

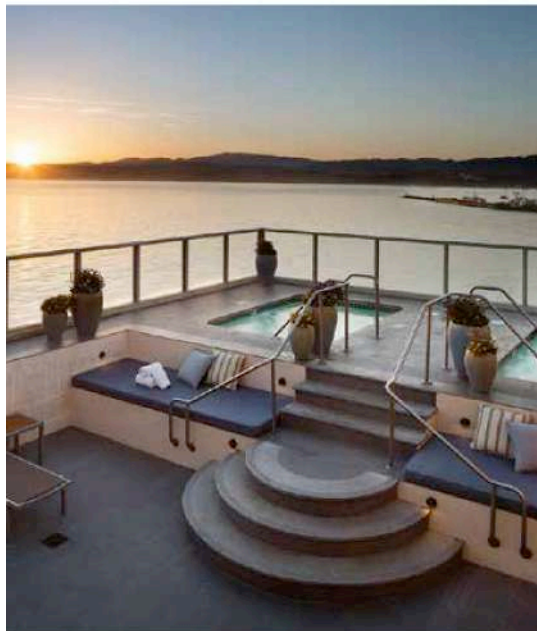


[SEASONAL FUN]

WEEKEND GETAWAY

Monterey & Carmel-by-the-Sea

by Elizabeth Kang



Just a two-hour drive delivers us East Bay locals to two of the most picturesque seaside towns in the country — how lucky are we? In this month's travel feature, we'll suggest a cozy kid-friendly hotel, three delicious local restaurants and a few fun activities in Monterey and Carmel-by-the-Sea.

We first checked in at the newly renovated Monterey Plaza Hotel and Spa, which sits right on the water, offering panoramic views of Monterey Bay. The location of this 4-star seaside hotel can't be beat, as it's walking distance to the world-famous Monterey Bay Aquarium and Cannery Row. Monterey Plaza Hotel will finish its entire renovation this summer, with added new furnishings, bedding, wallpaper, bathtubs, ect. to every room, in addition to adding four new luxury suites on the property. The rooftop deck is a wonderful romantic spot to snuggle with a loved one while watching the tide at sunset. But if you happen to come with kids-in-tow, the hotel offers cute and comfortable accommodations for little ones. Our room included an adorable kids' teepee, complimentary gift bag with sand toys for the beach, and a (requested) portable mattress bed for children to sleep or play on, as well.



We recommend sneaking away to the indulgent on-site spa, which was named by Travel & Leisure as one of the top 25 Spas in Northern California. After a relaxing massage, rejuvenating facial, or luxurious body wrap, guests can unwind on the outdoor sundeck to enjoy the cozy fireplace, or soak in a whirlpool tub, complete with gorgeous views, of course.

When the inevitable craving for fresh seafood calls, you certainly won't have to go far. Schooners Coastal Kitchen & Bar is located right inside the hotel, and offers an extensive array of seafood, shellfish and contemporary cuisine, with a huge emphasis on sustainability. We admired the commitment the restaurant has on maintaining a menu featuring sustainable seafood. The classics — raw oysters, steamed mussels, clam chowder, cioppino — are always favorites at Schooners, but we also appreciated some of the more contemporary dishes on the menu, such as the charred octopus appetizer, kale & kelp salad, and wild caught seared ahi. Non-seafood eaters will enjoy the numerous pasta, salad and steak offerings.



When traveling, we never miss a chance to imbibe in the local delicacies, and traveling with kids usually doesn't stop us from enjoying local wineries. Many wineries and tasting rooms in Northern California are very accommodating (or at least tolerant) of children

these days, so make sure to stop at a few in the area. We like to keep a well-stocked goody/activity bag to keep kids occupied and quiet during those times.

We had the pleasure of visiting two tasting rooms in nearby Carmel-by-the-Sea, (about a 20 minute drive from Monterey.) Albatross Ridge is a longtime family owned winery known for its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The generous pours included in our tastings were served by personable, knowledgeable and relaxed staff. The \$12 tasting fee is waived with the purchase of two bottles of wine. Open daily from 1 p.m. Located on Mission Street between Ocean & 7th,

Paraiso Vineyards by Smith Family Wines is a quaint and charming pinterest-worthy tasting room where \$15 buys you generous tastings of everything from riesling and chardonnay, to port. Located right in the heart

