





CYPRESS INN

Cypress Inn, right smack in the heart of Carmel-By-The-Sea, is more than just a dog-friendly hotel; it is a dog-loving hotel. No, it is a dog-beaten hotel. If I come back as a hound or a pug, this is where I want to stay. But, lest you get the wrong impression, Cypress Inn is also a great place for humans, too. It's just that our four-legged friends have it so good here. And, it is all the doing of the hotel's longtime owner, actress Doris Day, a dog lover of historical proportions. Ms Day co-owns the hotel with Dennis LeVett. We arrived just days after a big poodle weekend that featured a parade of some 60 dogs. Forty of them stayed at the Cypress Inn. Many were still hanging around, with their owners, of course.

I can see why. It's hard to leave this place.

It is humanity's good fortune that Ms Day loves dogs *and* people. And she doesn't just favor dogs: Cypress Inn is a *pet*-friendly hotel (though cats are discouraged for obvious reasons).

Checking In

If you didn't know or had never heard of Doris Day (and the younger clientele may not have), you'd be hard-pressed not to become aware of her after, oh maybe 15 minutes of arrival. Ms Day, who lives in Carmel, was indeed America's sweetheart and reigned in that position for much of the 1950s and '60s. She didn't begin as an actress though. She began as a big-band singer and her 1945 hit version of "Sentimental Journey" is still among the best-ever recordings of that song. Posters from virtually all her movies (some 40 in all) are festooned throughout the lobby, the restaurant, the bar, the hallways, and other public spaces.

WEEKEND GETAWAY



Her co-stars were the biggest show-business names of their day; movies in which she co-starred include *That Touch of Mink* with Cary Grant and Gig Young; *Young at Heart* with Frank Sinatra; *Love Me or Leave Me* with James Cagney; *Pillow Talk* with Rock Hudson and Tony Randall; *Teacher's Pet* with Clark Gable; *The Man Who Knew Too Much* with Jimmy Stewart; and *The Winning Team* with Ronald Reagan. Other co-stars include Richard Widmark (an erstwhile Montecito resident until his death in 2008), David Niven, Rex Harrison, and John Raitt.

The various TV monitors at Cypress Inn – ordinarily the domain of sports events in nearly every bar in the U.S. – play wall-to-wall vintage Doris Day movies and they are a delight to watch. The innocence of the films, however, can only mean one of two things: either it was a very simple-minded era and we really were that naive, or somebody was hiding something from us, big time.

Beside the front desk is a collection of World War I and World War II toy airplanes and soldiers. On one wall is a Mae West quote: "You should get out of those wet clothes and into a dry martini," from the movie *Every Day Is A Holiday*.

There is much to look at, admire, and marvel at, including a poignant painting of one of Doris's favorite dogs, Patrick Edward, and the many gold and platinum records and albums framed along the walls, particularly in Terry's Lounge.

Doris's Son

Terry Melcher was Doris Day's son who passed away 11 years ago at the age of 60, but who obviously remains alive in her memory.

The hotel's bar was named after him, as is the restaurant. Terry was an award-winning music producer whose efforts included songs for The Beach Boys, The Byrds ("Mr. Tambourine Man"), and Ry Cooder.

The walls in the bar tell his story: Gold and Platinum Records and other awards for hits such as "Kokomo," *Good Vibrations: 30 Years of The Beach Boys*; *The Byrds' Greatest Hits*; "Hey, Little Cobra" featuring Terry and Montecito resident Bruce Johnston on vocals. There is even a Silver Sails award given to Doris Day for a 2011 recording of the Sony Music album *My Heart*, which sold 60,000 copies. There are 42 different album covers throughout.



WEEKEND GETAWAY

Food & Drink

Terry's has an entire book's worth of drinks and cocktails, each with a vivid description of its ingredients and sometimes its history. The bar also features an all-day menu that includes a burger, two mini-Nathan's Famous Hot Dog sliders; a basket of fries and four curried lamb meatballs. You can also opt for a plate of Monterey Bay calamari. Cocktails run the gamut from an old-fashioned to a whiskey sour, a Kentucky champagne cocktail, sazerac, Marlene Dietrich cocktail, and plenty others. It's fun just to peruse the cocktail menu. Drinks are named for Doris Day's favorites, including James Cagney, Cary Grant, Ronald Reagan, and Kirk Douglas among them. Prices run from \$8 to \$12.

As for the pet-friendly restaurant, it was explained to me that the reason dogs and other animals are welcome in the eating area (many California city and county ordinances are strictly anti-animal) is that most people with pets choose to eat at tables set up in what is officially the hotel's lobby or in the inner outdoor patio, where animals are allowed, and not in the "restaurant." Cypress Inn probably gets away with its relaxed attitude toward dogs and other creatures because, well, because it's Doris Day.

Ambiance

The Cypress Inn was built in 1929 and is just half a block from busy, bustling Ocean Avenue, but it may as well be in the country. Our room was quiet and comfortable, situated near the inside patio. We heard no street noise, no noise from adjoining or adjacent rooms, but even if we had we'd still have been pleased to stay in such an iconic and comfortable place.

Because it is a relatively old building and is located pretty much in the very center of town, parking can be challenging. That problem, however, is about to be resolved. Currently, there are just nine (free) parking spaces set aside for hotel guests in a lot about half a block from the hotel. If you can't expropriate one of those spaces, you'll have to find on-street parking, which is free but has restrictions and may require you to walk a block or two. However, management has recently hired a valet company and will have access to assigned parking spaces

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for an additional 54 vehicles. By the time you read this, that valet-friendly parking plan will be in place for those looking to stay at the Cypress Inn.

Shopping

Downtown Carmel is and has been for many years a mecca for shoppers in search of local art or one-of-a-kind handcrafted goods. There are no chain stores on Ocean Avenue except in the Doud Arcade at the top end of Ocean Avenue, the main drag, and even here most shops are locally owned and operated, and offer unusual and often locally made products.

A couple of suggestions: Bittner, The Pleasure of Writing (831-626-8828) sells only writing instruments and accessories, and most of the items they have for sale are unusual and attractive. I ended up buying an *Ageles* ballpoint pen that came in its own canister and stands upright on my desk.

In the Doud Arcade, I stumbled into the Carmel Hat Company (831-625-9510) and purchased an all-weather golf hat that I apparently can wear even during an El Niño downpour. At least, that's the promise and the hope. It was made in the U.S.A. as were nearly all the hats in the store, though some came from Australia and Canada.

Continuing Charm

Carmel has been a tourist destination for so long, there is no real reason to describe its myriad charms, such as the jumble of curious structures built close together and framed by foliage so thick it is often almost impenetrable. Brick walkways spill out between bushes and hedges, outside stairways lead to artists' studios and guest bedrooms, architecture runs from *faux* Tudor to post-Victorian, and the overall effect is both charming and intoxicating. It really is a fairytale village. 11

Carmel-By-The-Sea is an excellent place to spend a weekend. (Lincoln Street & 7th Avenue; 831-624-3871). If you plan to spend any time in Carmel and want to be downtown (and you should), you won't do better than the Cypress Inn.

