery. It's not clear whether Richard Poncher was a Marilyn fan at the time of purchase, but by the end of his life in 1986 he had apparently been bitten by Marilyn fever and had a rather unusual last request. Poncher's widow, Elsie, recounts her husband's last request to the *L.A. Times*, "He said, 'If I croak, if you don't put me upside down over Marilyn, I'll haunt you the rest of my life.' " That's right, Richard Poncher requested to be buried face down over Marilyn Monroe. Elsie Poncher goes onto to report that this is exactly what happened. At his funeral she informed the funeral director of his last wish and when the ceremony ended, as told to the *L.A. Times*, "I was standing right there, and he turned him over."

There has been a more recent controversy surrounding Marilyn's final resting place. Fans were saddened by the news that Hugh Hefner, upon his passing in 2017, would be taking up his spot next to her. He purchased the crypt in 1992 for \$75,000 and is quoted in the *L.A. Times* as saying "I'm a believer in things symbolic. Spending eternity next to Marilyn is too sweet to pass up." He credits Monroe with launching the Playboy Empire by making her the first 'Sweetheart of the Month,' the forerunner to 'Playmate of the Month.' The photos caused controversy upon publication and nearly ruined Monroe's career.

I drove by the address twice. Both times it was a library. I gave it up, but as I checked my facts for this newsletter I realized the crypts are behind the library and the parking structure. I'll give it another try next week.



Maybe I'm learning my lesson. I parked about a mile away from the infamous Venice Boardwalk and took the bike down there. It was a smart move.





With the right lighting, this would make a great jigsaw puzzle.



Above is the Venice Boardwalk. I was not impressed. In fact, I have to admit that, with the exception of the canals which were pretty neat, I found Venice rather disgusting.

As I reached the boardwalk astride my bike, I stopped and was deciding which way to go. There are pedestrian paths and bike paths, and the two are not supposed to mix. I heard the guy in the corner booth say "Be careful", but I wasn't sure he was talking to me. I stayed there surveying the scene when I heard him quietly say "Police." I took a look behind me and moved over to let the squad truck go by, then thanked the guy in the booth. However, if the Venice police would have really given me a ticket for riding my bike across the pedestrian path, when there are several thousand homeless living in tents and ratty RV's on Venice Blvd, sleeping on the bus stop benches and the boardwalk itself, they really have to get their priorities in order. I suppose, if you write a ticket for a homeless person they can be pretty sure the fine will never be paid, so they might as well try someone who can afford it. Just my opinion.

I did some shopping yesterday and here in the 'new' America's Dairyland I was able to buy Sargento Cheese, from Plymouth Wisconsin, and Johnsonville sausage from Johnsonville Wisconsin. Today I paid \$3.69 for a half gallon of milk. I only pay about \$1.69 back home for a full gallon.

I'm getting cranky. I'm just a country boy who doesn't like big cities, and I've spent time working in Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Miami, Long Island, NY, the New Jersey shore and New Orleans, so I know big cities. I spent ten days working claims in the inner city of Detroit and I was not as disgusted then as I was today. Maybe I need a vacation (ha ha). A little jaunt into the mountains or something to freshen my perspective.

Last but not least, a big Happy Birthday shout out to my dad, 98 years young and plays on the computer every day. And I know he reads every word of every plaque photo I include. That's where I get my love of travel from. I love ya Dad.

Until next time.....

Just as I was proofreading I realized I forgot the picture below. It was a Saturday farmer's market a couple blocks from where I parked in Santa Monica. More strawberries

