

Take 7: Monterey + Carmel

FROM THE TWO SEASIDE HAVENS TO INLAND CARMEL VALLEY, THE ULTIMATE CALIFORNIA WEEKEND.
BY ROBIN RINALDI

(CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT): YOU'VE GOT UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1 TO SEE THE AUSTRALIAN SPOTTED JELLYFISH IN THE MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM'S "JELLIES: LIVING ART" EXHIBIT; AT CITRONELLE, IN THE CARMEL VALLEY RANCH RESORT, EXECUTIVE CHEF ANTHONY KEENE PUTS OUT AN INVENTIVE CALI-FRENCH MENU DESIGNED BY MICHEL RICHARD; IN SUMMER, THE FOG OVER THE MONTEREY PENINSULA WILL USUALLY BURN OFF BY NOON, LEAVING AFTERNOONS SUNNY (FALL WEATHER IS EVEN BETTER).



1 WATER'S EDGE

Monterey lodging, especially those properties near the historic ruins of Cannery Row, can be a bit funky. However, jutting out over the water, the **Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa** (montereyplazahotel.com) is an oasis of luxury. Read by the roaring fireplace in the grand lobby, or grab lunch alfresco on Schooner's sprawling heated patio. After your spa treatment on the top floor, head out to the cozy rooftop deck to lounge, hit the steam room or soak in one of two whirlpools overlooking the bay.

2 INTO THE WILD

You're steps from **Monterey Bay Aquarium** (mbayaq.org)—the world's best—so of course you have to schedule a visit. But for an up-close look at the bay's sea life, go on a guided two-hour kayak tour with **Adventures by the Sea** (adventuresbythesea.com). You'll paddle in sit-atop kayaks through the kelp beds to see otter families, jellies, sea lions, seals—and possibly even a few small dolphins—in their natural habitat. Don't fear the cold water; you're supplied with a warm, splash-resistant suit.

NEWS FROM THE ROAD

There's a new lodging option up Mendocino way in the form of the **Cottages at Little River Cove**, which opened last month. Nine bluff-side cottages, each sleeping up to four people, are decked out in designer beds, granite counters and flat-panel TVs, with a communal patio and barbecue outside. Three of them even welcome Fido with a pet bed and pet shower. Though perfect for a low-key getaway, the cottages also come with free Wi-Fi, as well as concierge service to provide those all-important in-room massages or arrange local wine or horseback tours. cottagesatlittlerivercove.com —RR

WEEKEND SHERPA

Tall Stack

Before summer ends, experience the **pancake breakfast at Mount Tam's rustic West Point Inn**. The twist: You've got to hike to get to the hotcakes. But the multiple trail options from various points in Marin (check westpointinn.com) are short and sweet, just enough to work up an appetite. And once you get up there—elevation, 1,785 feet—the views south to the Marin Headlands, the Bay and the Pacific will make your mouth water even more. Pony up \$10, grab a spot on the sprawling picnic ground and get your fingers sticky with maple syrup.

The breakfasts happen just a few times throughout the summer; the next two take place Aug. 10 and Sept. 7. —Brad Day

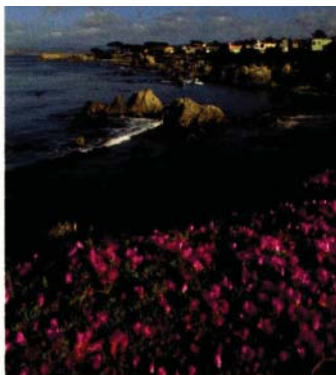
For more ideas from Weekend Sherpa, go to 7x7.com and click on "People."

3 FINE PAIR

Several charming cafes and bistros dot the tree-lined streets of Carmel-by-the-Sea—for lunch, grab an outdoor table at picturesque **PortaBella** (portabellacarmel.com). But the most noteworthy by far is **Bouchée Restaurant & Wine Bar** (boucheecarmel.com), where sommelier Thomas Perez pairs selections from a 24-page wine list with such French classics as steak frites and beef bourguignonne. The small, succulent mussels make the perfect starter; ravioli filled with fava-bean purée is the ideal summer dish, and cherry clafouti topped in ginger ice cream is fruity, eggy heaven.

4 INTERNATIONAL ORANGE

The new foodie stop on the Central Coast is **Citronelle** (carmelvalleyranch.com), the California twin of Michel Richard's Washington, DC, hit restaurant. Located at Carmel Valley Ranch, Citronelle's spacious modern dining room overlooks the resort's rambling oaks and rolling hills. The Cali-French menu changes with the seasons, of course, but don't miss the local abalone served with caviar cream, or the broiled sablefish marinated in sake and miso that literally melts in the mouth. The caramel crème brûlée is a reimagined custard tower layered with crispy wafers that multiply the dessert's iconic crunch.



5 STREET WISE

You could wander the gingerbread, Brit-themed storefronts of Carmel all day for everything from imported candies to handmade cards. The boutiques can lean toward the matronly, but **Red Haute** (redhaute.net) carries adorable girly dresses by Shu Lami and hipster-cult embroidered tees by Johnny Was. You won't find any Thomas

Kinkadee pabulum at **Trajan Gallery** (trajangallery.com)—just an edgy, modern collection of paintings and sculptures. Stop into **Carmel Drug Store** (carmeldrugstore.com) to browse the collection of Hoyle playing cards and old-school toiletries by Muelhens and Roger & Gallet—and while you're at it, grab a cold drink from the antique Coca-Cola icebox.

6 PEDAL PUSHING

If you've seen the cypresses and cliffs of **17-Mile Drive** only from your car window, try taking in the scenery instead from a bike, which you can rent from Adventures by the Sea (see above). A groomed bike path leads straight from Cannery Row to the Drive, which has a dedicated bike lane. Turn around anytime if you're not up for the 34-mile round trip. Along the way, make sure to stop at the **Inn at Spanish Bay** to have a drink at Roy's, where, between 5:45 and 6:45 p.m. each day, a bagpiper shows up to herald the dusk. pebblebeach.com

7 GREAT ESCAPE

You can stay at one of many cute hotels in Carmel-by-the-Sea, but just a 10-minute drive away, in the dreamy Carmel Valley, lies **Bernardus Lodge** (bernardus.com), a Med-inspired adobe spread existing on a whole other level of comfort. When you're not swimming in the heated pool, relax on your private balcony, in your oversized tub or beside your limestone fireplace. Bernardus' nearby winery crafts highly rated Bordeaux-style reds from its Marinus Vineyard; don't leave without hitting the tasting room. x