



Monterey, Carmel and Big Sur

Get ready for a little bit of heaven—if you appreciate gorgeous coastal ocean views and interesting places to visit.

We assume that you'll fly into Oakland or San Francisco and visit the City by the Bay before heading south to the Monterey area (see the Fall 2008 *Pathfinder Newsletter*, "San Francisco: the Quintessential City.")

From San Francisco, take the coast drive down to Monterey and Carmel, where you'll enjoy historic Monterey, Cannery Row, the Monterey Bay Aquarium and the 17-Mile Drive on the first day of your three-day driving tour. The second day, you'll visit Point Lobos State Reserve and enjoy several attractions along the stunning Big Sur coastline. On day three, you'll walk beautiful Carmel Beach, browse Carmel's art galleries and visit the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas.

This area is wonderful to visit almost any time of the year, but if you choose to go in late spring or early fall, you'll probably have great weather and avoid coastal fog and most of the crowds.

Pathfinder Newsletter

Spring 2010

Guided Tours of Cities, Towns, and National Parks in the American West

by the authors of *Seven Perfect Days in Northern California*,
Seven Perfect Days in Arizona and *Seven Perfect Days in Colorado*

Day One

If there's dense fog when you get ready to leave San Francisco for Monterey, we recommend that you take a more inland route: Interstate 280 to US 101, 101 to California 156, and 156 to California 1 which goes into Monterey. (See the following map for this alternate route as well as the coast route that we hope you'll be able to take.) Fog is common to this area in the summer months; it both obscures the views from the coastal road and presents an element of driving risk that you may want to avoid.

A Drive Down the Coast

We're now going to experience 130 miles (209 km) of California's beautiful 840-mile (1,352 km) Pacific coastline. The *piece de resistance* is the Monterey Peninsula's 17-Mile Drive. There, we'll enjoy the Drive's spectacular scenery and take a walk on the beach.

We'll start high on a bluff at Cliff House in San Francisco and end up viewing the underwater environment of Monterey Bay—a metaphorical two and one-half hour gradual slide into the sea.

To get to Cliff House in San Francisco, drive west on Geary and Point Lobos Streets. Then, head south on Highway 1 to Monterey.

South of San Francisco, you'll drive on mostly two-lane roads past residential areas of Daly City and Pacifica, by rugged coastal views with substantial drop-offs, by beautiful (and ubiquitous) roadside pampas grass, through laid-back Half Moon Bay, past two nice beaches at San Gregorio and Pescadero, by circa-1871 Pigeon Point Lighthouse, past the cement plant in Daverport, by Northern California's surfing Mecca, and on into Santa Cruz.

You'll need to follow the signs carefully in Santa Cruz, especially at Chestnut Street where Highway 1 becomes a divided highway and veers away from the coast. For some distance, you'll see a lot of Brussels sprout, strawberry and artichoke plants, but only a few glimpses of the water. Returning to the oceanfront, you'll continue on Highway 1 through the towns of Moss Landing, Castroville (which produces 95 percent of the nation's artichokes), Marina, and Seaside.

At Moss Landing, look about 100 yards (91 meters) offshore for a dark-blue finger of water. This signals the beginning of the Monterey Canyon, an underwater chasm that's wider and two times as deep as Arizona's Grand Canyon—and extends more than twice as far southwest as you can see! We'll give you more information about the Monterey Canyon later.



Monterey—California’s Capital Before the Gold Rush

When you arrive in Monterey, leave Highway 1 at the Monterey exit (past the Casa Verde/ Highway 68 exit), which empties onto Fremont Street, and after a short distance, turn right onto Camino El Estero. Look for the Monterey County Visitor Center on your right—before the road dead-ends at Del Monte Avenue. This is a good place to pick up brochures and ideas if you’re going to spend more than a day in the area. When you reach Del Monte Avenue, turn left and, shortly thereafter, turn right into the Fisherman’s Wharf/Monterey State Historic Park parking lot.

There is a lot to do in this area. You could easily spend the rest of the day here and never get to the primary attractions on our itinerary. So, we’ve carved out just a portion of **Monterey State Historic Park** for you to see. Mostly, we suggest that you bypass Fisherman’s Wharf, which despite its name, can’t hold a candle to its namesake in San Francisco. Unless you plan to go deep-sea fishing or whale watching (December through May), you’ll find the wharf to be little more than a collection of shops and restaurants. You’ll have access to plenty of those later in Cannery Row.

Instead, we’ll take a brief walk-by tour of five historic buildings, and then move directly to Cannery Row for lunch and our visit to the Monterey Bay Aquarium. The five buildings that we’ll see here are part of the park’s 46 structures along the Path of History, a two-mile self-guided walking tour through Old Monterey; all were built before the California Gold Rush in 1848.

A few facts should help put Monterey into perspective: Spanish explorer Sebastian Vis-



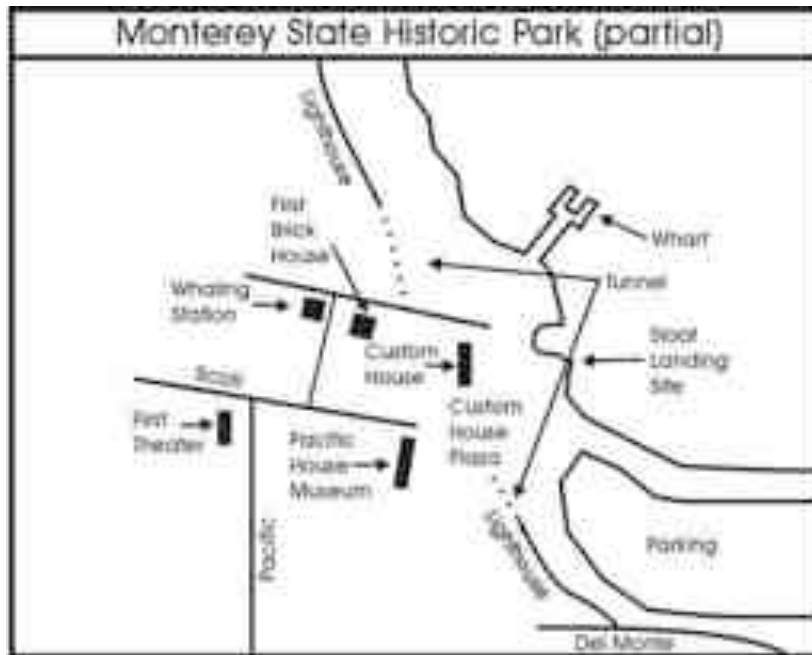
caino landed here in 1602 and named the area for the count of Monte-Rey. More than a century and a half later, in 1770, Spain began colonizing California after it was learned that the Russians were invading the coast farther north. Father Junipero Serra landed here in that year and built Carmel Mission (which we’ll visit later on this tour). Monterey was the capital of California under Spanish rule from 1775 to 1822, when Mexico gained control. On July 7, 1846 Commodore Drake Sloat raised the American flag outside the Custom House during the Mexican-American War (pictured here). California’s constitution was drawn up in Monterey in

1849, a year before California became a state. In other words, Monterey was the political, economic and cultural center of California for over 70 years—until the Gold Rush shifted power to the north, and San Francisco became California’s number one city.

A Brief Walk-by Tour: Five Historic Buildings

We'll start our walk-by tour at the Pacific House, which faces Custom House Plaza two buildings south of Fisherman's Wharf.

The **Pacific House** is now a visitor center and museum, but beginning in 1847 it was a military supply depot and then a tavern. Of adobe construction (sun-dried bricks made of mud and straw), the first floor of Pacific House contains historic exhibits and the second floor has a collection of Native American artifacts



The **Custom House** is one building closer to Fisherman's Wharf. Also adobe, the Custom House was built in 1827 and is the oldest government building on the West Coast. As you've probably assumed from the name, this was the place where all foreign goods shipped into the area were unloaded and duties were collected (until 1867). Inside, you'll see a display of early ship cargo.

From the Custom House, follow the yellow Path of History markers west to the **First Brick House of California**. "Gallant

Duncan" Dickenson, who had brought a brick-maker with him, built it in 1846. Dickenson had been a member of the Donner Party, which suffered grievously after being stranded in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Dickenson's group split off before the tragedy, so did not suffer with the rest of the Donner group.

The next building west is the **Old Whaling Station**, another adobe, built in 1847 in Scottish architectural style. It was initially a residence, and then housed a whaling business when Gray whales were aggressively fished off Monterey Peninsula between 1855 and 1885. The front sidewalk is unique in that it is made of whale vertebrae pavers.

Now, walk under the archway between the Whaling Station and the First Brick House, through the gardens, and out the back path to the next street. From there, you'll see California's First Theater diagonally to the right.

The **First Theater** was originally a tavern built in 1845 by an English immigrant named Jack Swan. The larger attached structure was built two years later as a boarding house, but was converted to a theater that showed melodramas for \$5.00 a person—a hefty entrance fee back then. We suggest that you step inside to see the tavern and theater.

Then, walk two blocks east and you'll be back in Custom House Plaza and on your way to your car.

To get to the Cannery Row parking lot that we recommend, exit the Monterey State Historic Park parking lot, turn right onto Del Monte, bear right onto Lighthouse Ave., drive through the tunnel and continue on Lighthouse Ave. for six blocks to Prescott. Turn right and drive one block to the corner of Foam and Prescott. Turn left and you'll find the entrance to the parking lot. From there, walk downhill two streets to Cannery Row.

Time Check

There are more than 100 businesses in six-block-long Cannery Row. If you love to shop, you could probably spend the rest of the afternoon right here.

We would rather have lunch, have a quick walk along Cannery Row, visit the Monterey Bay Aquarium and enjoy the 17-Mile Drive. The aquarium will take at least two hours—more, if you watch the scheduled feedings of the fish and sea otters. The drive from Cannery Row to Carmel (including the 17-Mile Drive) will require about an hour and a half.

It's Lunch Time!

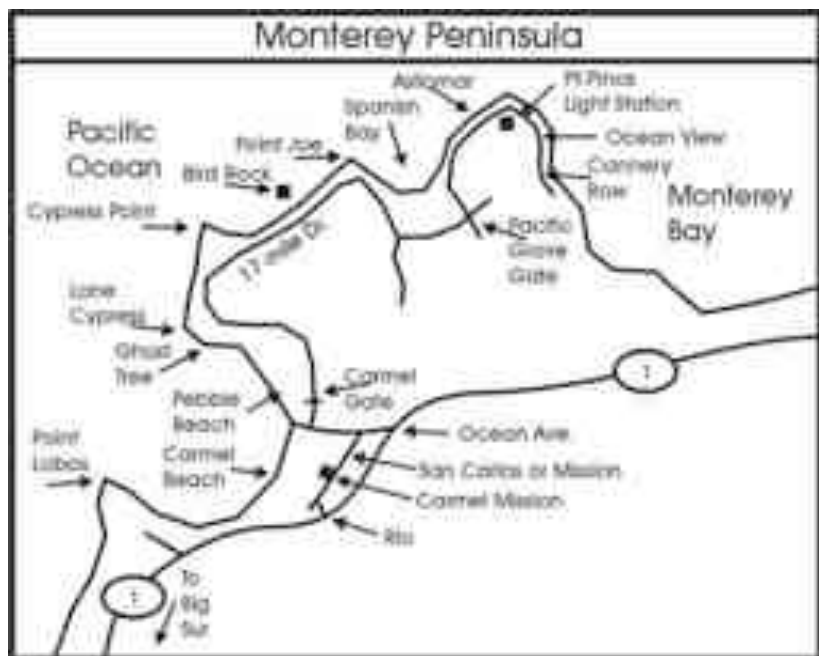
We recommend Louie Linguini's restaurant, which has a beautiful second-floor view of Monterey Bay. This Italian restaurant has wonderful clam chowder and hearty sandwiches. 660 Cannery Row; 831-648-8500; www.louielinguinis.com.

Another fine choice, also with a close view of the bay, is The Fishhopper Restaurant. This seafood-and-steak type place serves good sandwiches and salads. 700 Cannery Row; 831-372-8543; www.fishhopper.com. While you eat, allow us to tell you a little about the Monterey Peninsula, the Monterey Canyon and Cannery Row.

The Peninsula and the Canyon

The 35 square miles (91 sq. km) of Monterey Peninsula is home to four communities: Pacific Grove in the northwestern tip, best known for its profusion of Monarch butterflies from October to May; Pebble Beach in the west, with its world-famous golf course; Carmel-by-the-Sea in the south; and Monterey in the northeast. Together, they host more than three million visitors a year.

Monterey Bay, extending from Santa Cruz in the north to the western tip of Pacific Grove, is part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Beginning within the bay at Moss Landing, extending about 65 miles (105 km) southwest into the Pacific Ocean, and 10,000 feet (3,050 meters) in depth, is the largest submarine chasm along the western United States and is known as



Monterey Canyon. George Davidson discovered it in 1890. This is one of the world's richest marine habitats, caused by upwelling currents from deep within the canyon. The currents bring up an abundance of rich nutrients. This feeds a proliferation of small sea animals and plants that serve as the lowest links in the food chain. Monterey Bay contains dense kelp beds that are home to sea lions and sea otters; tentacled squid, octopus and jellyfish; bottom-dwelling abalones, crabs, sea urchins, starfish and anemones; and sardines, perch, leopard sharks and all manner of other fish. Gray whales can be seen offshore between December and February during their annual 10,000-mile (16,000 km) migration from Alaska to Baja, Mexico, and from March to May during their return trip with newborn calves.

Very shortly, you'll see what this underwater world looks like when you stand in front of the Monterey Bay habitats in the aquarium.

Cannery Row

The rich animal and plant life of Monterey Canyon spawned a major fishing industry here: there was an abundance of sardines in these waters when the first of 18 canneries opened in 1902. However, over-fishing depleted the supply by the late 1940s. (Some 560 million pounds—254,000 kg—of sardines were processed on Cannery Row in 1945 alone!) During that time, Monterey was known as the “Sardine Capital of the World.”

Most sardines were canned, but much of the catch was turned into fishmeal and fertilizer. With all that cooking and processing of fish, you can imagine what the area smelled like back then. In opening his novel, *Cannery Row*, John Steinbeck described the area as “a poem, a stink, a grating noise.”

Imagine the fishing boats unloading their catch into floating wooden hoppers and the sardines being sucked ashore into the canneries through large pipes. They were then cleaned, cooked, canned and sent via conveyors to warehouses across 16 bridges that vaulted Ocean View Avenue, now Cannery Row. Two of those original bridges remain.

John Steinbeck lived and wrote in Monterey between 1930 and 1935. If you've read *Cannery Row* and are interested, you'll find the locations of Doc Rickett's Western Biological Laboratory at 800 Cannery Row, Lee Chong's market at 835, and the La Ida Cafe at 851. Later on this tour, you'll visit the museum in Salinas that's dedicated to Steinbeck.

Monterey Bay Aquarium

You'll find the aquarium, opened in 1984, at the west end of Cannery Row, housed in the old Hovden Cannery. Considered by many to be the finest aquarium in the world, the Monterey Bay Aquarium averages nearly two million visitors a year. Hopefully, you're visiting during a weekday, when the crowds are smaller. On weekends and holidays it's wise to purchase tickets in advance by calling the aquarium at 831-648-4888 inside California, or 800-756-3737 nationwide. General admission tickets can also be purchased online at the aquarium's website, as can tickets for the Behind the Scenes Tour (see website info below).

To us, the forte of this aquarium is that its galleries and exhibits reveal the tremendous variety of sea life that's hidden under water just offshore. The aquarium has 34 major galleries where it displays more than 30,000 creatures in 650 species. About three million gallons (11.4 million liters) of seawater are pumped through the exhibits every day. Do yourself a favor and obtain the

visitor map of the aquarium as you enter, and determine where you want to concentrate your energies.

If you enjoy watching animal and fish feedings, consider these: sea otters at 10:30am, 1:30 and 3:30pm; Kelp Forest at 11:30am and 4:00pm; penguins at 10:30am and 3:00pm, and Outer Bay Exhibit at 11:00am (see the photo on page 1). The sea otters are especially interesting, because they lie on their backs with flat rocks on their stomachs and crack-open shellfish on the rocks.

We particularly enjoyed the two-story-high sea otter tank, the spectacular three-story-high Kelp Forest habitat (visible through a seven inch-thick acrylic window), the Monterey Bay Habitats, the jellyfish gallery, the seahorse exhibit, and the million-gallon Outer Bay Exhibit with its sharks, tuna, barracuda, sea turtles, stingrays and other fish swimming behind the largest aquarium window in North America. Also very interesting to us were the shorebirds in the aviary and the touch pools where you can do just that—touch starfish, crabs, bat rays and other underwater creatures.

To appreciate what the sardine industry was like in the 1940s, be sure to see the Hovden Cannery boilers, captioned photos and three short films just inside the aquarium's entrance.

Open daily, 9:30am-6pm during summer and on major holidays, 10am-6pm the rest of the year; 886 Cannery Row; 831-648-4800; www.montereybayaquarium.org.

17-Mile Drive

More than half of the 17-Mile Drive is within the Del Monte Forest. (No, there is no connection with the Del Monte Canning Company.) Since we prefer to show you the coastline up close as much as possible, we'll drive along Pacific Grove's northern and western shores, take in the coastal portion of the 17-Mile Drive and skip the forest.

So, after exiting the parking lot onto Foam St. and heading west two blocks, turn right onto David Ave. and then left onto Ocean View Blvd. Follow Ocean View west until it turns south and

becomes Sunset Drive. Along the way, you'll look out onto very picturesque Monterey Bay and the Pacific Ocean.



As you round the northernmost corner of land called Point Piños, you'll see the Point Piños Light Station on your left. Built in 1855, it's the oldest continuously operating lighthouse on the West Coast. It's open Thursday through Sunday, 1-4pm. (This photo was taken near Point Piños.)

Just south of Point Piños is the Asilomar (Spanish for "refuge by the sea") State Beach and Conference Grounds. Begun in 1913 as a YMCA campground and conference site, Asilomar became state property in 1958.

Soon after Sunset Drive turns east, away from the coast, you'll come to the Pacific Grove Gate of the 17-Mile Drive. You'll receive a helpful map as you enter the Drive, but watch your odometer, because signage is not good at the next turn. Nine-tenths of a mile (1.4 km) after you pass through the gate, turn right onto Spanish Bay Road and return to the coast.

It would be easy to get caught up in the continuing beauty of the 17-Mile Drive's coastline, seven golf courses and gorgeous homes as you drive by them, but we strongly recommend that you do stop to enjoy and photograph some of the sights. (See the preceding map.) Our favorite points of interest are: Spanish Bay, to enjoy a walk on the beach; Point Joe, where converging currents and submerged rocks cause very turbulent wave action; Bird Rock, to view shore birds and seals; Cypress Point Overlook; the Lone Cypress Tree which has withstood Pacific winds and storms for more than 500 years (see the photo on page 1); and The Ghost Tree, to enjoy the wind- and sea spray-bleached trees and short walking path. If you're a golfer, you'll probably want to see and be photographed at one of the most famous golf clubs in the World, the Pebble Beach Golf Links.

Soon after you pass Pebble Beach, you'll come to the 17-Mile Drive's Carmel Gate. Exit here, drive two blocks ahead, turn left on Ocean Avenue and drive to your accommodations.

Carmel has numerous good-to-outstanding places to spend the night. On the "good" end, we recommend:

- Carmel Village Inn at Ocean and Junipero, P.O. Box 5275, Carmel, CA 93921, 831-624-3864, www.carmelvillageinn.com (includes a buffet breakfast).
- Lobos Lodge, Ocean & Monte Verde, Carmel, CA 93921, 831-624-3874, www.loboslodge.com, (includes a delivered continental breakfast).

On the "outstanding" end, we recommend:

- Colonial Terrace Inn, San Antonio & 13th, PO Box 1375, Carmel 93921, 800-345-8220, 831-624-2741, www.thecolonialterrace.com (a bed-and-breakfast).
- Monte Verde Inn, on Monte Verde between Ocean and 7th Ave., PO Box 394, Carmel, CA 93921, 800-328-7707, 831-624-6046, www.casadecarmel.com (a bed-and-breakfast.)

For additional choices, consult www.carmelaccommodations.com.

Carmel-by-the-Sea (its official name)

This is a community that welcomes visitors but not urbanization. Local ordinances prohibit house numbers, parking meters, billboards, stoplights, neon signs, franchise restaurants and stores, and postal deliveries (mail must be picked up at the post office). Trees are protected. Home modifications are carefully controlled, and there are no sidewalks or streetlights in residential areas. The result is an aura of quaintness that's rare in California.

By the way, have you noticed all the "firsts" on the Monterey Peninsula: the first government building, the first capitol of California, the first brick house, and the first theater? Then there's the best aquarium, the largest underwater canyon, and the "sardine capital of the world." Tomorrow, you'll see the first library. All that within 35 square miles (91 sq. km)!

It's Dinnertime in Carmel

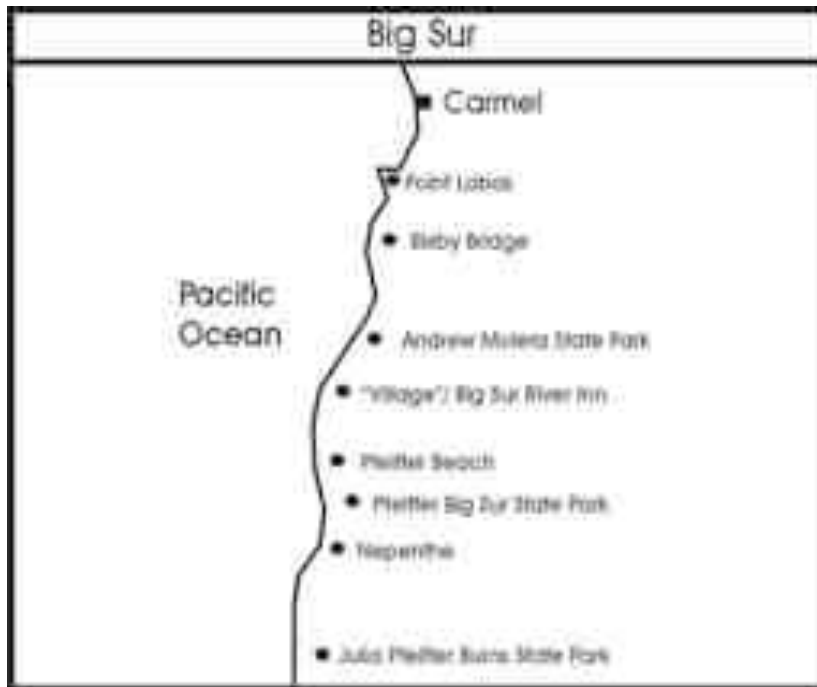
We have enjoyed wonderful meals at all of the following restaurants:

- Casanova (a particular favorite of ours), Italian and French cuisine, 5th between San Carlos & Mission, 831-625-0501, www.casanovarestaurant.com, \$\$\$.
- Em Le's (another favorite), American home-style cuisine, Dolores between 5th and 6th, 831-625-6780, www.em-les.com, \$\$.
- The Forge in the Forest Restaurant, American cuisine, SW Corner of 5th & Junipero, 831-624-2233, www.forgeintheforest.com, \$\$-\$\$\$.
- The Grill on Ocean Avenue, California & Asian cuisine, north Ocean between Dolores & Lincoln, 831-624-2569, www.carmelsbest.com/thegrill, \$\$-\$\$\$.

For additional choices, consult www.carmel.com/restaurants.

Day Two

This day is all about enjoying the coast south of Carmel. You'll visit a seal and sea lion habitat, enjoy a spectacular drive high above the ocean, see a waterfall dropping into the sea, and walk on an interesting beach.



Point Lobos State Reserve

Located 3.4 miles (5.4 km) south of Ocean Ave. on Highway 1, Point Lobos is a 1,250-acre (506 hectares) nature reserve with 12 walking trails allowing visitors reasonably close-up observation of coastal plant life, birds and sea animals. Each trail is described on the trail map that you'll receive at the entrance station. We recommend any of three trails: the Cypress Grove Trail, to see the rare stand of Monterey cypress trees, barking sea lions on the outer rocks, and sea otters in the giant kelp; Sea Lion Point

Trail, to see the wonderful view, the turbulent water called Devil's Cauldron, as well as sea lions and sea otters; and Bird Island Trail, to see China Cove Beach, where mother harbor seals nurse their young in April and May, and the large colony of Brandt's cormorants nesting on Bird Island.

All three trails are eight-tenths of a mile (1.3 km) or less in length. You might also spot humpback and blue whales offshore, brown pelicans, great blue herons and black-tailed deer. Be careful to avoid the poison ivy bushes which are so prevalent here; its leaves grow in groups of three and have a waxy sheen; touching anywhere on the plant can cause a blistering red skin rash.

Point Lobos, “Point of the Wolves” in Spanish, was named for the resident sea lions. Because of its beauty and wildness, Point Lobos is referred to as “The Greatest Meeting of Land and Water in the World.”

Open 9am-7pm in summer, 9am-5pm in winter; Route 1, Box 62, Carmel 93923; 831-624-4909; www.pt-lobos.parks.state.ca.us.

Big Sur

The 23 miles (37 km) of coastline between Point Lobos and the “village” of Big Sur is absolutely gorgeous. It’s known as one of the most beautiful oceanfront drives in the world. Unlike the relatively flat drive on Highway 1 between San Francisco and Monterey, most of this drive weaves high above ocean coves and provides many photo opportunities.

The waters along this coastline are also the home of the California Sea Otter Game Refuge. We know that you’ll have your camera handy, but be sure to also bring along your binoculars. Look for sea otters floating on their backs in small coves, in kelp beds or around rocky islands. During the summer months, you may have to take your photographs and look for sea otters between breaks in the fog.

Thirteen miles south of Carmel, you’ll come upon the very photogenic Bixby Bridge. It’s 714 feet long, 280 feet high and was completed in 1932.

Then, soon after you pass Andrew Molera State Park, you’ll go by a small commercial complex on the ocean side of Highway 1, that’s anchored by Big Sur River Inn. This is the only “village” in Big Sur; Big Sur is a coastal area, rather than a town.

It’s Lunch Time!

The next landmark of note is Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Just south of the park, you’ll come to the Nepenthe Restaurant, which we recommend for lunch and the ocean vistas. The adjacent Phoenix Shop is worth a little browsing; it has some good quality one-of-a-kind items.

Three-tenths of a mile (.5 km) south of Nepenthe, you’ll come to the Henry Miller Memorial Library. If you’re a Henry Miller fan, it’s worth a stop. If not, drive on by.

Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park

The additional 8.2 miles (13.1 km) drive south of Nepenthe will pay off in a big way—if the weather is reasonably clear. After you arrive at Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park and pay your parking fee (worth it), walk the ¼-mile (.4 km) McWay Falls Overlook Trail. It’s here that you’ll see something quite unusual and extremely picturesque: a waterfall dropping 80 feet (24 m) from the cliff into the ocean (pictured here). Even on hazy days, it’s a beautiful sight. In



December-January and in April-May, you may be able to see whales from the end of the over-

look trail; they pass close to this point on their annual migrations to their calving grounds off Mexico and feeding grounds in the North Pacific. You may also see harbor seals, sea lions, sea otters, cormorants, sea gulls and pelicans from this vantage point.

Instead of returning directly to the parking lot, first take a ¼-mile walk on the left-hand trail at the “T.” You’ll get a little more exercise and see lovely coastal views through the trees.

Pfeiffer Beach

If you want to walk on Big Sur sand at ocean level, the place to do it is at Pfeiffer Beach. The road to the beach is 1.9 miles (3 km) north of Nepenthe, just past the Post Office and Big Sur Bakery. Look for the yellow sign, “Narrow Road; No RV’s or Campers.” It’s a two-mile (3.2 km) drive from Highway 1 down to the beach and there is a parking fee. Is it worth it? Yes, if you enjoy walking the beach and watching the ocean crash over rocks and surge through holes in the rocks.

By the way, Julia Pfeiffer Burns was the well-respected daughter of an area settler; hence, the naming of three area attractions for her.

For dinner at a steak-and-fish restaurant with a knock-your-socks-off Big Sur ocean view (entrees are appropriately priced), try Rocky Point Restaurant (831-624-2933, www.rocky-point.com). You’ll see it on the west side of the highway, 16.4 miles (26.4 km) north of the Pfeiffer Beach road.

Day Three

Today, you’ll enjoy Carmel’s beautiful beach walk, visit California’s foremost mission, tour Carmel’s art galleries, and learn about author John Steinbeck at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas.

Carmel Beach

To get to this beach and to its picturesque walk, drive to the bottom of Ocean Ave. at Scenic Road, turn left and proceed to 8th Ave. Park here, walk out onto the beach, and enjoy the beautiful sweep of Carmel Bay and the constantly incoming waves.

Then, we suggest a walk south on the very pleasant promenade along Scenic Road; it’s heavily treed and beautifully landscaped. After your walk, we recommend that you drive farther south on Scenic Road, around the point, and enjoy viewing the homes that look out onto the bay and ocean. You’ll also find Carmel River State Beach around the point.

Carmel Mission

There are two ways to get to Carmel Mission: The first is to drive eight blocks south on San Carlos or Mission, from Ocean Ave. to Rio Road, then turn left and follow Rio about a quarter mile until you see the Mission on your right. The second option is to drive all the way to the top of Ocean Ave., and turn right onto Highway 1. After one mile (1.6 km), turn right onto Rio Road and follow it for a mile until you find Carmel Mission on your left.

The mission was originally begun on the site of the present Presidio Chapel near Monterey Bay and was moved a year later five miles (8 km) to this location, close to the Carmel River.

By its full name, this is the Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Rio Carmelo, the second of 10 missions founded along the California coast by Franciscan Father Junipero Serra. (The first was founded in San Diego; 11 more were built after Serra's death.) It was also Serra's headquarters and home until he died in August, 1784 at the age of 71. His remains are buried inside the church sanctuary, under the altar.

Although architecturally uninteresting at the front entrance, the mission takes on an aura of 1700s authenticity inside the church and when the mission's carefully restored buildings are viewed from the middle of the plaza. (See the photograph on page 1.) The church, with its Moorish-style bell towers, was built of local sandstone and dedicated in 1797; the rest of the mission is adobe. Most of the paintings in the Sanctuary are original to the church. Notice how the walls rise in a steep curve to create a vaulted ceiling.

As you might expect, the purpose of the Mission was to convert the local Ohlone Native Americans to Christianity. About 4,000 were baptized between the mission's founding in 1770 and its conversion (pun intended) to a conventional church in 1834. Between 700 and 1,000 Indians were usually at work in various mission agricultural and construction pursuits; they lived in a nearby village. Some 200 Indians and Spaniards are buried within the mission grounds.

It's our experience that this is a place where you can actually feel your bodily systems slow down and relax. Peace and serenity seem to reign. It begins the moment you enter the grounds from the museum store and continues until you exit. You can feel it as you walk through the gardens, cemetery and plaza; and you can feel it inside the church and museum.



Inside the museum, don't miss: the cenotaph (the large stone coffin-like monument) in honor of Fathers Serra, Lasuen, Crespi and Lopez; Father Serra's library (the first in California, pictured here) containing the antique books which he brought to the mission; the silver altar pieces (in the vestment room) which he also brought here; his modest living quarters; and the painting depicting the December, 1602 landing at Monterey of Spanish explorer Sebastian Vizcaino.

Open Monday through Saturday 9:30am-5:00pm and Sunday 10:30am-5pm, except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's; 3080 Rio Road; 831-624-3600; www.carmelmission.org.

Next, drive back to downtown Carmel and enjoy the art scene.

Carmel's Galleries

Known far and wide as an "artsy" community (Mary Austin, Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, Robinson Jeffers and Jack London were prominent here), there are more than 70 art galleries in Carmel and some 600 artists who "feed" those galleries.

You'll find most of Carmel's art galleries in the nine-block area between Mission and Lincoln Streets on the north and south, and between 7th and 5th Avenues on the east and west. One of our favorites is Classic Art Gallery at 6th and San Carlos, 831-625-0464, www.classicartgallery.com. Twenty-six top Carmel galleries are featured at www.carmelartgalleries.com.

It's Lunch Time!

We recommend Em Le's on Dolores, between 5th and 6th Avenues. They have a wide selection of delicious sandwiches, as well as appetizers, soups and salads, and lunch entrees.

The National Steinbeck Center

The Center is located in Salinas, about 22 miles (35 km) from Monterey, via Highway 68 (see the map on page 2). We came to this birthplace of author John Steinbeck on the strong recommendation of a friend. We had previously read only one of Steinbeck's novels, *Cannery Row*, but were so impressed with what we learned about this Pulitzer- and Nobel Prize-winner that we left the Center with an armload of his books, including *The Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *Travels with Charley*. The exhibits are engrossing and visually exciting.

The Center also has a wing that tells the story of Salinas Valley agriculture (the Valley calls itself "The Nation's Salad Bowl" because of the wide variety of fruits and vegetables grown there), and a gallery that hosts changing art and cultural exhibits. The 13-minute movie on John Steinbeck is very worthwhile.

Open daily 10am-5pm, except Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Day; One Main Street, Salinas 93901; 831-775-4721 or 831-775-4720 (recording); www.steinbeck.org.

From the National Steinbeck Center, you are well-positioned to return to San Francisco via US 101. Tip: try to avoid the San Jose and San Francisco evening commuter traffic (it's approximately 50 miles from Salinas to San Jose, and another 50 miles to San Francisco).

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