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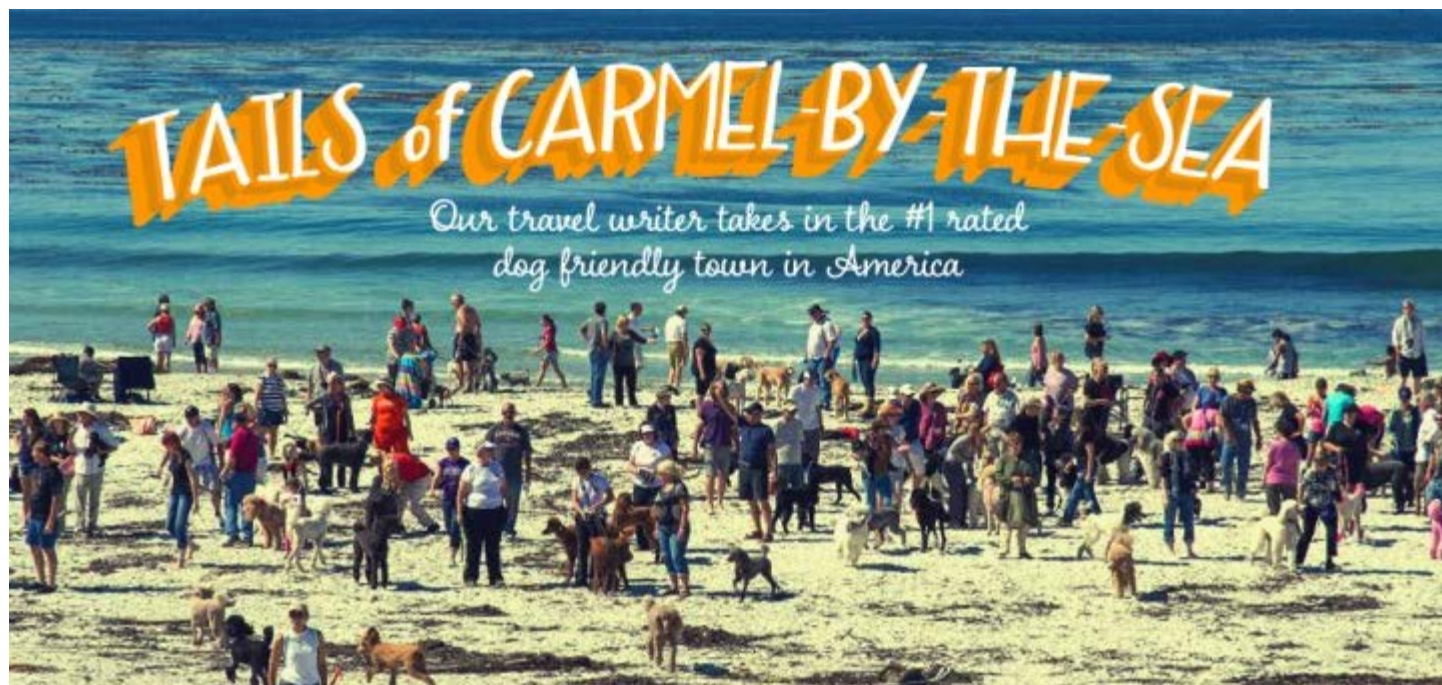
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Tails from the #1 Rated Dog Friendly Town in America

A visit to Carmel-by-the-Sea

By Si Si Penaloza



All a travelin' dog lover really needs to know about Carmel-by-the-Sea is this: Carmel Plaza boasts a

custom drinking fountain just for dogs. It is lovingly called the Fountain of Woof. You get the picture.

In my first five minutes in town center, I spot more poodles than people. As it happens, October 3 is Poodle Day in Carmel. This annual event unites poodle lovers for a full day of curly haired hypoallergenic love. Proceeds from Poodle Day benefit NorCal Poodle Rescue, which has been a haven for poodles in need in Northern California for 27 years.



And for the record, I didn't witness a Labradoodle or Giant Schnoodle getting stink eye from the pure bred crowd. It's a very welcoming atmosphere; I shook paws with a Saint Berdoodle and gave a treat to a Great Danoodle. I even caught a selfie with the ever elusive Weimardoodle. We're two breed mixes from a Dr. Seuss book here. Don't get me started on the Lhasapoo licking down the Pekepoo.

In short, it was the most fun I've had as a solitary traveler dropping into a local festival. I make friends in minutes, furry kisses in mere seconds. Poodle Day kicks off with a parade followed by activities at The Crossroads. Afternoon events include off-leash beach play, a scenic stroll, or other dog-friendly activities around Carmel. Later, a cocktail party allows poodles to lounge in style as human companions gather for convivial drinks and hors d'oeuvres.

In addition to being one of California's most beloved holiday destinations, Carmel-by-the-Sea is rated the #1 Dog Friendly Town in America. Hotels, shops and restaurants roll out the red carpet and the city offers many places — beaches, trails, and tourist attractions — where dogs can roam alongside their humans. Water bowls, dog treats and biodegradable bags are on every corner of this town, plus high-end services like massages, doggy turn downs, surf lessons.

Carmel-by-the-Sea has the feel of a whimsical English village as early settlers were clearly Beatrix Potter-

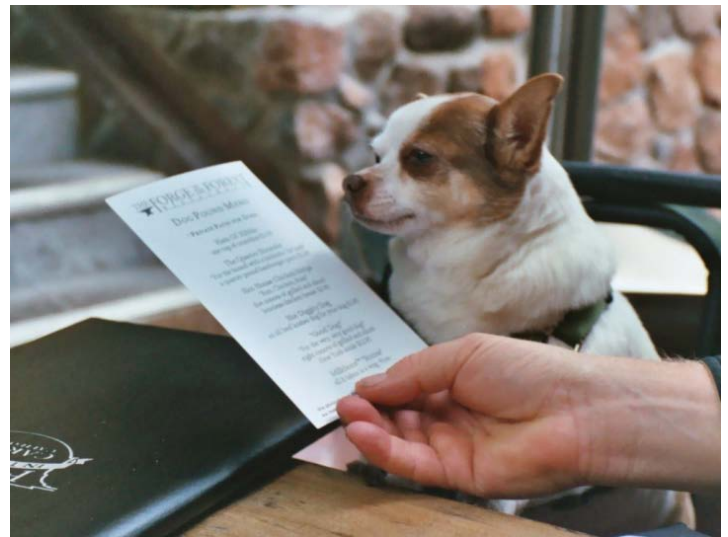
lovin' British expats on a mission to recreate a sense of home. The 5,000 citizens who live here today are more on a Lululemon and coconut water mission, easy going and into keeping it green. That being said, you need a permit to trim a shrub or wear high heels here. That's right, before you strap into your Louboutins, you'll have to stop by City Hall and secure a permit. The original law, which prohibits heels taller than two inches, was intended to prevent injuries on the cobblestone streets (and thus lawsuits).



A former artists colony, the artsy hamlet attracted authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Sinclair Lewis, and photographer Ansel Adams, as well as its celebrity mayor from 1986 to 1988, Clint Eastwood. Main Street is the embodiment of California quaint, unspooling vintage charms at every turn. The storybook cottages of Hugh Comstock are beguiling, especially Carmel Heritage Society's First Murphy House, built in 1902. Be sure to tour poet Robinson Jeffers' romantically snug Tor House and striking Hawk Tower, on scenic Carmel Point, a half-hour's walk from downtown.

You've got a whopping 25 hotels and inns to choose from here when traveling with Fido. Talk about spoiled for choice. Moreover, pets get VIP treatment in Carmel; the town takes its dog lovin' very seriously. Think: doggie turn down, doggie room service menus, and outdoor showers. When booking these pet-friendly hotels, inns or cottages, be sure to compare the perks. Many will seat canine companions with their masters in covered and open-air patios as well as a few indoor locations. Not content with just water bowls and doggy treats, businesses raise the stakes with custom doggie menus of kibble, biscuits, grilled chicken, steak tartar, and more.

You could say it all started with Cypress Inn, America's pioneer in pet friendly accommodations. Ahead of the curve, this was California's first hotel to not only welcome but cater to pets in the mid-1980s. Since then, the reception staff has seen everything from parrots to pot bellied pigs to miniature horses check in for an adventure by the sea. The interiors of this 1929 icon co-owned by actor and animal rights activist Doris Day recently got a glamorous vintage Moroccan makeover. The imposing white facade is still ornate Spanish Colonial, but the inside is all Casablanca shutters, mosaic tiles and souk-style lanterns. Concierges are known to carry grain-free all-natural dog treats, eager to dole them out on arrival. Terry's Lounge rolls out a daily Yappy Hour saluting all things retro with a classic cocktail carte for adults and Muttinis for four-legged companions. The new Culinary Canine menu is also a huge hit – Chowhound Chicken, Buster Burger and Muttloaf.



Strolling along Scenic Road is a highlight; it meanders along the curve of the Carmel beach and offers a packed dirt path alongside for joggers, on-leash dog walkers and sightseers. Spanning from Carmel Beach to Carmel River Beach, the Scenic Road path offers some of the area’s most iconic views of Carmel Point, Point Lobos State Reserve, Pebble Beach Golf Links, and Carmel’s famous Cypress trees and white-sand beach. Dogs are allowed off-leash on Carmel beach, however they must be under the voice control of their owners. Canines romp along the surf to their heart’s content, making new fur friends.

Carmel shopkeepers know the way to a customer’s heart is through their dog. Most keep a steady supply of dog biscuits at the counter and offer water dishes at the door. The Cottage of Sweets includes doggy treats in its popular line up. Many retailers in the Carmel Business District sport creative, artistic hitching posts outside and don’t mind if behaved dogs accompany owners inside. Diggidy Dog caters to the pets themselves, offering unique products that are functional and healthy. At the end of the day, cuddle up with your pooch on a beach rimmed by biblical cypress trees, pure bliss.



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