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Mona Day

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CARMEL CHARMS - I

Mona Day

In many ways, Carmel is a bit goofy - and therein lies its unique charm. To begin with, there are no street addresses: to [locate](#) a building you give the closest cross streets, directions, references ('5th house on the E side of Torres street'), or description ('the one with the blue trim and driftwood fence'). Without addresses, there's no postal delivery, so you pick up mail at the central post office. You say that's inefficient, they say its an opportunity to run into fellow residents and catch up.

There's no parking meters, no streetlights (make sure to carry a flashlight at night), no jail (don't commit any crimes there), and no cemeteries (so please don't die there). If you insist on wearing high heels, you'll need a permit from City Hall - yes, seriously. And its most famous mayor - Clint Eastwood - ran on a ticket that would allow ice cream cones just when the bad guys were about to ban them.

There are no franchises; all hotels are under 40 room mom and pops. I stayed at the quaint Carmel Country Inn which features a mix of cozy studios along with spacious suites with [living rooms](#) and large bathrooms with spa bathtubs. They come with fridges, coffeemakers and free wi-fi. Rooms open out to tiny [gardens](#) and unexpected patios.

The hotel's complimentary breakfast offers plenty of [options](#) like oatmeal, bagels, and yogurt that can get upscale: alongside [peanut butter](#) there is also almond butter, a huge bowl of [berries](#), and catered bacon and spinach quiches delivered fresh every morning. The attentive staff is around tidying and cleaning up, offering to warm up a bagel or [quiche](#) for you. Inn owner Amy Johnson makes it a point to meet and greet you at breakfast. She'll ask if you slept well, enquire about your plans for the day, offer tips, and help you find a restaurant for [lunch or dinner](#). Afternoon snacks and refreshments are a welcome surprise. The chains have nothing on her.

The Bohemians from San Francisco were among the town's early settlers and the town still remains a haven for the creative types whose energy finds expression in some 90 galleries, antique shops and cafes. An easy way to explore is a leisurely two hour guided walk led by Gael Gallagher ([Carmelwalks.com](#)) which includes many of the storied haunts of the famous who have called Carmel home.

As you walk the cobblestone streets with quaint fairy tale [cottages](#) featuring window box [planters](#) abloom with flowers, you are reminded of a storybook village. Trees are protected by city ordinance, so streets detour around them

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whimsically and buildings incorporate them in their design. Tiny unexpected pathways lead to hidden courtyards and secret gardens. And everywhere there are benches - inviting you to sit down, collect yourself, reflect, or strike up a conversation with a passing stranger.

Monterey County boasts almost 40,000 acres of wine country, and about 75 wineries have tasting rooms in and around the town. The Carmel Wine Walk is a self guided visit to 14 tasting rooms; a Wine Passport [available](#) at the Carmel Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center allows you a Wine Walk Flight of up to four one ounce pours at your choice of any nine tasting rooms.

Carmel's no franchise policy also means no fast food, but you won't miss much because there are over 60 coffeehouses, bakeries, pubs, bistros and restaurants carrying fresh local produce of the fertile Salinas Valley, seafood from the Monterey Bay, and the region's world class wineries. The Italian themed Little Napoli specializes in fried artichoke lollipops and spicy cioppino loaded with prawns, mussels, clams, calamari and crab. Cypress Inn has fried calamari, excellent poke, [crab cakes](#), and lamb lollipops. Grasings offers great sandabs along with other seafood and salads. As the name implies, L'Escargot specializes in French fare - escargot, sweetbreads, and quail in maple bourbon.(Continue with More Carmel Charms...)

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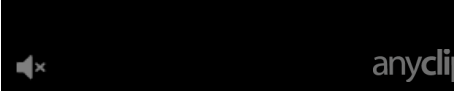


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