

ARIZONA

Golfer

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Carmel-by-the-Sea

By Alice and Danny Scott



Pine Inn view of Pebble Beach

Were you drooling over the spectacular scenery during the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro Am in February? We were smiling with memories of the dramatic coastline in northern California. Carmel-by-the-Sea's one square mile of garden cottages, eclectic shops, galleries, restaurants and wine rooms all lead down to the ocean crashing into the beach that is Pebble.

Comstock first built Hansel and Gretel cottages for his wife's felt dolls studio. Through the decades, aesthetically minded aspiring and inspired have held true to the heritage of an artisan community. Homes have names not numbers and retrieving mail at the post office is a social event. High heels are still banned without a permit from City Hall due to uneven roads but Clint Eastwood lifted the ban of walking with ice cream cones in '88. He might have had a Gran Torino but apparently not a grand exit as people still think he's mayor. He never made our day with a sighting but the wine walk did. 14 tasting rooms tucked in to adorably decorated alleys, on the main streets or in Carmel Plaza delight with stories in every certified sip. Carmel could be Charmel with all the happy, healthy people savoring local flavors infused with magic like Grasings' white linen introduction of abalone, La Playa's tenderloin and tuna in a hillside garden, Cantinetta Luca's home-style Italian and the chef's savoire faire at Patisserie Boissiere. Imagine, founder Devvy traded Carmel for the now flat broke Stockton!

Daily flights from Phoenix to Monterrey are short and convenient. The Inns and outs are easy with over 100 options. Pine Inn, the oldest, gives pining and wining a positive twist with canopied headboards and a window view through pine branches of, yes Pebble Beach. The sea beckons a morning stroll on white fluffy sand as we head to the point where hallowed fairways kiss the coast. We clamber up the rocks to sneak a peek at the First Tee Open, watching Tommy Armour III hit the 10th green and chat with a local about life in Carmel before a marshal advises our descent. That's ok; we feast at the Pine Inn's Il Fornaio buffet and head to Pebble's front gate to walk all 18 of the iconic US equivalent to St. Andrews. We imagined our ball flight, checked out the shops and Tap Room, satisfied, as Danny's look alike, John Cook sealed the Champions' deal. Tucson junior Chris Meyers won the amateur portion with the shot of a lifetime making a double eagle on the famed 18th hole. We saved \$495 each not playing.

Most tournaments at Pebble alternate with play on Spyglass and Poppy Hills, formerly the Hilltop Course, renamed by a winning survey. "Buckhorn Ranch" would have worked. If you don't capture a Pebble pet photo, it is not the posing deer's fault. This we played and you can too for just \$80/round, freshly redone by RTJ II who says, "It's a renaissance more than a renovation." It's superb.

Quail Lodge in Carmel Valley is also being redesigned. Already a great track, it has Big Valley views and fine dining on the terrace. Doris Day's A framed cottage perches high above the tee box of 18, a focal point from all directions. Blow her a kiss for a sweet finish. One returning Italian guest saw Doris (now 90) for the first time on her balcony. He shouted, "I love you Doris! I've looked for you for 34 years and if I were 20 years younger I'd climb up to hug you." She replied, "I love you too and if I were 20 years younger, I'd let you." She then sent an autographed picture by way of staff. Doris still owns Carmel's Cypress Inn, where dogs are allowed but children are not, perhaps the reason current Carmel is a well-coifed canine community featuring the Doggie Gazette in newsstands. Poodle weekend was a high stepping promenade of prissy pooches by well-heeled yet unpretentious people.

A wine taster quipped that Carmel is for newlyweds or nearly dead, but all in between make the scene. If you're a sucker for the sea and tranquility, go to the whimsical Carmel-by-the-Sea. Close enough to travel on a whim, discover exclusive deals and packages at www.carmelcalifornia.com.

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