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# Monterey on the Move

By Dan Johnson

It's no secret that Monterey, California, is becoming an enhanced meetings destination, with major hotel and conference center renovations popping up to complement an exciting array of attractions.

I was able to sample some of the highlights this spring during a four-day media fam trip offered by Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau. We stayed at Portola Hotel & Spa, a nautical-inspired property in the heart of downtown Monterey, just steps from Fisherman's Wharf and the coastline. During my visit, the hotel was opening Jacks Monterey, its new restaurant/bar. The upper lobby, front desk and main entrance also were being renovated.

A neighboring hotel, Monterey Marriott, recently completed a \$2.4 million renovation of San Carlos Ballroom and the new Greatroom, which includes a lobby and bar. Monterey Convention Center, which is

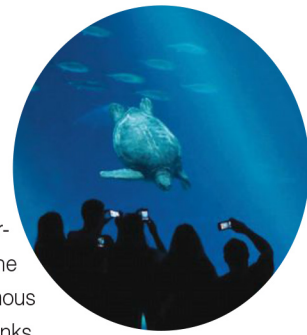
connected to both Portola Hotel & Spa and Monterey Marriott, is in the midst of a \$60 million renovation that will bring technological improvements, more prefabrication space and the ability to host multiple meetings simultaneously. Once it re-opens in the summer or early fall, the convention center will have more than 40,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

We also toured Sanctuary, a 119-acre oceanside property that is undergoing a \$4 million renovation that will improve guest rooms and furnishings; and The Lodge at Pebble Beach, which has invested in a three-year renovation of all 454 guest rooms. But perhaps the biggest news at The Lodge is that in the late summer, it will introduce Fairway One at the Lodge, consisting of 30 oversized guest rooms in three two-story buildings and two four-bedroom golf cottages. Fairway One will provide a 6,500-square-foot meeting facility, including a 2,500-square-foot main meet-

ing room with floor-to-ceiling views of the first fairway at the famous Pebble Beach Golf Links.

Between hotel visits, we enjoyed a preview of the fresh cuisine at the new Salt Wood Restaurant at Sanctuary Beach Resort Monterey Bay; the whimsically wonderful Folk Tale Winery in Carmel Valley; the world-renowned Monterey Bay Aquarium (pictured); the remarkably curious Dali17, dedicated to the life and work of Salvador Dali; and historic Cannery Row. We also visited the luxurious Carmel Valley Ranch, a hotbed of recreational activities where I proudly displayed my unbeknownst (even to me) archery skills and won the gold medal in our group competition.

As if this wasn't enough, we were supposed to gather for a beach bonfire and go whale watching, but the weather didn't cooperate. Well, next time...



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