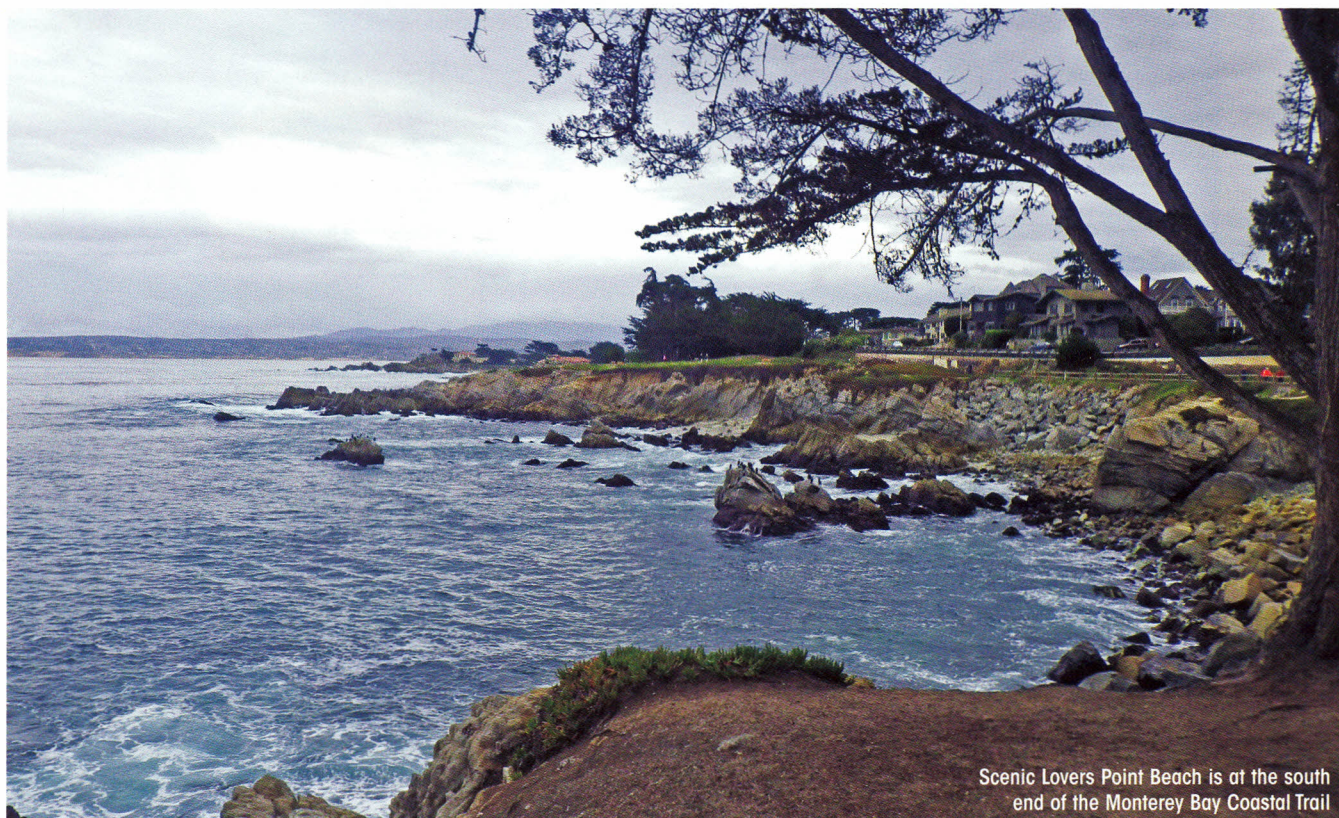


# Getting to Know Cannery Row



Scenic Lovers Point Beach is at the south end of the Monterey Bay Coastal Trail

**T**he California coast is home to more than a few world-class travel destinations. I thought I knew them all until we recently spent a few days in Monterey's Cannery Row. This colorful district of about 20 square blocks is located two hours south of San Francisco and five hours north of Los Angeles. Alternatively, nonstop Alaska Airlines flights from San Diego take 90 minutes.

From 1915 through the 1950s, this area was abuzz with the business of canning sardines. Immigrants from Sicily, Portugal, Japan, and China worked hard and thrived. However, after WWII the over-fished sardines began to disappear, and by 1962 the industry had collapsed. The region remained in a state of decline until 1968, when Bert Cutino and his partner founded The Sardine Factory Restaurant in an abandoned cannery cafeteria. ([www.sardinefactory.com](http://www.sardinefactory.com))

Soon, other vacant buildings were repurposed as places to eat and shop. Visitors flocked to the area to see the famous canning street described by John Steinbeck in his novel *Cannery Row*. More interest was created by Clint Eastwood's 1971 movie *Play Misty for Me*, filmed partially in Monterey, including some scenes inside The Sardine Factory.

The restaurant soon developed a large and illustrious following. Ronald Reagan was a fan of the abalone bisque; Governor Schwarzenegger often flew in for lunch; and Leon Panetta, whose office is nearby, is a frequent guest.

Bert Cutino was cooking the night my husband and I ate in his restaurant, but he took the time to share his early



The Sardine Factory's Conservatory was one of the first restaurants in the country with a truly legendary wine list



memories of the area while we enjoyed his calamari puffs, grilled wild abalone medallions, and pan seared petrale sole — all delicious.

The Sardine Factory was an easy stroll from our cozy Cannery Row lodging, the Spindrift Inn. We enjoyed a 4th floor king room with a padded window bench overlooking Monterey Bay. This perch was ideal for watching the sun rise, gazing at waves rolling up on the beach below, and catching a glimpse of seagulls as they flew past the window. All the rooms at this hotel come with fireplaces, complimentary room service breakfast, and a daily hosted wine and cheese reception.

([www.spindriftinn.com](http://www.spindriftinn.com))

After seeing kayakers out on the bay, we rented boats from Adventures By the Sea. The goal was to get a good look at sea otters while keeping an eco-friendly distance.

However, the little fellows had the annoying habit of ducking under water just as we'd get close enough for a good view. We did see harbor seals, sea lions, pelicans, gulls, cormorants, and egrets — and we stayed warm thanks to the high quality clothing provided by the rental company, which also offers bikes and SUPs.

([www.adventuresbythesea.com](http://www.adventuresbythesea.com))

We got a better look at otters at the Monterey Bay Aquarium located on the waterfront at the south end of Cannery Row. This renowned facility opened in 1984 on the site of the former Hovden Cannery and attracts more than

2 million visitors a year. Their otter display is great. I also adore their jellies, so much so that I bookmarked their Jelly Cam on my PC. The multi-story living Kelp Forest exhibit is the centerpiece; Open Shore (turtles, hammerhead sharks, a swarm of sardines, and more) is another popular area.

([www.montereybayaquarium.org](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org))

The aquarium is on the Monterey Bay Coastal Trail, known locally as “the rec trail.” This scenic walking and biking path follows the former Southern Pacific Railroad line and extends 18 miles from Pacific Grove to Castroville. Slightly off the rec trail, we discovered the charming Monterey Peninsula Art Foundation Gallery, where the work of 30 local artists is displayed in a historic carriage house. ([www.mpaaf.org](http://www.mpaaf.org))

On our last day in Cannery Row, we stopped for a “quick lunch” at A Taste of Monterey Wine Market & Bistro.

However, it didn't turn out to be very quick when we discovered that this is *the place* to try all



The Jellies Experience at Monterey Bay Aquarium is an ethereal world where creatures dance and bloom

the wonderful wine, beer, and food (artichokes, Brussels sprouts, almonds, salmon, crab) for which Monterey County is famous. They offer three local craft beers on tap and 90 wines made with Monterey County grapes. These can be enjoyed by the glass or table flight. We were driving, so my husband consoled himself with a Sparkey's Root Beer from Pacific Grove. My artichoke and potato soup was fantastic. The flatbreads were positively divine. ([www.tastemonterey.com](http://www.tastemonterey.com))

It was great getting to know Cannery Row. ELIZABETH HANSEN

Sea otters are a favorite of visitors to Monterey Bay Aquarium

