

# Travel Report from WOSP 2004

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The Fourth International Workshop on Software and Performance (WOSP 2004) was held January 14 to 18 in Redwood City, California. The workshop, which was held in Oracle's premises just by the San Francisco Bay, seemed interesting when looking at the advance program, but it did not meet my expectations. The conference started with tutorials, and the first tutorial on software performance antipatterns by Connie Smith was good, whereas a tutorial on automatic benchmark generation indicated that research in the field had produced little of interest.

The research quality of the papers presented at the conference was a disappointment, and although some papers touched interesting areas, their research contribution were either minimal, or the researchers had made simplifying assumptions that made their results hard to use in practice. The invited industrial keynote talks, on the other hand, were great. The first talk was a presentation of automated performance tuning mechanisms in Oracle's next release of their database. The second keynote, from IBM, made a strong case for embracing model-driven development, i.e. automated code generation from object-oriented modelling tools such as UML, as the next logical step in raising the abstraction level for software development. The last talk described the structure of Google's search engine, and the performance issues they are facing. One interesting observation is that search engine operators have virtually unlimited thread-level parallelism, but energy costs are a substantial factor. Hence, today's computer architecture trends of performing speculative operations, which waste energy, in order to improve single thread performance are working against them.

Redwood City is, like the rest of the Bay Area, a monotonic Californian neighbourhood, which seems artificial by European standards. San Francisco, however, is a charming city, and well worth a few days of extra stay. I had visited the town before, so I joined some friends and drove out into the countryside, visiting Yosemite National Park and the scenic Highway 1, both of which can be recommended. If you visit Central California, my recommendation is to either experience the often magnificent nature in unpopulated areas or stick to the coast, and avoid inland urban areas, such as Fresno and Sacramento.