



A LADY GOES WEST

Adventures in fitness, food and fun

by Ashley Pitt

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ONE LOVELY NIGHT IN CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA

Posted on December 4, 2014 by Ashley

Visiting Carmel-by-the-Sea has been on my list of California to-dos since moving to the West Coast more than two years ago. Although Dave and I have thoroughly explored **wine country**, **Tahoe**, **Santa Cruz** and **Monterey**, we had never made it all the way down to the lovely area of Carmel until this past Sunday.

We tacked on an extra day away after our **Thanksgiving roadtrip to San Diego**, stayed a night in Los Angeles and drove up to Carmel from there on Sunday morning. With just some minor traffic, we arrived in Carmel a little bit after noon. Even though it had been raining all day, the skies cleared for our arrival, and we were greeted by sunshine and a crisp breeze.

Dave and I stayed at **Tradewinds Carmel**, a lovely hotel on a quiet residential street in downtown Carmel, about three blocks from the main drag, which was recommended to me by one of my previous personal training clients. The first thing we noticed when pulling up to Tradewinds? It was very Asian-inspired in design, with a real “zen-like” feel. Oh, and it doesn’t have a street address, which I’ll get to later.



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WELCOME



Zen-like? Here's a shot of the hotel's courtyard meditation garden. Oh and that's me up there by the sign.

Although our room wasn't ready yet and check-in time wasn't until 3 p.m., we left our car at the hotel and picked up a little informational packet with a map of the area from the friendly concierge and front-desk person, then we set out on foot. But first ...

Some fun facts about Carmel

Because I love to learn about the places I visit, thought I would share some fun facts about Carmel with you, in case you like useless trivia or plan to visit one day.

- Named the world's third best city for romance by [Travel + Leisure](#) in 2014.
- Has moderately warm temperatures all year with an average high of 68 degrees and a low of 48 degrees. And the best weather of the year is during the Indian Summer of September and October.
- There are 45 inns, 60 coffeehouses, bistros and restaurants, 80 art studios and four shopping venues, in addition to a ton of boutiques.
- The population is 3,787, according to the 2011 census.
- In the 1900s, Carmel was home to an eclectic group of artists and intellectuals, which is certainly evident today by the number of art studios that remain.
- Carmel is about 120 miles south of San Francisco and 350 miles north of Los Angeles.
- The city is just one-square mile.
- Clint Eastwood lives in Carmel.
- There are no mailboxes in Carmel, instead there is a central post office. And there are no street addresses at all, merely general hints at locations, which is a totally neat thing in practice adding to the vacation vibe, and just a tad confusing as we searched for our hotel upon arrival.



Hello! I'm Ashley. Welcome to my blog, where I write about healthy living, personal training, teaching group fitness, food and fun in San Francisco. Stay awhile!

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- There are tons of cottages with an English-village feel, as well as huge sprawling homes with ornate architecture.

I pulled all this information from the welcome packet, of course. And here are some fun facts about our hotel, Tradewinds Carmel:

- It opened in 1959. There are 26 deluxe guestrooms and two suites in a three-story multi-level building inspired by the architect's time in Japan. Ah-ha, I knew it was an Asian feel.
- Room amenities include Egyptian cotton linens, a fireplace, kimono robes (super cute), CD players with some spa music (which we totally listened to), WiFi, coffee and tea, some chocolate-covered strawberries upon arrival (which I totally ate), a comfy bed, lovely decor and all of the other conveniences you'd expect of a luxury property.
- A delicious complimentary breakfast spread is served in the Catlin room every morning from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., and if you don't want to dine in, you can have what you want delivered to your room. I'll get to more about the breakfast spread later.
- While room rates can range from \$250 to \$550 a night, it's pretty reasonable in Carmel standards. (Yes, Carmel is know as a pricey place to visit, much like the rest of this state.)

Now let's get to the trip recap.

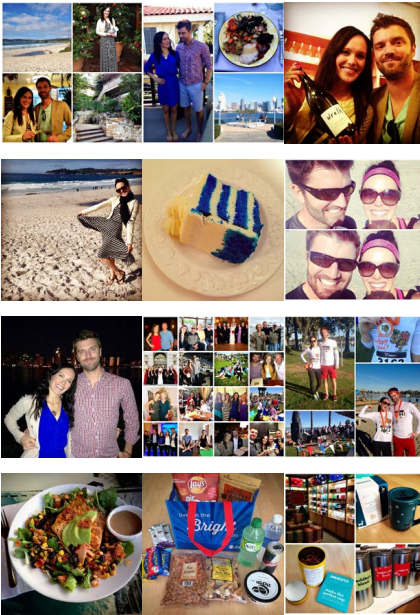
Walking, sipping and taking in the Carmel scene

First of all, when Dave and I checked into Tradewinds Carmel to leave our car, we used the lobby restroom, and there was a little sleeping cat in a box on the floor, quietly minding its own business. How cute. That encounter really started off the cozy, laid back and casual vibe of our time in the area.

Second of all, we decided to start our adventure by making our way to the beach, and we walked along the neighborhoods and main commerce district of Carmel completely in awe of the "village" feel. While I didn't expect Carmel to be beachy, it was way more European than I had anticipated. Very cozy and quaint homes and shops, all nestled in tight together. I loved it. Dave and I had watched the movie "The Holiday" a few nights before, and many of the homes reminded me of Kate Winslet's cottage that Cameron Diaz ends up staying in for the movie. Does that help with imagery? Of course, some of the homes were huge and gorgeous as well, but many were small and compact.

Two very different fitness class experiences
A day of my eating and some commentary

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Most of the people we chatted with in Carmel were super nice, except for the gal that took the picture of us on the beach. She didn't seem happy to do so. Oh well. At least she took a decent shot.

After taking a few photos on the beach, we made our way back into town for lunch, which was only about a five-minute stroll. We stopped along to look at menus at various restaurants and ended up at **Dametra Cafe** for some fine Mediterranean cuisine. Because it was a Sunday, it wasn't quite as busy as expected. Still, we chose to sit at the bar to dine rather than wait for a table. And this dining — yes, our first meal in Carmel — was a major success. We had warm bread and dipping oil, spanakopita, and grilled shrimp, all shared while sitting in a vibrantly decorated cafe. I was very pleased and stuffed. And the price was right too.

Post-lunch, we pulled out our map and welcome packet from the hotel, which included some **Wine Walk Tasting Passport passes**, so kindly gifted to us from the Tradewinds Carmel folks. You can buy these passes online from the Chamber of Commerce for \$65 each, giving you a free wine flight at nine of 14 tasting rooms all within walking distance of downtown Carmel. It's a self-guided tour and definitely worth experiencing if you like wine. We had a ton of fun with it. And yes, we do like wine.

With food in our bellies, we came up with a game-plan and made our way to our first tasting room on the Wine Walk, **Caraccioli Cellars**. There we had some sparkling wine, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and learned a little bit more about Carmel from the nice ladies pouring. I was in love with the **Brut Rose varietal** (which apparently was award-winning), and wish I had purchased a bottle. But of course, I felt like we shouldn't jump on the first thing, so we left that tasting room empty-handed.

One tasting room down, we received a call from Tradewinds Carmel that our room was ready, so we headed back to check it out and drop our bags. Upon entering, I was so impressed with the room. Although it was small, it was very comfortable, and the decor was perfect. Both Dave and my favorite feature was the fireplace, which is something we would love to have in San Francisco.



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California has some beautiful places. Here's a look at my recent visit to Carmel-by-the-Sea. I want to go back now!
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One lovely night in Carmel-by-the-Sea - A Lady Goes West



my list of California to-dos since moving



Shown above from top left to right: Dave and I posing with a Wrath wine bottle, the Wine Walk passes, which got us the free flights and me in front of a Christmas tree. Yes, the second Thanksgiving was over, I decided to jump into Christmas-mode, but haven't started my Christmas shopping yet.

We continued to the **Wrath Tasting Room** in the very fancy **Carmel Plaza** shopping center, complete with a Tiffany's, Bottega Veneta and all sorts of other high-end labels. And then we mosied along downtown to hit up a few more spots. We spent the most time at **Scheid Vineyards**, which came highly recommended. There we chatted with some fellow San Franciscans and even exchanged contact information so Dave could offer up some Warriors tickets. The woman of the couple we met owns a lovely boutique in Carmel as well, which I had ooggled over on the walk from the beach. Such classy stuff.



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Shown above from top left to right: The outside of Scheid tasting room, me in front of a fancy doorway when the sun was still shining bright, and Dave and me cheers-ing to wine tasting and Sunday Funday.

Every single stop, we learned a little bit more about Carmel, sipped on some good wine and took increasingly silly pictures, which didn't make the cut for public broadcast.

When night falls in Carmel ...

Finally, after we had used up our tasting passes, we went back to the hotel to shower up for dinner, and upon recommendations, went to **Grasing's**, a restaurant very close to our hotel. We had heard good things about **Christopher's** as well, but that spot was closed for a private party, unfortunately.

The weather was perfect for a short stroll outside to and from dinner, but the lights were off at most of the places along the way. Yes, Carmel is quiet and peaceful once the sun goes down, unlike the bustling city we call home. And to second that quiet feeling, Grasing's was not super busy for a Sunday night (not to mention, places close much earlier in Carmel than they do in San Francisco, so our 8 p.m. dinner was a late one there), but still, the setting was good. And we didn't even need a reservation.

I was pretty excited to dig into a full Carmel coastal-cuisine dinner at Grasing's, especially because it had been talked up so much. We had some very tasty and moist-flavored bread, a cheese plate, veggie lasagna, a duck dish and a warm cookie with ice cream (yes, this was some 80/20 eating to all my healthy-living blog friends out there!). Sadly, I wasn't amazed by the entrees at Grasing's. And although our server was nice, she actually delivered us the duck when we ordered the chicken. That's a pretty big mix-up, and rather than wait another 20 minutes for the chicken to be ready, we decided to eat the darker meat. Not a fan of the duck dish at all. (But a good service recovery move on her part, she only charged us for the chicken and gave us the dessert for free!) Once again, I'm worried that Dave and I are becoming very-much food snobs due to our time in San Francisco, because I continue to encounter meals that aren't as good as what I get here. I never used to be so picky, I

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swear. But still, I have no doubt that Carmel offers up some excellent cuisine, and we got a taste of that at lunch and parts of dinner.

After dinner, we strolled right on back to Tradewinds, all tucked out.

In Carmel, the nightlife takes place back in your hotel room when you snuggle up to go to sleep before 10 p.m. as happy as a clam. That's my kind of place. As someone who could take or leave the bar scene, I like a sleepy little town in which relaxing and getting to bed at a reasonable hour is what's in store. Dave and I had a great night's sleep in our comfy bed, but were very sad to wake up on Monday. There's nothing worse than ending a holiday and a fun roadtrip knowing you have to go back to the real world. I already spoke about my **rough re-entry into the City** and am dreaming of going back to Carmel soon. I mean, we only got to go to nine of the 14 tasting rooms, so clearly we need to revisit that gorgeous seaside village.

Ending our trip with a great breakfast

Nonetheless, breaking-the-fast at Tradewinds Carmel made our last day seem a little brighter. While you can usually expect a couple of small boxes of cereal and dry pastries for a complimentary breakfast spread, the Tradewinds Carmel Catlin dining room went above and beyond, with breads, baked goods, granolas and yogurts. I tried a little bit of everything, because I could. There was also a fireplace, newspapers and very pretty table settings (also Asian-inspired) available, welcoming you to stay a while and enjoy your food. Bland cafeteria, this was not.



Shown above from top left to right: Dave slicing up a bagel, the lovely table where we dined, my breakfast spread and the diverse selection of teas.

Once we finished eating and packed up, Dave had some work to do from the room before we drove away. I used that time to catch up on **Monday-morning blogging**. Then, check-out was a breeze, because all we had to

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DISCLAIMER

This blog, while awfully entertaining, is not meant to offer professional nutrition or exercise advice to all readers, merely my thoughts and experiences on all things health, fitness and life in San Francisco.

Everything I write about is my own opinion and what works for me. I hope you enjoy my ramblings, but don't take it all too seriously. Although I'm a certified group fitness instructor and certified personal trainer, I'm not a registered dietitian, meaning you should ask a professional before you decide if my recipes and tips are right for you.



do was leave our room keycards and let them know we were off. And for one more “small world” encounter, the nice lady at the front desk said she had a daughter who lived near our neighborhood in San Francisco and who had also just hit the road in that direction minutes before. And with that, we made the nearly three-hour drive back up to the City.

Final thoughts on visiting Carmel

My final thoughts on our short, but lovely, stay in Carmel? I enjoyed it! Carmel is great for couples. It’s great for a girlfriends’ getaway. It would be great for a small destination wedding. And it’s great for people who love wine, sidewalk strolling and high-end shopping. I’d love to go back and spend more time checking out the art studios, because I’ve always wanted to buy a real California-made painting of a place we’ve visited together. But truly, visiting Carmel is almost like a little walk through an English village, complete with a breathtaking beach just a few minutes from downtown. Good stuff. And just what I needed before launching back into the busy-ness of December.

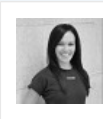
Okay folks, I’m heading off to do some work, with a **Barry’s Bootcamp** lunch-time session and a Christmas party on the agenda for later. Have a lovely Thursday, and make sure you come back in the morning for my favorite post of the week — “**Friday Favorites**.” See you soon!

** Disclaimer: The super-friendly folks at Tradewinds Carmel and Carmel-by-the-Sea provided Dave and me with a complimentary one-night stay at the hotel, as well as the Wine Walk Tasting Passports. But I think my pictures alone tell you that my words of admiration for this area are nothing but true. Wine not?*

Questions of the day

Have you ever been to Carmel? What’s your favorite thing to do on a vacation? What’s one place that you’re dying to visit?

- Ashley



About Ashley
I’m a personal trainer, group fitness instructor and the writer of A Lady Goes West, a blog about my adventures in fitness, food and fun in San Francisco.
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17 COMMENTS
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17 Responses to One lovely night in Carmel-by-the-Sea



Erin @ Her Heartland Soul says:
December 4, 2014 at 4:27 am

What a great trip recap! You’ve made me so excited to visit Carmel next week!

Erin @ Her Heartland Soul recently posted...[Fitness Focused Gift Guide](#)

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Ashley says:
December 4, 2014 at 7:51 am

Oh yes, it’s such a lovely place. Hope you have a good time!:)