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Perfect Trip to Carmel by the Sea

By [Jennifer Boden](#)
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Photo Credit: Jennifer Boden

Carmel-by-the-Sea has a storybook quality about it: the picturesque downtown, stunning houses – each one unique – and beautiful ocean vistas. And within that setting, there's no better place to set up shop than the La Playa Carmel – an oasis within an oasis.

Originally built in 1905 by artist Christian Jorgenson as a gift for his wife, a member of the Ghirardelli family, the mansion was converted into a hotel in 1916 and has since remained a sacred getaway and social gathering place in the scenic seaside community.

“The property honors the history by having Ghirardelli chocolates as a turn down amenity”, said General Manager Mary Crowe.

Another ode to history is that La Playa has a “10 cent happy hour” tradition that was started by Howard “Bud” Allen, a local



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resident who bought the property in 1968.

“Wanting to draw in the locals from the residential neighborhood, he added a full-time bar (considered a modern amenity at the time) and reduced the price of martinis every Sunday to a dime”, said Crowe. “The residents, most of whom were artists at the time, loved the reduced rate and made La Playa their stop every Sunday.”

Now the “Bud Allen Hour” is only for 10 minutes; it lasts every Sunday from 5:00 pm to 5:10 pm. Like Mr. Allen insisted upon in the '60s, patrons must pay in *exact* change.

“La Playa Carmel is one of the coastal village’s oldest, most cherished landmarks, harkening back to the town’s heritage as an affluent artists’ community,” said Crowe. To top it off – the hotel is a little more than a block from Carmel beach in one direction and shops and restaurants in the other – ideally situated for fun.



Elegant Comfort

Like so many of the charming inns in the village, La Playa has that iconic, old-school feel with its tile, open wood beams and antique furniture. The grounds have lush gardens where guests can walk around or just kick back in the historic bar.

The hotel also offers a number of room options, from ocean views to large poolside casitas, which include fireplaces and sitting areas. Other options include garden and village views.

Champagne Breakfast

During my visit to Carmel-by-the-Sea, I learned that all hotels and inns offer complimentary breakfast and La Playa is no exception, simply delish. After a brisk daily morning walk on the white sandy beach, I was always excited to return to the hotel for a cup of coffee or mimosa, while enjoying a fresh omelet or waffle, custom made for each guest. The Champagne Breakfast Buffet also included eggs, fruit, variety of cheeses and more.



“From the moment we got here we were impressed,” said guest Gabrielle Maisonet of Albany, New York. “Complimentary sangria, wine, and milk and cookies upon arrival! I was there on my honeymoon and the hotel took special note – delivering a bottle of champagne to our room. How thoughtful.”

Carmel-by-the-Sea and Beyond

La Playa is the perfect location to dive into Carmel-by-the-Sea, which is renowned for its boutique shops and plentiful art galleries. Take a walk around downtown, but pay attention, the village has lots of hidden nooks that visitors will want to check out.

For art lovers who don’t want to miss anything, try Carmel Art Tours, which offers a variety of packages to take you *on*, and *off*,



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the beaten path. “One of Carmel’s highlights is its booming arts scene”, said art connoisseur Rohana LoSchiavo. “Whether it’s artists busy at work in their galleries, award-winning chefs creating works of edible art in the village’s world-class restaurants, or shop owners crafting head-turning storefronts, the essence of art is as defining to Carmel as its beautiful beaches and fairytale cottages,” said LoSchiavo.



During the Carmel art tour guests explore artwork from the 1906 artists up to today’s young generation who use new technologies in their art. “The art in Carmel-by-the-Sea today is the legacy of over 100 years of artists living and working in Carmel,” said LoSchiavo. “Built on the tradition of well-trained painters and sculptors, the art colony continues to attract professional artists exploring their own styles, inspired by the Carmel coast”.

Carmel is nestled between Big Sur, Carmel Valley, Pebble Beach and, beyond that, Monterey. Carmel Valley boasts a thriving wine industry, as well as horseback riding and hiking. Take the 17 -Mile Drive through Pebble Beach, or enjoy a round of golf at one of its famous courses. Visit historic Monterey, home to Cannery Row and the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Dining Out

There’s no shortage of good eats in Carmel-by-the-Sea, from tasty morsels to fine dining. One popular and pet friendly place is Terry’s Lounge, inside the Cypress Inn – a 1929 landmark property co-owned by legendary Hollywood actress Doris Day. At Terry’s Lounge they offer a line-up of ‘20s to ‘40s-era hand-crafted cocktails that keeps things buzzing.



Another great option is Vesuvio which offers traditional Italian dishes, like chicken piccata and osso bucco, but fuses in sushi and other Asian cuisines. They also offer creative appetizers. (try the fried artichoke lollipops with chipotle aioli) For dessert, how bout the chocolate mousse, cannoli “piccola italia”, white chocolate crème brûlée or “cheese-a-cake” with seasonal berries. Delish!

Grasing’s restaurant features fine steak and seafood. Tuna tartare, Dungeness crab cakes, scallops, a bone-in rib eye – or all of the above.



Wherever you go in Carmel, enjoy the atmosphere and comfortable surroundings. The village is an idyllic place to relax on the beach, enjoy a cocktail, take in beautiful art

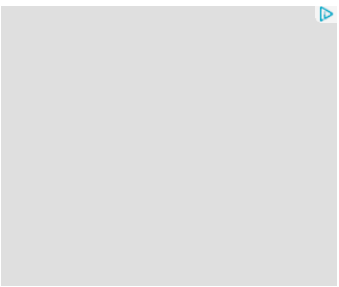
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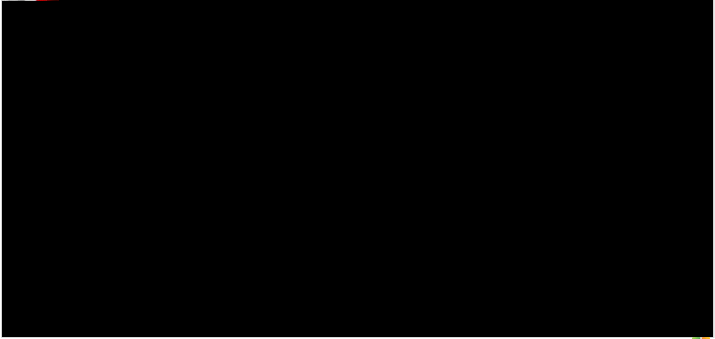
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