



## Modern-Day Bohemia: Quaint, Quirky Carmel-by-the-Sea

Carmel-by-the-Sea is a modern day Bohemia with an eclectic, loose-knit vibe, sans the bespectacled trendy hipsters donned in fedoras and skinny jeans. It's a small town built on the creative genius of artists, poets and writers, muses inspired by the iconic beauty of the Monterey Peninsula and the year-round mild [...]

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## Modern-Day Bohemia: Quaint, Quirky Carmel-by-the-Sea

Gayle McCarthy CALIFORNIA, CHRONOLOGICAL, DESTINATIONS, UNITED STATES NO COMMENTS

Carmel-by-the-Sea is a modern day Bohemia with an eclectic, loose-knit vibe, sans the bespectacled trendy hipsters donned in fedoras and skinny jeans. It's a small town built on the creative genius of artists, poets and writers, muses inspired by the iconic beauty of the Monterey Peninsula and the year-round mild climate. The one-square-mile city is nestled on Carmel Bay in central California on the southern bend of the peninsula, roughly two miles north of Big Sur and 120 miles south of San Francisco. But don't let its small size fool you; Carmel packs a big punch, with countless restaurants, coffeehouses, pubs, galleries, bistros and bakeries, not to mention the ongoing calendar of cultural events.



Monterey pines line the main beach of Carmel-by-the-Sea

Everyone's genuinely friendly here and that happiness is apparently contagious. *Condé Nast Traveler* recently ranked Carmel-by-the-Sea number six in the annual Top 10 Cities in the United States Readers' Choice Awards, based on criteria such as culture, atmosphere, friendliness, shopping, restaurants and lodging. And that friendliness extends to four-legged pals, too. The term "animal friendly" is almost an understatement here. Water bowls line the streets of the downtown area, outside cafes, restaurants and galleries; dogs run leash-free on the beach and owners are mindful of the mess; there's a daily "Yappy Hour" at the historic Cypress Inn, Carmel's landmark boutique hotel made famous by owner Doris Day, where dogs can belly up to the bowl and drink alongside their human counterparts at the bar.



The charming Cotswolds-like cottages of Carmel

It's a small town rooted in odd quirks and anomalies. Eating ice cream in public was once made illegal due to the mess it created on the streets. The law was shot down when Clint Eastwood took office as mayor in 1987; today, ice cream can be enjoyed outdoors thanks to Dirty Harry. High heels are illegal to wear within the city limits for liability reasons. A woman's (or man's) shoe heel cannot exceed two inches in height and its base must be at least one inch across. You can pick up a free permit at City Hall to wear high heels and avoid getting ticketed, even though the law is rarely enforced. There's no jail in town, no sidewalks within the residential areas, no cemetery, no street lights, and the homes are not numbered, which equates to no home mail delivery. Addresses are explained by street location, cross street information or house names; for example, "fourth house on the east side of Ocean Avenue with pink trim," or "Sea Scape." Residents flock to the post office to collect



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| DESTINATIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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their mail, making the post office the most popular place in town to connect with fellow neighbors and keep up with the latest gossip.

The winding paths, hidden gardens, eclectic shops and charming cottages make Carmel the perfect city to discover on foot. A worthwhile tour is Gael Gallagher's two-hour leisurely-paced walking tour, an informative and fun group activity that paints a rich historical perspective while showing the must-see stops along the way. Architecture buffs will appreciate the story behind the cute cottages tucked off the road, starting with the First Murphy House, an 820-square-foot cottage built in 1902 by the 17-year-old architect Michael J. Murphy, who, under the tutelage of land developer James Franklin Devendorf, began creating his signature style of late Victorian and Craftsman Bungalows to shape the iconic Carmel landscape of summer homes by the sea. The First Murphy House was restored and preserved by the Carmel Heritage Society and now serves as its headquarters and visitors' center. Carmel is also known for its "fairytale" homes, based on the architectural vision of Hugh Comstock, who built his wife a 300-square-foot dollhouse in 1920 to house her hand-sewn doll collection. People loved the house and began asking Comstock to build more homes in the same "Dollhouse Tudor" style, creating a Cotswolds-like English village landscape with homes featuring rounded doors, rolled eaves, asymmetrical stone chimneys and mullioned windows.



*Relax under a canopy of bougainvillea at the Carmel Cottage Inn*



*Producer Karim Amer talks about his award-winning documentary, "The Square," at the 2013 Carmel Art and Film Festival*

of sparkling cider upon arrival. All of the cottages are nestled in a lush backdrop of landscaped trellises, vibrant bougainvillea, cobblestone paths, and sun-splashed patios, transforming the morning ritual of coffee or tea to a sacrosanct, spiritual experience.

Artists looking for a community of fellow creatives will be challenged to find a more inspiring destination. Carmel exudes creativity, and the perfect forum for such artistry can be found at the annual Carmel Art and Film Festival. The 2013 festival marked its fifth anniversary by welcoming burgeoning filmmakers, producers, directors and talent from all over the world for premier movie screenings, workshops, forums, wine tastings and after-party events. It's become a signature event for Carmel, drawing in big name celebrities and tourists alike, second only to the annual Concours d'Elegance classic auto show held in nearby Pebble Beach each summer. Cajun artist and former Carmel resident George Rodrigue, who recently passed away from a long battle with cancer, was honored as this year's featured artist, where his iconic "Blue Dog" image served as mascot for all things art and film. Actress Melonie Diaz was named "Breakout Actress of 2013" for her role in the award-winning film, "Fruitvale Station," a drama produced by Forest Whitaker. Save the date for the 2014 Art and Film Fest, slated for October 15 through 19 in Carmel.



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