

Travel Capsule: Carmel-By-The-Sea

An enchanting destination in the heart of Monterey County, Carmel-by-the-Sea is a jewel box filled with natural beauty, fine dining, and artistic charm.

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Carmel Beach, Carmel-by-the-Sea (Photo credit: Michael Karsh)

I grew up spending Thanksgiving in Carmel-by-the-Sea. My father was a golfer and I was his pint-sized golf cart pilot. I remember cozy fireside dinners, crisp beach hikes, and pockets full of sea glass. But it wasn't until driving into Carmel for a recent weekend getaway, more than twenty years later, that I remembered the real magic of the place. As I rolled down the windows, now driving a *real* car on a *real* road, I was overwhelmed by the crisp, effervescent air – the scent of mossy forests in harmony with salty ocean breezes instantly put me at blissful ease.

And it's not just me. With its signature sculptural cypress trees, seaside bluffs speckled with wildflowers, powder-soft sand, and azure waters, Carmel casts a spell on all who venture here. The natural beauty is unmatched, the wine is excellent, and the food is farm fresh. No matter how long you stay, your time here will surely leave a special imprint.

Where to Stay

Carmel Beach Hotel

The Carmel Beach Hotel is tucked in a quiet residential pocket just 100 steps from the sand. Step out your door and you'll be surrounded by sculptural cypress trees, and in less than a minute you'll be walking down a set of quintessentially Californian wooden stairs to the tranquil shoreline of Carmel beach, a secluded one-mile stretch with a Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece perched on one end and the 18th hole of Pebble Beach at the other.

The intimate property exudes casual elegance and operates much like a private beach club. Spanning three historic buildings, the facilities include a gym, spa, and delectable cuisine at the onsite restaurant Secoya. Next time, I will definitely be bringing my dog Badger, as both the hotel and beach are dog friendly!

San Antonio Avenue & 13th Street, Carmel-By-The-Sea, California



Where to Eat

Aubergine—This Michelin-starred gem, helmed by Chef Justin Cogley, is a contemporary celebration of the bounty of the region. The eight-course tasting menu is an odyssey of delights, further enhanced by exquisite wine pairings by award-winning Lead Sommelier John Haffey.

San Carlos Street, between 5th & 6th Avenues, Carmel-By-The-Sea, CA



Chez Noir—A newcomer to the Carmel food scene and already a Michelin starred hot spot. Chef Jonny Black's California coastal cuisine features pristine hyper-local ingredients, served in a Craftsman-style residence with chic French bistro vibes. Don't miss the abalone skewers.

5th Avenue, between San Carlos & Dolores Streets, Carmel-By-The-Sea, CA



Stationaery—The perfect neighborhood spot for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Elevated fare in a casual atmosphere with a distinct cool factor. The menu evolves with the seasons, but be sure to try the plentiful Farmer’s Salad, potato chips & caviar, and biscuits & jam. They also have a takeaway wine and food shop, perfect for a picnic.
San Carlos Street, between 5th & 6th Avenues, Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA

Cella—A must-try. The seasonal cuisine is bursting with flavor and the hospitality is as excellent as the ambiance. You may think you don’t have room for dessert, but you do—the Greek yogurt panna cotta with yuzu granita, puffed black rice, and stone fruit is a heavenly kiss to close the meal.
525 Polk St. Monterey, CA

Stokes Adobe—Located inside an historic adobe building originally constructed in the 1830s, the restaurant has been impeccably renovated and decorated. Whether you’re seated in the library, bar, solarium, or other cozy nook, the atmosphere will be as exceptional as the new American cuisine. A favorite among locals.
500 Hartnell Street Monterey, CA

Wild Fish —When a menu lists the boat captain who harvested today’s catch, you know the seafood is fresh. Live jazz music during dinner services on Friday and Saturday is the perfect pairing for a night out.
545 Lighthouse Ave, Pacific Grove, CA

What to Do

World-class dining aside, the biggest attractions of the region are the natural treasures. Here's how to soak in the scenery, whatever your style:

If you're looking to take in nature on foot, the Whalers Cove trail at [Point Lobos State Natural Reserve](#) is a jewel to behold with otherworldly vistas of waves crashing against craggy rocks shrouded in mist, sandstone slot canyons slipped in against thick forest, serene tidepools and limpid turquoise waters in the cove below.

If you like your nature on two wheels, rent an e-bike from [Mad Dogs & Englishmen](#) and take in the sea breeze, charming architecture, and picture-perfect views at your own pace or with a boost.

If you'd prefer it on four wheels, rent a classic car from [Monterey Touring Vehicles](#) and cruise around the Monterey Peninsula. Your trip is not complete without a drive through the iconic 17 Mile Drive and down the Pacific Coast Highway to Big Sur. Be sure to stop at [COAST](#) for a delicious lunch, sweeping views, and well-curated gift shop.



If you like your greens groomed, play a round at the storied [Pebble Beach Golf Links](#). If you can't get a tee time, try for a reservation at the [Stillwater Bar & Grill](#) for views of the course.

If you have a taste for adventure, take a dive with **Monterey Bay Scuba**. The Bay is a protected National Marine Sanctuary that attracts scuba divers from around the world, lured by the beauty of the kelp forest and underwater canyon.

If you prefer your outdoors indoors, visit the world-renowned **Monterey Bay Aquarium**. The creatures on display in the new *Into the Deep Sea* exhibit are dazzling.

And if you plan to stay the night in Monterey to explore the historic Cannery Row and Fisherman's Wharf, book an ocean view suite at the **Spindrift Inn** for huge windows perched right over the water.



Where to Shop:

- **Malbon Golf Shop**—Uniquely fashionable golf gear and attire with a celebrity cult following, including Steph Curry, Justin Bieber and Travis Scott.
- **Pilgrim's Way Bookshop**—Lovely local bookstore, tucked in a secret garden.
- **Foxy Couture**—A luxury resale shop, perfect for collectors of current and vintage couture.
- **Somewhere in Carmel**—A collective of elevated finds for everyday living. Something for everyone.
- **Fourtané**—Fine jeweler with a robust collection of rare and antique pieces.
- **Tejido Collective**—Earthy and ecologically mindful, artisanal attire, accessories, and beauty products.
- **House of Cardoon**—A playful yet sophisticated collection of colorful home goods, furniture, and textiles.

A Taste of Carmel-by-the-Sea:

