

Jack and Charmian's Oregon Horse and Buggy Trip 1911

Jack and Charmian took a 12-week, four-horse wagon trip to Oregon from June 12th to September 5th, 1911, which Jack referred to as his “midlife honeymoon.” Nakata went with them and they covered about 1500 miles, averaging 30 miles/day. Jack and Charmian each took a turn at the reins but it required too much strength for Charmian most of the time.¹ Their four horses, Prince, Milda, Maid, and Outlaw, had distinct personalities and Jack would subsequently write a story about them called *Four Horses and a Sailor*. The Londons stayed in the homes of friends or in hotels and did not camp because Jack said he had had enough of “roughing” it.² It was a working vacation as Jack wrote several short stories including *The Turtles of Tasman* and *The End of the Story* during this trip. Charmian brought a typewriter along to type his manuscripts.

Jack missed adventuring out of doors and talking with local folk. They did lots of that on this trip, traveling up the coast and stopping at several places including Duncan Mills, Fort Ross, Gualala, Gaberville, Grants Pass, Port Orford, Coos County, Roseburg, and then making their way inland to Coquille, Wolf Creek (spending a night at Wolf Tavern)³, Medford, and several other towns. They were greeted as celebrities in each town and newspapers covered their trip. When they were late arriving in one town, the newspaper printed a headline, “Where is Jack London? Answering the Call of the Wild?” Among their adventures, they saw Crater Lake (driven there by car), “laugh[ed] themselves sick” at a play in Bandon, bought Myrtlewood furniture for the Wolf House in Coquille, caught 16 rainbow trout in Rock Creek, attended a socialist meeting in Roseburg, and Jack gave a lecture at the Opera House in Medford.

When they arrived back in Glen Ellen on September 5, 1911, they moved into the ranch cottage.⁴

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¹ Charmian was still recovering from the complications from Joy's birth, almost exactly one year earlier, and writes that she tried to keep her “lack of freshness” from Jack.

² Staying in lodging did not spare them the dust, mosquitos, or Charmian's bad case of poison oak, causing her eyes to swell and unable to hang her arms at her side.

³ There's a trail near Wolf Creek named after Jack and his visit there.

⁴ They had been living at Wake Robin.

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By Kate Johnston, updated 7/16/2025, and as written for Jack's Facts #9 (July 2025)