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Travel Feature Story



Carmel-by-the-Sea: A Cool Vacation Destination

BY Candice Merrill
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When I left Pasadena on a recent May Sunday it was already 95 degrees and the weatherman was gleefully predicting 3-digits. I hate the heat but I had a smile on my face because I was headed to cool, picturesque Carmel-by-the-Sea.

Now is the perfect time to visit because the summer crowds have not yet descended on this charming, Cotswold-like village. When we arrived, we were greeted by cool temperatures with a bank of fog off shore. Just how I like it!

We were staying in one of the charming inns located in the village called the Coachman's Inn. Located in the village center, the Coachman's Inn offers a hot breakfast in the morning, wine and hors d' oeuvres in the afternoon and fresh cookies all-day long. Our room on the second floor was a cozy affair with a king-sized bed, fireplace, wifi, Kuerag coffee maker, real cream (a BIG must in my book, why have great coffee and then only offer powdered creamer), a refrigerator, microwave and premium movie channels. They have onsite parking and there is also parking on the street.



2017
USC
PACIFIC
ASIA
MUSEUM
GALA

SATURDAY,
THE TENTH OF JUNE
TWO THOUSAND
SEVENTEEN

THE LANGHAM HOTEL
1401 SOUTH OAK
KNOLL AVENUE
PASADENA,
CALIFORNIA 91106

RECEPTION AND
SILENT AUCTION
- 5:00PM
DINNER AND PROGRAM
- 6:30PM

USC Pacific Asia Museum

Summer
Watering
Schedule

Apr 1 - Oct 31



Tuesday
Thursday
& Saturday
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During our stay we enjoyed an array of breakfast dishes from Eggs Diavolo to Red Velvet Pancakes, Muffins to Scones. When you need that little extra bump in the afternoon there are always fresh, tasty cookies to munch on. Before dinner we would grab a glass of wine and a tasty hot appetizer, with an assortment of cheeses and fresh veggies. It was a great location, everything was a short walk, so the car stayed in the parking lot for most of our trip.

Dinner was in one of Carmel's newer restaurants, Cultura Comida y Bebida. This is not your average Mexican restaurant. Although they do have a few of the old favorites like enchiladas and tacos they are completely re-imagined to make a new and tasty dish.

We started with some freshly-made guacamole with two salsas. The green was a fiery-hot charred jalapeno sauce and a red guajillo salsa with a hot smokey flavor. The guac was really delicious with a bite of its own and a cool clean avocado taste. We also tried the Queso Fundido, served flaming with Mezcal and smoked chorizo and plenty of gooey cheese. We washed it all down with a smoky Cultura Mezcalrita, the house special with mezcal, lime, orange and sal de gusano.

I ordered the Wagyu barbacoa enchiladas, a cheesy affair with zippy barbacoa enrobed in blue corn tortillas, nestled on a spicy black bean puree with Guajillo chili and topped with lots of cotija cheese. I loved these enchiladas, they were different from the norm and the barbacoa was really tasty.

My companion ordered the whole Steelhead Trout. It was served eyes, skin, bones and all. The mild rosy flesh was lightly smoky from the oak it was roasted on. Fluffy rice, cilantro, lime and garlic completed the dish. We found the restaurant to be lively, uniquely decorated with great waitstaff.



After a good night's sleep and a light breakfast we ambled over to Terry's Restaurant + Lounge located in the Cypress Inn where man's best friend gets the same treatment as its master. It's co-owned by Doris Day which explains the special treatment for your favorite pet. Actually all of Carmel is dog-friendly so if you like to travel with Fido you'll be welcomed with open arms.

I enjoyed a light lunch of Doris Day's favorite chicken salad with is now a favorite of mine. A nice mound of shredded chicken breast was dressed with capers, water chestnuts and mayonnaise. Surrounding the salad was an assortment of red grapes, black olives and hard-boiled egg. If you're in the mood for something light and refreshing this is it.

Carmel has always been know as an artist colony and this is evident in its many galleries. One of the artists is Mary Titus. She has her own gallery and offers art classes to the beginning painter up through the experienced one. I, being a beginner was excited to put paint to canvas. The classes are all inclusive, Mary provides the instruction, canvas, paint, and brushes you just provide the inspiration.

With brush, paper and paint in hand Mary instructed us on her technique. Then we went to our canvases and with gentle suggestion and enthusiastic encouragement, Mary let us express ourselves in acrylic

paints. I was in a group of four and all of us were covered in paint and had two completed canvases. We all used different color schemes and different techniques. It was a lot of fun. I don't think I will be quitting my day job but I am no longer afraid to put paint to canvas.

Dinner was at the popular Vesuvio. Featuring a wide selection of Italian dishes, Vesuvio reflects the owner, Chef Pepe's roots in Campania. We shared appetizers of burrata mozzarella caprese, fried artichokes and fired calamari. Both the artichokes and calamari were served with a zingy chipotle aioli and the caprese had a sweet-tangy balsamic reduction.

For dinner I had the Al Forno Sinatra, a dish of oven-baked ziti with spicy house-made sausage, mushrooms, and mozzarella. It was a delicious, cheesy delight. My companion had the bolognese sauce served over spaghetti because he claims that spaghetti is the best tasting pasta. It is normally served with hand-cut pappardelle, a better choice in my opinion.

I managed to save a little room for my favorite dessert, affogato. I crave this dessert from Vesuvio and was so happy to be back in Carmel to get a fix. Rich vanilla ice cream was topped with crumbled biscotti. It has a small pot of espresso and one of amaretto on the side. I slowly poured some of the hot espresso over the ice cream and added a dab of amaretto. Yum just yum.



The next morning I took a tour of the Sunset Center, Carmel's performing art center. Live music and concerts, dance, theatre, comedy, and family events are held at the Sunset Center regularly. Classes and event venues are also available. It's a beautiful space with a definite Gothic bent.

It had been many (many) years since I driven the 17 mile drive. So with my companion at my side we drove through the Carmel gate and enjoyed the sights of this beautiful part of the world. From the lone cypress to deer, crashing waves to forested acres we stop at almost all of the scenic stops and feasted on the wild California coast line. We also stopped in Pebble Beach and had lunch overlooking the golf course and the ocean. Such fun!

We also visited one of the nine wine tasting shops that just happened to be a couple of doors down from the Coachman's Inn. Scheid Vineyards' tasting room offers a flight of white or reds. I had a bit of a light fruity Pinot, a rich Tempranillo, a surprising delicious Melot, and a full-bodied Cabernet. It's always a pleasure to go wine tasting but it's really great when you can do it on foot.

Dinner was at Flaherty's Seafood Grill and Oyster Bar a local favorite serving fresh fish and seafood. We started with Salmon and Tuna Tartare with a roasted pepper sauce, aioli and ciabatta crisps. It was a bit spicy and very fresh and delicious. My companion had a plate of assorted oysters on the half shell. He proclaimed them plump and full of flavor.

A cup of Lobster Bisque was next. Oh my what can I say, it was rich and full-bodied with chunks of lobster, artichokes, and tomatoes. I followed the Bisque up with a piece of fresh halibut encrusted with cashew nuts. A sauce of sherry and cream with wild porcini mushrooms topped this light, fresh fish. Mashed buttery potatoes and carrots completed the meal. I usually stay away from halibut because everybody wants to over cook it. This was anything but and simply delicious.

Sadly it was time to go home, but we did so with memories of a wonderful respite full of good food, wine, art, majestic scenery and of course, cool temperatures.

The 411:

Visit Carmel: www.carmelcalifornia.com/visit-carmel.htm

Coachman's Inn: San Carlos Street between 7th Avenue and 8th Avenue, Carmel
(831) 624-6421, www.coachmansinn.com

Cultura comida y bebida: Delores between 5th and 6th, Carmel
(831) 250-7005, www.culturacarmel.com

Terry's Restaurant + Lounge at Cypress Inn: Lincoln and 7th Street, Carmel

(831) 620-7454, www.carmelterrys.com

Titus Contemporary Gallery, San Carlos between 5th and 6th Street, Carmel
(831) 622-9880, www.marytitusart.com

Vesuvio, Trattoria-Bar-Pizzeria, corner of 6th and Junipero, Carmel
(831) 625-1766, www.chefpepe.com/restaurants/vesuvio

Sunset Center: San Carlos Street at Ninth Avenue, Carmel
(831) 620-2048, www.sunsetcenter.org/event-calendar.htm

17 Mile Drive Carmel Gate: N. San Antonio Avenue
(800) 654-9300, www.pebblebeach.com/17-mile-drive

Scheid's Tasting Room, San Carlos and 7th, Carmel
(800) 550-4333, www.carmelcalifornia.com/wine_tasting_carmel_wine_walk_by_the_sea_645.htm

Flaherty's Seafood Grill, Oyster Bar, 6th Avenue between San Carlos and Dolores, Carmel
(831) 625-1500, www.flahertysseafood.com

Comments are closed.

