

## Carmel Valley Ranch

**Comfortable and Warm with Homegrown Everything**

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The scenery in the Carmel area may be the best in the world. Still, many will find the climate too cool, especially in the afternoons, unless you choose wisely and stay a bit inland. Carmel Valley Ranch is ideally located close to all the beauty of this area but enjoys a much warmer micro-climate. Of course, with all they offer to guests you may not want to leave the property until you check out.

### The Setting

“The Ranch,” as locals call it, is actually a private club set on 500 acres with an elegant lodge inside its gates. As you enter, you pass through the 18-hole championship golf course and head up to the hilltop hotel with commanding views of the Carmel Valley. Along the way you pass by the organic gardens where much of the resort’s produce is grown. Deer are abundant throughout the oak-studded property.



### **The Resort**

The main lodge is where you check in and is also home to the Lodge Restaurant. The oversized rooms spread out a bit farther up the hill, allowing for great views of the valley. These are the largest rooms you will find in the Carmel/Monterey area. Travertine fireplaces, oversized marble bathrooms, two large LCD TVs, and comfortable down bedding adorn each unit. The rooms are laid out much like a large suite, allowing easily for a family of four if needed. Take some time in the evening to enjoy the uninterrupted views of the valley from your private balcony.

This resort really prides itself on its own organic gardens and the extent to which their food is locally sourced. Even the bath soap in the rooms comes from lavender grown right on property and lining the driveway in. I took the garden tour offered to guests and was very impressed. Carmel Valley Ranch even makes its own salt, which is a first in all my travels.

This attention to procurement continues with every item on the menu at the Lodge Restaurant. Chef Tim Wood uses only local sources, if it is not grown on property, and this shows up in the deliciously fresh taste of your food. I dined on Monterey salmon, and it was as good as any I have ever tasted. The pool, spa, and fitness center are adjacent to the main lodge and easily accessed from the rooms via a walking bridge. Visit [CarmelValleyRanch.com](http://CarmelValleyRanch.com) for complete details.

### **The Golf**

The resort's golf course was designed by Pete Dye, and it is much more player friendly than many of his creations. There is enough of a course to challenge the best players, but beginners will also have a fair chance.

Carmel Valley Ranch Golf Course has two very different nines for guests to enjoy. The front nine is fairly flat with water guarding many of the greens. It can be easily walked if you so desire. The back nine winds its way up into the hills near the Lodge and will require a cart. There are many memorable holes on this

nine, offering the same views you get from your room but an even closer look at the local deer population. The course is always in great shape and has a large practice facility for before or after the round.

The clubhouse restaurant is a good spot for breakfast or lunch, even if you are not going to play golf. The sweeping views look over the golf and take in mountains and lakes.

### **The Drive**

If you want to take in Highway 1 through Big Sur on this trip I have a suggestion. Drive up to Carmel on 101 and take the Spreckels exit just south of Salinas. This will connect you to Highway 68 going west toward Monterey. Then make sure to take the Laureles Grade over to the Carmel Valley area. This route will save you a lot of time, especially if you arrive near 5 p.m. Your best time to see Highway 1 is on the way south after checkout with the sun at your back. As you head south through Big Sur during the late afternoon, make sure you watch the road — a warning I give because it will be hard to do.