

6 Things To Know Before You Visit Monterey

Written by Allison Young

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Photo by Onyx & Ash

Most travelers know Monterey for its world-famous aquarium, the oft-photographed Bixby Bridge and Pebble Beach's grand golf course. And sure, it boasts California's most dramatic stretch of coast and premier wine regions, but that's not all there is to love about Monterey.



1. It's not all wine Monterey County may have been named one of the world's top 10 wine destinations, and no doubt you'll sip a standout pinot noir or chardonnay, but wine isn't the only reason to imbibe. At [Cultura Comida y Bebida](#), Carmel's newly opened Mexican restaurant, sommelier and owner Sarah Kabat-Marcy offers small-batch, single origin Mezcal, including creative Mezcal-driven cocktails (the carrot-ginger-orange Conejo Bebida is swoon-worthy) and a Mezcal flight that'll have you joyously pinching agave worm salt and chapulines (edible grasshoppers). Cheers to that!



2. The beaches aren't all sandy white Between Del Monte Beach and Carmel Beach, there's plenty of silvery sand to go around, but white isn't the only beach hue. Case in point: [Pfeiffer Beach](#), a wave-crashing spectacular in Big Sur that boasts—get this—purple sand.

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3. You will see whales—and more! Whales are a given. Bring your binoculars and you're bound to spot gray whale as they migrate past California's coast, and even humpbacks, blue whales and killer whales if you're lucky (take the [Monterey Bay Whale Watch](#) tour for an up close and personal view). You can also see sea otters at [Fisherman's Wharf](#) and Monarch butterflies at [Monarch Grove Butterfly Sanctuary](#).



4. Carmel-by-the-Sea is touristy and so worth it The seaside enclave has a dizzying array of restaurants, bakeries, bars and souvenir shops, but the fairy tale-like enclave pulls it off in the most charming way. Check in at [The Hideaway](#), a newly renovated B&B/boutique hotel with 24 guest rooms, a complimentary wine and cheese happy hour and European-style breakfast with house made quiches and pastries, plus bikes and boogie boards to borrow. Take the [Wine Walk-by-the-Sea](#) and wine hop through walkable downtown.



5. It's a hiking hotspot Wineries aren't the only way to tour. See wildflowers ([Point Lobos](#)), waterfalls ([Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park](#)), sandy coves ([Andrew Molera State Park](#)) and towering redwoods ([Garrapata State Park](#)) exploring Monterey's hundreds of miles of hiking trails.



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6. No need to rough it in Big Sur You may not get a cell phone signal, but there's a lot of luxury in Big Sur, from the obvious (Post Ranch Inn, obvi!) to the hidden gems. [Glen Oaks Big Sur](#) fits the latter, a revamped and reimagined motor lodge from the 50;s that boasts retro cool

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furnishings, heated bathroom floors, gourmet s'mores kits and yoga mats. Book the Big Sur Cabin for outdoor clawfoot tubs and soak under the stars.