

Itinerary: Marina, Seaside and Sand City

The towns of Marina, Seaside and Sand City have become a hub for adventure activities, interesting food and fantastic art, combining a "SoHo West" feel with the peace of seaside life. All three are located right on the water, so visitors can walk straight from a loft-style artist's gallery over to the beach for some parasailing, and then head back over the dunes for a drink while admiring the sunset.

Friday

4pm

The local artists' scene is concentrated in Sand City. Once a factory district in which sand was made and processed (hence the name), its industrial areas later became a popular place for artists to work and (not quite legally) live. Rather than kicking out these artists, Sand City decided to support them and legalize their live-work lofts, and now the tiny town of 310 is packed wall-to-wall with resident artists. Check the Sand City website for a [list of artists and galleries](#).

While you're exploring the area, keep an eye out for signs for that weekend's live music. There's a live show almost every night in Sand City, and it could be anything from punk to classical — or even a punk-rock show played by a string quartet. Make a note of when and where, in case you want to come back later.

7pm

Dinner tonight will show off the best in sustainable seafood at [The Fishwife Seafood Cafe](#) in Seaside. The restaurant, tucked away just off Fremont Boulevard, is a legend in this part of the world, with fresh fish and house-made desserts. The window seats will give you a nice view of passers-by, but due to a quirk in licensing, you can't drink alcohol there; choose a seat further in the restaurant if you want a beer.

If you're feeling adventurous, perhaps you want to check out one of those live shows in Sand City. But turn in at a decent hour; tomorrow starts early!

Saturday

7am

It's an early morning. If you're a surfer, it's time to head over to [Marina State Beach](#) and catch some waves. If you prefer golf, head over to [Bayonet and Black Horse Golf Course](#) for a quick breakfast and 36 holes with a fascinating history. Originally the on-base golf course for the Army's Fort Ord, one section of these courses was designed around a general's notorious slice,

and has earned the nickname "Combat Corner". If you find yourself in the rough, take solace in the glorious view of Monterey Bay you'll get as you try to find your ball.

Noon

After a morning on the links or the waves, a sustaining lunch is in order. Just up the road in Marina, tucked into a small shopping center at the far end of Reservation Road, [Wild Thyme Deli & Cafe](#) uses the best fresh ingredients to provide a mix of East Coast comfort food and West Coast organic cuisine.

1:30pm

Tucked away next to a sand dune in Sand City is the [Sanctuary Rock Gym](#), Monterey County's premiere indoor climbing destination. You've called ahead before you came to town to book a private lesson with one of Sanctuary's excellent instructors. No need to buy equipment if you're trying this for the first time; they'll rent you all the gear you need, and teach you at whatever level you feel comfortable with, from newbie couch-potato to rock-climbing expert. Look toward the beach as you're in the parking lot, and you might just catch a glimpse of the parasailers on the other side of the dunes.

4pm

You must be feeling yesterday's climbing workout in your arms and legs. Head on up to the [Sanctuary Beach Resort](#), a series of beachy gray buildings tucked away in Marina's sand dunes, right by the beach. A Nirvana massage at their spa will be sure to dispel any lingering soreness.

6pm

If you haven't been turned to water by that massage, head over to [Marina State Beach](#) and achieve instant tranquility. This beach is known for its sand dunes, which reach heights rarely seen on the coast of California and provide a home to unique birds, plants and animals. The well-marked Dune Nature Trail has signs throughout explaining the various features and creatures you'll find along the way. Depending on the season, you'll either be able to feast your eyes on the antics of hang gliders, who launch from an area directly south of the parking lot, or sit with the locals and check out Marina's hottest evening show — its breathtaking sunsets.

8pm

If you're not heading back to Sand City for a live show, it's time for dinner. Just down the road from the Sanctuary Beach Resort, at the end of a shopping plaza on Reservation Road, is [Dishes Bistro and Grill](#). Dishes uses high-quality ingredients to make California and Mediterranean food with a Brazilian twist. Their wine and beer list has some unusual international selections, but their best drink is the caipirinha; it's probably the best one you'll have north of Brazil.

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10pm

Wind down with a drink back by the beach at [Kula Ranch Island Steakhouse](#). The lower patio has great fire pits and glass barriers that provide shelter from the sea breeze, but the upper patio has fantastic views of the beach and dunes; you'll be able to see the moon reflected in the ocean. On a clear night, you might even catch a glimpse of the twinkling lights of Monterey and Pacific Grove.

Sunday

10am

Pick up a to-go breakfast and bring it down to the beach at Sand City. Marina State Beach is the hang glider's beach of choice; Sand City, on the other hand, is the place where all the paragliders take to the air. Sit and soak in the sea air and the soaring flyers, and let the tranquility permeate you. The sense of serenity (and your breakfast) will sustain you as you head home.

Maritime Museum Visitors Center: 5 Custom House Plaza, Monterey, CA 93940 1-877-MONTEREY

Lake El Estero Visitors Center: Franklin and Camino El Estero, Monterey, CA 93940