

A Weekend In Monterey County

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Amber Gibson



Carmel-by-the-Sea
Sunlit waves and cliffs

Monterey was once home to 18th century Spanish missions, then smelly fish canneries. Today, it's one of the most visited places on the Central Coast, and for good reason. It's just as beautiful as HBO's Emmy Award-winning 'Big Little Lies' would have you believe.

Where To Stay



Carmel Valley Ranch
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Pebble Beach Resorts recently opened new rooms and cottages at Fairway One and guest room renovations at The Inn at Spanish Bay are underway, with the goal of being entirely completed by the 2019 US Open. Book an ocean view room for great views of the legendary Scottish bagpipers marching up the first fairway serenading golfers and guests each evening at sunset. The golf courses here are the obvious crowning glory. Pebble Beach is best known but Spyglass Hill is perhaps the most beautiful; the first tee faces the ocean and progresses from coastal beaches into the Del Monte Forest.



Carmel Valley Ranch vineyard suite

Further inland, Carmel Valley Ranch is an agrarian utopia with 500 acres to hike, golf and explore. The ranch has its own bees, goats, hens, vineyards and organic garden, not to mention lots of lavender, which is harvested to make in-room bath amenities along with poultices and oils for the spa. There are a dozen or more daily activities, from archery and tennis to gardening but the bee experience is the most highly recommended. After donning a bee suit and peering into the fabric of honeybee society, you'll have a whole new appreciation for the honey served at Valley Kitchen, the resort's excellent restaurant.

Where To Eat



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Cooked abalone

“I remember just popping these 25- to 30-year-old abalone off the rocks, cutting them into steaks and frying 'em up on the beach,” Chef Bert Cutino says. He opened The Sardine Factory with partner Ted Balestreri in 1968, and the ambitious young men used to give away free squid at happy hour. Fifty years later, the iconic restaurant on Cannery Row is still known as the best seafood spot in town; Clint Eastwood is a regular. Start with a sipper of earthy artichoke bisque, followed by wild abalone medallions, Alaskan halibut and Pacific sand dabs. All sustainably harvested of course – they are right next to Monterey Bay Aquarium after all, home to the Monterey Bay Seafood Watch.



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Wild Alaskan halibut at The Sardine Factory

In Carmel-by-the-Sea, La Bicyclette is beloved for wood oven-fired pizzas and Anton & Michel is another classic. Sit in the intimate courtyard with a light salad for lunch or kobe beef short ribs and duck breast at dinner. Service at Anton & Michel is earnest and kind. “We can fire the dishwashers,” our server happily proclaims after we clean our plates, sopping up every last bit of sauce with baguette.

Where To Play



Carmel-by-the-Sea

Point Lobos

Monterey Bay is a little chilly for swimming, although the surfers at Spanish Bay don't seem to mind the cold. I prefer kayaking with the sea lions, seals and sea otters. You're supposed to keep your distance, but the curious creatures will come right up to your boat. At Pebble Beach, you can take a guided tour of Stillwater Cove; the waters here are calm enough for beginners. The National Marine Sanctuary offers amazing wildlife viewing all along the coast, including tide pools, beaches and kelp forests. Hiking Point Lobos is a spectacular way to see all of these shoreline habitats from land.



Scott Campbell

The Spa at Pebble Beach hot tub

You could spend the whole day at the Forbes five-star Spa at Pebble Beach, whether you're looking for relaxation, rejuvenation or beautification. Every amenity you could think of is included, from the requisite pools, saunas and steam rooms to zero-gravity chairs next to a wall of Pink Himalayan salt meant to purify the air. Snack on a housemade honey oat bar in the conservatory between treatments and dips in the pool. Carmel Valley Ranch has a nice spa too, right next to the adults-only pool. Treatments incorporate the ranch's own honey and lavender for a farm-to-facial feel.



Caraccioli Cellars

While Monterey is home to some up-and-coming wineries, the best ones are not the most conveniently located. Luckily, Carmel has plenty of walkable tasting rooms downtown, all easily accessible with the Wine Walk by-the-Sea passport, which affords you 10 tastings at your choice of 13 wineries within a square mile. Wrath makes excellent pinot noir and Caraccioli Cellars is the only sparkling wine specialist. Hahn Family Wines just opened a new tasting room in the Carmel Plaza too.