

## HOT SHEET/MONTEREY COUNTY - 2009 Editorial -

**ENVELOPE PLEASE** – Votes are in and if travelers have their way, Big Sur will be the next Big Thing on the American agenda! Tripadvisor® reports that Monterey County took three of the Top 25 **2008 Travelers' Choice Destination Awards** including Big Sur (#2), Carmel (#7) and Monterey (#19). [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com).

**HAUTE HOLIDAYS** – Historic Monterey is one of the nation's top holiday haunts boasting an impressive line-up of classic candlelit adobes, sing-alongs in legendary **Carmel Mission** and home-town boat parades. Families who enjoy the safety net of a self-contained environment will appreciate downtown Monterey's tapestry of hotels, restaurants and events laid out within an eight square-block grid. Top hits: **Christmas in the Adobes** featuring 20+ historic adobes (Dec. 11 & 13); [www.parks.ca.gov/mfhp](http://www.parks.ca.gov/mfhp) or the **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Monterey Cowboy Poetry and Music Festival** (Dec. 5-7), [www.montereycowboy.org](http://www.montereycowboy.org).



**NATURE'S NUPTIALS – Same Sex Weddings** are certain to deliver a much-needed infusion into California's economy and Monterey County sits front and center for couples who prefer exchanging vows in the great outdoors. From a primary redwood grove in Big Sur to the fragrant vineyards of Carmel Valley, kayak at sea wedding or bonfire bash on Carmel State Beach the options for alfresco nuptials are endless. Urbanites who relish a city wedding can mix it up with a honeymoon in Monterey County spotlighting Mother Nature.

**CANNERY ROW PROPERTY OPENS, Four new hotels slated.** Perched on the Pacific, the **InterContinental The Clement Monterey** debuted June/2008 on Cannery Row. The \$80+ million, 208-room hotel includes a 95-seat C restaurant and 15,000 sq. ft. of meeting/banquet space. Next up: a **330-room Fairmont Resort** on the grounds of the former Fort Ord in Seaside. The \$100 million property will include 24,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, a 14,000-sq. ft. Willow Stream spa, magnificent Bayonet and Black Horse golf courses, pool and 295 residential units. Additional projects include mid-size hotels in **Marina, Salinas** and **Seaside** due to top off in advance of the **2010 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links**.



**RETRO FIX** - From wintering **Monarchs** to **naturalist kayak tours** and a bevy of B&Bs, Pacific Grove delivers the classic California getaway. For a retro fix, check out **Andril Fireplace Cottages** with expansive back lawns, bbqs and that 50s gin & tonic tone; other picks include the Butterfly Grove Inn, Lighthouse Lodge and Bide-a-Wee Inn. Gay friendly: The newly renovated Anton Inn is just the ticket, two blocks from the beach for \$139/dbl. Nearby, trek the 100+ acre forest and dunes at Asilomar, play the poor man's Pebble Beach – Pacific Grove Golf Links – or paddle over to Passionfish restaurant, a leader in sustainable seafood and key proponent of Seafood Watch. [www.andrilcottages.com](http://www.andrilcottages.com), [www.antoninn.com](http://www.antoninn.com).

**WALK ON THE WILD SIDE** – If you've never had a chat with a California Condor, scaled/scurried the volcanic artistry of the Pinnacles National Monument or had breakfast served by an African Elephant, it's time for Monterey County Wild Side. Join the MCCVB for a three-night outback fam spotlighting the **Ventana Wildlife Society's condor banding/release program**, next up: clock out to the sounds of roaring lions at the **Vision Quest** safari camp, spend the morning with a pro at the Pinnacles and an afternoon kayaking after monsters of the deep in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. **Parkfield, USA** - the self-proclaimed earthquake capital of the world - is a side trip option. [Link2koli@aol.com](mailto:Link2koli@aol.com).



**CARMEL ON THE CHEAP** – Cash in on the charms of **Carmel Valley** without breaking the bank. Digs: **Los Laureles Lodge**, once a thoroughbred ranch for the Vanderbilts, offers 31 rooms smack in the action with a pool and plenty of family charm. Pack a picnic and hit the hiking trails at 4,500-acre **Garland Ranch Park**, take a morning tour at Earthbound Farm, stroll the village for antiques, tee off at a gem of a course – **Rancho Canada**, explore the Carmel River or sip away the day with a trek through seven local wine tasting venues. [www.loslaureles.com](http://www.loslaureles.com), [www.ranchocanada.com](http://www.ranchocanada.com). **New:** Citronelle by Michel Richard at Carmel Valley Ranch.



**SADDLE UP FOR SEAHORSES** – Spring/2009 delivers a new, multimedia special **exhibit on seahorses** slated for the nation's #1 ranked Monterey Bay Aquarium. With a head like a horse, a snout like an aardvark, a belly pouch like a kangaroo, a prehensile monkey-like tail and chameleon characteristics, seahorses are one fascinating fish. [kjeffries@mbayaq.org](mailto:kjeffries@mbayaq.org)

**CELEBRITY SPOTTING** - With its wealth of world-class sporting events and nation's top ranked golf courses, Monterey County is an avid haunt for star spotting. Celebrity gazing hits full tilt at the annual **AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am (February/2009)** drawing 180+ star-studded celebrity players. Pop into the **Tap Room at Pebble Beach** for a brew and off-the-green camaraderie with regulars Kevin Costner, Bill Murray and Ray Romano. **The Sardine Factory** is home base for event players Vijay Singh, Ray Romano, Rush Limbaugh, Alice Cooper and the "Governator." **Bernardus Lodge** and its award-winning **Marinus restaurant** are another great bet. Pony up to the outside terrace where recent visits included Leonardo Di Caprio, Three 6 Mafia, Noah Wyle, Michael Richards, Goldie Hawn, Kurt Russell and Clint Eastwood.

**ART ALERT** – Seeking to unearth the next big art gig... follow your toes to **Sand City**, 120 miles south of San Francisco. This enclave of artist lofts and light industrial is home to 300+ residents, nearly two miles of prime Pacific beachfront.



Check out the annual Westend Celebration each August or scour the region for arts & crafts straight from the source. Eats: Ol' Factory restaurant serves up java happy hour, pajama parties and all things kitsch.



**LAND GRAB:** Hikers have three reasons to hoot: The State of California approved a \$2.68 million grant to help buy **144 acres of Elkhorn Slough in Moss Landing**, home to more than a dozen rare or endangered species. The USDA Forest Service purchased **460 acres of Big Sur**, linking 1,100 acres; the acquisition creates a 10-mile "coast to crest" open space corridor just 15 miles south of Carmel. **Pinnacles National Monument**, home to the California Condor release program, celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008.

**OENOPHILE ALERT** – Mystic microclimates, 40,000 acres of vines and **nine AVAs** spell a good time for the avid oenophile. Cash in on 30+ tasting rooms countywide including swirls along Cannery Row, Carmel-by-the-Sea or the verdant River Road, an outback excursion pouring everything from Grenache to award-winning Pinot Noir. Carmel Valley is also home to a variety of top-flight producers and organic wineries. **New hot spot: Cachagua Valley** for the ultimate outback experience. [www.montereywines.org](http://www.montereywines.org).

**SYBARITE/SPIRITUAL RETREATS** are the perfect Rx for anyone looking to rejuvenate mind and spirit. Top picks - the **Esalen Institute** in Big Sur, a sprawling mind-and-body compound perched on the Pacific ([www.esalen-institute.org](http://www.esalen-institute.org)). Nearby in Lucia the **New Camaldoli Hermitage** is a statement to serenity. Bed down at this restive monastery two miles in the sky with expansive views of the Big Sur coastline (donation; [www.contemplation.com/Hermitage](http://www.contemplation.com/Hermitage).) In for a bit of rugged reflection? Four-wheel it to **Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in Carmel Valley**. Check in and truly check out as resident Buddhist monks manage guests on their path to enlightenment. (\$112/person; [www.sfzc.com/tassajara](http://www.sfzc.com/tassajara))



**WINTER WANDERLUST** – Winter is an excellent time to tap into the natural wonders of Monterey County. Ditch the iPod and tune into the whispers of thousands of **migrating monarch butterflies** perched in Pacific Grove, reflect on flocks of migratory fowl or hit the waves for whale watching in the Monterey Bay. Top Stops for spout-spotting: **Point Lobos State Nature Reserve**, Schooner's restaurant on Cannery Row, the alfresco hot tub atop Monterey Bay Inn, Point Pinos Lighthouse or the back deck at Big Sur's legendary Nepenthe restaurant. **A Bird's-Eye View** - Monterey County is also a haven for threatened and **migratory birds** including Bald and Golden Eagles which thrive in southern Monterey County. Top Spots: Elkhorn Slough, Lake San Antonio.

**GREEN IS GOLD** when it comes to the variety of **public gardens gracing Monterey County**. Make a day of touring some of the region's hidden gems including Custom House & Garden, Casa Soberanes & Garden, Cooper-Molera Adobe & Garden, Memory Garden and the Stevenson House & Garden. Offbeat options: Labyrinth Walk and the Sensory Garden.

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