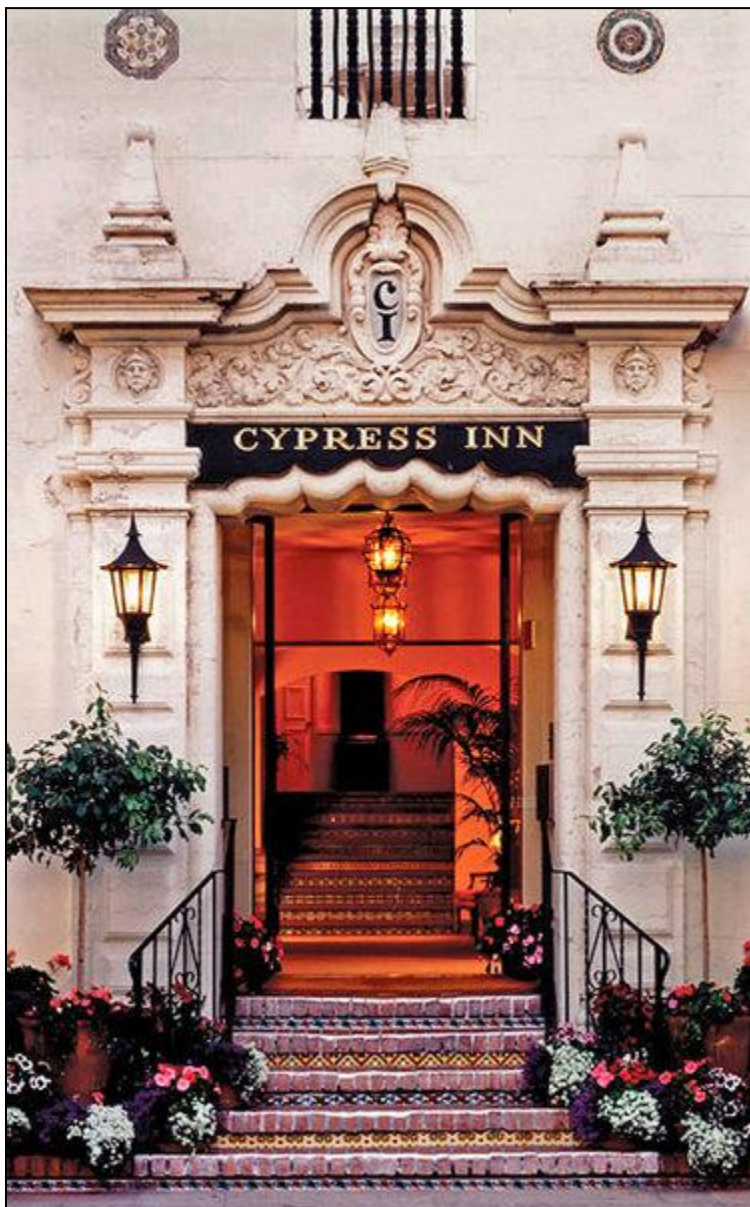


Los Angeles Times

TRAVEL



(Cypress Inn)

Welcome to the Cypress Inn in Carmel. Have Fido in tow? No problem -- the grand and historic Mediterranean-style inn has been voted the most pet-friendly hotel in America.

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TRAVEL

For Mother's Day, pamper, pamper, pamper

From a five-star retreat in New Caledonia to a dog-loving Carmel inn to a romantic wine country getaway, there's something to suit every mom.



CAPTIONS

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By Amanda Jones

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To some, a Mother's Day getaway means a don't-look-back, tires-screaming hall pass for an escape with girlfriends. To others, it means an amorous sojourn with a husband or partner. Then there are those who want to take along their kids or even the family pet. Herewith, places to suit all preferences. A tip: You can sometimes get fantastic last-minute deals on websites such as <http://www.hotels.com>.

Le Méridien, Isle of Pines, New Caledonia

For the mother — or family — who has been everywhere. The Isle of Pines isn't widely known, yet it boasts the five-star Le Méridien resort on a gorgeous lagoon. The island is part of the French-speaking New Caledonia archipelago in the South Pacific, a 2 1/2-hour flight from New Zealand or one hour from Fiji.

With a blue infinity pool on the edge of an even bluer lagoon, Le Méridien has a peaceful, romantic view (with the bonus of free-flowing French Champagne). The beaches are talcum-

powder white, deserted and dotted with exotic shells.

Even more amazing, the island is ruled by traditional tribal elders, and they have strict standards. They have allowed only two large resorts on the roughly 70-square-mile island, and jet skis and helicopters are forbidden. The elders like their peace and quiet.

Le Méridien's luxury bungalow suites are surrounded by palm trees and have a private stretch of white sand lapped by the turquoise lagoon. The food is local but French-influenced, and the best dish on the resort menu is the snails endemic to the island. They're offputtingly huge, but try them anyway — better than regular escargot.

When you are not sitting on your own private beach, explore colonial ruins, take a picnic to Madeleine Falls, snorkel on the surrounding reef, visit a local village, succumb to a crystal massage at the spa, or take a boat to one of the outer islands for a fresh crayfish feast.

Info: <http://www.starwoodhotels.com>. Rooms from about \$279 a night, depending on the season.

Cypress Inn, Carmel

If you can't imagine a weekend without your pooch (or your pot-bellied pig, as has happened), or if you are stuck for a pet-sitter, actress and animal rights activist Doris Day has provided the answer. Her grand and historic Mediterranean-style Cypress Inn, a landmark in Carmel since 1929, has been voted the most pet-friendly hotel in America.

The hotel provides royally for your best friend with plush dog blankets, grain-free treats and a Culinary Canine Menu sporting dishes such as Muttloaf and Chowhound Chicken at reasonable prices. "Yappy Hour" is hosted nightly at the bar where dogs may socialize while their human sidekicks imbibe Hollywood-themed cocktails.

Better still, your canine can romp on the local beach leash-free. Next morning, hire a pet sitter (provided by the hotel) and hike at Point Lobos State Natural Reserve. After hiking one of California's loveliest coastlines, indulge in a therapeutic neuromuscular massage at Carmel Massage.

Make sure you stop at Ajne Organic Perfumes and sniff its Kennel No. 5 and Tro daBone "furfumes" crafted for your hirsute sybarite, then head to dinner at Vesuvio, an Italian restaurant with a blazing fire and a Euro-chic rooftop lounge overlooking the Pacific.

Info: (800) 443-7443, <http://www.cypress-inn.com>. Doubles from \$235.

Koloa Landing, Kauai

If you like to cook and have privacy but still be close to the beach in Kauai, Koloa Landing offers the best of all worlds. With huge and swanky apartment accommodations (some 3,600 square feet with four en-suite bedrooms), these places are a good value for money.

The fully equipped gourmet kitchen means you can save by cooking; there's even a poolside barbecue and an on-site marketplace. The property also has a huge pool complex and a new high-end spa and fitness center.

Poipu is on the sunny side of Kauai, so you end up logging more time on the beach, a short walk, and staring at more picture-perfect sunsets than you can imagine.

Koloa Landing is a short bike ride or walk from the myriad excellent restaurants at Kukuiula Village. The most popular with the surf set is Tortilla Republic, a hip take on Mex 'n' margaritas. Josselin's Tapas & Grill is not to be missed. Sit at the bar and share the firecracker

salmon, the shrimp duck confit taco, or the roasted eggplant and goat cheese fritter. Merriman's Fish House is a celebrated spot for Hawaiian farm-to-table cuisine. Try the fresh ahi and kukui nut poke or Keahole lobster mac and cheese. Alternatively, the village has Living Goods, an organic, locally grown and specialty foods market where you can buy healthful, tasty fare to eat on your large lanai overlooking the ocean.

Info: (888) 317-0205, <http://www.koloalandingresort.com>. Doubles from \$369.

Hotel Les Mars, Healdsburg, Calif.

Healdsburg, in Northern California's Sonoma Valley, is a wildly romantic spot yet sees far fewer visitors than other better-known wine country towns. With almost perennial golden light falling on gnarled oak trees, rolling grasslands and grapevines, it is an ideal destination for excellent dining, wine tasting, shopping, spas and luxury.

Les Mars is an elegant Relais & Châteaux boutique hotel a block from the tiny town's idyllic plaza. French in design, it features a sweeping iron staircase, wood-paneled library, marble floors, suites with four-poster beds, whirlpool tubs and flickering Provençal wall sconces.

You can park your car and not look at it again; almost everything is within walking distance. Breakfast is served in your room, so no need to worry about where to find morning coffee.


Lounge by the pool or get an in-room massage, then wander next door to the newly opened Healdsburg Shed to shop for artisanal cheeses, breads, pastries, kitchenware and organic gardening supplies, then eat an arugula pizza from its café and learn how to raise bees.

At dinnertime, walk two blocks to Charlie Palmer's chic Dry Creek Kitchen. If the crispy pork belly and fried egg is on the menu, order it. The next night, cross the street to the delicious and reasonably priced Campo Fina for the Burrata cheese and crispy quail, or head around the corner to its sister restaurant, the impossible-to-get-into Scopa. Make sure you stop at some of the wine rooms for a tasting.

Info: (707) 433-4211, <http://www.hotellesmars.com>. Doubles from \$460.


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