

JULY / SEPTEMBER 2016

travelife

MAGAZINE

of the Castles

WIN
2 AIR TICKETS
TO SEOUL
DETAILS
PAGE 4

Treasured Hotel Transformed
Into One Of the World's
Great Destinations

Sweet Carmel

Still Looks Beautiful At 100



Posh California hideaway where rich and famous play has much to offer visitors

Carmel's Pacific coast setting makes it one of the most beautiful locations on Earth. The posh village where the likes of Clint Eastwood has been mayor, is one of the most sought-after addresses in the United States and while it's the playground of the rich and famous, it's also where dogs rule the beaches.



PHOTOS BY KATHERINE BRODSKY

By Katherine Brodsky

TRAVELIFE CONTRIBUTOR

CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA, CALIF. — This quaint coastal enclave, which is celebrating its centennial this year, is a town of many mysteries and quirks. From the countless courtyards and stone-paved passageways to the fairy-tale, curlicue-roofed houses and shops with asymmetrical stone chimneys and rounded doors designed by architect Hugh Comstock, there's nowhere else on earth like it.

Then consider for a moment a few of Carmel's mayors, which have included the likes of Clint Eastwood and former CIA agent Sue McCloud. (Incidentally, the latter is co-chair of the Centennial "Century of Memories" celebration, complete with a parade and luncheon to take place on October 29).

Reminiscent of a European village, Carmel is surrounded by lush green hills and features wooded trails, white sands and a soft sea breeze that engulfs the land.

"The greatest meeting of land and water in the world," wrote Jack London of Carmel in his 1913 novel *The Valley of the Moon*.

It is dotted with rustic cottages, log cabins, shingled beach

houses and glass homes, all of which cost on average more than \$1 million U.S., even if you can't always tell. And that's part of Carmel's vast charm; it is entirely unassuming and relaxed.

Here you'll find no street addresses. As result, the village's post office serves as a sort of a social gathering spot, as well as the sole place to pickup mail. There are also no parking meters, no streetlights and no sidewalks outside of Carmel's downtown commercial area. Carrying a powerful flashlight isn't such a bad idea after sundown.

And if you want to wear high heels, you'll need to get a license from City Hall. The town's dwellers love their uneven sidewalks too much to let pesky lawsuits get in the way. There was once even a law prohibiting the sale and consumption of ice cream on public streets (to avoid messiness, presumably). Luckily, one of Eastwood's first acts as mayor in 1986 was to repeal that cruel ice cream law.

Speaking of eating, you'll also not find a single chain restaurant in Carmel. Instead you can enjoy the likes of Vesuvio, which made in into the headlines recently when actor Bill Murray allegedly tossed fans' cellphones off of the rooftop patio. Aside from sharing that dubious honour, Vesuvio offers a casual, warm environment to enjoy some old school Italian dishes, including, of course, pizza. Plus, that patio is gorgeous at night when the firepits are going and the twinkly lights are dazzling.

Terry's Restaurant at Cypress Inn, which incidentally is co-owned by Hollywood legend Doris Day, is a great place to enjoy lunch. Take a seat in the flower-filled courtyard and enjoy the Charlie Chaplin mural alongside an assortment of canine guests in this particularly dog-friendly property (Day is an animal advocate).

Tapas more your thing? Mundaka has your paella fix. It's a dark intimate space with vintage black-and-white movies projected on the wall.

For fine dining, head over to Casanova Restaurant. It's an Italian-French room with a romantic flair and French Provençal decor — it feels like it has been lifted from a different decade. Van Gogh once frequented this restaurant and nowadays you can book Van Gogh's Table — the actual table at which the legendary Dutch painter enjoyed his meals at the Auberge Ravoux.

For a shot of java, you can head over to Carmel Coffee House and Roasting Company, or pick up a delicious treat at Carmel Bakery. Built in 1904, it's exactly the sort of old-fashioned bakery you imagine when you close your eyes. The aroma of freshly baked goods draws you in from the streets.

Cottage of Sweets, a British-style sweet shop, will easily bring out the child in you with its extensive collection of candy. So, if you have a sweet tooth, you know where to go. And if you're craving chocolate the chocolate-covered sea salt caramels at Lula's Chocolates will sort you out.

For a more sophisticated experience, stop by Trio Carmel to sample their extraordinary selection of vinegars and olive oils. Try blood orange infused olive oil or espresso dark balsamic in your ice-cream. Honey Ginger White Balsamic, with its slight heat, mixes particularly well in a cocktail or just with soda water. You are limited only by your creativity.

For your sipping enjoyment, Carmel also has 14 tasting rooms and a Carmel Wine Walk-by-the-Sea Tasting Passport — \$65 gets you a flight of wine at any nine of them.

Better yet, take in a Carmel Food Tour (<http://www.carmelfood-tour.com>). It's three hours of tastings for \$79, including wines and chocolates.

At night, much of the town shuts down. If you're not ready to climb into bed, head over to one of Carmel's "dive" bars (by Carmel standards only), like Sade's.

There, you can only pay in cash and order any drink of your



Carmel is a village where surfers and sculptors like XXXXX XXXXXXXX feel right at home. The art shops, quaint inns and hotels and its renowned restaurants make Carmel the perfect place to escape.

choice as long as it doesn't involving mixing more than two ingredients. The real characters here are the bartenders, like Parker, whom locals refer to as "Legend." For a delicious Aviation cocktail, head over to Barmel (next door to Mundaka). One of their bartenders has an uncanny resemblance to John Goodman.

Once you're ready for bed, you can stay in any number of quaint inns like Horizon Inn & Ocean View Lodge, which offers a spacious and comfortable resting place, great views and a fireplace. They even deliver a breakfast basket to your room each morning. There are also more luxurious digs like La Playa Carmel and L'Auberge.

Rested for a new day, you're ready to take in Carmel's art haven, with approximately 100 galleries featuring paintings, sculptures, glass and photography (Winston Boyer's Ocean Series at Gallery Sur is particularly worth seeing). the Carmel Art Tour (<http://carmelarttours.com>) will take you inside with their 90-minute walk-in tour that covers the historical to the contemporary.

Or take in a show at the multimillion-dollar Sunset Cultural Centre (recent guests include David Sedaris and Michael Feinstein).

The jewel of the Monterey Peninsula, Carmel-by-the-Sea has attracted an assortment of colourful characters of some renown over the years. Those include names like Pickford, Fairbanks, Gable, Taylor, and Dali. Today, it still attracts its share of movie stars, famous scribes, politicians and business leaders who come in pursuit of a quiet reprieve and creative energy in this unassuming town that lives by an unspoken code of privacy.

But there's no one quite as revered in Carmel as our four-legged companions. This is truly a city gone to the dogs. In a town where there is no cemetery, the only grave within city limits belongs to a dog, Pal. There's even an annual Poodle Festival.

Everywhere you go, there are dogs. They are running free on the beach, drinking out of bowls filled with fresh water at shops, and some restaurants offer a "yappy hour" or dog menus. Several establishments even offer massages and doggy turn downs — whatever those are.

In a town where the population is under 4,000, canines quite possibly rival their human counterparts.

And that's one of Carmel's biggest charms. •