If you want to have a pleasant traveling experience in San Francisco, let me offer you a piece of advice: AVOID THE CLIFF HOUSE RESTAURANT AT ALL COSTS!

Now that I have my dramatic warning out of the way, let me explain my story. I was traveling with my parents this fall throughout the United States on a road trip to pick up some antique car parts. While driving up the Pacific Coast Highway my mom decided to look for a nice seafood restaurant in San Francisco and stumbled upon a listing for the Cliff House, a historic seafood establishment that has been around since 1858. Many of the reviews discussing the food quality seemed positive, and she didn’t see any of the reviews about people’s cars being robbed at first glance.

We got there around 8pm or so and parked directly outside of the restaurant under a streetlight, and we noticed a valet standing outside of the restaurant as well. We went inside and were seated with no warnings about what could (and would *likely*, as you’ll see soon) take place outside while we were dining. After having a pretty nice meal (and dropping a cool $200 for only 3 people to eat) we walked outside to find our car broken into (see photos below). Thieves had absconded with my whole backpack, which had contained my $4000 MacBook Pro, along with some other things worth some money too. While I concede it was foolish to leave such an expensive machine in the car, it was in the backpack, fully zipped, on the floor, with a blanket obscuring the whole bag. So, while the thieves made off with some nice loot, there was no way for them to know it was in the car before they broke in. It seems much more likely that someone had watched us pull up (remember the valet standing idly outside?), noticed our out-of-state tags, and called a band of thugs who routinely rob from patrons of the restaurant to see what they could take this time. Now, I say “routinely” in a very serious and realistic sense. When we went back into the restaurant to speak to the management about seeing the security tapes so we could have a better idea of the exact turn of events, we were told that they “didn’t have the key” to access where the security system was, and we’d have to wait for another day when someone would come let us in to see them (I guess some unknown person has a key?). I explained that we were leaving San Francisco that night and had a tight schedule to make it home. To this they basically just said “well I guess you’re out of luck.” They couldn’t even muster up a “sorry” for one of their customers that just lost thousands of dollars for no reason except dining in their restaurant. The only valuable information they could provide was that this sort of thing “happens 15 times a day.” 15 times a day? Surely that must be hyperbole. But no, even the police confirmed that much. Now you know why I said “routinely.”

How a business that charges too much money for their food and has their patrons stolen from 15 times a day stays in business I’ll never know. Perhaps they are kept afloat by innocent (and apparently foolish) patrons like us, but they’ll only get money from people like us once. You can be sure they’ll never get another dime from me, and I hope not from anyone who reads this blog either. So, please do yourself a favor, and when you see the Cliff House, don’t be tempted to stop and eat. Just keep on going.

P.S.: I tried to include a link to their website but it wouldn’t even load. So if you want more info, take a look at their Wikipedia page [here](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cliff_House,_San_Francisco).

[Mcloons](https://mcloonslobster.com/) is the place that I look forward to going to most whenever I’m in Maine (at least food-wise).  Its located in a beautiful spot on Spruce Head Harbor that is very picturesque spot for sunsets.  Given their remote location, they are able to pull up the lobsters from the ocean before your eyes to prepare them, which means that they are extremely fresh and have incredible taste.  The lobster is so tender it melts in your mouth (which is why I get a lobster roll 50% of the time).  If you are planning to go this route with your meal, spring for the “rolls royce”…. you won’t regret the extra meat.  As for the other 50% of the time, one of my other favorites there are their crab cakes.   I don’t mind saying that I have never had a better tasting crab cake in any seafood restaurant, and they are the perfect size.

If these examples don’t have your mouth watering, then you need to have their blueberry pie for an extra tasty dessert.  They serve you the perfect sliver of warm blueberry pie with a scoop of french vanilla ice cream (one of the best combos ever).  If you don’t think it’ll be as good as I am describing, notice below that I didn’t include a photo of it (I was so excited to eat it that I neglected to take a photo before wolfing it down.

When I went home with my mom following vacation, we started to have separation anxiety so we discovered that you can order their food from anywhere and they will ship it to you!  This is a perfect option for someone who is unable to get to Maine as much as they wish they could.

Only downside: they close at 7pm, so make sure you remember you’re in Maine before you drive there hungry at 7:30pm.

After traveling to Maine in the morning and having to do some housework upon our arrival, my father and I were eager to not have to cook dinner and go out to eat.  And since I enjoy taking pictures of some of Maine’s prettier spots, many times I’ll suggest we go up to Camden, Maine to get dinner because there are a few great restaurants on the Camden Harbor.

Last night we decided to go to Peter Ott’s on the harbor, which is a restaurant that has been in its location since before I was born, but has since changed hands a few times in the recent past.  Its most recent incarnation is that of Peter Ott’s, which has a reputation for having an excellent menu, but also has prices sometimes too steep even for those who don’t mind spending the money for a great meal.  For an appetizer, we decided to order the crab cakes which had an excellent sauce draped over two small crab cakes, with a small arugula salad on the side.  The flavor was excellent.  Then, for dinner I ordered the classic Maine lobster roll, which had the taste I was expecting, but not the price as it was $22 for a small lobster roll and a little container of fries (see picture below).  My father ordered the broiled haddock, which was a substantial piece of meat with mashed potatoes and again, another excellent sauce on top of the fish.  Here is a link to the [dinner menu](http://peterotts.com/menu/).  To cap off this great tasting meal, I ordered the chocolate mousse for dessert.  I was surprised at its size, as it was big enough for me to not want to finish it even though its taste was superb and the raspberry sauce made it even better.  And even more than the taste of the food, the background of the harbor at sunset made the meal seem even greater.  A theme whose importance is paramount in these Maine restaurants would be “location location location.”  Altogether even though the bill for two people to eat dinner was almost appalling, the dinner was great and the scenery even better.  Check out the photos below if you don’t believe me.

A new(ish) seafood place that is worth checking out in midcoast Maine is Hill’s Seafood Co in Rockland, Maine.  Less than a mile off of US Route 1, the restaurant is a small venue with a large outside deck that has great view of the picturesque Rockland Harbor, especially in the summer months when the harbor has beautiful sunsets.  It is also situated in a prime location during the times that Rockland hosts the Lobster Festival and the Maine Boats, Homes, and Harbors Show in the late summer.

For an appetizer we got the very basic but tasty popcorn chicken topped with barbecue sauce with a side of ranch dressing.  This was enough to whet our appetites for our entrees.  For mine, I ordered the Lobster Mac ‘n’ Cheese (one of my favorites at many restaurants in Maine), which was a simple dish served with a side of broccoli and coleslaw.  You could tell that the lobster was fresh and had plenty of large chunks of meat, and the actual Mac ‘n’ Cheese was also good.  Side note: the broccoli may have been the best broccoli I have ever eaten at a restaurant.  My dad ordered the Cajun Parmesan Haddock which also had a tremendous taste (I tried some), and was served with the usual fries and coleslaw.  As much as I wanted to try their dessert options, after having the appetizer and finishing the entree, I found myself not having enough room to try any of their desserts.  Definitely a place I would recommend.  Here is a link to their [website](https://www.hillsseafoodco.com/)(complete with photos of the view from the deck).

(From June 1, 2017)

Last weekend I had the pleasure of attending the Lantern Fest at the Maple Grove Raceway in Pennsylvania.  At first when my friend invited me, I only was going along for the ride.  I actually didn’t even know what we were supposed to be doing at this event until the day we went.  When we got there, it was hot (about 93 degrees) and there wasn’t much to do except for a bean bag toss and a DJ who was ad libbing pop songs on the stage (which was quite funny I may add).

The real experience started around dusk when we were finally allowed to set our fire pits ablaze and could make our s’mores.  Then the fun came.  We decorated our lanterns and then lit the bottoms of them, and with that our lanterns ascended with our dreams in them, or so they say at least.  I was amazed at how pretty they all were in the air, save for the 10 or 15 people who launched theirs early (and who got booed for doing so).  The sky was filled with lanterns, which made for a picturesque scene to end the night.  The price I got for the event wasn’t too horrendous since I got the tickets on Groupon, but I know that the price of tickets for some people skyrocketed.  The products received for the money was a box with marshmallows, Hershey’s chocolate, and a lighter, and the firepits and firewood were already at each spot.  [Here is a link to the generic website that has info for other venues where lantern festivals are held](http://www.thelanternfest.com/).  Overall an incredibly enjoyable experience, especially for someone who hadn’t watched the Disney movie Tangled and had no idea what to expect.   Be sure to check out the photos below!

(From June 17, 2017)