



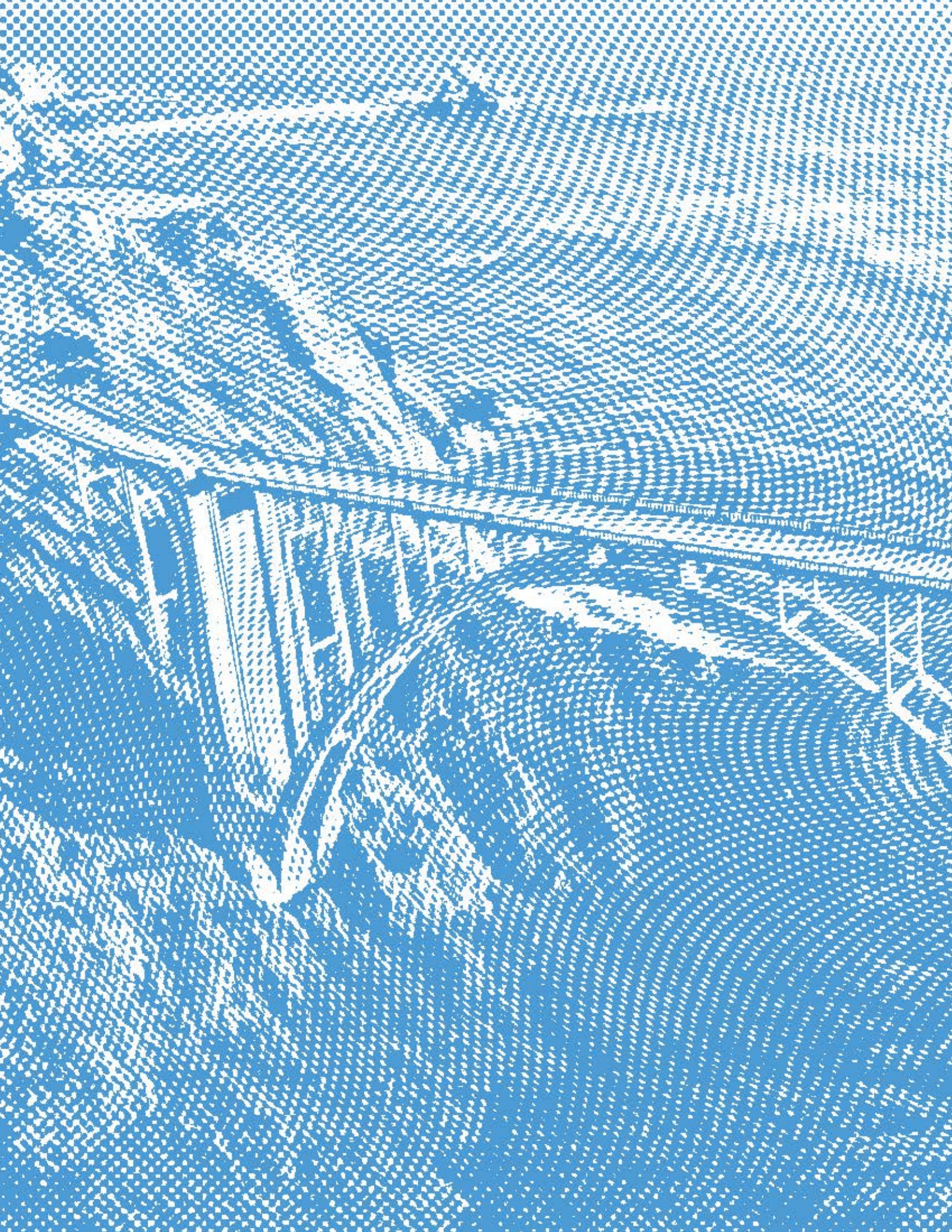
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# Golden State of Mind

A Multisensory  
California Adventure

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# Introduction

## Ruminations on the Word *Explore*

1. At one of my writing workshops, our de facto group leader said something that I will never forget: Notice yourself noticing things. Notice the flapping of butterfly wings, the startling lapis shimmer of the blue jay's feathers as it flies. Notice the shock of the first toe dipped in cool water. Notice too the smell of wet rags. The swollen wood of the kitchen sink cabinets. The tough texture of undercooked rice.

2. To attempt to describe the world around us requires a constant exercise in mindfulness. Being present. Paying attention. We can craft meaning from anything—if we choose to. We can observe stimuli and synthesize these into meaning as sensory information travels through the ever-twisting roads of the neural network. Stimulants cross sensory receptors, across nerve endings and synapses, arriving at the mind which translates these into perception. And this is the beginning of meaning.

3. Why do I bother telling you about this? I am describing these things because they're related to the story I want to tell you (if you'll let me) about how I've arrived to this proposal.

4. I am having to search for the meaning of the word *explore*. Unpack, and investigate it in order to understand it. But it's such a deceptively complex word! I need to go back to its origins. The word *explore* comes from the latin *ex-* meaning "out" and *-plore* meaning "to utter a cry." *Explore* initially meant *to cry out*. It wasn't until around the 16th century that the French started using the word as a synonym for *investigation*, inching us closer to our modern usage of the word. But *to cry out*? Etymologists offer various theories for the word's origins, but the widely accepted one holds that *explore* was initially a hunting term.

"This relates to a hunting technique that consisted in encircling [an] an-

imal by shouting loudly, forcing [it] to move in a certain direction [where it can be easily hunted]. A collective, highly visible endeavor intended to move something out of darkness towards visibility."

- Christina Montenegro

5. Thinking about origins and hunting is making me reflect on our primordial ancestors. Before the invention of agriculture, the first explorers were hunters and gatherers. A nomadic lifestyle wasn't a choice, but the norm as groups moved in search of food. This survival method is what pushed them out of their comfort zones and into unfamiliar territory. They had to be sharp, using their senses to find and identify animals and plants for food and medicine. Taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight. Perhaps our strongest allies in our collective survival.

6. Of course, now we have agriculture. We have our cities and our modern technology. And yet





that ancient instinct to venture out survives—why? My personal, completely un-scientific theory is that we evolved to be naturally curious, as curiosity is likely what pushed our ancestors to try new things (maybe I read this in a book somewhere). The potential reward of curiosity (more food) far outweighed its inherent risk. In fact, staying in the same place throughout the year would mean starvation, as food ran out with the changing of the seasons.

7. Perhaps a closer definition for the verb *explore* is not to go out to a completely new place, but to be perpetually curious. And to follow that curiosity wherever it may lead.

8. I believe we have something of a warped understanding of what it means to explore. Part of me believes this is guided by our obsession with the new. But exploration to me is not always about the first foray into the unknown. Exploration is not always about going to a foreign destination.

Exploration is a state of mind, a way of seeing and being in the world. To observe your surroundings and try to look at them in a different light. It's the art of paying attention. True exploration is a constant, deliberate, and daily exercise in curiosity—not necessarily a yearly vacation at a resort or even a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity provided to you by a generous architecture firm (yes, I know).

That being said, how can we exercise or develop this curiosity? And why should it matter?

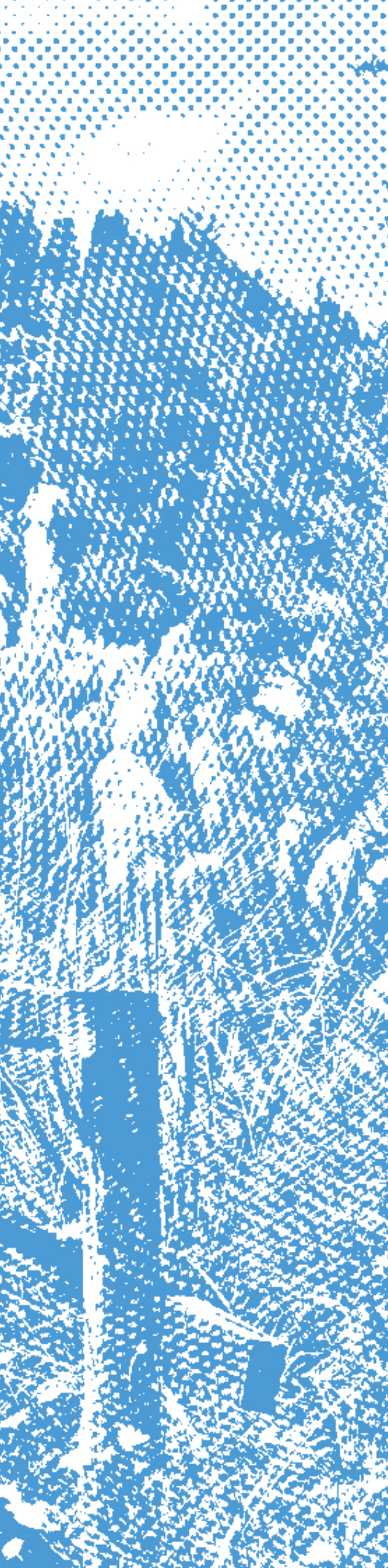
Perhaps curiosity and exploration are part of our evolutionary lineage.

“Exploration is a state of mind, a way of seeing and being in the world.”









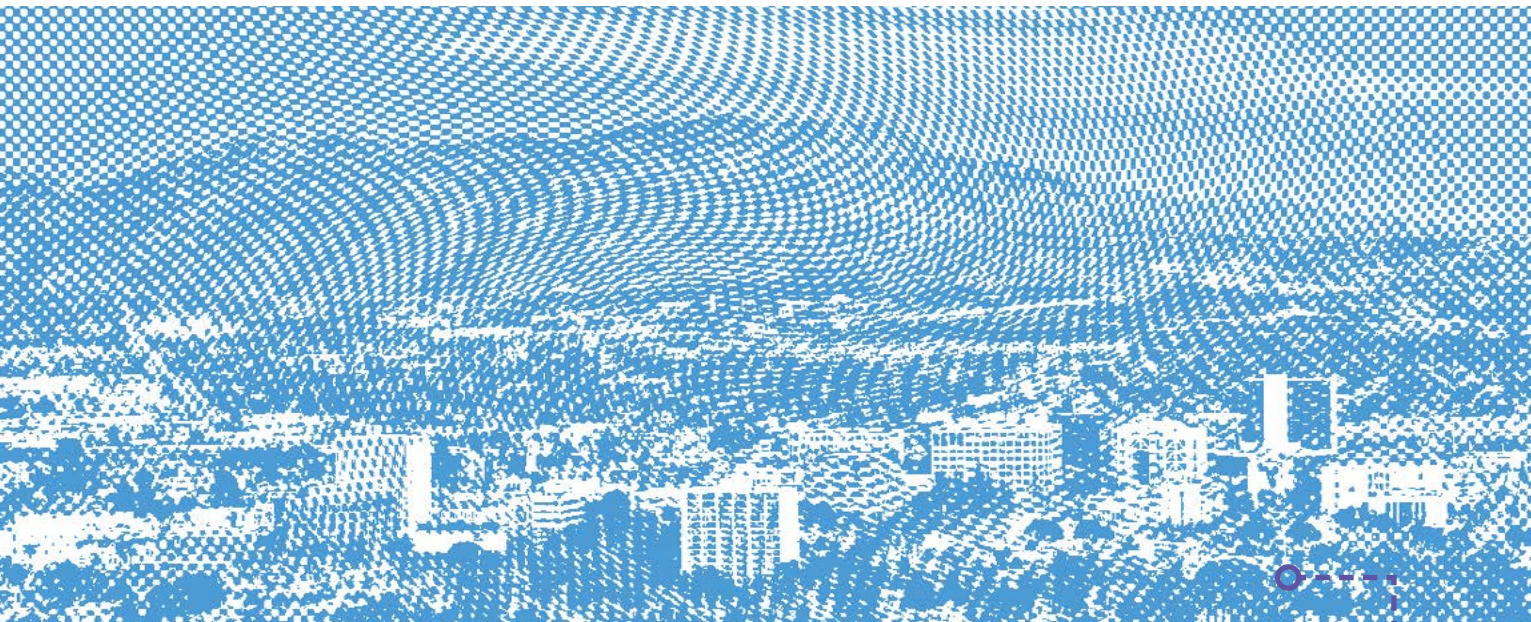
# Purpose

*"You can call on beauty still and it  
will leap from all directions"*

-Adrienne Rich, "Calle Vision"



# Purpose



## Exercising Curiosity

In his book *Deviate: The Science of Seeing Differently*, neuroscientist Beau Lotto argues that our minds didn't evolve to perceive reality—they evolved to survive. The brain picks up on stimuli which it believes crucial to our survival and learns to tune out everything else. However, because we're all different, our minds have different ideas about what sensory information is crucial for survival.

Throughout the book, he challenges readers to find ways to do things differently, to challenge their understanding of perception, and see how we might expand our powers of perception. I took on this challenge recently, although I didn't realize it at the moment (I had forgotten about the book until I started this project). I bike and walk everywhere, since I decided to live car free over a year

ago. A few weeks ago, inspired by my quarantine walks with a friend, I made the deliberate effort of taking different routes to work. Sometimes this means turning a street earlier or later. Sometimes it means making a giant loop. This daily exercise has expanded my awareness of my immediate surroundings and my community. I'm discovering neighborhoods and hidden corners on a daily basis, meeting new neighbors as they water their lawns or sit at their porches. Even on days when I'm not experiencing something new, I notice that by training myself to be more curious and attentive, I'm registering more sensory information, which allows me to experience the world more fully. I notice this particularly with my sense of smell, which feels sharper than it did even a few weeks ago. I have wondered if this is some sort of evolutionary response to changing my routine—the brain needs to

I walk and bike everywhere. I challenge myself to deviate from a commute that efficiently gets me from Point A to B. This has helped me be more attuned to my environment, my senses, and my inner mind.





register more information to make sense of new places.

But again, why does it matter? As Beau Lotto argues, exercising curiosity can help us become sharper thinkers, and lead to new ideas and creativity. Furthermore, **understanding that perception is an individual experience and that we all see the world differently can also help us bridge gaps of difference in our society.**

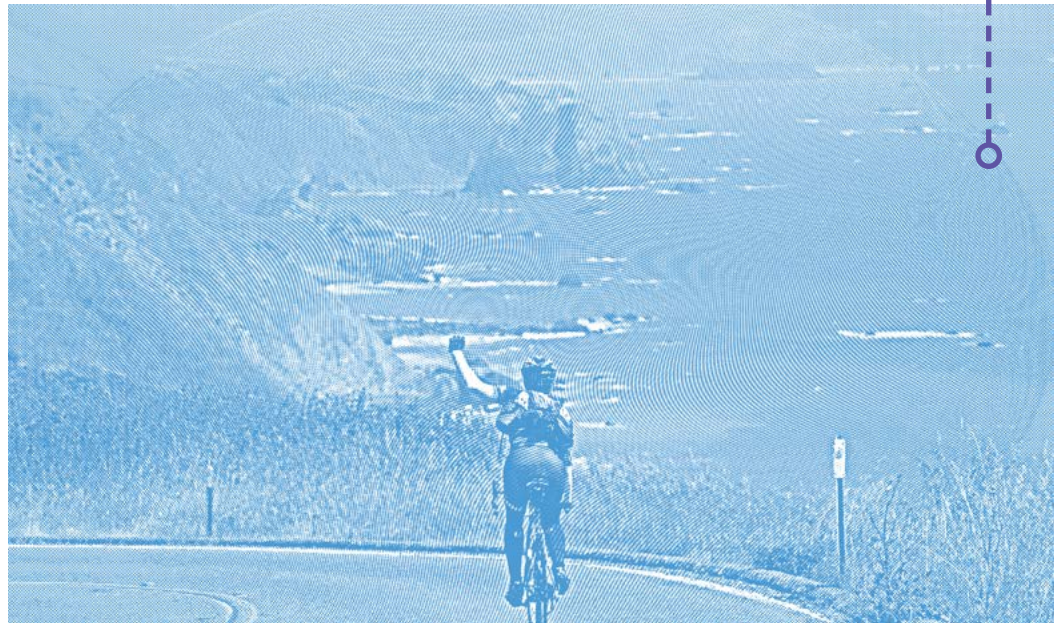
### My Big Idea

To continue training my spatial awareness and exercise curiosity, I need to take a trip that's both familiar and unfamiliar. This will allow me to pay closer attention to what I already know and use my lessons learned to navigate the places that I don't know.

**I want to bike the California coast to re-experience the familiar in a new and unique way. Doing this will allow me to continue exercising curiosity and lead me to a deeper understanding of how I can have an exploratory mindset on a day-to-day basis.** Furthermore, I want to share my experience with my co-workers to encourage

them to re-asses their surroundings, and try to look at the familiar from new and different perspectives. This is not only beneficial during a time when travel is limited, it can potentially help with our creativity (both in and out of the workplace) and understanding of the self and others.

I want to bike the California coast to re-experience the familiar in a new way, exercise curiosity, and cultivate an exploratory mindset.



*"By encouraging curiosity and learning to recognize...our biases, we can create a culture driven by creativity and experimentation..."*

– Georgia King











# Destination

*"People will tell you where they've  
gone, they'll tell you where to go.  
But 'till you get there yourself,  
you never really know."*

-Joni Mitchell, "Amelia"



# Destination



## A Closer Look

I've gone up and down the California coast various times. By car, by bus, and by train. However, have I truly experienced it if I've only experienced it with one sense (sight)?

Taking a bike trip will allow me to engage this landscape more meaningfully. **Additionally, as I've never ventured north of San Francisco, this trip will be a combination of familiar and unfamiliar territory, re-enforcing the purpose of my ex-**

**ploration.** Cycling requires great spatial-temporal awareness. It also connects me more deeply with my environment, allows me to see what drivers don't see, and helps me appreciate my city more.

## Itinerary

Although I initially planned a detailed itinerary and schedule to include in this proposal, I decided against it while listening to *Hejira*, Joni Mitchell's travel album. In her song *Amelia* she reflects on travel in a letter to an old friend, noting that listening to other's advice on what to see can set us up with false hopes and expectations. I started thinking about how we create meaning and realized that if I went to all the spots that everyone agrees are beautiful, I won't be able to experience them for myself. I would be too wrapped up in arriving at the "beautiful" destination that I may not notice beau-



*I want to follow the main paths down California, but I also want to be guided by my senses: allow my eyes, ears, nose, tongue, hands, and sense of curiosity to guide me.*

ty elsewhere, or believe it secondary to spots that others have assigned value to.

Additionally, it would be antithetical to the purpose of my exploration. I want to follow the main path down California, but I also want to be guided by my senses: allow my eyes, ears, nose, tongue, hands, and sense of curiosity to guide me towards backroads and little towns.

However, as this is still a self-supported bike trip, I do need to stop somewhere. The map on the left includes cities that I've identified with motels/hotels for me to stay, based on mileage I can anticipate cycling over my two-week trek.

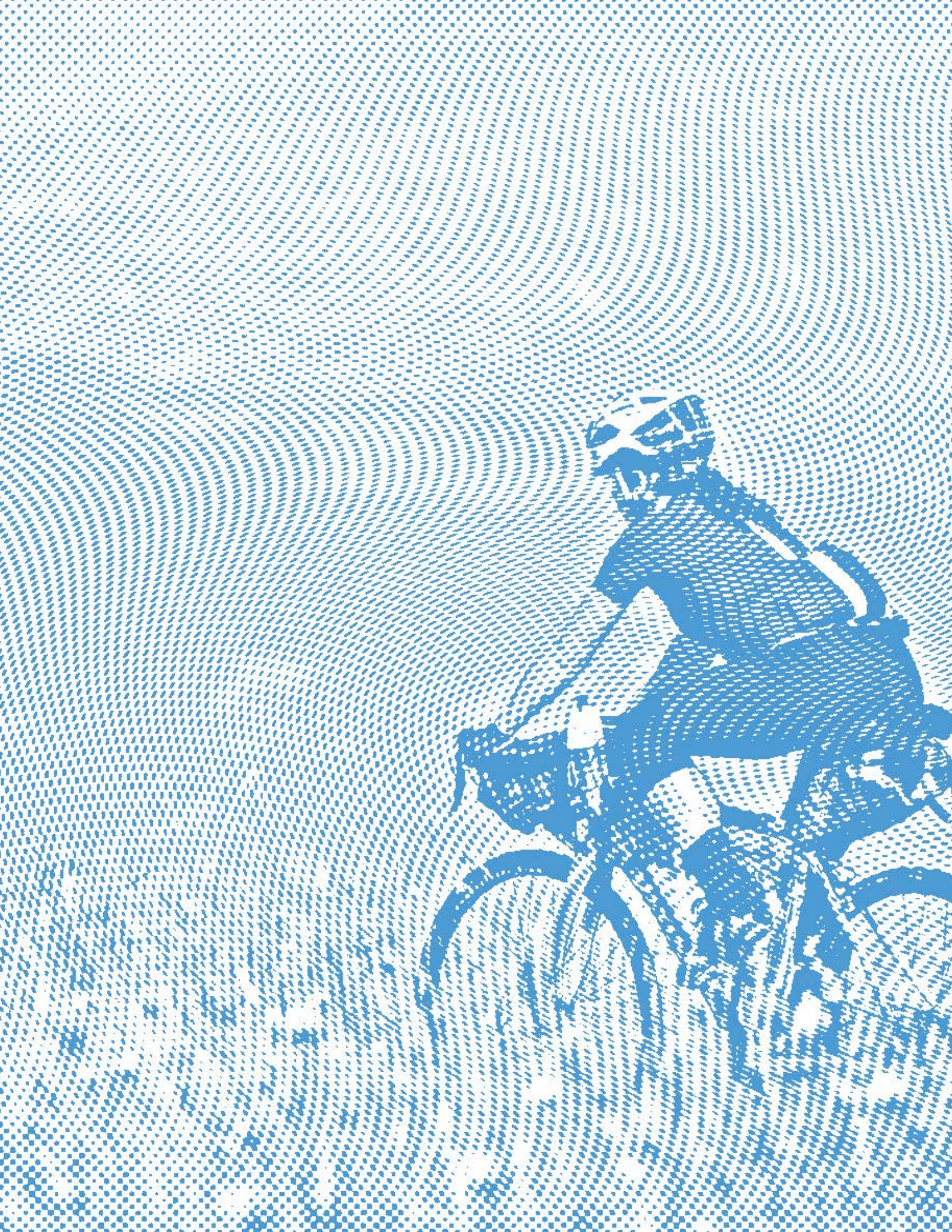
I will be flying in to Crescent City and will be taking the Amtrak back home from San Diego.

### Rest Cities

- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Crescent City | 9. Big Sur           |
| 2. Ferndale      | 10. Pismo Beach      |
| 3. Garberville   | 11. Buelton          |
| 4. Ft. Bragg     | 12. Ventura          |
| 5. Gualala       | 13. Manhattan Beach  |
| 6. San Francisco | 14. Dana Point       |
| 7. Santa Cruz    | 15. Solana Beach     |
| 8. Monterey      | 16. US-Mexico Border |











# Documentation

*"In my view, as soon as you've told something to someone, you've taken the potential for a deeper meaning away from them. True knowledge is when information becomes embodied understanding: We have to act in the world to understand it."*

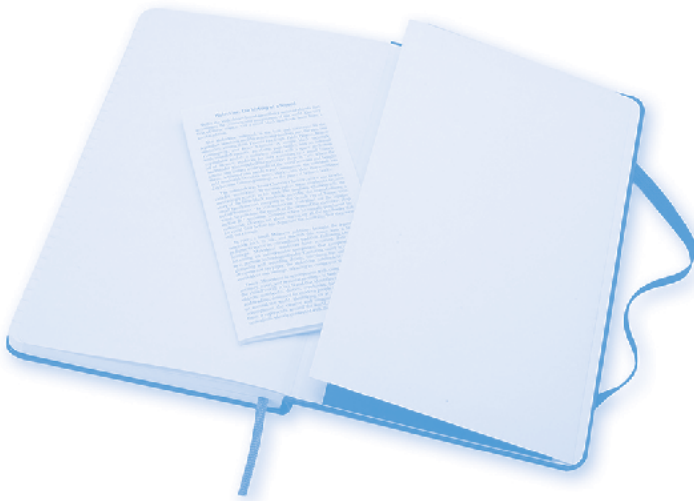
-Beau Lotto



# Documentation

## Mindful Journey

**I will be documenting my journey primarily through journaling. Video, photography, and recording sounds will be secondary to the act of journaling.** I will very deliberately not be blogging, vlogging, or posting on social media. Not only is there already an abundance of California bikepacking travelogues online, I believe blogging and engaging on social media would be in opposition to the purpose of this exploration. I would like to be fully present.



## Journaling

My primary mode of documentation will be journaling. I'll include my thoughts, experiences, and interesting things I noticed along my route. I will also be collecting interesting plants and flowers and pressing these. Journal may include drafts of poems, lines, ruminations, etc.



## Images and Sounds

My secondary method of documentation will be my phone. I will be using my phone to take photographs and videos when I feel necessary, and to record soundscapes for sharing purposes. However, I will keep phone usage to a minimum as I feel this is contrary to the purpose of my exploration.



# Sharing My Trip

## Bringing it Home

Simply talking about my experience or sharing footage would be antithetical to the purpose of this XPLORE proposal. **To truly inspire others to heighten their awareness and be present in their everyday lives, they will need to experience sensory information for themselves. This is in alignment with theories of embodied knowledge.**

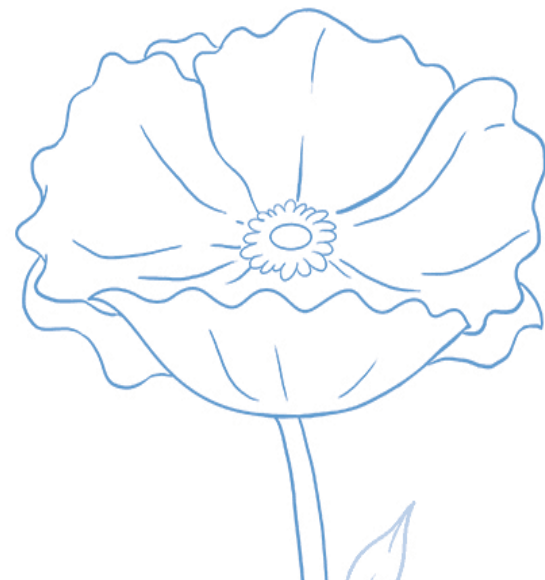
## Multi-Sensory Exhibit

I'm proposing an interactive, multi-sensory exhibit. This traveling exhibit can be set up at both Ruhnu Clarke locations on separate days. Rather than over-explaining my experience, I will be bringing it to my co-workers and allowing them to draw their own conclusions while experiencing the same things I'm experiencing.

Rather than over-explaining my experience, I will be bringing it to my co-workers.

Below are some preliminary ideas of what I might include in the interactive multisensory exhibit, corresponding with each of the five senses:

- **Sight:** Video footage and slideshow of things I found interesting throughout my trip. Note that I said interesting and not necessarily beautiful.
- **Smell:** Blindfolded interactive guessing exhibit where participants identify collected wild herbs and/or flowers, based on smell.
- **Touch:** Blindfolded interactive guessing exhibit where participants identify found items.
- **Taste:** I've been obsessed with foraging and identifying wild edible and medicinal plants and herbs lately. For safety purposes, I will not be feeding co-workers foraged food. Instead, I will identify items on the road and find them at a store and bring them in for tasting.
- **Sound:** Interactive soundscape exhibit where participants try to pinpoint which soundscape corresponds to which point on a map.






# Exhibit Concept

## Multisensory Exhibit

The most exciting thing to me about this exhibit is that knowledge won't be a one-way street. By engaging with participants and listening to their thoughts, I will expand my understanding of perception even more, allowing me to continue my exploration even after my physical trip is over. The floor plan to the right is a preliminary plan of what I want to do.

### Key

1	Sight	4	Taste		NorCal
2	Sound	5	Smell		Central California
3	Touch		SoCal		Other

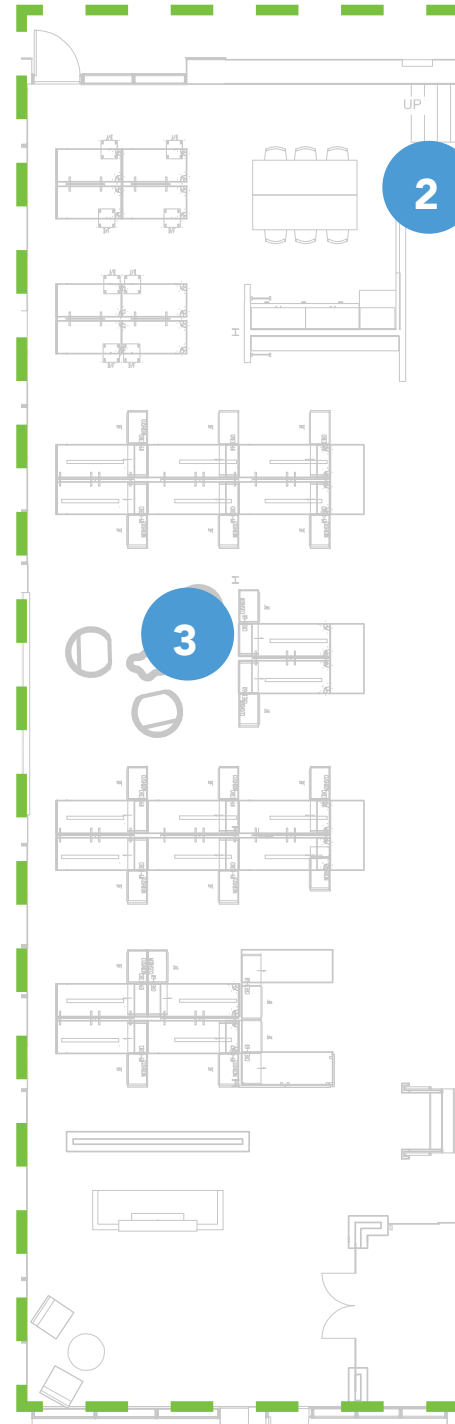


### COVID-19 Preparedness

Multiple stations with very small groups will help facilitate social distancing. Activities that require mask removal (taste, smell) can be conducted outside and/or in highly ventilated areas. After the traveling exhibit materials have been sent to both offices, remote workers can pick up materials and experience the exhibit at home.

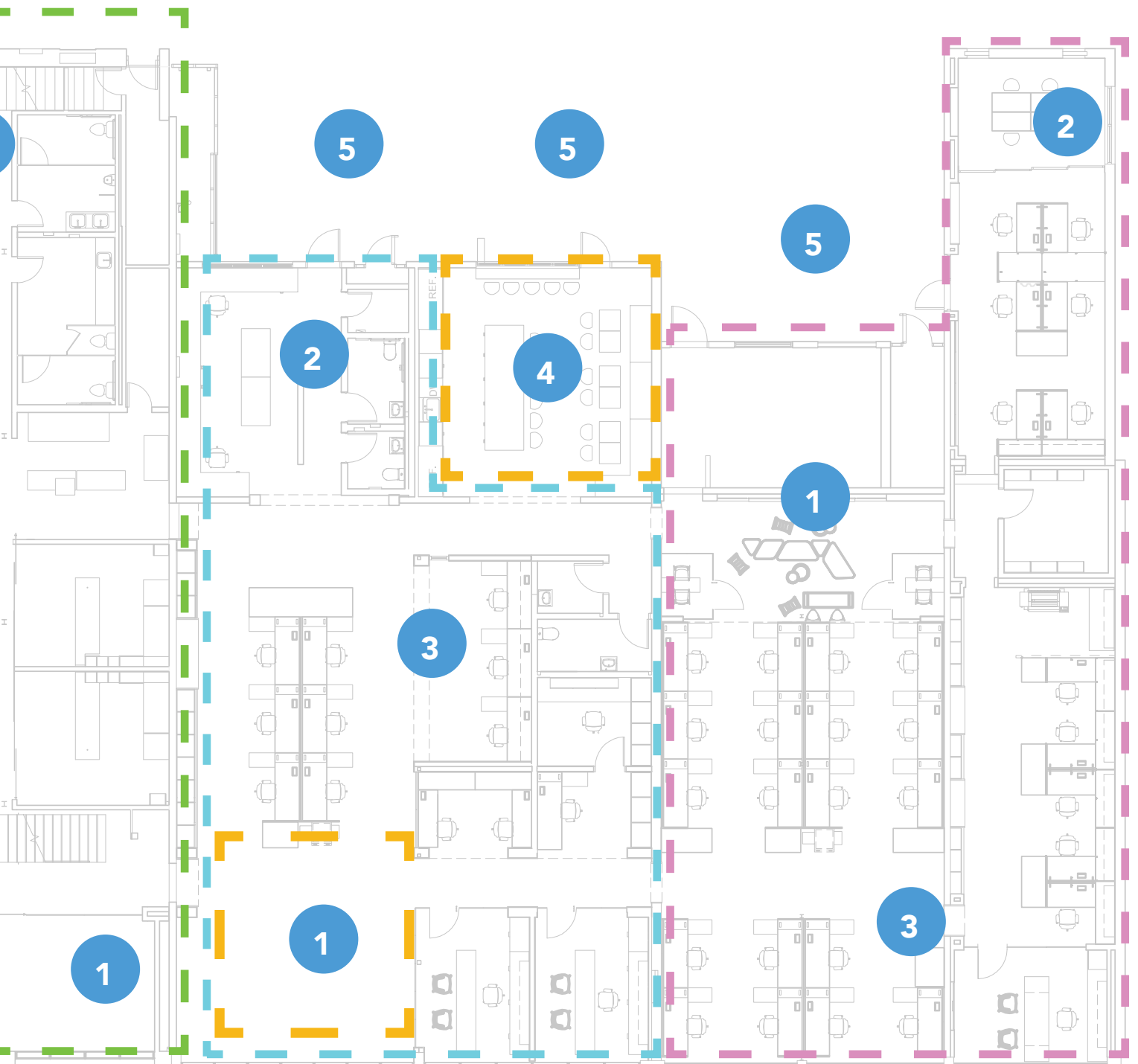
## Riverside Office

Market Street





ce



Tenth St









# Appendix

*"Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, / the world offers itself to your imagination, / calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting."*

-Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese"



## Details

### Preparation

I will continue bicycling two times during the week, on my daily commutes. On weekends I will work my way up to an average of 60-70 miles. In the month prior to my trip, I will do round trips on the Santa Ana River Trail carrying the items I will take with me on the road in order to condition myself to carrying heavy loads on my bike.

### Timing

I will be going at the end of April. This is the beginning of spring, which should mean weather should be mostly sunny and minimal wet conditions.

The end of April is also a good time astrologically for me. The sun will be transiting by 11th house of travel, expansion, and higher learning—perfect for a physical and mental voyage.

## Closing Thoughts

### Acknowledgments

One of the things that stood out to me about Christina Montenegro's explanation of the etymology of the word *explore* is that the crying out happened collectively. Although I will be conducting this exploration largely by myself, I never would have arrived here without the collective help of a few key people:

- Roger Clarke, Alvin Flores, and Jennifer Dubon, the XPLORE Committee Members who helped me, listened to me, and challenged me throughout this process.
- My sisters Monica and Wendy; my friends Jose, Alejandro, Desiree, and Diana; and my co-worker Michelle for listening to my ideas and providing feedback, thoughtful critique, and words of encouragement and affirmation.





## A Helping Hand

I have very talented co-workers and I know you will be thoughtfully considering many incredible proposals. To help you with this challenging task, I have include the scoring matrix below along with the page where you can quickly and easily identify key information. **The corresponding item will be bolded in this color.**  
Thank you for consideration.

pg. 9

pg. 13

pg. 16

pg. 17-19

CRITERIA	POINTS
<b>PURPOSE</b>	Max 25 Points
Is the purpose clearly defined? Does the purpose have the potential for personal growth, social and/or global impacts?	
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Max 10 Points
Does the choice of location reinforce the purpose for travel?	
<b>PRESENTATION</b>	Max 20 Points
Does the submission format reinforce the concept of the proposed exploration? Is the presentation creative? Is the overall presentation well executed? Does the presentation tell a complete and compelling story?	
<b>DOCUMENTATION (during and after the journey)</b>	Max 25 Points
Is the proposed method of documenting the journey clearly defined? Is the method of sharing the journey with our firm clearly defined? Does the method convey the experience in a meaningful way? Is it personally and communally enriching? Will the method of documentation enrich or inspire our staff?	



Thanks!

