

Itinerary: Midweek Monterey Getaway

A midweek Monterey escape can leave you with the deliciously naughty feeling that you're playing hooky. You can watch locals grab a quick coffee on the way to work while you're eating a leisurely breakfast, get the best spot at all the local attractions and have wide, sandy beaches all to yourself!

Day One

7pm

After you check in to your hotel, dine at a restaurant that centers on Monterey's culinary specialty: seafood! Monterey has seafood-specializing restaurants at every price point. Some restaurants do seafood with a Milanese spin, some with a Mexican slant, some with a genteel Southern feel, some with an Italian-American influence, and several with a flavor that is distinctly Monterey. Most seafood restaurants are clustered in spots allowing you to view the Monterey Bay origin of the meal on your plate while you dine. [Check our listings](#), and dine at the venue that tickles your palate the most.

9pm

Monterey is known for its music festivals, but the live music continues year-round at the live music venues in Old Monterey and Cannery Row. The calendar of events is constantly changing; pick up a local paper to learn what's on that night, or just stroll by and listen.

Day Two

9am

Stop by [Paris Bakery Cafe](#) in Old Monterey for a delicious breakfast of great French pastries, accompanied by wonderful coffee.

10am

Even though it's a weekday, the [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#) can still get crowded with school tour groups. You've made two arrangements to avoid holdups: you arrived at 10am, right when it opened, and you [bought your tickets online](#) and printed them at home. While everyone else is going through the big main gate, you can waltz in through the tucked-away Advance Ticket Holder entrance, which, as you're facing the building, is down an alley about one hundred feet to the right of the main entrance. You've got map in hand, and there's plenty to see. Where do you begin? Decide which you'd rather watch get fed: otters, penguins or large seafish? This will determine your next steps.

If it's **otters**, then as soon as you enter, go up the stairs to your left, past the gift store, and down the stairs in front of you to the Sea Otter exhibit. The first sea otter feeding and training session is at 10:30am, and you just got front-row seats! You've even got a little while to watch the otters cavort before the show starts. Make sure to go to the upper level of the Sea Otter exhibit for the best view. If this display whets your appetite for more feeding, follow the signs to the Kelp Forest, where divers will be feeding sharks and other fish at 11:30am. If you just can't get enough otters, head back to where you entered for the Wild About Otters exhibit.

If you prefer the **penguins**, go up the same set of stairs and pass the gift store, but take the skywalk over to the Splash Zone. Dogleg right and then left around the large tank to get to the penguins, where you should have a prime viewing spot for 10:30am's penguin feeding. You're also a short stroll from the upper level of the Kelp Forest exhibit, where you can watch divers feed sharks and fish at 11:30am.

If your aim is the **seafish**, you have a little time before the feeding, which takes place only on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. While everyone else is admiring the otters and penguins, you've got the run of the Wild About Otters and Vanishing Wildlife exhibits, both of which are in front of you as you enter. If you don't linger too long, you can see both exhibits before going into the Outer Bay area to get your nose to the glass and watch the tunas, barracuda and bonito have an early lunch.

1:30pm

Most people are heading into the Portola Cafe for a quick bite. You've made your reservations in advance and are heading to the Monterey Bay Aquarium's fine dining experience: the [Portola Restaurant](#), which has great seafood and an award-winning bartender. Watch Monterey Bay out the gigantic picture windows while you eat your lunch, and you just might catch a glimpse of wild marine life eating their lunch, too.

3pm

Monterey County is known for its wines, and many local wineries have tasting rooms right on Cannery Row. How many you'll experience depends on your stamina, both for walking and for wine. Get your start at [Scheid Vineyards'](#) Wine Lounge, across the street from the lobby of the Intercontinental The Clement Hotel on Cannery Row. Once you're done at Scheid, across the street and slightly to the right find the tasting rooms for [Bargetto Winery](#), and, just up the stairs, [A Taste of Monterey](#), which serves wines from a number of different area wineries and has a breathtaking view of Monterey Bay. Keep walking down Cannery Row, and just past its intersection with Drake Avenue you'll find [Baywood Cellars Tasting Room](#), across the street from the lobby of the Monterey Plaza Hotel. Haven't had enough? If you're ambitious, and don't mind strolling right along the coast for a half mile, take the Recreation Trail through Fisherman's Shoreline Park, and cut through Custom House Plaza to [Wines from the Heart](#), another wine shop that prominently features local wines and holds daily tastings. If you're still thirsty for more, and it's the last Thursday of the month, stroll up to Del Monte Avenue and go right one

block to [Terranova Fine Wines](#), whose once-a-month tasting parties are something to write home about.

6:30pm

If you walked all the way to Terranova, you're now in Old Monterey. This historic district isn't just there for looks; it's still a thriving downtown. Many of the historic adobes are now home to fabulous restaurants and bars. For Italian, try [Rosine's Restaurant](#) or [Cibo Ristorante Italiano](#), which has live music Tuesday through Sunday. For an authentic taqueria experience, dine at [Turtle Bay Taqueria](#). Try [Montrio](#) for European and American cuisine, [Lallapalooza](#) for American and martinis, and the [Stokes Restaurant & Bar](#) for California-Mediterranean food with an emphasis on local ingredients.

Try the nightlife again if you dare, but remember, tomorrow you're getting an early start!

Day Three

8am

Today you'll have an early breakfast at your hotel. If you haven't arranged for a late check-out, have them hold your bags; your morning won't accommodate luggage!

9am

The centerpiece of Monterey is its magnificent harbor, Monterey Bay. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary provides homes for seals, sea lions, dolphins, whales, otters, jellyfish, sea turtles, and many more denizens of the sea. You've peeked at Monterey Bay between buildings and seen it from the road, and you learned about its residents at the Aquarium yesterday. Now it's time to get up-close and personal, checking out both the shoreline and the abundant marine life. The all-important question: would you rather do it via land or sea?

By Land

For the landlubbers, the Monterey Bay Coastal [Recreation Trail](#) provides 18 miles to explore, from Castroville all the way down to Pacific Grove. You can strap on your walking shoes, or better yet, rent a **bicycle**. [Adventures by the Sea](#) has several locations along the rec trail, while [Bay Bikes](#) is located on Cannery Row. Both businesses rent both bicycles and surreys (four-wheeled, pedal-powered vehicles that can accommodate entire families). Bay Bikes also offers tandem bicycles.

Today will be an easy there-and-back trip. Rent a bike from either of these great providers on Cannery Row. Head northwest on the Rec Trail toward Pacific Grove. (If you don't have a handy compass, just ask a store employee to point the way.) Bike down to Lover's Point Park in Pacific

Grove; take a break there and admire the view. Then turn around and ride your bike past Cannery Row, along the coast to Fisherman's Wharf, and beyond to Del Monte Beach. Feeling like you want a little more? If you follow the rec trail for a little over a mile beyond Del Monte Beach, it will take you across the massive sand dunes of Sand City, and give you a very different view of Monterey Bay.

By Sea

Ready for an on-the-water adventure? Then it's time to go kayaking. Kayaking is a safe, easy way to see Monterey Bay at your own pace. Rent your kayak from [Adventures by the Sea](#) or [A B Seas Kayak](#) on Cannery Row, or [Monterey Bay Kayaks](#) at Del Monte Beach. All three will give you a quick orientation to the art of kayaking before you go out on the water.

A spin in a kayak allows you to get much closer to the birds, mammals and other marine species of Monterey Bay. Though you may want to get close enough to pet them, it's recommended you stay about 50 feet away from them at all times, for their safety and your own. Bring a pair of binoculars or a camera with a zoom lens if you want a close-up look at these creatures.

Otter, Seal or Sea Lion?

Monterey Bay has a lot of otters, seals and sea lions. To the untrained eye, it can be hard to tell these adorable ocean mammals apart. Here's our guide:

- If it has a tail, it's an otter.
- If it has ears you can see, it's a sea lion.
- No tail, and no external ears? It's a seal.

12:30pm

After all that exercise, you must have worked up an appetite. Fortunately, wherever you're returning your kayak or bike, you're right near many of Monterey's best restaurants. Cannery Row has 30 places to eat, so you'll be able to get what you want, whether it's seafood, salad or a big Italian lunch. Fisherman's Wharf, right next to Del Monte Beach, has fifteen diverse restaurants, all with a great view of Monterey Bay.

2pm

Don't scoot out of town just yet. Learn about the history of California with Monterey's Path of History. Yellow disks planted in the sidewalk will lead you to every stop along the way. There's over 30 buildings on this walking route. Many are open to the public every day, and all stops along the way are free. Start at the [Maritime & History Museum](#) at Custom House Plaza; you'll get a briefing on the history of the area, and can also pick up a map showing you every stop along the way.