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Romantic Cannery Row Getaway

Treat yourself to an indulgent trip to Monterey Bay's sunny main stretch.

BY LINDA LENHOFF



Monterey's historic Cannery Row has long appealed to families with its salt water taffy and arcade games. But dig a little deeper, and you'll find that a romantic hideaway set against the breathtaking bay awaits you. Just two hours from home, Monterey beckons couples with indulgent spa treatments, fun-in-the-sun adventures, delectable local tasting spots and restaurants, and luxurious hotels. Get ready to relax and rejuvenate in style by the sea.

Sip

Featuring more than 95 local wineries, **A Taste of Monterey Wine Market and Bistro**—in a refurbished 1918 sardine cannery—is a great place to start your wine-and-dine experience. Let owner Ken Rauh and his well-versed staff talk you through a wine-tasting flight (we enjoyed a ruby-colored 2012 De Tierra Tondré Grapefield Pinot Noir and a blackberry- and violet-tinged 2013

Cima Collina Mourvedre), before you pick up a few bottles in the shop. The bar, with a panoramic view of the bay, is the ideal place to linger over the bistro's exquisitely roasted Castroville artichokes and flatbread pizzas. atasteofmonterey.com.

If suds are more your style, stop by **Cannery Row Brewing Company**. This cavernous space is home to 130 varieties of brews, 37 small-batch bourbons, and plenty of bar bites. Split an 18-ounce parmesan pretzel appetizer with beer cheese dip as you sip your way through a Dank and Stinky IPA or a Wells Banana Bread beer. Sit indoors, or relax outdoors by the fire pits, where even pups are welcome. canneryrowbrewingcompany.com.

Want to hang with the locals? Get charged up at the **Chart House's** bustling happy hour, which also offers a gorgeous bay view. Happy hour \$4–\$7 bites of firecracker shrimp or prime rib sliders crush it with a pomegranate mojito or \$5 glass of Dynamite Merlot. You'll love the romantic ambience—and solid value—at this pretty (and packed) spot. chart-house.com/locations/monterey.

Eat

Ready for a fresh catch? Step inside **The Fish Hopper**, with walls of windows facing the bay. We loved the crab cakes served with mango papaya relish, then went whole hog (so to speak) with a 10-ounce lobster tail and the 18-ounce bone-in rib eye. Order the Ultimate Seafood Bloody Mary, which is garnished with an oyster, bacon-wrapped prawn, crab-cake slider, and crab meat. It's a seaside feast suited to the view from your table. fishhopper.com/monterey.

For a splurge-worthy meal, feast at **The Sardine Factory**, with its grand service, sparkling white plates, and thick tablecloths. Sidle up to the bar, where Clint Eastwood filmed a couple of scenes from *Play Misty for Me*, for a glass of vino from the restaurant's 32,000-bottle wine cellar—a palace in itself, with 16th and 17th century antiques and a 25-foot fallen redwood table. Make sure you get a seat in the stunning Conservatory atrium, sunny in the day and warmly lit in the evening. Start with the signature abalone bisque (served at Reagan's inaugural dinners), then dig into the prime filet mignon, or indulge in the melt-in-your-mouth lobster ravioli drenched in rich sherry wine, tarragon, and truffle cream sauce. Cleanse your palate between courses with sorbet in an impressive sculpted ice swan that's selfie ready. And finish with a classic crème brûlée—it's worth it. sardinefactory.com.



Shop

Dip into more than 70 varieties of all-natural olive oils and balsamics—and learn the difference between EVOOs and FFAs—at **Monterey's Tasty Olive Bar**. montereystastyolivebar.com.

Locally owned **For Garlic Lovers** stocks gourmet foods and gifts, with walls of garlic-infused treats, along with wine, home wares, and assorted sweets and sundries. Taste pickled garlic cloves at the garlic bar, and stock up on seasonings and sauces (and grab a few spicy souvenirs). (800) 745-3221.



Play

What's more romantic than watching two penguins in love preen and pose just for you? You can reserve a private Romance Tour at the **Monterey Bay Aquarium** and choose from over-the-top options such as breakfast in front of the Kelp Forest, an up-close encounter with a penguin, and sparkling wine in crystal flutes. A scuba diver can even display a special message on a sign for your loved one to read. Be sure to contact the aquarium a couple of weeks in advance to personalize your tour, which also lets you explore the aquarium's new *¡Viva Baja! Life on the Edge* exhibit, celebrating the marine and animal life of Baja California, without the crowds. *Starting at \$100, montereybayaquarium.org.*

Segway Tours Monterey will have you rolling along the recreation trails behind an expert guide, taking in the historical sites of downtown and coastal Monterey. A brief lesson will have you up and running on your own well-balanced Segway. Listen to your guide through two-way radios, as you feel the sea breeze on your face. Feeling ambitious? You can't miss on the wide-path tour of Monterey's sparkling 17-Mile Drive through Pacific Grove to the Lone Cypress Tree. It's a memorable way to see the best of Monterey. *segwaytoursmonterey.com.*

Adventures by the Sea and **Monterey Bay Kayaks** offer kayaks, surreys, and paddleboards to keep you fit. Paddle along the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary through kelp forests, and learn about the wildlife: Keep an eye out for the adorable otters, who sun their tummies in the bay and pose for photos. *Starting at \$20 per hour, adventuresbythesea.com; starting at \$30 per hour, montereybaykayaks.com.*

Bay Bikes rents everything from road bikes to baby joggers. Grab your tandem partner, and ride down the 29-mile-long Monterey Bay Coastal Recreation Trail. Or pack a picnic, and ride to San Carlos Beach, where scuba divers pop in and out of the bay. *Starting at \$8 per hour, baybikes.com.*

Rejuvenate

The Couples Aromatherapy and Sugar Bliss treatment at **The Spa at InterContinental** is side-by-side heaven. After you're massaged with a healing combo of citrus, lavender, cypress, and cinnamon, you'll enjoy a back treatment with the spa's Tropical Sugar Scrub and a trio of oils—macadamia nut, dilo nut, and coconut—from Fiji. Don't miss the mimosas, and take home a yummy-looking block of lavender soap from the shop. spaicmonterey.com.

Monterey Plaza Hotel's refined European **Vista Blue Spa**, named one of *Travel & Leisure's* Top 25 spas, dazzles with a rooftop sun deck, fireplace, and bay-view whirlpool tubs. Order the revitalizing Bliss on the Bay treatment, and let an expert massage you with a lavender and blue chamomile salt scrub, then lavish you with shea butter. The couples' bubbly package promises chocolate-dipped strawberries, sparkling wine, and tranquility in a private hydrotherapy suite that overlooks the bay—and it delivers. montereyplazahotel.com/spa.

Party

There's no need to call it an early night in Monterey. Just follow the sounds of rocking-good music to **Sly McFly's**, which features live music seven nights a week, food, drinks, and sports on TV. That should be enough to round out your fun-filled day (and night). slymcflys.us.



Stay

Waterfront rooms at **InterContinental the Clement Monterey** are equipped with limestone bathrooms and inviting soaking tubs. Pull on your plush robe, then relax in front of your private fireplace, or sit on your balcony. In the evenings, the lobby's grand staircase beams a jellyfish light show worthy of a glass of champagne, available at **The C Restaurant and Bar**, which also offers a fireplace-equipped courtyard with bay views. *Starting at \$199, ictheclementmonterey.com.*

If a traditionally elegant hotel is more your style, step inside the **Monterey Plaza Hotel and Spa**, and experience the lobby's self-playing piano, huge fireplace, and plush furnishings. The resort serves up luxury with comfy beds and views for miles. You can reserve a suite with a fireplace, wet bar, and a soaking tub. Is that view making you hungry? Grab coffee from **Cafe La Strada**, or sit down for any meal at **Schooners Coastal Kitchen and Bar**, set on a terrace that places the bay at your feet. *Starting at \$225, montereyplazahotel.com.*