

# NAPA VALLEY LIFE

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NAPA TO NAPLES  
NAPA SCENE

SPECIAL ISSUE

## HOME+GARDEN

GARDEN WITH A VINEYARD VIEW

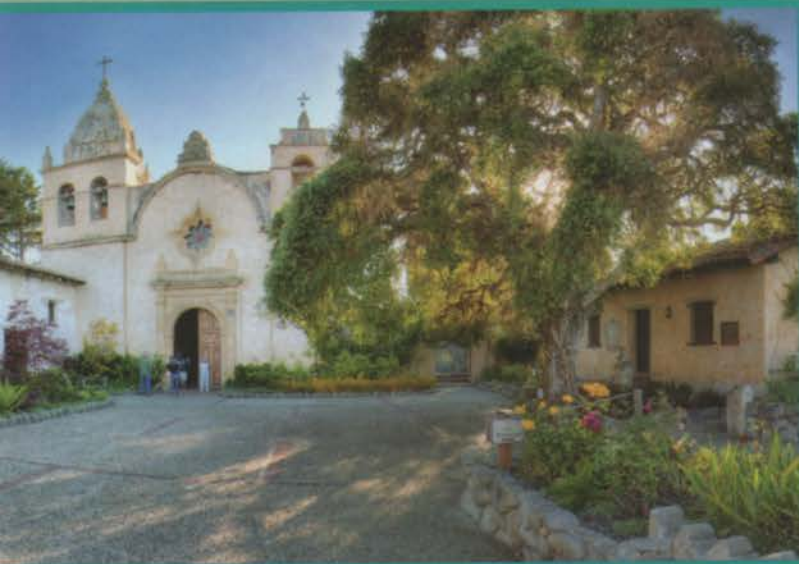
NAPA VALLEY HOME & GARDEN TOUR



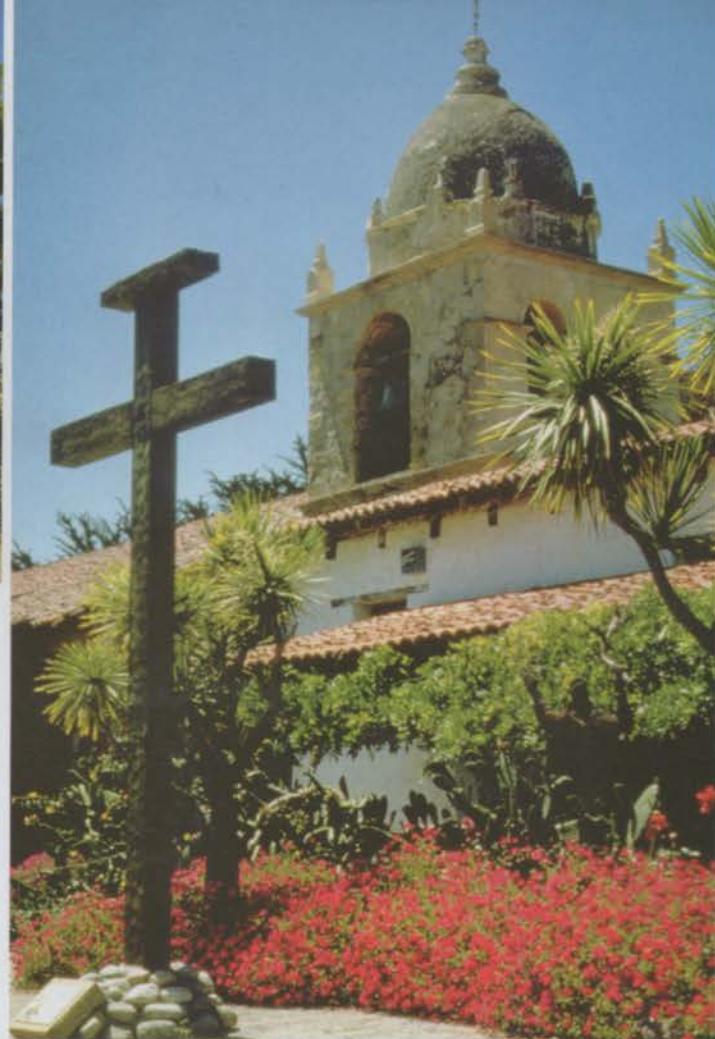


# CARMEL *By the Sea*

by ROBERT KAUFMAN







**A**ll it takes is a trek of approximately 5,000 guided steps throughout the arteries of Carmel-by-the-Sea for curious-minded strollers to earn credit for a crash course on the spirit and characters that have shaped

the charming European-like village since the early 1900s. The only recommended supplies to complete the session? A pair of comfortable walking shoes and a willingness to absorb entertaining storytelling from Gael Gallagher, an expatriate from Boston, who has been turning the pages of her trivia-filled history lessons on her Carmel Walks tour for three years.

Aptly, opening remarks include a story of Perry Newberry, a journalist, playwright and political activist who ran for Mayor in 1922, on the following platform: "Don't vote for Perry Newberry if you hope to see Carmel become a city. If you want its growth boosted. If you desire its commercial success. If street lamps on its corners mean happiness to you. If concrete street pavements represent your civic ambitions. If you think that a glass factory is of greater value than a sand dune, or a millionaire than an artist, or a mansion than a little brown cottage. If you truly want Carmel to become a bustling, hustling, wide awake lively metropolis, don't vote for Perry Newberry."

Not exactly a winning campaign formula by today's standards. However, only six years after this quaint coastal enclave was incorporated as a city in 1916, the voters elected Newberry, and his victory proved to be a defining moment for the future preservation of the beauty, the artistic identity, and the community soul that have contributed to prevent the sophisticated Carmel-by-the-Sea from becoming "citized."

So far, it's worked. To this day, the central post office continues to function as a social hub for residents to retrieve mail. There are still no addresses, parking meters nor sidewalks in the residential zones. And drivers will be happy knowing they cannot ever receive a ticket for running a red light on their way to Starbucks. Why? Streetlights don't exist, and neither does the iconic coffee bean shop. Plus, as amazing as it may seem for a high-traffic tourist zone, not until Clint "Make My Day" Eastwood served as Mayor (1986-88) was it lawful to sell or eat ice cream on public streets in Carmel-by-the-Sea.

Lying just over the hill from Monterey, Carmel-by-the-Sea is a unique community sprinkled with fairytale cottages and, at one time, home to such luminaries as photographer Ansel Adams, authors Robert Louis Stevenson and Sinclair Lewis. It is still the residence for screen legend Doris Day, who also co-owns the landmark (1929) Cypress Inn. With a population under 4,000, this one-square-mile area attracts over two million visitors every year, and that can lead to a source of frustration at times for locals. But not for business establishments. The variety of palatable eateries (exclusive of chain restaurants), the nearly 90 art galleries, or the multitude of shops and antique stores that grace Ocean Ave. and the tapestry of branching alleyways won't be voicing much concern. Thanks to the visitor influx, a majority of the 45 inns and hotels, void of any neon or national brands, remain very content all year around.





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When it comes to heads in beds, a mansion built in 1905 by an artist for his wife, who was a member of the Ghirardelli chocolate family, is considered the "Grande Dame of Carmel." Best known as La Playa Carmel, it is now a freshly renovated, 75-room, luxurious boutique hotel in the heart of Carmel-by-the-Sea's most prestigious residential neighborhood, placing guests – and that includes dogs – only a few blocks from the center of town, and minutes' walking distance from the white sands of Carmel Beach, where all humans and canines are free to roam unleashed.

Presumably, nobody appreciates La Playa Carmel more than Rafael de la Torre. As the longest-tenured employee for 25 years, the Houseman has been granted a front row seat to thousands of guests passing through the lobby.

"With all the changes happening around us, including more homes, the hotel has continued to maintain its historic charm and remain busy," says de la Torre. "Many more people now come to Carmel than in past years, and we love sharing the destination and preserving the history with visitors."

Just around the corner from Ocean Ave. is the historic (1929) European-style L'Auberge Carmel, built around a classic brick courtyard, originally to house artists in the twenty apartments, all since transformed into spacious and elegant guestrooms.

While there are a variety of sleepy-time quarters to suit differing budgets and styles in Carmel-by-the-Sea, location selection is irrelevant because, as proven by Gallagher's foot tours, this town was made

for walkin'. And whether guided or solo, the ticket to exploring is not be apprehensive about weaving through a maze of hidden passageways and exploring a slew of nooks and crannies containing the core personality of what Condé Nast Traveler claims as the "#2 Best Small City in the U.S."

Depending on your tolerance for drinking and walking simultaneously, one of the more entertaining ways to experience the journey is treating yourself to a Carmel Wine Walk by-the-Sea passport and savoring some local vintages produced from the marble-sized fruit grown in Monterey County, the second largest grape growing region in the country. Not only will it entitle you to sample wines at nine of the twelve tasting rooms within a three-block zone, but it affords the opportunity to pull up a barstool and hear tales from folks like Jack Galante, the "head honcho" of Galante Vineyards, whose great-grandfather, Frank Devendorf, was a co-founder of Carmel. Sometimes, the more you listen, the more liberal the servings become! Or you might saunter over to Dawn's Dream Winery, run by Jack's wife, and if by then you've attained an carefree level of weaving, there's a decent chance you'll be feeling some comfort in the free-standing copper bathtub used as a showpiece inside her tasting room.

It's just a hint of the adventures waiting discovery in what de la Torre refers to as "a little city built in a peaceful forest." **NVL**