

Everybody Loves Carmel

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Cypress Inn is a favorite of dog owners. Some check in several times a year

“Please take me to Carmel-by-the-Sea.” That’s what your dog is saying when he or she looks up at you with those big pleading eyes. He’s heard about the leash-free beach, the shopkeepers who keep a cache of biscuits behind the counter, and the restaurants that welcome four-legged diners. Can you blame him for dreaming about a trip to such a dog-friendly destination?

When my husband and I checked in at Carmel’s Cypress Inn, I couldn’t help but notice the jar of dog treats on the counter and a handsome standard poodle sprawled out in front of the living room fireplace.

“We work such long hours,” the poodle’s people explained. “If we couldn’t vacation with our dogs, we’d hardly have any quality time with them.”

The hotel has been a landmark in Carmel since 1929, and the town has been pet-friendly since Doris Day and her friends Betty White and Kim

Novak took it upon themselves to make it happen.

The Cypress Inn resembles a Spanish-style mansion, and we enjoyed the homey atmosphere and personal service. During the yappy-hour, Drago the bartender proudly showed us the extensive bar menu, which includes his research into the original recipes for ’30s and ’40s cocktails. Our pick: a yummy “Dark ‘n Stormy” made with ginger beer and Goslings Black Seal Bermudian Rum.

Dinner in Terry’s Lounge was equally memorable: lamb chops with mint and pistachio pesto sauce for me, and pan-seared scallops with truffle oil and honey sauce for the mister. Since the dining area is adjacent to the bar — a hangout for locals as well as repeat visitors — we could eavesdrop on the conversation while we enjoyed our meal (“Did you see Clint...?”). Afterward, we enjoyed the live entertainment in the living room.

Our room had wonderful heritage character enhanced by a terracotta tile floor, gas fireplace, open-beam ceiling, plantation shutters, and traditional furnishings. In the morning I stood on our balcony and looked across the street at the Church of the Wayfarer and thought about my two friends who were married there many years ago. They had both related to me the experience of waiting at the hotel until it was time to walk down the aisle.

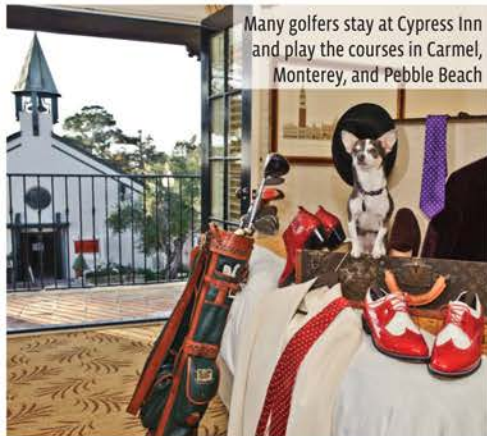
In addition to being charming, the Cypress Inn is also perfectly located near Carmel-by-the-Sea’s renowned galleries and shops, and only about a ten-minute walk from a beautiful white sand beach. Many two-legged



Cypress Inn’s Drago is often referred to as the “star-tender” because he is popular with Doris Day and other Hollywood celebrities who live in Carmel



Afternoon tea is served in the Cypress Inn living room, and guests congregate here at night to listen to live music



Many golfers stay at Cypress Inn and play the courses in Carmel, Monterey, and Pebble Beach

travelers come to Carmel to shop, and others gravitate to the numerous golf courses in the area. (www.cypress-inn.com)

Bernardus Lodge in Carmel Valley is popular with visitors who are drawn to the area by the local food and wine scene. This luxurious resort is the home of Marinus restaurant, which has a list of awards and accolades as long as my arm. These include being the winner of *Wine Spectator's* Grand Award. *Forbes Travel Guide* says Marinus is "an epicurean's delight."

The 57-room property is set on 25 acres, including eight covered in grapes that thrive in the valley's 320 days a year of sunshine. In spite of the space, the ambience here is one of intimacy — rather like staying with wealthy friends in their large home. Each guest is greeted with a glass of wine and shown to spacious lodgings

that include two-person bathtubs, feather beds, Italian linens, French doors, fireplaces, fresh flowers, and splits of wine and cheese to sample.

Recreation facilities include a lap pool kept at 82 degrees, tennis, croquet, bocce ball, and a fitness center. The Spa at Bernardus offers a wide range of luxurious treatments, including a two- or four-hand lomilomi massage. (I recommend the four-hand for complete bliss.) The pool in the spa is kept at 100 degrees year round.

Chef Cal Stamenov is a graduate of the California Culinary Academy. He began his career at New York's Four Seasons restaurant, cooked in Europe's best kitchens, and found his way to Carmel Valley via Napa Valley and San Francisco. In addition to Marinus, he presides over Wickets, the resort's bar and bistro. More than 60 percent of the produce served at Bernardus Lodge is grown on the property and nearly everything else is sourced locally. The Bernardus Tasting Room is nearby in Carmel Valley Village, but Ingrid's Pinot and Ingrid's Chardonnay (named for the wife of owner Bernardus Pon) are only available at the resort.

And what about those big pleading eyes that beg to join you on your travels? No problem. Man's best friend is also welcome at Bernardus Lodge. (www.bernardus.com) ELIZABETH HANSEN



Much of the produce served at Bernardus Lodge is grown on the property



Exquisite desserts are served in Marinus and Wickets Bistro



Bernardus Lodge's warming room is a wonderful place to relax before or after a spa treatment