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ESCAPES

Carmel-by-the-Sea: A Quirky-Cool Town Where Dogs Are Welcome and Secret Passageways Are Celebrated

Posted by [Starre Vartan](#) × June 1, 2015 at 1:26 am



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Carmel-by-the-Sea is one of those towns that I couldn't believe I didn't already know existed. Founded as an artist's colony, it has all sorts of almost-whimsical rules—like no streetlights downtown (which I loved! You can see the stars from Main Street at night!) and no heeled shoes over two inches for women. No kidding—though you can get a waiver from Town Hall, this is a law that's not really enforced, but fun to talk about (and an excuse to flaunt your flats!).

Carmel-by-the-Sea: What to Nosh, Quaff & Love (Dogs Galore!)

By  Starre Vartan

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FULL STORY

There's no mail delivery (or mailboxes) in the downtown area either, which means that addresses are all approximate (and yes, it's a bit confusing at first, but it's also really kind of fun)—that fact combined with the fact that there are myriad alleyways, secret passageways and cut-throughs to discover means you can wander for several days in town and still find new spots you hadn't seen before.

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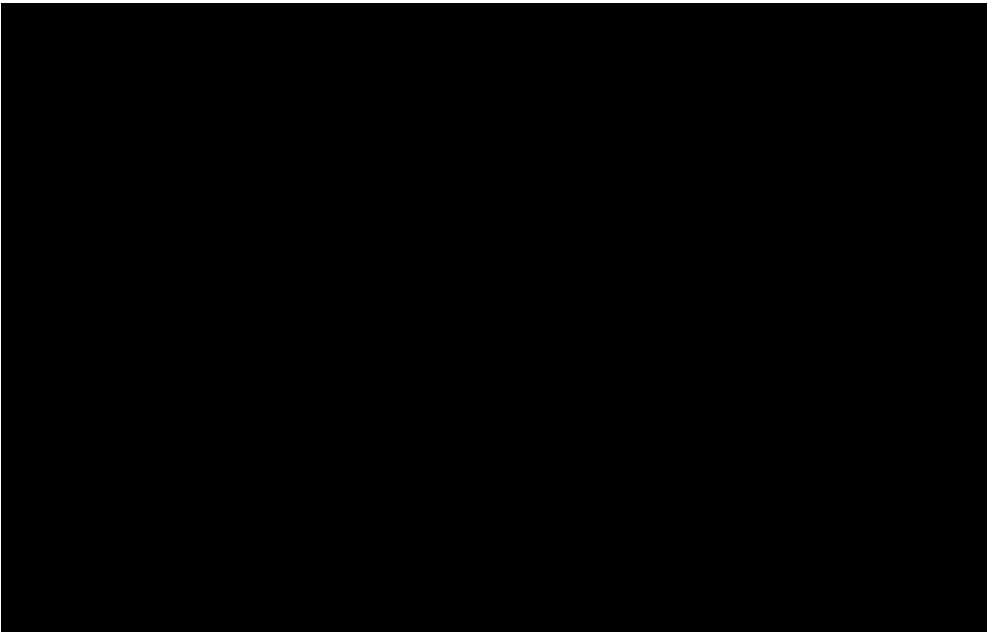
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And all this, just a few hours from San Francisco and the Bay Area! It's like another world (in the best possible way).

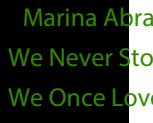


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Carmel is also well-known for its excellent wine scene, with more than a dozen tasting rooms within walking distance of downtown, you can spend several days just walking from tasting to tasting.



Yes, it's as fun as it sounds, and if you are going to hit more than two tastings, pick up the excellent deal which is the Carmel Wine Walk tickets.



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The beach in Carmel is just a walk down the hill from downtown. Yes, it really looks like this—and it’s dog-friendly, of course! You can also enjoy bonfires at night and picnic in the daytime.



Bring snacks for all the pooches along the way (SO much fun to pet all the friendly dogs since I don’t have one at home).



Carmel is known for its alleyways and hidden passages. Half the fun is getting lost and finding all the fabulous little out-of-the-way spots that feel like you’ve just discovered them!



The attention to detail for the 20s-30s era buildings and

preservation of absolutely all the vintage elements in town makes for plenty of stopping to catch great shots to Instagram—you just can't help it!



The Cypress Inn is co-owned by actor and comedian Doris Day; I love the courtyard there, which is a perfect mix of new-and-old Hollywood.



The **Carmel Food Tour** is run by Staci, who takes you around town to all the best eating (and drinking) spots in just a few hours. her tour is a great way to get to try more different

venues than you would on your own.



A short ride across the peninsula brings you to the world-famous [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#), a must-visit for animal lovers. They do incredible conservation work, don't keep large cetaceans for "entertainment" and are pioneers of the sustainable seafood movement.



There's so much natural beauty in and around Carmel—this is just a random snap of the coastline on the way back from the aquarium!

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About Starre Vartan

Starre Vartan is editor-in-chief of Eco-Chick.com and the author of the Eco-Chick Guide to Life.

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