

# VOGUE

TRAVEL

## Why Carmel-by-the-Sea Is the West Coast Destination of the Moment

BY KRISTINE HANSEN

September 21, 2023



Photo: Getty Images

With three new boutique hotels, a new Michelin-star restaurant, and younger, jet-setting residents, Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, is poised to usher in travelers during its sunniest season—in the fall.

Even with only around 4,000 residents, the downtown brims with boutiques, cafes, and restaurants—proving this beach town offers more than sugar-white sandy beaches. It's also attracting new residents like Brad Pitt—who snapped up the \$40 million D.L. James House (“Seaward” House) in Carmel Highlands in 2022—and Stephen and Erica Malbon, the married owners of Malbon Golf, who also opened a boutique in Carmel-by-the-Sea.

“Being in Carmel is like stepping back in time,” says Anthony Carnazzo, who owns Stationaery—a farm-to-table brunch and dinner restaurant—with his wife, Alissa Cardazzo. The couple moved from Los Angeles and are raising three young kids. “There’s a slower pace of life here,” he says. Case in point: no one has mail delivery. You must pick up your mail at the post office, and hopefully say hello to others when you do.

Also, don’t hesitate to bring the dog, because thanks to Carmel-by-the-Sea’s late actress and animal activist Doris Day, who owned Cypress Inn, this continues to be a pet-friendly destination. Four-legged friends are welcome on most beaches, in parks—and, yes, even in fancy boutiques and restaurants.

## Where to Stay

### Carmel Beach Hotel



Photo: Richard Pharaoh

In June, the 26-room (including three suites) Carmel Beach Hotel opened 100 steps from the sand, within seven restored and renovated buildings. There's a cocktail bar, wine list, spa, and fitness studio, plus e-bicycle rentals. Interior designers Carol Padham and Martin-Vegue worked with an ocean-inspired palette to create custom furnishings for the guest rooms, which also feature Victoria + Albert bath fixtures. Meanwhile, Secoya Restaurant—from Michelin-star chef and Charlie Trotter's alum Justin Cogley, of L'Auberge Carmel's Aubergine, which earned a Michelin star in 2019—is open exclusively to hotel guests.

**BOOK NOW**

## Le Petit Pali at 8<sup>th</sup> Ave.



Courtesy of Le Petit Pali

Rotary-dial phones and an artful blend of plaid and floral fabrics are leading design details in the 24 rooms within this Craftsman-style building, paired with Adirondack chairs and pin-striped umbrellas in the courtyard, and loaner bicycles with wicker baskets. A hosted cocktail and wine hour (focusing on bottles plucked from the region), as well as a breakfast of pastries, Champagne Taittinger, eggs, and other indulgences, are included in rates—and fresh-baked cookies delivered to rooms daily.

**BOOK NOW**

## Le Petit Pali at Ocean Ave.



Courtesy of Le Petit Pali

Like Le Petit Pali at 8<sup>th</sup> Ave., and offering the same amenities, this 24-room hotel represents Palisociety's new brand. Open since June, these are the first two locations, with others forthcoming in Brentwood and Laguna Beach. Most rooms flaunt fireplaces to cozy up on a cool Central Coast night and vintage art pops on sage-green walls. Sink into half-moon-shaped upholstered floral-print headboards or wide-striped chairs channeling the French Riviera.

**BOOK NOW**

# What to Eat

## Chez Noir



Photo: Erin Ng

With a French and Northern Spain-inspired menu orchestrated by chef co-owners Jonny and Monique Black, (veterans of Per Se, Atelier Crenn, and Quince and choosing to raise their kids in a small, coastal town) Chez Noir popped up in October. This year it earned a Michelin star. Wines are a strong point here, with bottles stemming from small-production Monterey County wineries and every member of the wait staff brimming with wine knowledge. Seating is in the dining room, courtyard, or intimate—and highly coveted—eight-seat bar.

# Stationaery



Courtesy of Stationaery

The Carnazzos opened Stationaery in 2018. Alissa also produces a stationary line. Both trace Monterey County roots back several generations and are committed to operating a family-friendly, farm-to-table restaurant. From seasonal lattes (like the summertime “Creamsicle”) paired with brunch to natural wines served with dinner, the menu shifts often to reflect what’s in season. In the adjacent boutique, black sweatshirts flaunt menu items in white lettering (for example, “chilaquiles” or “biscuits and jam.”)

# Aubergine



Photo: Bonjwing Lee

Tucked into the Relais & Châteaux 20-room hotel L’Auberge Carmel, the Michelin-starred Aubergine is among the fanciest restaurants in town, attracting celebs and foodies alike, including the Obamas for their wedding-anniversary dinner last fall. Start with innovative cocktails (like “Cherry on Top,” a cherry clarified milk punch) before moving into the dining room, where there are just nine tables. Among the 3,500 bottles in the wine cellar are picks from Monterey County and France, or you can tack on sommelier-approved wine pairings for the eight-course tasting menu.

## Where to Shop

### House of Cardoon

This boutique’s Maximalist-styled interior—by owner Nora Lee Cavallaro, a former Pottery Barn buyer—is very Betsey Johnson meets Palm Springs and ranges from paper goods to vintage art, plus furnishings and tableware. Scoop up a set of colored wine

glasses (one in each hue—stem or stemless) or take a peek at the chunky beaded bracelets.

## Pilgrim's Way

Enter [this bookstore](#) through The Secret Garden, not the street, for a meditative approach, which is a perfect fit for the store's focus on wellness titles along with *New York Times* bestsellers. Open since 1969, and now on its fifth owners, Paul Fridlund and Cynthia Fernandes met and married in the store. Author readings and sound baths fill the calendar. Fun fact: actor Clint Eastwood—a former Carmel-by-the-Sea mayor—once rented an apartment above the store.

## Tejido Collective

Sourcing gorgeous sweaters, scarves, ponchos, and other knitwear from indigenous cooperatives in Huancayo, Peru, who use ecologically mindful yarns and employ Fair Trade practices, founder and co-owner Shanti Rackley (with co-owner Taira Hustedt) opened [this shop](#) in 2012. It's been in this location since 2021.

## Foxy Couture Carmel

Score a vintage tweed Chanel jacket, Louis Vuitton handbag, or any other number of finds at [this luxury consignment shop](#). Since 2012 Susan Galvin has maintained this shop. For any lover of vintage couture, plan to spend a few hours here marveling at all the wares.