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Courtyards, Corridors, and Crannies: Uncovering the Secrets of Carmel-by-the-Sea



(CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA, Calif.) – Carmel-by-the-Sea was recently voted the “No. 2 Best Small City in the U.S.” by the readers of *Conde Nast Traveler* magazine. Maybe it would have been No. 1 if the readers had been able to find all the secret passageways and courtyards hidden throughout this charming coastal village.

According to the official travel website — www.CarmelCalifornia.com — there are more than 40 courtyards and outdoor covered walkways tucked around town, each comprehensively documented with photographs and historical accounts on the site (click on the “Explore” tab).

But it's quite possible that visitors staying at one of Carmel's charming village inns will uncover a few “hidden” nooks and crannies that even the local residents don't know exist.

Carmel's courtyards debuted nearly 100 years ago, when noted architect Hugh Comstock built his fairy-tale houses and shops. All the passageways and courtyards boast their own distinct personality and flair, many featuring unique shops, galleries, and restaurants awaiting discovery by visitors (not to mention curious locals).



A quick tour of some of the courtyard or passageway highlights includes:

- * Pine Inn. The Pine Inn, designed and built by M.J. Murphy, opened July 4, 1903 and quickly became the central hotel for Carmel. Accessible from Ocean Avenue or Mission Street, there has long been a fine selection of shops on the terrace, including Fourtané Jewelers since 1950.
- * Su Vecino. The courtyard's name reflects the neighborly community of Carmel and grew

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up around the terrace of Su Vecino's Mexican restaurant that opened in the 1950s. Much later, the restaurant was home to the serape worn by Clint Eastwood (Carmel mayor, 1986-88) in the famous 1966 film, "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly." Another local favorite, Jack London's Bar & Grill relocated from San Carlos Square to this spot in 2001. Author of "The Call of the Wild," London often visited his bohemian friends in early Carmel.

* Eastwood Building. Eastwood constructed the redwood-sided building in the mid-1980s, with the courtyard looking down upon the Hog's Breath Inn (a restaurant he opened in 1992 along with Walter Becker). Today, the passageway offers a nice view down to the Hog's Breath patio.

* Jordon Center (The McFarland Center). The McFarland Center was built in 1977 on the site of an early service station. Inspired by English Tudor architecture (1485-1603), this collection of shops and businesses offer another angled shortcut from Mission Street to Sixth Avenue — directly across from the fire station. Grasing's Coastal Cuisine restaurant, on the corner, has an award-winning reputation as well as a cozy pet-friendly patio.

* Court of the Golden Bough. Hailed as "A Bit of Old Europe," this courtyard is considered Carmel's first shopping center. Former Los Angeles attorney, Edward Kuster, fulfilled a dream when in 1923 he built the Theatre of the Golden Bough. In 1923, Kuster moved a unique, curlicue-roofed building from Ocean and Monte Verde (well known today as The Cottage of Sweets store) to be a fanciful ticket booth for his new Golden Bough Playhouse. Meandering through the winding passageways and stairs here may serve as a reminder of an early scene from Eastwood's 1971 film, "Play Misty for Me."

* Doud Arcade. Completed in 1961, the arcade provides an interesting stroll from its Ocean Avenue entrance to San Carlos Street. Originally it housed local craft studios and small shops. The artisan feeling remains today, especially in the central interior courtyard with its red tile floor.

* Hampton Court. Jewelry, art, and real estate — a longtime Carmel combination — all are situated in this intriguing modern interpretation of a half-timber Tudor street with stunning handcrafted finishes. Nancy Dodds Gallery hosts contemporary and plein air artists, while Alan Bienenfeld Fine Jewelry has been at home here since 1976. Visitors mustn't miss the brick stairs leading to a small balcony where a great view of interesting Carmel rooftops awaits.

* Carmel Square. Situated next to Nielsen Brothers Market, a family-run business since 1935, the square, with its white buildings and blue trim, offers a feel of old European country cottages. Home to a local watering hole, stores and galleries — stained glass and photography — the court ends at Wells Fargo Bank's parking lot where stairs lead to the Court of Fountains.

* Court of the Fountains. On the former site of the Loma Prieta lumberyard, this rose-filled court is one of Carmel's most impressive commercial experiences. The brick buildings and courtyard with the copper-roofed gazebo were built in the early 1960s and the fountains are a beautiful addition to one of Carmel's finest restaurants — Anton & Michel — offering an elegant and romantic setting and delicious cuisine since 1980. Not to be missed: the arched doorway and stairs leading to Seventh Avenue, as well as the small passageway to Carmel Square.

It's never been easier to get to Carmel-by-the-Sea by air, as Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) is just a 10-minute drive. Convenient direct flights are available to and from San Francisco (SFO, United Express), Los Angeles (LAX, American Eagle/United Express), Las Vegas (LAS, Allegiant Air), and Phoenix (PHX, U.S. Airways), as well as newly added San Diego (SAN, Alaska Airlines). Moreover, San Jose International Airport (SJC) is an easy 75-mile drive from the north.

The Carmel Hospitality Improvement District — a joint organization of the City of Carmel, Carmel Chamber of Commerce and Carmel Innkeepers Association — is working to promote the village's abundant attractions, events, and stunning seaside location. From its incomparable white-sand beach to many choices of distinctive meeting venues, lodging properties, restaurants, shops and galleries, Carmel-by-the-Sea has everything visitors seek.

For more information, visit [CarmelCalifornia.com](#).

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