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Escape to beautiful Carmel-by-the-Sea

Lysa Allman-Baldwin | 10/23/2014, 2:14 p.m.



Part of Carmel-by-the-Sea's charm is its boutique size—just one incorporated square-mile and only 3,900 full-time residents. (Carmel Street) LYSA ALLMAN-BALDWIN



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Situated along California's Central Coast region just 249 miles north of Santa Barbara, five miles south of Monterey and about 120 miles south of San Francisco, Carmel is a spectacular vacation gem. Its boutique size—just one incorporated square-mile within the larger Monterey County boundaries with only 3,900 full-time residents—is part of its charm and what has attracted people here for decades.

Its history dates back to the early 1700s, when the San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo Mission was founded by one of several Spanish Franciscan monks, who eventually had 21 missions built throughout California. It remains today a historic National Historic Landmark Basilica Church, school and museum.

The waterways, fertile soil, topography and weather were among the

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many factors that attracted numerous early explorers to the area to establish businesses, agriculture and other entities. This included two businessmen who founded the Carmel Development Company in the 1900s, which helped transform Carmel into a true village.

You could say that the decades to follow really “made Carmel’s day”—yes, that’s my cheeky ode to actor and director Clint Eastwood’s famous “Dirty Harry” “make my day” movie lines. Eastwood was elected mayor of Carmel in 1980. As a longtime resident, Eastwood and other celebs who both lived and vacationed here raised Carmel’s visibility and popularity. Since that time, folks have flocked here from all over the world to enjoy this unique setting that captivates and inspires the senses.

A great place to start your exploration of Carmel-by-the-Sea (which, although part of the bigger Carmel area, is still commonly referred to as “Carmel”) is to stop by the Carmel Visitor Center, which is chock full of information, brochures, maps and other items to help visitors plan their stay here.

For an overview of Carmel’s history and historic structures, begin with one of the first, the First Murphy House. Constructed in 1902, it is named after Carmel’s most prolific designer and builder, Michael J. Murphy, and is now the home of the Carmel Heritage Society, offering a wealth of historic exhibits, written documents and audiovisual elements about the area’s history.

Murphy went on to design and/or build over 300 homes and buildings in Carmel, many of which are highlighted along the “Carmel History Tour.” On it, visitors can learn about and explore places such as the Harrison Memorial Library, designed by well-known architect Bernard Maybeck; the Golden Bough Theater, now home of the Pac Rep Theatre, the only professional theater on the Monterey Peninsula; and the Cypress Inn, a landmark, Mediterranean-style boutique hotel built in 1929—it was originally called La Ribera—and today co-owned by actress Doris Day.

Other historic entities include one of the city’s original fire stations, built in 1937 of Carmel stone, the Seven Arts Building and Court, built in the late 1920s for Herbert Heron, and the Forest Theater, a 540-seat amphitheater established in 1910 as the first outdoor theater west of the Mississippi, just to name a few.

CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA TODAY

Today, Carmel-by-the-Sea is consistently rated as a top U.S. 10 destination by many A-list travel, lifestyle, arts and culinary websites and publications, each invariably noting how its fascinating history, expressive



Lysa Allman-Baldwin

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architecture, unique topography, beautiful weather, captivating charm and romance, and intimate size create a unique backdrop for its plethora of bistros and restaurants, cultural and performing arts, art galleries, shops, accommodations and more.

Carmel-by-the-Sea is highlighted by numerous shops, restaurants and art galleries set in historic and architecturally attractive structures. (Carmel Restaurant)

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