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Carmel by Susan Lanier-Graham

CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA: ESCAPE FOR LOVERS AND THEIR DOGS

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CALIFORNIA DESTINATIONS NORTH AMERICA RESTAURANTS TRAVEL WINES AND SPIRITS

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The charming hamlet of Carmel-by-the-Sea has everything a couple could need or want...along with a place for their pups. Carmel is a romantic dog-friendly escape on the Monterey Peninsula about 120 miles south of San Francisco on the Pacific Coast of California.



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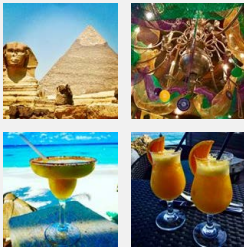




Like many restaurants in Carmel, Little Napoli happily invites dogs to dine. Photo by Barbara Barrielle

It is a walking town so park, clip on a leash and head out to taste wines at the many tasting rooms that dot the Village. You will see indicators that Carmel is for foodies, wine aficionados and dog owners. There is no shortage of first-rate restaurants and dog bowls in front of every storefront.

Bubbles make for a romantic weekend and some of the finest Methode Champenoise can be found right downtown at Caraccioli Cellars where they also make Pinot Noir and Burgundian-style Chardonnay from the fog-laden Santa Lucia Highlands. Their range of wines is mostly fruit forward and you'll have plenty of opportunity to taste for yourself. The lively tasting room stays open until 10 PM on Friday and Saturday evenings for a coupe before dinner or a bubbly finish to the evening. Many nights there is live music.



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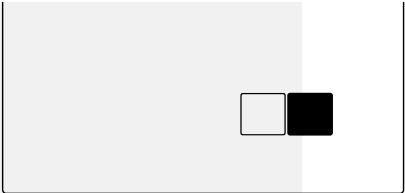
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Enjoy bubbles made in the finest Methode Champenoise at Caraccioli Cellars. Photo by Susan Lanier-Graham

At the outdoor shopping mall of Carmel Plaza, find Wrath Wines, conveniently and deliciously located next to the renowned Cheese Shop-Carmel. Named for the Led Zeppelin song "Going to California," Wrath is irreverent and exploratory. Winemaker Sabine Rodems produces site-driven wines from both the family-owned Wrath property as well as many long-time growers in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Syrah are Wrath's mainstays, but owner Michael Thomas is an archaeologist with two dig sites in Italy. Wrath is one of the few producers of Falanghina, known for its bright, crisp acidity and somewhat unusual cluster shape.

There are fourteen wineries on the Carmel Wine Walk by-the-Sea and it pays to get the Passport that allows for up to four tastings per winery and will get you waived corkage at participating local restaurants. Check out Silvestri, owned by composer Alan Silvestri and taste through the wines produced on their 11-acre vineyard while watching clips from movies he has scored.



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Dogs love the beach and they are welcome to run on Carmel Beach. The author's dog Noelle loves it there. Photo: Barbara Barrielle

Romantic restaurants abound in Carmel with its oyster bars, fresh seafood and an array of Italian and Mediterranean eateries. Start with oysters at either [A.W. Shucks](#) or [Flaherty's](#) then move to one of the Italian favorites like [Da Giovanni](#), [Casanova](#) or [Little Napoli](#).



Casanova is a romantic restaurant in Carmel-by-the-Sea that offers a great wine list. Photo by Susan Lanier-Graham



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Anton and Michel's inspires with its creativity and ALL of the restaurants listed above are dog-friendly making romance easy for the whole family.



The view during sunset form the third floor of the very dog-friendly Hofsas House. Photo: Barbara Barrielle

Carmel doesn't disappoint with romantic inns and bed and breakfast charmers. In fact, nearly every hotel serves some kind of breakfast and they all have rooms set aside for our four-legged loves. Most places have a nominal \$25 pet charge and some even have special treats for dogs. For a spectacular view and reasonable rates, try [Hofsas House](#), a family-owned hotel with history and a number of suites with fireplaces and kitchenettes. Amazing pastries in the morning and the Hog's Breath Inn with its killer Bloody Marys and outdoor fireplaces is a short block away.

If Relais and Chateaux is more your style – and budget – [L'Auberge Carmel](#) offers every luxury just a few blocks from the beach. Cookies and milk appear in your room upon check-in and a sumptuous breakfast at their award-winning restaurant, Aubergine, is simply a teaser for the multi-course feast each evening.

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Thaddeus and Noelle loved their stay at Hofsas House where they got treats, a water bowl, a bed to sleep on and more! Photo by Barbara Barrielle

Interestingly, Carmel-by-the-Sea has no street lights making it quite dark, mysterious and even romantic at night, but each morning the beach comes alive with dogs and their owners. Based at the end of the main drag, Ocean Drive and completely open to all dogs, Carmel Beach encapsulates the total joy of complete doggie freedom. They frolic in the surf and chase Frisbees, their owners or each other. The beach is untamed and ringed by Monterey Pines and driftwood. While enjoying the wineries, restaurants and shops, don't forget the Beach and its natural, rugged beauty when visiting Carmel-by-the-Sea—with or without a dog.

Before leaving the area, it is worth a 45 minute trip out to the heart of the Santa Lucia Highlands to visit [Hahn Winery](#) and their spectacular rolling vistas of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in the heart of this prized AVA. Winemaker Greg Freeman, a former musician and chemist, learned how to make wine on the job. Hahn Wines reflect the terroir and seaside climate of morning fog and afternoon winds. Freeman also serenades his wines in barrel with bagpipes....and they seem to like it given what's in the bottle. [Read more about Barb's earlier article visiting Hahn Winery here.](#)



Winemaker Greg Freeman “thieves” wine aging in barrel for lucky visitors. Photo by Barbara Barrielle

[Click here for more on what to explore in Carmel and on the California coast to explore the Monterey Peninsula.](#) When you are looking for a romantic dog-friendly escape, there's no place better than Carmel-by-the-Sea. This little ocean front town has great wine, great food, and plenty of charming inns where the two of you will find the perfect escape.

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BARBARA BARRIELLE
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