

Acres of fun—Eat, drink and get a pumpkin at Bishop farm in Wheatland

By Nancy Dingler

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Wheatland—I answered the call of my grandchildren, “Can we go pick our own pumpkins?” Being an indulgent grandmother, I wanted to find the greatest pumpkin patch on the West Coast, as long as it was within a day’s reach, that is. Serendipitously, a story appeared on the TV about the great pumpkin farm in Wheatland. It was destiny - meant to be. With a little research, I mapped out the path to the glorious Bishop Pumpkin Farm with 72 acres of fun and pumpkins.

Bright and early on a Saturday morning, the family headed up Interstate 80, taking the split at West Sacramento. It was pretty smooth sailing.

As we approached Roseville, we looked for the Highway 65 sign to Yuba City. Traffic moved along the two-lane highway until we approached Lincoln, then we went to creep speed.

Lincoln, with its quaint downtown, appearing to date from around the turn of the century, also boasts a large industrial clay pipe factory as you pass through town.

Once more traffic thinned until reaching Wheatland, which has no stop signs or traffic lights on Hwy. 65 - which is now designated as “D” St.

We were looking for “D” and 4th, where a large pumpkin sign should be, and sure enough there it was, as promised.

Now, the trick was to find a break in traffic to make our turn through several blocks of residential homes, before coming to a sea of parked cars. They charged us \$5 to park, but in exchange they gave us a ticket for a family ride on a hay wagon.

Upon entering the main gate, there was an absolute buzz of activity and pumpkins placed everywhere. Tractors were hauling giant pumpkins out to the parking lot, while less weighty pumpkins were carted out by hand. This was the place for the great pumpkin experience.

The grandkids headed to the petting farm, with Mom, Dad and Grandma in tow. This has to be how Knott’s Berry Farm looked like in the early days.

The petting farm boasted very cute and quaint buildings with funny signs and critters all begging for a handout. The Bishops did not miss a beat. You could purchase critter food, and souvenirs. There were even hand-washing stands available upon leaving, advising everyone to wash up after petting the critters.

The grown-ups picked the next attraction, the apple-pressing barn. Even the grandkids found the making of apple juice and apple cider fascinating. Of course, there were more souvenirs and kid stuff, along with cotton candy being offered for sale.

We could not miss the sign proclaiming “Complete Bar-be-q Chicken Dinner” as we made a bee-line for the elevated covered deck stocked with tables and benches, overlooking the pumpkin patch and train route.

Being one who has sorely missed the Nut Tree train for holiday outings, this was a wonderful treat. The complete chicken dinner with drink came to around \$6. Not bad at all.

We took in the train ride, pony ride, and hay wagon ride. The hay wagon takes you out to the 60 acres of pumpkins and waits patiently for you to wander the fields intent upon the special, largest dang pumpkin that you can carry.

Then it is back to the barn, where your pumpkin’s circumference is measured. The very largest one is only \$8. However, if you want one of the “humongous” pumpkins, they can go for as high as \$25.

Those pumpkins are grown in a special field near the train ride. We put the kids to work, they pulled the pumpkin cart in tandem out to the car, where we placed our precious cargo.

After all that “pumpkining,” we stopped for liquid refreshment and some kettle popcorn. Dad took the kids to Coyote Mountain, where they could pan for marbles and slide down a very tall and twisty slide.

Mom and Grandma headed for the gift shop. Next and last order of business was to tackle the Corn Maze (corn - maze, get it?). Grandma volunteered for maze escort, since no children under 12 are allowed without adult supervision.

I am not sure if the child is to rescue the adult, or vice versa. There was a goal to the maze, not just to find your way out, but also to locate six placards with pirates painted on them.

We were given a map, which was of no help, and a pencil to record the pirate placards

that we found. In spite of these placards being moved about the maze to add to the hunt, we achieved success. Our reward was gold-covered chocolate doubloons. After all that work, we had to do one more food stop. The bakery bulged with assorted homemade pies, drinks and soft ice cream. The family waddled off to the parking lot, feeling that the whole grand pumpkin experience a great success.

As we motored our way home, the sun dipped behind the Vaca Mountains, casting its magic upon the drifting clouds, creating a spectacular sunset to a special day.

For more information, check out the Bishop Pumpkin Farm Web site:
www.webpumpkins.com or call (530) 633-2568.

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