

California Dreamin'

The golden state of California has much to offer in the way of adventure and entertainment and our Expert Traveler has just about done it all. This issue Gig focuses our attention on the picturesque Monterey Peninsula and someplace almost holy for lovers of the links.

A Good Reason to Go

Monterey, California (a less than two-hour drive south of San Francisco,) is beautiful and that is reason enough to visit. Its caretakers – residents and other farsighted preservationists – have done a superlative job of creating a world-class tourist area while carefully protecting the natural beauty and indigenous wildlife.

Start your tour at the Monterey Bay Aquarium on historic Cannery Row. The Aquarium features exhibits of marine life from the Monterey area as well as the oceans of the world. I found the jellies exhibit (a combination of live jellies and art inspired by jellies and marine life) especially interesting. If you're taking young children along, they will love the hands-on activities where they can actually touch different sea animals. Everyone will get a kick out of watching the playful California sea otters gather food then flip over to float on their backs as they eat it.

“...Monterey has an excellent selection of wonderful restaurants featuring almost any seafood treat you can imagine.”

If you're like me, a day of watching the sea otters enjoy their snacks of clams and crab will have you thinking about getting a seafood meal yourself. Like most of coastal California, Monterey has an excellent selection of wonderful

restaurants featuring almost any seafood treat you can imagine.

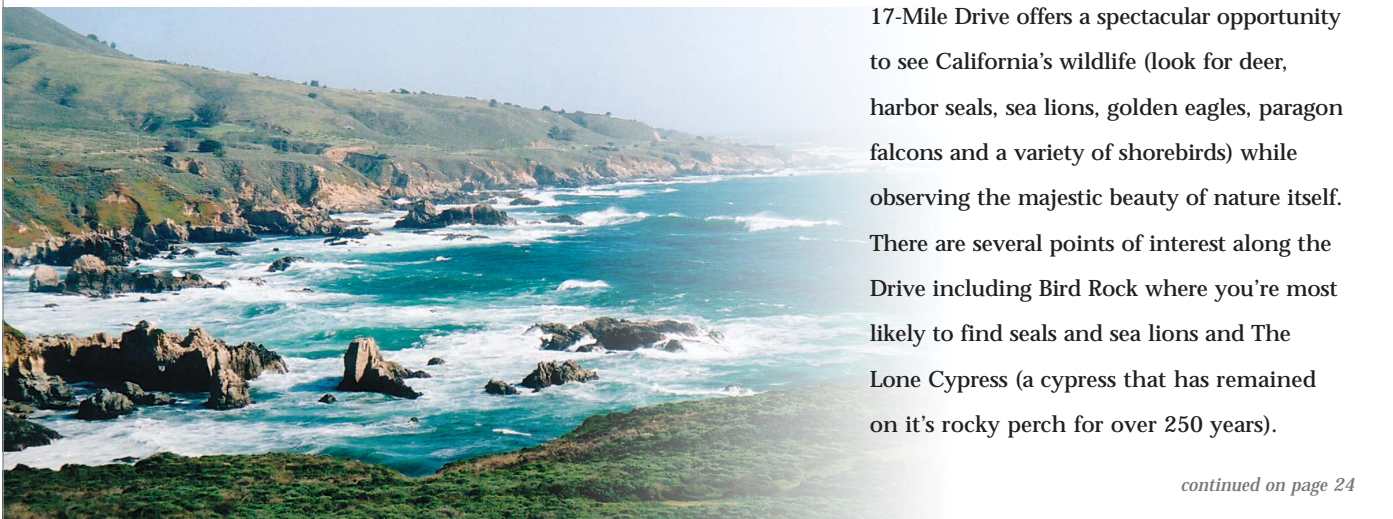
Add a bottle of your favorite California wine to complete the meal. (NOTE: The restaurants in Monterey offer the casual, laid-

back atmosphere typical of California; feel free to take the kids along.)

Your visit to Monterey Bay Aquarium will put you in the mood to take in more of California's great outdoors, so enjoy a leisurely drive further south to Pebble Beach and the famous 17-Mile Drive. Originally a carriage path, the

17-Mile Drive offers a spectacular opportunity to see California's wildlife (look for deer, harbor seals, sea lions, golden eagles, paragon falcons and a variety of shorebirds) while observing the majestic beauty of nature itself. There are several points of interest along the Drive including Bird Rock where you're most likely to find seals and sea lions and The Lone Cypress (a cypress that has remained on it's rocky perch for over 250 years).

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The Real Reason to Go

Of course the golfers among us would say the real reason to visit Monterey, California is to ultimately get to Pebble Beach. And one goes to Pebble Beach for golf. For the golfer this is Mecca. Both challenging and visually stunning, the Pebble Beach Golf Links course (there are several others in the area, though none more renowned) first gained fame in 1947 as the site of The [Bing] Crosby Clambake (now known as the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am,) which showcased professional golfers competing with crowd-pleasing Hollywood names. One of the most scenic courses in the world, Pebble Beach wraps around Stillwater Cove and features the gorgeous Seventh Hole, a par 3 you hit towards the ocean. (The locals say if you happen to miss the green here, the nearest drop is Hawaii.)



In September of 1999, Graydon "Gig" Gwin became one of only a handful of people to have visited every country on earth, making him the "most traveled" travel agent in the

world. According to the Travelers Century Club of Los Angeles, there are 317 recognized countries in the world; Gig has visited them all – many of them numerous times – plus several areas no longer considered countries. His quest has taken him on over 2,400 flights covering 3.1 million miles, on over 30 cruises, innumerable trains, motor coaches, taxis, and even "hoofing it" when necessary. Less conventional transportation has involved elephants, camels, horses, mules, donkeys and an ostrich.

My traveling companion and I played Pebble Beach's eighteen holes and were constantly amazed by the breathtaking views full of ocean, dramatic coastline and lush greenery. We visited in March when the temperature stayed a fairly constant sixty-five degrees, but one of the other benefits of this area is the year-round playability. Since it's never too cold for a game, golfers' only concern is periodic bouts of thick fog.



Obviously the greens fees at this world-class course reflect the course's stature, but playing it is worth every penny. After playing this most famous course, I recommend you also take a turn at the two other outstanding courses in the Pebble Beach family: The Links at Spanish Bay and Spyglass Hill Golf Course.

Whatever you choose to do, you're sure to enjoy a trip to this special part of California. Whether enjoying the area's abundant wildlife or hitting the links, it will be an adventure to remember. ▶

- Gig