

MONTEREY LOVE  
PLAY AND STAY BY THE BAY

CULTURE OF CREATIVITY  
STATUS OF THE ARTS

OH, BABY!  
SUTTER'S MATERNITY WARD

# Sacramento

## Just Desserts



### Travel



Vista Blue Spa at Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa



Salt Wood



Pacific Grove coastal recreational trail

way 1, behind the dunes along the Marina/Seaside stretch, this inn/timeshare/restaurant compound fronts the ocean and a pristine beach. The 60 guest rooms have plush bedding and fireplaces, and most include balconies or patios overlooking the ocean. Cars don't travel past the mid-property line. Guests are ferried in silent carts or can travel on foot to the common areas: the market-lighted lawn where wine and cheese are served each evening, the two nightly campfires (one on the beach), the spa, the pool or the new restaurant. Salt Wood Kitchen & Oysterette opened this past fall with chef David Baron at the helm, bringing his experience at some of the finest kitchens in San Francisco and Carmel. His focus on relationship-based sourcing shines through in the menu, which includes the freshest local seafood and ingredients grown and raised on local farms. It's no surprise that Salt Wood has quickly established a following. Menu favorites include oysters, of course (grilled or raw), and wild sea-

food: line-caught salmon and California halibut and a seafood boil that tastes like the East Coast. (Ours included the sweetest Monterey spot prawns.) Some unexpected details stand out: The parkerhouse rolls, served with sea-salted butter, were divine, and a dessert that came recommended—a corn pudding that glorified end-of-summer crops—truly wowed us, even though we're usually chocolate people. 3295 Dunes Road, Marina; (831) 883-9478; [thesanctuarybeachresort.com](http://thesanctuarybeachresort.com)

**NOODLE BAR**—I can hardly believe we didn't discover Noodle Bar until this past year, when Mike got a tip from one of his boat buddies. In a not-so-attractive strip center in Seaside, this little Vietnamese place is exactly what it says it is: a noodle bar. Some 10 or so patrons can sit on barstools at a counter—like an old soda fountain—and order from a good-sized menu: pho, noodle and rice stir-fries, spring rolls, bobas. Prices are low, quality is high, seating is tight, and you'd best bring cash

because they don't take plastic. (The on-site ATM charges a fee that would've cost nearly a quarter of our lunch bill.) 1944 Fremont Blvd., Seaside; (831) 399-0210

**CARMEL VALLEY COFFEE ROASTING COMPANY**—A few of these exist (seven, actually) in the Monterey/Carmel area, including the one in Seaside just down the street from Noodle Bar. It's a favorite for two reasons: the killer pumpkin spice latte in the fall (not too sweet, perfectly seasoned) and the lineup of choices if you just want a great cup of coffee: light, medium, dark, darker, organic, decaf and then some. 880 Broadway Ave., Seaside; (831) 899-1896; [carmelcoffee.com](http://carmelcoffee.com)

**PLUMES COFFEE HOUSE**—In downtown Monterey, Plumes serves a mean pour-over, and it's impossible to get out without ordering a fresh-made panino or crepe. There's tucked-away bar seating, a perfect spot to nestle down with a newspaper or a laptop or people-watch the folks who

### TRAVEL

## Monterey Love

A lifelong appreciation for Monterey yields a collection of favorite spots.

BY KRISTA MINARD

My husband and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary this past year, but we're older than that, really. We didn't marry till we were almost 30, even though we met when we were 14. Friends before anything else, Mike and I have been through the proverbial thick and thin—joys and heartbreaks and lots and lots of household drudgery—and we have a saying that goes something like this: "There's no one I'd rather \_\_\_\_\_ with." Often the blank is filled with something like "be broke" or "sit at the DMV," and sometimes it's fun, like "eat Indian food." One biggie is "go to Monterey."

Our first trip to Monterey together took place back in 1981, when we were high school sweethearts. Mike's dad, co-owner of a San Jose crane company, needed to check on a job site on Cannery Row, and he invited us along for the ride. One of his company's cranes was involved in the construction of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, it turned out. He proudly walked us around the site, which at the time looked nothing like the gleaming, teeming aquarium today, and Mike and I dreamed about visiting it when it opened. Which we did a few years later, awed by

the tanks full of sea life, the huge viewing windows and the otters that frolicked in the bay off the deck. Mike went on to get certified to scuba dive and to captain boats on the bay; I explored the inns to cover in this magazine and in a romantic-getaways book I worked on back in the '90s. Over the years—decades—we have prowled the area, from the touristy Fisherman's Wharf (clam chowder samples!) to gentle Lover's Cove (where our toddler daughter first dipped her toes in the sea) to the scenic Pacific Grove seaside recreational trail that blooms with fuchsia ice plant each spring. We love quaint Carmel (where we always try to get a table at Flying Fish Grill) and the sweeping vistas of Point Lobos and the drive down to Big Sur, where cookies must be procured from Big Sur Bakery. We've explored Monterey in the chilly-fogged days of summer and the roasting-warm days of fall, and on every trip, we discover something new. Here are a few favorites from a recent trip.

**THE SANCTUARY BEACH RESORT**—How many times have we driven past this place without knowing it even exists? Off High-