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Fundraising Gala at the Lucas Estate in Carmel

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The Frank Lloyd Wright house along Scenic Drive in Carmel-by-The-Sea

Julie Hatfield

Before September 23, residents of Carmel-By-The-Sea loved to go up to their hilltop mission to reflect, attend mass, meditate and just enjoy the famous dramatic sunsets over Carmel Bay. For years, they also chose the courtyard next to the basilica for their annual culinary gala, Taste of Carmel.

This year, though, on the first day of October, the 24th annual Taste of Carmel was even more celebratory, since their beloved Mission San Carlos de Borromeo is now the home of the very first saint canonized on American soil. Father Junipero Serra, a Franciscan who was canonized by Pope Francis in Washington, D.C. on September 23, established the mission in 1771, lived in what is called his "cell" here, and chose it as his final resting place. The mission basilica, a National Historic Landmark, houses California's first library and some of the most significant religious artifacts in California including tools and equipment used by the Spaniards and Native Americans and a cenotaph, which is an empty travertine and bronze sarcophagus, showing Fr. Serra, created by sculptor Jo Mora, lying atop it. He is buried elsewhere on the property.

The gala, a fundraising for the Carmel Chamber of Commerce, displayed the wares of some of the 60 restaurants within the one-square-mile of the town, and a selection from a group of the town's 14 wine tasting rooms, among them Figge Cellars, Caraccioli Cellars, Galante Vineyards and Windy Oaks. There is so much good locally grown wine in the area that Carmel has created Wine Walk By-The-Sea, a self-guided tour for wine lovers which allows a taste at any nine of the tasting rooms at the "Wine Passport" holders' leisure as they walk through the town.

This year's theme for the Taste of Carmel was "007," and some of the attendees cooperated with the fundraiser's dress code suggestion of secret agent costumes by wearing James Bond tuxedos,



Jim DeLillo

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slinky black sheath dresses and gloves, and gold jumpsuits. Carmel is, after all, a lovely drive north not that far from Hollywood, so costuming comes naturally for some of these residents.

If you're a visitor to this town and heading up to the mission for next year's gala or just a visit to the mission, by all means do not take the faster, straight Mission Street route. Instead, if you want to be dazzled by the Pacific Ocean seascape and by some of the most incredibly beautiful (and most expensive) architecture in the USA, take the slow, one-way, winding Scenic Road, which starts at some of the cute "fairytale" style cottages and opens up along the way to ever larger and more spectacular homes. The Tor House and garden and its Hawk Tower where poet Robinson Jeffers personally gathered the stones for his house from the beach, is now open to the public for touring. Actress Kim Novak once lived on Scenic Road, as did former mayor/actor Clint Eastwood, and Frank Lloyd Wright in his self-designed house perched as far out on the ocean as is safe. The "Butterfly House," just as close to the sea, is so named because of its winged roof which resembles the delicate flying creature just about to take off. It's difficult to travel Scenic Road at any normal speed because you don't know whether to look to your right at the dramatic gnarled cypress trees belonging in a Harry Potter film framing the ocean, said to be found only here or in Tibet, or to the left to catch a glimpse of the next \$8 million mansion, each varying in its own unique style and design.

Whichever way you decide to look, the route to Carmel Mission, formally called Mission San Carlos de Borromeo, is as much a joy to the eyes as is the special little town just behind you.

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