

On Big Sur
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In the book *Big Sur*, writer Jack Kerouac's recounts his trip, alone, in the early 1960s to San Francisco and an area south of that city near the ocean known as the Big Sur. This was several years after the publication of the book that made him famous, *On the Road*. Below are excerpts from *Big Sur*, although in some cases I may not have copied them down exactly as they were in the book.

I'm supposed to be the King of the Beatniks according to the newspapers, but I'm sick and tired of all the endless enthusiasms of new young kids trying to know me and pour out all their lives into me so that I'll jump up and down and say yes yes that's right, which I can't do any more. Like those five high school kids who came to my door, all expecting me to be 25 years old and here I am old enough to be their father. My reason for coming to the Big Sur for the summer is to get away from that sort of thing.

The poor drunkard is crying. He's crying for his mother and father and sister and wife and children, all gone, he's crying for help. He tries to pull himself together by moving one shoe nearer to his foot and he can't even do that properly. He'll drop the shoe, or knock something over. He pulls and tugs on his stained shirt. He'll do something that will start him crying again. He feels like rubbing his face into something soft, but there is nothing soft. He moans for forgiveness and mercy, but there is silence.

"Where have I gone wrong?"

"What you've done wrong is withhold your love from a woman like me. Can you imagine all the fun we would have had, with the boys, going out to hear jazz or even taking planes to Paris suddenly and all the things I could have taught you and you could have taught me?"

"But what if I didn't want that."

"Of course you wanted that."

That's it, be a loner, travel, talk to waiters, walk around, no more self-imposed agony. I have been fooling myself all my life thinking there was a next thing to do to keep the show

going. It's time to think and watch and keep concentrated on the fact that, after all, this whole surface of the world as we know it now will be covered with the silt of a billion years of time.

The ocean seems to yell to me DON'T HANG AROUND HERE. I'll get my ticket and say goodbye on a flower day and leave all of San Francisco behind and go back home across autumn America and it'll be like it was in the beginning. Nothing will have happened, not even this. Constance will be there, young again—and standing beside her, the two little boys, smiling in joy. My mother and father and sister, and my brother, his heart healthy, will be waiting for me. On soft spring nights I'll stand in the yard under the stars. It will be golden and eternal.