

NEW YORK TRAVEL

Chill Out and Drink Up in Carmel Valley

Bypass ritzy Carmel-by-the-Sea and venture inland to this burgeoning wine region, with intimate tasting rooms, seasonal new eateries, and modern takes on ranch living.

By [Geraldine Campbell](#) Published Jun 20, 2014

1. Where to Stay



Extensive grounds surround the refined Western-style rooms at Carmel Valley Ranch.

(Photo: Courtesy of Carmel Valley Ranch)

Take advantage of the bevy of outdoorsy activities at [Carmel Valley Ranch](#) (from \$325). Sunset hikes, tennis mixers, hilltop yoga, and stargazing are all on the bill at this 500-acre property (a \$30 fee covers most activities), which feels more like an especially luxurious camp retreat thanks to a \$35 million renovation in 2010. The 139 suites have private decks, fireplaces, and soaking tubs, while the grounds boast an 11,000-square-foot spa and bonfire pits for nighttime s'mores sessions. Earthy foodies, take note: Last September, the resort added a hen house to its farmstead, which also includes an apiary, salt house, and two-acre organic garden. Sign up for a gardening session with farmer Mark or just stop by on Saturday mornings to quiz him on his bounty—then grab a laid-back dinner at the Lodge, where the ranch wedge with Point Reyes blue cheese dressing (\$14) and the sweet-spicy honey-chile chicken wings (\$13) are musts.

Kick back or tee off at [Quail Lodge](#) (from \$195), which reopened in March 2013 after a \$28 million makeover. Once country-club conservative, the 93 rooms and suites spread across a dozen bungalows now have a contemporary ranch feel, with rustic modern furnishings, wood-beamed ceilings, and warm yellow accent walls, plus roomy bathrooms with deep tubs and private balconies or terraces. Golfers will dig the Robert Muir Graves–designed course (green fees from \$80), and thrill-seekers can face off-road obstacles at the on-site Land Rover Experience Driving School (\$250 per vehicle for one hour). The less athletically inclined can happily doze off beside the tranquil lake on the grounds, or stroll along the one-and-a-half-mile South Bank trail, a new walking path that runs between the lodge and Palo Corona Regional Park, with views of the Carmel River.

Stay close to the valley’s shops, restaurants, and tasting rooms at the [Sanctuary Cottage](#) (from \$317). Details like a stained glass window above the queen-size bed spruce up simple but smart interiors—but the grounds are the real draw. The home sits on seven acres of rose bushes, fruit trees, and ponds (including a koi pond with a waterfall, which the cottage overlooks), and guests are welcome to take advantage of the seasonal vegetable garden. And though town’s close by, there’s plenty of entertainment on the property, including a solar-heated pool and a ping-pong table.