



The tranquil mile-long beach in Carmel inspires sunset strolls after enjoying dinner at Terry's Lounge in the Cypress Inn, co-owned by Doris Day.

A California feast for the senses

Journey from San Francisco to San Diego reveals a wealth tastes and sights

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SPECIAL TO THE PROVINCE

A brief taste of coastal California has one family craving second helpings.

In mid-June, my husband and I flew to San Francisco to meet my parents to take a week to wend our way down gorgeous Highway 1, walking on as many beaches, city streets and nature trails as we could get our feet on, and overnighting in San Francisco, Half Moon Bay, Carmel, Cambria, Santa Monica, and San Diego.

It was a whirlwind marathon trip, but since it was everyone's first visit to that part of the state, it was a

delight to sample the distinct flavours of California's coastal communities — plus plot a return to our favourite spots.

First stop was in San Francisco; the Mystic Hotel by Charlie Palmer in Union Square. The 109-year-old building underwent a massive renovation before opening last year and its 79 stylish rooms are accessed through stairs that creak with history or charming antique elevator.

Also retooled was the restaurant (Palmer is not only a hotelier but Michelin-starred chef), a sultry, speakeasy-inspired space called the Burritt Room and Tavern.

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The Fairmont Miramar in Santa Monica shows off its pool deck and palm-tree-canopied bungalows.

Executive chef Luke Knox's modern tavern fare, head bartender Josh Trabulsi's classic cocktails, and some of the city's best jazz musicians are on tap.

The next morning was spent doing the touristy thing, stopping at Pier 39 for breakfast at the Wipeout Bar and Grill, visiting Fisherman's Wharf to see the sea lions, setting sail with the Red and White Fleet for a harbour tour, and hopping aboard City Sightseeing for a bus tour.

Next, a complete change of pace 30 minutes south. The Coastal Trail (it will span 1,200 miles when complete) was tackled in Pillar Point Harbour. Lunch was served at the Half Moon Bay Brewing Company's expansive patio overlooking the marina, with chef Gaston Alfaro's fresh seafood (the Portuguese Fisherman's Stew is a must-try) and a flight of brewmaster James Costa's craft beers.

Checking into the stunning Ritz-Carlton Half Moon Bay, guests sat around the crackling fire pit roasting s'mores and sipping local wine, gazing out at the Pacific. A romantic tasting dinner at the newly renovated Navio restaurant followed.

Diners were treated to a culinary journey by sous chef Kevin Tanaka and treated to a brilliant sunset.

A pod of dolphins playing in the surf the next morning were pointed out to a jogger who turned out to be Helen Mirren.

Yappy Hour — yes, Yappy Hour — at Terry's Lounge in the Cypress Inn came next in the idyllic seaside community of Carmel.

The inn, built in 1929 and co-owned by Hollywood legend Doris Day, is a popular hangout for locals, well-behaved canines, and out-of-towners alike. The food, wine and cocktails at Terry's are top notch and the Cypress's newly refurbished rooms are beautiful.

Powdery mile-long Carmel Beach is only six blocks from the inn past stately character homes.

Every California coastal town leaves you desperate to linger, and next stop Cambria is no different.

The Olallieberry Inn, a historic 1873 bed and breakfast, is named for the hybrid berry that grows in the region. Owner Marjorie Ott greets her guests and encourages them to fill up plates and glasses on the porch at cocktail hour.

That evening, it seemed like half the town was sitting down to dinner at Robin's. The popular restaurant has an international menu using lots of local products and a fantastic regional wine list.

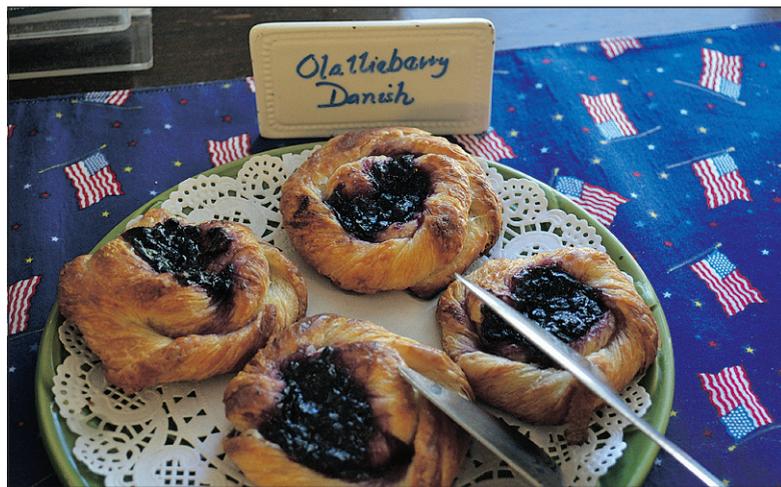
Nearby Fiscalini Ranch Preserve proved perfect for a morning walk the next day along scenic seaside trails, with elephant seals sunning themselves on the rocks below.

The next adventure awaited in Santa Monica, on Highway 1 past Santa Barbara and Malibu, with check-in at the Fairmont Miramar Hotel and Bungalows. Santa Monica State Beach Park and many more miles of beachside strolls lay across the street.

Swanky window shopping on the



Numerous guided tours give visitors access to the extravagant rooms and opulent grounds of Hearst Castle.



The three-course gourmet breakfast at the Olallieberry Inn features delicious Olallieberry creations like danishes, yogurt, jam and syrup.

Third Street Promenade then followed a chance encounter with NHL star Sidney Crosby.

The next day's ride to San Diego alongside endless stretches of fairy

tale beaches led to San Diego's Hotel del Coronado, which is celebrating 125 years of reigning over Coronado Island, a bridge away from the city core.



Robin's, a favourite Cambria restaurant, features international foods made with local ingredients.

This National Historic Landmark represents the essence of a summer retreat: The carefree pace of a bygone era, a beach and boardwalk that stretch on in both directions,

swarms of happy people dining al fresco, lights that twinkle in the warm summer night, and sweet music carrying through the air.

Everyone left wanting more.