

# CARMEL *with Man's Best Friend*

With two dogs in tow, we explore the wonders of a weekend in Carmel.

BY ELSIE FLORIANI

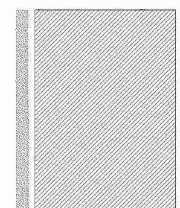
**T**his was an eventful trip, and it started with a bang. Unfortunately, the bang was my head falling on a very hard floor while endeavoring to dress myself using only one arm—the other being in a very confining sling. This was followed by an accidental fall into a small lake the following day—undoubtedly caused by the concussion resulting from the previous day's adventure. But that's another story for another time. A good reporter treks on, however, and indeed I did. Moreover, I would do it all again if only for the simple pleasures that Carmel and the lovely people who live and work there provided us. Beautiful weather, lovely accommodations, extraordinary food, and interesting locals—about all one could ask for in a weekend press trip—with pets.

## Pet Friendly Hofsas House

Within walking distance to almost everything and positioned quaintly on San Carlos Street in beautiful Carmel-By-The-Sea, Hofsas House is an understated tiny jewel. A family-run boutique inn for the past six decades, you will actually feel a part of this warm and embracing family.

Donna Hofsas and her husband, Fred, moved from Los Angeles to Carmel in the late 1940's, buying four little cottages, one of which they lived in while renting out the other three; thus, the beginning of Hofsas House.

Like Topsy, however, the little place grew and today sports 38 European-styled rooms, some with fireplaces, some with ocean views, a swimming pool, and a meeting room. Still, it has that lovely cocoon-like feeling, all warm and cozy. Donna's artist ➤





Brandon Miller of Mundaka Restaurant

friend, Maxine Albro, painted a Bavarian-themed welcome mural on the façade and carried that theme throughout. And the little cottage that was once the Hofsas' home is now the "family suite," still available to guests today, as are the three other original cottages on the property.

With a wonderful tradition of European hospitality, one can also enjoy the fresh continental breakfast (and I do mean fresh) with French Roast coffee, tea, and wonderful pastries. My husband and I have gotten so old and funny we don't like to go anywhere over the weekend if it means leaving our dogs behind. But Hofsas House welcomed our two dogs with lots of hugs and special treats. There was even a special letter addressed specifically to them, welcoming them and suggesting other places they might enjoy (we did not let them read it).

There is a long and lovely history to the place, now run by Donna's granddaughter, Carrie Theis, with help from her

mother, Doris, and her brother, Scott. As a child, Carrie spent summers there helping her grandmother with whom she was very close, escorting guests to their rooms at the age of eight, and earning a seat behind the front desk at age twelve. Now, college-educated and having had careers of her own, Carrie has returned to carry on her grandmother's legacy of service and hospitality—a mission she fulfills with charm and grace every day for every guest.

"I loved my grandmother," said Carrie. "I knew someday I would be here, that I would continue her legacy . . . that's what the hotel business is all about, and I love it."

Give it a go if you have plans to get down that way. Their personal attention and kindness will make you want to come back again and again. And this year, especially, you can help them celebrate their 60 years of success, and the experience will help you understand why.

**Mundaka Restaurant, Carmel**

Shortly after arriving, we were welcomed with an intimate offering of wine and cheese at Hofsas House before taking a short walk to nearby Mundaka Restaurant, a terrific place for tapas (cold and hot) and wonderful specialties like paella, Chuieton (22 ounces of bone-in ribeye steak), or Sopa de Peix (prawns, bay scallops, calamari, tomato, and aioli toast). With well-known chef Brandon Miller

bringing tapas to new heights, the food kept coming, and we kept eating. "We believe in serving real food and real food only," says Miller, and I think I can honestly attest to that fact. As their menu states, it's "fresh, local, line-caught, free-range, organic, biodynamic, homemade from scratch without hormones, antibiotics, or artificial anything." The one word we came away with, however, was delicious! You simply must give it a try.

**San Carlos Street, Carmel**  
 831.624.7400, [www.mundakacarmel.com](http://www.mundakacarmel.com)

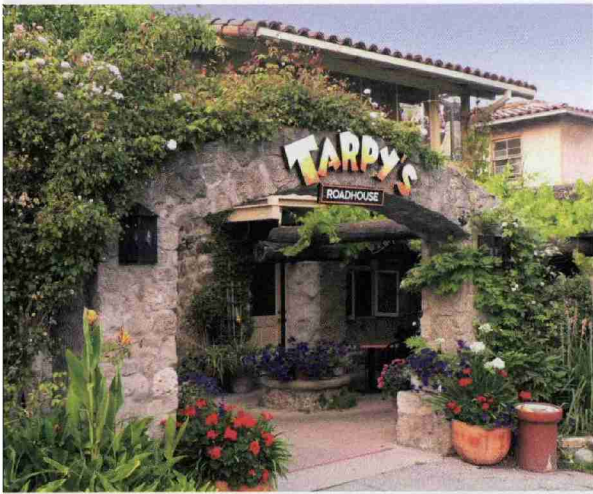
**Tarpy's Roadhouse, Monterey**

We had lunch the next day at Tarpy's Roadhouse. The fascinating history of Matt Tarpy is about as compelling as the relaxed atmosphere and affordable pricing that one finds there. You should Google it and get a good overview of life in the mid-1800's. In the early 1900's the Ryan family bought some acreage from ➤

excursions

the Tarpys and spent the next 10 years building the stone house that today houses this famous and fun restaurant. Fronted by a lovely lake-like setting, it's a delightful view if you choose an outside table on the front porch. The food is southwestern/Californian, the atmosphere is embracing and casual, and the wine list, impressive. Chef Michael Kimmel practically invented the phrase "Creative American Country." Try the Bourbon Molasses Pork Tenderloin.

2999 Salinas Highway, Monterey  
831.647.1444, [www.tarpys.com](http://www.tarpys.com)



to do because the place is terrific and the food outstanding. Zagat has named them as one of the "Distinguished Restaurants of North America," and they have received Wine Spectator's Best of Award of Excellence for the past several years. Featuring Mediterranean and European-style cuisine, they are best known for their fresh seafood, giant sea scallops, and their most famous rack of lamb—all cooked on their wood-burning grill. You don't want to miss it. And, as if you needed another reason to go, you can actually make your reservations online.

223 17th Street, Pacific Grove  
831.373.3456, [www.fandangorestaurant.com](http://www.fandangorestaurant.com)

Yes, a weekend, a week, a month—however long you have—remember all the beauty, the tranquil setting, the sound of the ocean, and the simple joys of fine living and mosey on down to the Carmel area. You will be renewed. And don't forget Snoopy. ■

**Fandango, Pacific Grove**

This was the great place we visited for dinner—our last stop. As their opening line states, life at Fandango—like the dance it was named for—continues to be sometimes fast and often furious. But most important, it's always fun. In the early 80's, Walter Georis converted a charming old house into this now-famous restaurant. Among his first patrons were Pierre and Marietta Bain (he of Club XIX at The Lodge at Pebble Beach fame where he worked with Pedro De La Cruz, their head chef). Three years later, Georis sold his place to the Bains who then partnered with De La Cruz to run the restaurant. As the book they have recently published reads (on the cover, yet), *Fandango, The Story of Two Guys Who Wanted to Own a Restaurant. (Fortunately One Knew What He Was Doing)*. Seems to me they might both have a good idea of what

