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FAMILY FIRST IN MONTEREY

MONTEREY COUNTY, CALIF. – With 99 miles of prime coastline, rugged redwood groves and a tapestry of world-class attractions, Monterey County is the ultimate playground for families. Key stops include:

- The **Monterey Bay Aquarium** (www.montereybayaquarium.org), consistently voted the nation’s top aquarium and family attraction. The aquarium showcases 250,000 animals and plants representing more than 700 species found in the Monterey Bay, and kids and adults alike can pet sharks and rays, marvel at swirling jellies, duck into the walk-through wave crash and enjoy endless aquatic exploration.
- The **National Steinbeck Center** (www.steinbeck.org) explores the life and work of Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-Winning author John Steinbeck through multi-level, interactive exhibits. Highlights include a life-sized horse kids can climb on in *The Red Pony* display, the actual camper Steinbeck drove across the U.S. in *Travels with Charley* and “Vote for Your Favorite Vegetable” and “Design Your Vegetable Crate Label” stations.
- **Monterey County Youth Museum** (www.mymuseum.org), geared toward children ages 3-8, this 8,500 square foot museum is packed with a variety of hands on exhibits, making each visit unique and exciting.
- Secluded deep in Steinbeck Country on 50 acres is **Wild Things** (www.wildthingsinc.com), an exotic animal training facility with 100+ critters -- lions , tigers and bears, oh my! Year-round special events and packages include feeding and bathing the pachyderms, nighttime flashlight tours and “Roar and Snore” sleepovers. Adults can bed down at the **Vision Quest B&B**, which features four luxury, safari-styled tents with breakfast served by elephants.
- Monterey County has myriad **parks and beaches** perfect for kite flying, picnicking, hiking and leisurely afternoons (try Big Sur, the Carmel Valley and Marina State Beach). Guided **kayak** tours are available for ages four and up, and families can also explore the Monterey Bay Recreation Trail by **four-wheeled surrey**. A full playground and rental paddleboats at Monterey’s **Dennis the Menace Park** on Lake El Estero also provide outdoor entertainment for all ages.
- Other family-friendly adventures include historical walking tours that cover adobes, missions and more (including the unbeatable **Ghost Trolley of Old Monterey**); **Cannery Row** boasts a mix of kid-friendly

restaurants, shops, ocean views and historic displays (and the Monterey Bay Aquarium); and **wildlife watching** galore, from whales and sea otters to Monarch butterflies and bald eagles.

Several Monterey County hotel properties are especially family-friendly, and some offer specific reunion/extended family getaway packages:

Asilomar Conference Grounds: (www.visitasilomar.com) Families who are reluctant to take on the organization of group activities, meals and sleeping space will enjoy the offerings and service at Asilomar Conference Grounds, where all-inclusive family gatherings are a specialty. Established in 1913 as a campsite for the YWCA, Asilomar Conference Grounds blends acres of sand dunes, natural forests, and coastline for precious time to be spent together.

For daytime fun, families have choices of swimming, horseshoes, volleyball, billiards, ping-pong, bicycle riding and walks along beachfront boardwalks. Evenings can be spent enjoying fireside chats, cards, board games, sing-a longs or rousing team games like Charades and Pictionary in a cozy community living room environment. Mealtimes are a treat at Asilomar where country-style, family-pleasing menus are served in the casual, friendly atmosphere of the Crocker Dining Hall. Or, families can have custom planned menus served in one of 20 special event rooms (try an oceanside barbeque dinner with picnic tables and red-checked tablecloths). Sleeping arrangements are perfectly suited for families of all sizes and age, with 314 guest rooms that sleep 2-7 and are tucked throughout 28 clusters of historic lodge buildings – each building with a common living room and many with oversized fireplaces and pianos

Carmel River Inn: (www.carmelriverinn.com) Nestled on 10 acres, Carmel River Inn's lush grounds are the perfect setting for company picnics, family reunions, and garden club gatherings. The wooded areas are ideal for exploration, games, and team-building exercises; the property is just minutes from the state parks of Big Sur, the hiking trails and vineyards of Carmel Valley, and the attractions and restaurants of Monterey, Marina and Carmel. Both main inn accommodations and historic cottages (sleeping up to six) are available, and most cottages have equipped kitchens ideal for cooking a family dinner. Year-round packages include things like aquarium and whale watching tickets, and an on-site pool is also available.

Monterey Bay Lodge (www.montereybaylodge.com), complete with a swimming pool and two-room family suites with bunk beds, video games, TV and DVDs– and, it's located just across the street from the Monterey Bay and Dennis the Menace Park.

Embassy Suites Monterey Bay (www.embassymonterey.com), along the coastal Recreation Trail, has two-room suites with kitchenettes, complimentary breakfast, and evening appetizers. The **Victorian Inn** (www.victorianinn.com), just steps from Cannery Row and the Monterey Bay Aquarium, also has family suites with in-room games and kitchenettes.

VISITOR INFO.

Monterey County is located 120 miles/192 km south of San Francisco and 345 miles/552 km north of Los Angeles along the classic California corridor. The region boasts 99 miles of prime Pacific Coastline, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, three historic missions, 40,000 acres of premium vineyards, 24 golf courses and over 250 lodging properties. Monterey County includes the Monterey Peninsula, Big Sur, North County and the Salinas Valley. The Monterey Peninsula Airport (MRY), just three miles from historic downtown Monterey and minutes from the area's major attractions, is served by non-stop flights to and from Denver (DEN), Las Vegas (LAS), Phoenix (PHX), Los Angeles (LAX), San Diego (SAN) and San Francisco (SFO). www.SeeMonterey.com.

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