

How We Roll: Dad and daughter hot-rodgers

Patio Style: A color punch for summer

Made in Texas: Wine down at Red Caboose

Destinations: Quirky Carmel beckons

360 West

A FULL-CIRCLE VIEW OF WHERE WE LIVE

A photograph of a modern, single-story house with a prominent stone tower on the right side. The house has large windows and a covered patio area with blue chairs. In the foreground, there is a swimming pool with a dark blue tiled edge. The scene is set in a lush, green environment with trees and plants.

READY
SET RELAX

A Southlake couple finds there's no place like home when it comes to getting away from it all.



CARMEL CHIC

Story and photos by
Michael Hiller

You don't come to Carmel to spend the day in a spa or lounge by the hotel pool. You come to be wowed. You come to hike along its rugged coastline, explore its leafy passageways and stare out at its wave-lashed horizon. Even when it is swaddled in fog and raked by the wind, you're happy to be here.

Ever since 1602, when Carmelite friars surveyed this Monterey Peninsula hilltop and named it for their order, the tiny town of Carmel-by-the-Sea has tugged on visitors with its natural beauty. In this 1-square-mile collision of land and sea, you'll find a postcard destination that quickens the pulse. It's a feeling that inspired numerous artists; writers Sinclair Lewis and Jack London, painter Donald Teague and photographer Ansel Adams all found inspiration here. The famed bronze sculptor Steven Whyte, who created the enormous *Aggie War Hymn Monument* at Texas A&M University, proudly calls the town home.

It's hard not to fall hard for this sloped village of crooked streets,

Quirky, poetic,
timeless, seductive
— Carmel is like an
enchanted
fairytale village filled
with delicious food,
magical views
and, of course,
spectacular
golf courses.





Aside from the spectacular views, left, Carmel has much to offer. You never know where a vine-covered pathway in town will take you, but take it anyway. And dogs love this place as much as humans do.



gnarly tree trunks and tall Monterey pines. With a mostly well-heeled population of about 4,000, Carmel continually prims its good looks and good fortune. It disguises newspaper racks as cedar-roofed boxes, bans neon signs and chain restaurants, and reveres the cypress and eucalyptus trees that shade its streets and sidewalks.

The town long ago eschewed residential sidewalks in favor of well-trodden dirt paths. There are no mailboxes or house numbers; instead, locals offer directions with cross streets. "This has never been a typical town," says tour guide Gael Gallagher of Carmel Walks, which specializes in two-hour guided walks through secret pathways and hidden courtyards. "But it's the quirks that make it special."

Carmel came into its own following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, Gallagher tells me as we stand in front of the town's library, constructed in 1928. "That's when Carmel became an artist's town, built around small wood-framed buildings that haven't changed much since then."

Wearing jeans, an old pink Patagonia fleece vest and athletic shoes, Gallagher tells me she first visited here 30 years ago to experience the laid-back life and never left. She inhales the town's history as deeply as its culture.

"Things don't change quickly here. That bakery across the street was built in 1906, and it's a still a bakery today. And over there," she says, pointing across the street to our right, "is the Pine Inn, which is

almost as old and one of the 50 small hotels and B&Bs in town."

In another part of the compact downtown, we cut through a flower garden, then dart into the Church of the Wayfarer, making our way to a dark alcove left of the entrance. Gallagher tells me to tug hard on an unmarked rope dangling through a ceiling cutout. The church bell clangs twice, alerting the whole town to our presence. We slip out of the church and poke our heads into Steven Whyte's gallery and studio. The sculptor, bearded and burly, is crouched over a low desk, etching a clay model of a Texas cowboy commissioned by a man from Houston. Whyte stands and welcomes us with handshakes. He and Gallagher tell me Texans own half of Carmel. "If it weren't for Texans," says Whyte, "Carmel would go broke."

Gallagher and I head down a

hidden alley, take a couple of turns and end up on one of Carmel's cypress-lined streets crammed with boutique shops, galleries and restaurants. The English-cottage architecture is punctuated with Dutch doorways and local chalk-rock stone.

Later that day, while I'm exploring on my own, bright bougainvillea pulls me toward storybook inns



Carb load at any number of Carmel's Italian restaurants and fuel up for a day of hiking.

with enchanting names like Happy Landing, Lamp Lighter and Tally Ho. My home away from home for this trip is closer to the beach, with ocean views. La Playa Carmel, one



The course at Monterey Peninsula Country Club is just one of the sights along 17-Mile Drive.

CARMEL CHIC

of the few full-service hotels in town, is stocked with a coffee maker, mini-fridge, free Wi-Fi and freshly baked Ghiradelli chocolate chip cookies at turndown. At night, I crank the windows open on my third-floor room and let the salty breeze pour in.

My daytime excursions continue with more walking. On the sandy end of Ocean Avenue, the main road linking Carmel to Highway 1 on the east and the Pacific on the west, I meet a woman named Pia. She says she's a Dallas transplant who moved to Carmel a half-dozen years ago "to take it easy."

A broad line of sturdy beach homes stands behind me, their tall windows slurping in ocean views and afternoon sun. To my right, I can make out the craggy brown cliffs and green turf of Pebble Beach Golf Links. To my left, the horizon is blond sand peppered with dogs. Dozens of dogs. White dogs, brown dogs, black dogs, dogs chasing Frisbees, dogs romping through the water, dogs digging holes for buried treasure.

"What's the name of this beach?" I ask Pia, whose curly dark brown hair and windswept face suggest she spends a lot of time on this beach. She and a friend also have canines.

"We really just call it Dog Beach."

We chat a few minutes about their backgrounds. Pia lived in Dallas and on the East Coast; her friend lived for years in Paris. I mention that the town seems too small for two city girls tethered to dogs.

"But that's exactly why we moved here," says Pia. "You wake up in the morning and put on a lot of clothes. By noon, you take half of them off, and then it's time to play with the dogs."

Carmel sure looks like dog heaven. Beach dogs, restaurant dogs, window-shopping dogs, even hotel dogs, who drag their human handlers into the lobby of the Cypress Inn for free treats. If you're keeping score, the Cypress Inn, once owned by Doris Day, bills itself as the first dog-friendly hotel in the U.S.

You can spend a small fortune in Carmel and have a fantastic time, dining in standouts like Cantinetta Luca, La Balena, Vesuvio or La Bicyclette. But you certainly don't need to spend big. Rather than springing for a \$50 lunch at one of the 50 restaurant in towns, I pop into Nielsen Bros. Market, order a \$6 custom-made deli sandwich, then settle into a park bench on the beach.

I also decide not to spend \$495 for a round of golf at Pebble Beach Golf Links, instead opting to experience the same coastal beauty without a scorecard. A \$10 fee grants me access to 17-Mile Drive, the private two-lane road that begins on the



THE DETAILS

Carmel-by-the-Sea Fly into San Francisco, rent a car and drive south 2 hours.

Lodging

La Playa Hotel Camino Real at Eighth Avenue; rates from \$455. 800-582-8900 or laplayahotel.com

Bikes

Bay Bikes Rent excellent-quality road bikes, hybrids, tandem and comfort cruisers by the hour or by the day and arrange deliveries to your hotel or inn. 486 Washington St., Monterey; 831-655-2453 or baybikes.com. Rentals from \$8 an hour.


often-overlooked nature reserve 3 miles south of Carmel, is even more spectacular, so I phone Gallagher. Yes, she says, I shouldn't skip it. In fact, she says, she'll meet me.

Lugging her spotting scope,

we hike two of the 10 miles of trails that weave through the 550-acre wildlife sanctuary. We pause to take it all in: centuries-old Monterey pines, crashing surf, barking seals and sea lions, and that Pacific view — oh, that view — a panorama of reds and blues and seafoams and forest greens.

"I can't believe I almost missed this," I tell Gallagher.

"The hardest decision you have to make when you get to Carmel is narrowing down what to do out of dozens of really good choices."

Which reminds me of something Pia told me at Dog Beach that first afternoon: "No matter how long you spend here, you'll never see it all. You can walk from one end of town to the other in 10 minutes, but there's so much tucked away that unless you know where to look, you won't even notice." 

north edge of Carmel then takes you around Pebble Beach and the Del Monte Forest. The drive offers jaw-dropping ocean vistas, despite distractions like multimillion-dollar estates and Pebble Beach's championship golf courses.

The guard at the entrance hands me a free map that guides me to points of interest, like the iconic Lone Cypress (the solitary tree always pictured as Monterey's logo), beaches and picnic areas. Since it's nearing sunset, I splurge on dinner at The Bench, Pebble Beach Golf Links' Cal-Ital restaurant, overlooking the 18th green.

For a nongolfer, a bike is a great way to explore the 17-Mile route, but it's a challenge. Instead, I load my Trek hybrid rental bike into my car, drive to the far end of 17-Mile Drive and park on the sandy shoulder of Asilomar State Beach in Pacific Grove. From there, it's an easy cruise along well-marked bike lanes striped between crashing waves on the west and fluffy sand dunes on the east.

A few miles in, a hard right turn brings me to the entrance of 17-Mile Drive (there's no fee for cyclists), where the bike lane continues several miles along craggy coastline. When the protected lane ends just beyond Monterey Peninsula Country Club, I double back to finish my ride.

I've heard that Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, an



Rent a bike and see Carmel from two wheels.



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