



## *Making the Most of Monterey*

*Wednesday, August 27th, 2008*



therapeutic salty air and watch the playful marine animals frolic in the kelp beds.

Cannery Row may be initially enticing, but don't spend all of your time in the tourist district: There's life beyond the bustling waterfront way. Monterey's a central base for much diverse activity, so be sure and take advantage of your prime locale. Explore the city's stately mansions and historic architecture. Play a round of golf at Pebble Beach. Go wine tasting in Carmel Valley's vineyards. Navigate the scenic 17-Mile Drive. Or simply claim a plot of sand and enjoy doing absolutely nothing at all (my personal favorite way to spend a vacation!).



While the rest of the country swelters under the August heat, Northern California maintains its cool—quite literally. But the seaside town of Monterey, just a two-hour drive south of San Francisco, will keep your temperature down and your stress level even lower, as you inhale the

**When to Go:** Now! Or anytime really. Temperatures are consistently mild and pleasant, averaging a high of mid-60s twelve months of the year and topping out in the low-70s in August, September and October. Regardless of when you go, expect foggy morning and late afternoons, though the haze will burn off around noon to reveal a few gloriously sunny hours. And as goes the story anywhere in California, nights are bound to get chilly, so pack accordingly or don't say I didn't warn you.

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**Where to Stay:** The Monterey Bay Inn is a favorite, with its personalized touch and location on the quiet end of Cannery Row. Request an oceanfront room with balcony, and have your breakfast platter (included in the stay and delivered at your chosen time) in a serene setting overlooking the stay. The king-sized feather beds are like sleeping on a cloud, and the 49-room boutique boasts all the modern amenities one could ask for, including wireless access, flat-screen TVs, DVD players, coffee makers, robes and slippers. Some even have gas fireplaces. If you want a larger, more resort-like feel (and have the extra dough to spend), opt for one of the 290 rooms at the Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa, perched right on the water and occupying prime Cannery Row real estate. The spa is a must-do—an 80-minute metabolic detox treatment will ensure you

leave relaxed and rejuvenated—and the rooftop fireplace and hot tubs are not to be missed.



**What to Eat:** Some of the finest fare around can be consumed at the Monterey Plaza's Duck Club, or the more casual bistro Schooner's, with outside waterfront dining. A tad bit cheaper (though everywhere along the Cannery is overpriced), Paradiso Trattoria serves an appetizing conglomeration of seafood and pasta dishes. If you're looking for a

nice cafe in which to chill while catching up with your e-mail (or even work, though I don't encourage working

on vacation!), check out downtown gem [East Village Coffee Lounge](#), with its medieval facade, high ceilings, multiple rooms and comfy chairs.



**What to Do:** Start with the obvious: The [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#). Even if you're traveling sans children, you'll surely be in awe of the underwater life that combs the Pacific Ocean's floor. (Not to mention, the otters and penguins are just so darn cute!) Once you've explored every nook and cranny, walk south of the aquarium along the coast to find lazy seals and sea lions sun bathing along the sandy shores *en masse*. Before the sun goes down, hop in your car and catch it setting from the lighthouse at Pacific Grove, a marvelous lookout point. If the weather's in your favor, grab a towel and hit the public beaches just north of the city in Marina or Seaside.

–Kristin Luna