

## WHILE AWAY EVENINGS IN OREGON AT LLOYD'S

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BANDON, Ore. -- I'm wearing a fleece right now and my toes are cold. Jealous? I'm writing to you from Bandon ([www.bandon.com](http://www.bandon.com)), a tiny town, on Oregon's southern coast, where the mornings are foggy and cool, and the afternoons sunny and 70, with a wind just strong enough that wussy folks from Texas might wear sweatshirts, even in August.

Lloyd's is the main "bar" bar. Nestled among "downtown" shops selling jewelry and T-shirts and endless jars of Oregon jam, Lloyd's is a locals' tavern, windowless and dark, like the belly of a ship. Three pool tables, three TV's, a bar top so worn that even the bartender doesn't hand you a beer mat or napkin to set your drink on.

Between 10:30 p.m. and midnight one night, eight or so people made their way in and out, including a Coke-drinking regular who attempted to teach me pinochle. Pinochle is apparently the game of choice late night at Lloyd's; the bartender has a reputation for being something of a shark and, as someone muttered, the winters (such wild stormy winters they have here) are long, the days endlessly gray and rainy.

Lloyd's has a number of activities to keep the winter at bay: Sunday nights are karaoke; Mondays they play Texas Hold 'Em (I keep missing that one, though I'm dying to play). Saturday nights a "casino" is set up across from the bar: blackjack for the brave and stupid who'd gamble their paychecks. (Me! Me!) Thursdays there's a pool tournament. And off the main area, in a room nearly the size of Casino El Camino's downstairs, is a small stage set up for bands.

Bandon seems to be a popular destination for bikers; in the two weeks I've been here, I've seen dozens of motorcycles at the cheese store (where you get ice cream) and the fish market (where the fish and chips are so astoundingly good you might wake up in the middle of the night thinking about them). I've also seen them at Lloyd's, along with a moving-to-Alaska older waitress from Lloyd's restaurant next door, young off-duty bartenders, local cardsharps of all flavors, people who looked like fishermen, people on vacation, and people whose stories I had no idea about. Lloyd's was the bar everyone I talked to told me to visit -- from the girl in the exceptionally good video store to Jimmy the pipe-leak-fixer -- and apparently just about everyone stops by.

It's not that Lloyd's is the only place to go; other places are more beautiful and chichi. The Bandon coast is marked by rocks the size of the Texas Capitol, rising rough and enormous from the sea; when the tide is out, their crevices are revealed as caves, ones you can walk through, careful of purple starfish and green anemones. But if you'd rather look at the rocks than clamber through them, Lord Bennett's Restaurant and Lounge offers unparalleled views of the legendary Face Rock, as well as pinot noirs and scallops. And, of course, just up the road are two of the country's top-ranked golf courses at Bandon Dunes. The resort has a bar/restaurant called Mulligan's, with basil-laced spinach

and mushroom pizzas, salmon sandwiches and unparalleled views of men in golf shoes and sweater vests. More importantly, it has a big fire outside. The cement hearth is as high as my shoulder, as deep as the length of my arm. Service outside is slow, but sipping a Blackbush whiskey near the fire while the crepuscular light fades and the fog settles in . . . well, it more than makes up for overhearing conversations about lies and caddies.

I want to come back in the winter, when the wind grows fierce and the whales call to each other as they migrate by. I'll write in the mornings, whale watch in the afternoons. And in the evenings, damp and tired by the good day, I'll shuffle some cards, drink a single whiskey and kill at pinochle -- or least, not make any major errors. A girl can dream . . .

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