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TRAVEL & RECREATION
weekender

CARMEL CHARM

The perfect quaint vacation—100 years in the making. —Angela Fairhurst

Imagine navigating a town like it's the turn of the century, with no street addresses, sidewalks or streetlights. Nothing has really changed in Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif., for the last 100 years, and that's part of its appeal. The city recently celebrated its centennial, during which former Mayor Clint Eastwood served as the grand marshal of the town parade and rode in on an old horse-drawn mail carriage. A visit to this eccentric little city, where most of the 4,000 full-time residents know and watch out for one another, is like stepping back in time.

The classic image of Carmel is framed by the architecture of Hugh Comstock. In the 1920s, Comstock designed rows of cottages here after the style of an English village with rounded entryways, rolled eaves and asymmetrical chimneys. Consequently, there are no tall buildings anywhere—and the sidewalk thing? They're banned in residential areas because local

ordinance forbids cutting down existing trees. This left no need for addresses, or even mail delivery. Each resident picks up their mail at the post office located at Dolores Street and Fifth Avenue.

Wearing high heels over 2 inches requires a special permit from City Hall. This law has been in effect since its early days and remains in force today, primarily because the few sidewalks on the main streets are uneven and hard to see at night with no light.

Its lack of traditional amenities and quirky nature continues to attract visitors to Carmel, as does its food, wine, architecture and art scene. Its proximity to Pebble Beach, 17-Mile Drive and Big Sur doesn't hurt either. Here, where to stay, play and find a good bite to eat.



Carmel's quaint village features charming courtyards dating back to the town's original 1920s fairy tale-inspired shops and cottages.

EAT

Affina Food and Wine (affinacarmel.com) is a modern American eatery that focuses on fresh, seasonal ingredients, with live piano music on weekends.

Casanova (casanovacarmel.com) is a romantic French and Italian restaurant with an outdoor patio once frequented by Vincent van Gogh. The spinach gnocchi is not to be missed.

The same family owns the new bistro **La Bicyclette** (labicycletterestaurant.com), which is equally as tasty.

Anton & Michel (antonandmichel.com) is a restaurant that serves Continental cuisine and flambé desserts. This three-decade-old establishment had a recent makeover, updating the fine-dining experience.



Fresh bites from Affina Food and Wine include steamed Manilla clams, pork belly and slow-roasted barbecue ribs.

When Cypress Inn was acquired by Dennis LeVett and Doris Day, Day insisted pets be allowed to accompany their owners.



STAY

Artist Chris Jorgensen built the 75-room **La Playa Carmel** in 1905 for his bride, Angela Ghirardelli, of the famed chocolate family in San Francisco. It's known for its award-winning gardens, Champagne breakfasts and fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies in the evenings. Room rates from \$256 per night, suite rates from \$541 per night, laplayahotel.com

Carriage House Inn's 13 rooms and suites, many with spa tubs, feature vaulted ceilings, feather beds and fireplaces. Room rates from \$379 per night, suite rates from \$459 per night, carriagehouseinn.com

Located in the center of town, **Cypress Inn** is as charming as actress Doris Day. The ardent animal lover is part owner of this charming, pet-friendly 44-room historic hotel. Room rates from \$279 per night, suite rates from \$399 per night, cypress-inn.com

PLAY

MARCH 16-19

Gourmet Fest 2017 (gourmetfestcarmel.com) is a four-day international food and wine festival in the village of Carmel-by-the-Sea. The festival features an exclusive roster of Relais & Châteaux chefs from around the globe and the world's best wine estates.

APRIL 20-23

Pebble Beach Food & Wine (pbfw.com) highlights the offerings of 100 celebrity chefs and 250 wineries in this four-day event.

Sea Otter Classic (seaotterclassic.com) is a four-day cycling event in Monterey.

APRIL 30

The nonprofit **Big Sur International Marathon** (carmelcalifornia.com) has athletes compete along 26.2 miles of coastline. Proceeds benefit local charities while promoting health and fitness.

The largest rural marathon in the world, Big Sur International Marathon follows the Californian coastline with the finish line overlooking Carmel's beaches.

