

New Reasons to Visit Carmel Valley

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Several iconic properties in Carmel, California's valley reveal major upgrades and re-openings this summer.

Big news hits Carmel, California's little valley this summer, with some of its most iconic properties unveiling major upgrades and renovations.

Stay

This summer, the 500-acre adventure resort [Carmel Valley Ranch](#) completes a major facelift, giving you several new reasons to perch in one of its wine country-inspired rooms. Among the highlights are 30 new suites appointed with outdoor living rooms, complete with daybeds and picnic tables overlooking the ranch's vineyards. The chic farm-to-table restaurant, featuring ingredients from the on-site garden, is adding a sprawling new terrace that juts out from the hillside to the oak canopy's brim, for treetop dining illuminated by hanging lanterns. Save room for the complimentary nightly s'mores by the pool.

A long list of optional activities inspires guests to get in touch with their inner child: strolling through the new butterfly garden while learning about the resident monarchs and anise swallowtails, embarking on a bird-watching adventure led by a naturalist, or sauntering by horseback through the expanded mountaintop trails. After you've tested all the activities, there's only one thing left to do: let it all sink in

at the new adult-only oasis, opening later this summer, which features a zero-edge pool, hot tubs, cabanas, and outdoor bar (*doubles from \$600*).

Eat

Lucia Restaurant & Bar is the star of the valley's newly re-imagined [Bernardus Lodge & Spa](#) (*pictured; doubles from \$395*). The walls of the once stuffy restaurant have been torn down to make way for panoramic views of the estate vineyards that turn golden at sunset, and the old historic feel has been switched out for earthy, chic contemporary style—like white Italian leather chairs surrounding reclaimed wood tables. The rethought menu highlights produce sourced from the ground's gardens, as well as the chef's private orchards, mushrooms from local foragers, and octopus courtesy of fishermen from the nearby coast. Summer is peak time for local dishes, like Monterey Bay abalone with applewood smoked bacon and a saffron chardonnay sauce (*entrees \$21 to \$45*).

Do

One of the valley's best secrets is [Refuge](#), a two-acre outdoor spa tucked at the base of the Santa Lucia Preserve. The theme is hydro-thermal therapy, the process of rotating through hot and cold environments to relax muscles and release endorphins. To facilitate the process, the tranquil grounds are decked with a large cedar sauna, eucalyptus steam bath, and six hot tubs with thermal waterfalls. Adirondack chairs and fire pits offer optimal lounge spots to recover from the cold plunge pools, with temps ranging from an icy river to the Pacific Ocean (*\$44 for an all-day pass*).