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Staci Giovino's three hour guided culinary and wine walking tour Carmel Food Tours is an efficient, social and fun way to check out the culinary scene. We stopped for [samples](#) of American Kobe beef shortrib on polenta with Merlot at Anton & Michel; more samples at the romantic Casanova restaurant; seasonal pizzas at La [Bicyclette](#) - one with three kinds of cheeses, the other with caramelised onion puree and mushrooms on a base of roasted butternut squash; classic cocktails at Terry's Lounge at Cypress Inn, wine tasting at Figge Cellars, and finished off with Lula's Chocolates.

Trio Carmel is a tasting room that also carries exotic olive and nut oils and balsamics, and offers educational tastings to help you appreciate the nuances of their offerings. Pretty soon you'll be able to tell fresh grassy olive oils from the pungent 'double cough' varieties. Be sure to pick up a free [brochure](#) full of creative ways to use their products. My favorite discovery was blood orange balsamic on ice cream: yum.

Nestled in Morgan Court between 7th and Ocean Ave is Kush Day Spa. Operated by John Jertberg, it features a full menu of massages - Swedish, [deep tissue](#), and warm stone with enhancements like aromatherapy, chocolate oil or sugar scrub that can cater to special needs like pregnancy. Facials also run the gamut - calm facial, Vitamin C anti oxidant, acne aid or the peptide anti aging; with enhancements of eye treatment, fruit enzyme peel, and custom serum. The spa also offers private consultations and high quality, medical grade [skincare](#). Make sure to ask for the [package deals](#) and seasonal specials.

Carmel boasts a diversity of big city cultural offerings. There is Carmel Music



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Carmel boasts a diversity of big city cultural offerings. There is Carmel Music Society, Monterrey County Symphony, Carmel Bach Festival, Monterey Jazz and [Blues](#) Festival, Pacific Repertory Theater, Carmel Shakespeare Festival, and Carmel Art & Film Festival. The [Sunset](#) Center offers a line up of world class performing arts; I grabbed the opportunity to [watch](#) Martha Graham Dance Company.

A day trip to the Monterrey Aquarium is a must. Located on [the site](#) of a former sardine cannery on Cannery Row, the aquarium's [centerpiece](#) is a giant 28-foot-high tank that can be viewed from several floors of the building. Exhibits include sunfish, stingrays, jellyfish, sea otters, and other native marine species. One striking exhibit featured a school of 3000 anchovies - once the foundation of Monterey's economy - swimming against the current. At an interactive jellyfish exhibit you can wave your arm to control fluorescent displays of jellies and coral as they dance, glow, and bloom. All this wonder is yours for only \$15 - the price of a movie ticket.

There is no shortage of outdoor activities in Carmel - horseback riding, jogging, walking, bicycling along coastal bluffs, hiking the trails of Point Lobos, and world class golf. [Water activities](#) include fishing, kayaking surfing, scuba. Of course, you don't have to be particularly athletic to enjoy its coastal splendor: just head out to the beach for a brisk morning walk, mist in the air, or catch a breathtaking sunset.

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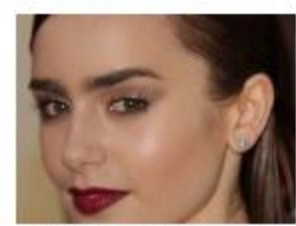
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