



Carmel, California for Couples

Things to Do in Carmel-by-the-Sea & Carmel Valley

From [Lauren Leonardi](#)

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One of the prettiest and most charming spots along the Central California coast, the village of Carmel-by-the-Sea is a lovely place for a stroll. With thatched roofs and tiny arched doorways, some of the small buildings look as if they dropped straight out of the shire. Many spaces have been refurbished and repurposed: a pharmacy is now a restaurant, a dairy trading post is now a bank. Every block has dozens of shops and art galleries. Shops are small, specialized, and feature precious finds.

Tours & Dining Consider joining a walking tour in order to sample the flavors and history of Carmel-by-the-Sea. You'll have an opportunity to

visit multiple venues in three hours as your guide leads you through nooks

and crannies of the area that you'd likely miss on your own. They also sprinkle in a delightful amount of regional history. You'll be offered cheese, chocolate, wine, and more from local purveyors. [Buy a Carmel Small Group Food and Wine Walking Tour Online.](#)



An arched doorway in one of Carmel's many hidden nooks.

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If you prefer to go it alone and at your own pace, consider picking up a [Wine Walk Passport](#). You will get to sample nine local wines in a variety of tasting rooms in town. The route is easily walkable. Passes provide one \$10 flight at each of nine tasting rooms and can be used in one day or spread out over a weekend, several weeks, or even months.

Some nearby vineyards offer tours of their land; several are within a 15-minute drive from downtown Carmel. If you're interested in the agriculture of wine making, Hahn Family Wines lets couples sign up for an [ATV excursion](#) through the vineyards (check for availability) that concludes with a tasting in the VIP room.

If it's the end result — what's in the bottle — that interests you most, visit independent tasting rooms. Oftentimes they are located several miles away from the vineyard proper. Grapes grown at [Heller Estates](#) on Carmel Valley Road have been 100% organic long before "organic" was a household term. At the Heller tasting room a few miles down the road there's a small sculpture garden (works are by artist Toby Heller, the Mrs. of Heller Estates) plus comfortable tables, chairs, and umbrellas. You're welcome to bring a picnic lunch, which is unusual for wineries in the region.

Should you find the bouquet of flowers as enticing as that of wine, visit the farmland of the nationally recognized brand [Earthbound Organics](#). Shop in the farm stand café, walk the chamomile aromatherapy labyrinth, and savor a fresh lunch on their soft green lawn surrounded by flowers and mossy hillsides.

Dining in Carmel

BREAKFAST/LUNCH: For a little taste of Paris, La Bicyclette delights in the morning with croissants and brioche French toast accompanied by an elderflower mimosa. The bistro wears the adornments of its former life as a pharmacy, built in the city's infancy. Thanks to a proper brick oven, their thin, crispy crusted pies will please even the most finicky pizzaficionados.

LUNCH: [Cantinetta Luca](#) offers casual "rustic" Italian fare next door to their salumeria, where they cure and age imported meats on site. If you plan on having a [picnic](#), this is a good place to gather delicacies.

DINNER: At [Aubergine](#), a [Relais & Chateaux](#) restaurant, each plate is tiny, precious, and artful. Every element of every dish feels scientifically concocted, and dressed with technique. It's fussy, sure, but it's also exquisite. The precision of service matches the fare in intensity. As delicious as it is beautiful, Aubergine could be the meal of a lifetime. If your budget allows for only one true extravagance, and if food is important to you, this is the place to splurge. Dress up, even though in casual Carmel it's not required.

Carmel Spa for Couples

[Refuge](#) in Carmel Valley bills itself as "America's First Co-Ed Relaxation Spa" and provides a unique and affordable spa experience. It consists of a three-step process: Heat up in the eucalyptus steam room or the sizable sauna for 5-10 minutes; dip into either a "cool" or "cold" pool for 10-15 seconds; then relax outdoor and fireside, or indoor in an anti-gravity recliner for 10-15 minutes. Or soak in any of the ten UV-heated, saline hot tubs of different temperatures.

Refuge is a no-talk zone. The whole experience happens in near silence. Not all guests respect this rule, but all should. The best part? The whole experience, to enter and use the facility for the entire day, is affordable. Massages are available, and are also reasonably priced. It's unlike any other spa experience, and one of the best experiences Monterey County has to offer.

Sunset Beach Bonfire

The husband and wife team from [Beach Bonfires and Picnics](#) can transform the environment of your choosing for the perfect romantic moment. They'll schlep just the right amount of wood down Carmel's steep beach stairs and start a well-timed fire to blaze on the beach at sunset.

The beach bonfire picnic includes a blanket to sit on, a basket of s'mores-making supplies, you and your lover's initials spelled out in flower petals, Pellegrino, and even a flashlight for making your way back from the beach in the dark.

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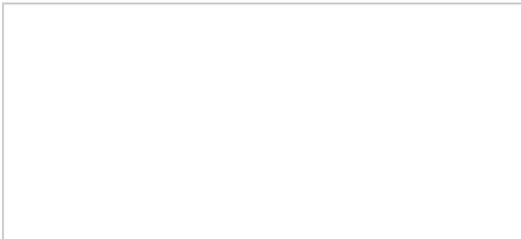
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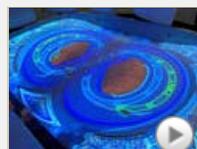
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