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Ed Bierman

# Monterey & Carmel. A Joie de Vivre Guide

## **Carmel, Monterey, Big Sur, 4 Days**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** It never ceases to amaze us that visitors coming either to San Francisco or the Monterey Peninsula expect to find sunshine, since both are famous for their cooling summer fog! For truly warm sunny days, September and October are definitely the best months to explore the beautiful Monterey Peninsula. This can be a fast-paced day trip or a leisurely overnight journey. Enjoy the beautiful scenery along Highway 1 as it winds its way down the coast. Along the way you'll pass through the seaside college town of Santa Cruz, notable mainly for its boardwalk and amusement park. If you're short on time, take the faster Highway 280 South to Highway 17 West, which drives through some scenic wooded mountains as it heads to Santa Cruz and Highway 1. (During rush hour both of these highways are heavy commuter routes to and from Silicon Valley.) If you're really in a hurry, you can take Highway 101 South to Highway 156 West, and continue on to Highway 1. But frankly, if you're that pressed for time this probably isn't the place for you!

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Monterey

DAY NOTE: Monterey

From Highway 1 take the "Downtown Monterey" exit onto Del Monte Road and follow this through a tunnel to The Cannery. You'll find a parking garage at Foam and Prescott Streets where you can leave the car and head out on foot.



### Monterey Bay Aquarium

World class aquarium perfect for family outings



### Jacks Peak

Jacks Peak Park offers visitors spectacular views from trails that wind through skyscraping Monterey Pine forests.



### Montrio's

Colorful and full-flavored

The Big Sur region is a 90-mile stretch of spectacular rugged coastline which begins south of Carmel on Route 1. Watch for the magnificent Bixby Bridge, 13 miles south of Carmel, a dizzying structure that rises 260-feet above Bixby Creek Canyon. Another 12 miles along the coast you will reach the village of Big Sur, a mere wide spot in the road, but a good place to stop for lunch and to catch your breath after all of the glorious scenery.



### Ventana Inn & Spa

Luxury unveiled

## Day 2

DAY NOTE: Pacific Grove and Pebble Beach

Almost always surrounded by impenetrable fog, this hidden peninsula is often bypassed by tourists. Secluded and private are the key words here.

## Day 3 - Carmel

DAY NOTE: Carmel

The town of Carmel is perfectly manicured and beautiful, in fact perhaps a little too perfect. With nonsensical restrictions, like no gum chewing after 9pm, Carmel can seem sugar coated. Don't spend too much time in the town itself; just think of it as a byway to more magical places.



### Flying Fish Grill

This intimate seafood grill in downtown Carmel marries Japanese, Asian and California influences with delicious results.

## Day 4 - Big Sur

DAY NOTE: Big Sur

# Day 1 - Monterey

## QUICK NOTE

### DAY NOTE: Monterey

From Highway 1 take the "Downtown Monterey" exit onto Del Monte Road and follow this through a tunnel to The Cannery. You'll find a parking garage at Foam and Prescott Streets where you can leave the car and head out on foot.

**contact:**  
tel: (831) 648-4888  
<http://www.mbayaq.org/>

**location:**  
886 Cannery Row  
Monterey CA 93940

## 1 Monterey Bay Aquarium

**DESCRIPTION:** The Monterey Bay Aquarium is a world class facility located in the heart of Cannery Row, housed (somewhat ironically) in a repurposed sardine and squid cannery at the ocean's edge. The exhibits are mesmerizing, engaging, entertaining, and simply beautiful. The interactive areas (touch pools, under-the-sea themed play area) are a huge hit with children. This is a must, especially for families. To avoid long lines and heavy crowds, buy tickets in advance (to queue in the "have tickets" line) and visit during the fall and winter months (other than holidays) between 2 and 6 P.M. During peak summer months, mid-week is best. To save money, find on-street parking around Foam St. and David St, and pack a lunch for the aquarium's picnic area. For an extra \$10, get a behind-the-scenes tour. If you are visiting during the holidays, don't miss the New Years Eve black-tie gala. © NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** This is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the area, and with good reason. The Aquarium houses tanks of otters, sharks, schooling fish, as well a three-story living kelp forest. Don't let the crowds discourage you, this place is really worth seeing. And if you can get here on a weekday, you can probably enjoy a more leisurely pace. Call for current admission prices and hours.



wcities

**contact:**  
tel: 831-755-4899  
<http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/parks/jackspeak.html>

**location:**  
25020 Jacks Peak Park Road  
Bradley CA 93940

## 2 Jacks Peak

**DESCRIPTION:** Jacks Peak Park has much to offer the outdoor enthusiast. Almost 8.5 miles of horseback riding and hiking trails wind through cathedral-like forests and to breathtaking ridge top vistas. The Skyline Self-Guided Nature Trail traverses the summit of Jacks Peak. Brochures describing features along the trail are available at the entrance station. Visitors can also enjoy other passive activities including nature study, photography or relaxation. Viewing scenery, trail use, and picnicking are the primary reasons people visit Jacks Peak. Jacks Peak is located high above Monterey Bay and about two miles off Scenic Highway 68.

**MY NOTE:** For an incredible view of the Peninsula, drive up to Jack's Peak County Park, just 15 minutes away. Take Highway 101 South to the 218 junction, and 218 to Highway 68. Follow 68 until you see signs for the park. There are 11 wooded trails,



Photo courtesy of Jacks Peak

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but take Jack's Peak Trail for the best view. Great spot for a picnic!

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**contact:**  
tel: (831) 648-8880  
<http://www.montrio.com>

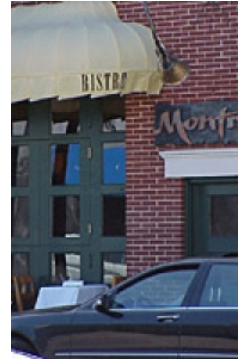
**location:**  
414 Calle Principal  
Monterey CA 93940

**hours:**  
11:30a-10m Mon-Thu; 5p-11p  
Fri-Sat, 5p-10p Sun

### 3 Montrio's

**DESCRIPTION:** The kitchen and rotisserie are completely open for all to see in this colorfully decorated bistro that combines American, Italian and French cuisines. The interior is fancy and sleek, but the attitude is very casual, which accounts for the wide-ranging clientele. It won an Esquire "best eatery" award for plates such as Grilled Gulf Prawns over Caramelized Leek Risotto and Veal Cheeks over Mustard Whipped Potatoes. Beginning with house varietals, the impressive wine list includes some alternative whites and adventurous reds. The friendly service will bring you back many times. © wcities.com

**MY NOTE:** Don't pass up the delicious roasted garlic whipped potatoes at this bistro located in a restored 1910 structure. Moderate prices, good food, and a friendly atmosphere make this a sure thing.



wcities

# Day 2

**DAY NOTE:** Pacific Grove and Pebble Beach

Almost always surrounded by impenetrable fog, this hidden peninsula is often bypassed by tourists. Secluded and private are the key words here.

# Day 3 - Carmel

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QUICK NOTE

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**contact:**

tel: (831) 625-1962

[http://national.citysearch.com/profile/819553/carmel\\_ca/flying\\_fish\\_grill.html](http://national.citysearch.com/profile/819553/carmel_ca/flying_fish_grill.html)

**location:**

Mission St.  
Carmel CA 93921

**hours:**

Sun-Thu 5pm-9pm; Fri-Sat  
5pm-9:30pm

## 1 Flying Fish Grill

**DESCRIPTION:** This small 40-seat restaurant is situated on the lower level of the tony Carmel Plaza shopping area. Japanese minimalist decor is livened up with ornate Balinese animals on the walls and colorful flying fish hanging from the ceiling. Owner-chef Kenny Fukomoto and wife, Tina, often mix with guests, while friendly staff is eager to suggest a favorite dish, recommend sake or offer day-trip destinations. In an inspired (and irresistible) Asian take on chips and dip, meals start with fried wonton chips dunked in fresh ginger salsa with minced tomatoes, cucumbers and cilantro. Although the restaurant is known for seafood, even a New York steak is top-notch.

**MY NOTE:** You will need to call ahead to this tiny, but popular place. Foodies come here for the fabulous fish dishes, many with a Japanese slant.

# Day 4 - Big Sur

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QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Big Sur

The Big Sur region is a 90-mile stretch of spectacular rugged coastline which begins south of Carmel on Route 1. Watch for the magnificent Bixby Bridge, 13 miles south of Carmel, a dizzying structure that rises 260-feet above Bixby Creek Canyon. Another 12 miles along the coast you will reach the village of Big Sur, a mere wide spot in the road, but a good place to stop for lunch and to catch your breath after all of the glorious scenery.

**contact:**

tel: +1 831 667 2331 / +1 800  
628 6500 (Reservations)  
fax: +1 831 667 0573 / +1 831  
667 2419 (Reservations)  
<http://www.ventanainn.com/>

**location:**

Off Highway 1  
Big Sur CA 93920

## 1 Ventana Inn & Spa

**DESCRIPTION:** This resort is located 28 miles from Carmel, on the Big Sur coast. Though the rooms, suites, cottages and villas available are all quite expensive, the place is perfect for those who do not mind spending a few hundred dollars a day for some time away from the city. The luxurious rooms, suites and villas are perfect for a leisurely stay. The heated pool and the sauna will melt your worries away, while the fitness facility will help you get toned up. There is a restaurant and business center on the premises, so that you do not have to step out for some grub or a meeting. However, if you do go outdoors, you can enjoy strolling on the beach. © wcities.com



Hotels.com

# Carmel Snapshot

## Local Info

Carmel, also known as Carmel-by-the-Sea, is a small town that leaves a big impression. A mecca for the performing arts, a shopper's paradise, a nature lover's dream and a traveler's oasis, Carmel has something for everyone. Lovers come for the intimate vistas and romantic hotels and inns such as Briarwood Inn. Epicurean enthusiasts come for the wine tasting and delectable, mouth-watering dining experiences at places like The Cheese Shop, Vino Napoli, Mundaka and The Bountiful Basket. The posh come for shopping and pampering. Everyone can

feel a little luxurious in Carmel. Standards are high here, so don't expect to be disappointed by any spot you decide to grab some grub or rest your head at night.

While downtown is the center of activity here, there's plenty to see and do beyond the heart of Carmel. The world-famous 17-Mile Drive takes visitors on a journey through pristine forests, white sanded beaches and momentous views of the Pacific Ocean.

Google "Pebble Beach" and the first thing that pops up is "golf." Host of the PGA U.S. Open in 2010 and 2019, the Pebble Beach

Golf Links, ranked America's #1 public golf course by Golf Digest magazine, anyone can come and play 18 holes overlooking the ocean.

Carmel hosts thousands of weddings every year. It's rare a day goes by without seeing a glowing bride and groom posing for pictures in front of the Carmel Mission Basilica or the setting sun.

A few days in Carmel-by-the-Sea is like spending a few days in paradise.

© NileGuide

# Monterey Snapshot

## Local Info

Monterey embodies the soul of coastal California. It is a city of firsts: California's first capital, home of the state's first theater and printing press, and the place where the country's flag was first hoisted in California, claiming the Sunshine State for the United States. In fact, it was the capital of Spanish California, Mexican California and American California. It is a place of many faces, from the adobe homes that harken to the Spanish conquistadors and missionaries to Cannery Row and the area's rich fishing history to the internationally beloved Monterey Bay Aquarium. History can be lived here, but the present is very much alive and thriving. Home to six universities, abundant sea life, impressive art galleries, award winning restaurants, countless clam chowder stands and shops with one-of-a-kind finds, Monterey Bay remains one of California's most popular travel destinations.

### Cannery Row

"Cannery Row in Monterey in California," author and Salinas, California native John Steinbeck wrote, "is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream." This is the opening line of his novel named after the place, a literary testament to the microcosm of life that is Monterey's Cannery Row. It was once the hub of the area's commercial fishing industry, full of characters that inspired Steinbeck's novels. Today, the skeleton of this bustling community of seamen, scholars and adventurers is still visible, notably in the

gangways suspended several stories above the street that connect the old sardine-packing factories to one another. Those buildings now house a seemingly endless array of restaurants, like Schooners Bistro on the Bay and The Sardine Factory, that serve up the day's freshest catches. Another distinct transformation on the Row are the mini-malls created inside some of the factories. In a single building, a pub (like the Mucky Duck) will be below candy stores such as the tasty Ghirardelli's Chocolate & Ice Cream Shop, which is next to souvenir stores overflowing with crafts and keepsakes, like the Cannery Row General Store.

The highlight of Cannery Row is the Monterey Bay Aquarium, widely considered the best aquarium in the world. About 1.8 million visitors come through the aquarium's doors every year to learn about and experience the underwater world. Exhibits recreate the ocean habitats found just outside the aquarium's walls, from shallow tide pools to deep water canyons. First timers should check in with the information desk or ask any volunteer about the day's special tours, presentations and feeding schedules. The ocean has never been presented in a more interactive, hands-on and enlightening manner than at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

### Downtown

Alvarado Street is Monterey's main drag and has a delightful bohemian vibe. Coffee shops, organic restaurants and Mom and Pop shops litter the road, most encased in buildings that have stood for over a century.

The relaxed atmosphere is contagious. Alvarado links to Fisherman's Wharf, another bustling center of activity. The Wharf juts up against the steel blue waters and, with all its food stands and gift stores, you'll be glad you're on land rather than in the chilly sea. From Fisherman's Wharf, you can jump off on a whale watching tour, a fishing trip or a sail on the Bay.

### The Bay

It's easy to forget that the ocean is a destination all its own. Sailors can launch on an epic day on the open ocean from Monterey. Fishermen cast off from the piers and rock faces into an ecosystem abundant with fish. Whale watchers rarely don't see a humpback or gray whale breaching the surface. And divers of all swaths-- from snorklers to SCUBA to free-- descend on Monterey to go below the surface and witness up close, and in the wild, sea life of the most amazing variety.

Monterey Bay sits on a canyon, the Monterey Submarine Canyon. The bottom of this underwater canyon is two miles below the surface. It extends 95 miles from Moss Landing into the Pacific. The canyon itself is a mile deep, making it comparable to the Grand Canyon. Its depth and high nutrient availability make it a veritable Eden for marine life. Scientific research is a huge element of the central coast because of the canyon's existence and a huge draw for divers to check out what's going on below the surface.

© NileGuide

# Big Sur Snapshot

## Local Info

Big Sur will, without a doubt, leave you breathless. A dizzying drive along the section of Highway 1 that takes you into the area is widely considered one of the best scenic routes in the world. Adventurers will find a rugged, jagged, and incredible topography where trees almost outnumber the stars in the night sky. Attesting to

its untamed nature, Big Sur technically has no boundaries, but for the sake of geographic placement, most consider the 90-mile stretch of coast between Carmel and San Simeon to be Big Sur's domain. State parks run adjacent to the vast Santa Lucia mountain range, making camping the preferred mode of lodging here. There are a fair amount of hotels, motels, and inns

offering creature comforts, though no matter where you lay your head at night there will be a noticeable lack of urbanity. Secluded beaches, endless hiking trails, and dramatic outlooks over the Pacific Ocean are the rewards for venturing into one of North America's last wild places.

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