

## [Anthony's America Part 4: The Weed Man, Dictator Lemonade, a Wizard of Oz Cafe, the Sheriff of Nottingham & Tangoing](#)



Cannabis. It seems Fort Bragg is oozing with weed growers, farmers and smokers. And Mendocino County, where I've chosen to live temporarily, is nicknamed the 'Cannabis Capital of America'.

California law lets people own eight ounces of processed marijuana, plus 12 plants growing in their home for 'personal use'. But the average illegal cannabis garden here in Mendocino has 6500 marijuana plants, each of which make around five to

10 pounds of smokeable weed. Who knew? Not me. Man.

Now, I've smoked some pot - both passively and not so passively - in the past. Some even made me hallucinate: people's eyes grew as big as their heads and their faces exploded (that scared me; my imagination is horrific enough already without adding drugs to it). So I wouldn't do it anymore...I enjoy my brain functioning and saw too many friends at university drop out after they wrecked their minds by smoking too much.

But the other day I was offered a huge, free clump of what's called 'shake' here (the loose leaves and roots of hash plants), by The Weed Man (name changed to protect the innocent).

I was strolling into town along California Highway 1 as it was a lovely sunny day. But, as walking is seen as weird over here, it didn't take long before a truck stopped next to me. A bearded, er, *gentleman*, stuck his head out the window and shouted: "Hey dude, what da *fuck* are you walkin' for?" I replied in a very British fashion: "Um, I'm just having a nice walk, thanks."



He proceeded to persuade me to get in his truck and, as I thought I was old enough to know when I should or shouldn't talk to strangers (or take sweets offered to me by them), I got in. He immediately asked if I smoked and, before I could answer, pulled out a coal sack-sized bag of weed and offered me a handful of hash. Roughly the amount that would get me a seven year prison sentence in the UK if I was found with it on me.

Yet, apparently, 56 percent of Californians support the legalisation of cannabis; so it can be taxed as a crop and make money for this cash-strapped American State.

On the flipside of the law, and in a paradoxical juxtaposition (ooh, big words Anthony), I met the county sheriff, Thomas D. Allman, this week too. This was at a 'Mixer'. Mixers are networking evenings for local business people to get together, promote their work, drink wine, eat, get drunk and chat. How cool is that?

Sheriff Allman, who is also the county coroner, was a very charismatic man. He told me he'd been to Buckingham Palace last year for tea (cough, tongue at the side of my mouth). Then he explained the origins of the term 'sheriff' - which means tax collector - from Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham. I realised after I left the Mixer that he is the equivalent to a British Chief Constable. So, you know, quite high up. I'm not great with hierarchy; it doesn't impress or mean much to me. He was a nice man, that's all that counts.

I also met the lovely Heather at the Mixer and she invited me to tango. At first I thought she meant I had to put on weight, shave off my hair, strip naked, paint myself orange, run up to her and smack my hands over her ears whilst shouting "you've been tangoed!" and then run off giggling. But no, she meant the dance, tango.



I was a little disappointed, I was looking forward to smearing myself in orange paint.

(For those who watched the British comedy series, *The Mary Whitehouse Experience*, please insert a suitable Jarvis 'ooooh God' here).

Er, anyway, I digress. We went dancing at the Caspar Community Centre and, even though I've never tangoed in my life, I had a great time.

Lynne and Ben, my friends who live in Sacramento, came up to stay for the weekend too. We did an 8-mile walk (mos' def) around the Russian Gulch to see a waterfall. We also tried fifteen beers at the local brewery - my favourite was an 8% one called La Merle - and we watched something called 'American Football'. If you're not familiar with it, it's a popular sport over here. It involves men with big shoulders. I don't understand it, they seem to stop playing A LOT and hug each other. A LOT. Hugging is good, though, perhaps that should be a sport. I'd play.



Whilst shopping, Ben discovered some bizarre lemonade. It's called 'Leninade' and is an actual, branded alcoholic lemonade named after the popular Russian communist dictator who once said, cheerily: "One man with a gun can control 100 without one." This Only-In-America drink is sold with the two taglines: 'Get Hammered and Sickled!' and 'A Taste Worth Standing In Line For.' Ooh, harsh.

I couldn't find the strawberry-coloured 'Vietnam Vodka': the 'Jungle Juice Worth Losing 70,000 For'.

I did, however, find the local Botanical Gardens which were stunning. A beautifully landscaped 160-acre plot of land that stretches to the Pacific Ocean. It was full of little paths to explore, rivers, creeks, red rhododendrons, a dahlia garden, gigantic Sequoia trees and lots of sculptures made by local artists. Including a naked one. Sculpture, that is.



And to round off my weekend I found a great little cafe in town called Eggheads. It's completely themed on the classic movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, with painted yellow brick road walls and a menu to match. I love that film and love this little restaurant. I got chatting with a waitress called April, who had just got back from travelling in Thailand and helping orphans there. She was cool and Eggheads make the bestest omelettes ever. So I'll be going back there.

And that's all I have to say about that. Until next time, folks, if you'd like to see all the pictures that go with Part 4 of my American Adventures please just [click here](#).