



ROAD TO THE RUNOFFS: A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO

WORDS Renee Brincks

When SCCA brings this year's National Championship Runoffs to Monterey, Calif., on Oct. 6-12, 2014, history will be made. This is the event's first time at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, and its first West Coast excursion since 1968 - that event was hosted at the now-defunct Riverside Raceway. Doubling the event's westward foray with a world-class racetrack and spectacular setting, it's guaranteed to be an unforgettable week.

October offers some of the peninsula's most pleasant weather, making it an ideal time for spectators and participants. The coastal communities in the area each have a distinct atmosphere. Monterey, the central city on the peninsula, is home to Cannery Row and the Monterey Bay Aquarium, plus historic attractions and a bustling waterfront. Restaurants and retail shops line the streets of Carmel, an artsy community with a stunning beach. Affordable hotel options and the National Steinbeck Center distinguish Salinas, and it's a picturesque drive from there to the track.

Participants traveling to town from the north will follow Highway 101 to Highway 156 west, and that connects with Highway 1 into Monterey. From the south, it's Highway 101 to Salinas, and Highway 68 toward the coast. Then, it's off to the races - or, off to exciting hotels, restaurants, and recreation.

WHERE TO STAY

Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca is a short drive from accommodations suited to every style. Out in Carmel Valley, the newly remodeled Quail Lodge offers modern digs, and it is home to the Land Rover Experience Driving School.

Carmel Valley Ranch has a golf course and spa, along with spacious suites, rope swings, and fire pits, if you're into evening s'mores. Nearby, picturesque Bernardus Lodge is known for its highly regarded restaurants.

Blocks from the beach - in downtown Carmel - La Playa Carmel offers historic charm and contemporary amenities. Mission Ranch, a 22-acre property saved from development by Clint Eastwood, boasts beautifully landscaped grounds. Carmel Mission Inn is close to Highway 1; up in Marina, Sanctuary Beach Resort is also well situated for racing fans. Travelers coming in on

7 Reservations are always a must on race weekends, pretty much wherever you go”

KENTON KOCH

Highway 101 will find reasonably priced options in the Courtyard by Marriott and Holiday Inn Express in Salinas, as well.

With hotels positioned close to dining, shopping, and recreational activities, Monterey is a good match for guests who want a “walkable” experience. A trio of downtown hotels – Hotel Pacific, Portola Hotel & Spa, and Monterey Marriott – offer easy waterfront access. On Cannery Row, the Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa is a bay view gem with well-appointed rooms and on-site dining. The Hotel Abrego is a recently renovated property not far off Highway 1.

FREE TIME

The Monterey Bay Aquarium put this seaside community on the map, and it

remains one of the region's most popular attractions 30 years after opening. The "Tentacles: The Astounding Lives of Octopuses, Squid, and Cuttlefishes" exhibit, which debuted this spring, captivates all ages. From the aquarium, stroll down Cannery Row for shopping, wine tasting, and great bay views.

Should you have spare time between qualifying sessions, this is also a good place to rent a bike and explore the Monterey Bay Coastal Recreation Trail. Downtown, follow the Monterey Path of History for a self-guided tour of the area's celebrated adobes, and stop at the Monterey Museum of Art to see the work of renowned California artists.

Carmel earns rave reviews for its boutiques, art galleries, and gift stores. After shopping, take Ocean Avenue down toward Carmel Beach for white sand and sweeping panoramas of Pebble Beach. Several Monterey County wineries operate tasting rooms in Carmel, and more are clustered in Carmel Valley Village.

In Salinas, the National Steinbeck Center celebrates the Pulitzer Prize-winning author with interactive exhibits, and more than two dozen Monterey County golf courses provide plenty of opportunities to tee off.

GO FOR A DRIVE

When you're done at the track for the day, rather than heading back to the hotel, hit the road for the region's breathtaking driving routes. Monterey County is home to 99 miles of prime Pacific coastline, and some of the prettiest are in Big Sur. Here, the Santa Lucia Mountains tower over the

KENTO KOCH

**SCCA Pro Racing
Mazda MX-5 Cup
racer and 2013 Skip
Barber Mazdaspeed
Pro Challenge
Champion**
kentonkochracing.com

"The Best Western on Sand Dunes Dr. is the place to stay in Monterey if you want a nice bang for the buck place on the shore. As far as food goes, in Monterey there is a place called Hulas that is really tasty. If you like sushi, there is the Crystal Fish. Reservations are always a must on race weekends, pretty much wherever you go.

If you want to get away from the not so amazing track food, within five minutes of the track, Tarpy's Roadhouse is the only option of quality. This is the perfect place for either lunch or dinner. Usually it isn't terribly busy, so this might be the only place a wait might not be a factor, depending on the time you go."



ANDY LEE

World Challenge
GTS racer
andyleeracing.com

"To avoid the crowd on Cannery Row, try driving up to the Carmel Valley for dinner – there are great little restaurants in that area, and it's not too busy."



RANDY POBST

Four-Time World Challenge Champ
randypobst.com

"Vegetarian and health-nut preferred food is found at Happy Girl Kitchen Company, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Also, Tillie Gort's, a little vegetarian-oriented cafe in Monterey, and Ambrosia Indian Bistro. A great long-established, locals only, real food place just a mile or two east of the main track entrance for breakfast and lunch only is the Toro Place Cafe.

Stay at the Best Western Plus Beach Resort. It's kind of nice, and right on the beach in Seaside. Quick, straight run to track.

Here's a little tip: Arrive at the track early. The steep two-lane entrance road jams badly. Use S. Boundary Road side entrance to the west, but watch your speed and keep an eye out for school zones!"



Mark Weber

MIKE SKEEN

World Challenge GT racer
mikeskeen.com

"Cannery Row can be pretty busy, but the Sea Harvest Fish Market Restaurant is a nearby alternative. If you aren't in the mood for seafood, try Gianni's for casual pizza, or Epsilon Greek closer to Fisherman's Wharf. For Mexican, there's Los Altos in Salinas. If you find yourself in Carmel, try Katy's Place for breakfast or lunch."



LAI / Scott R. LePage

THE SIGHTS

If you spend any time in Monterey, you'll undoubtedly become familiar with the Fisherman's Wharf and aquarium (BELOW).



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Pacific Ocean, and Highway 1 takes drivers through redwood stands, past state parks, and over the often-photographed Bixby Bridge.

For another coastal treat, trace the Pacific Grove waterfront on Ocean View Boulevard, where waves crash against craggy shoreline. Turn into Pebble Beach to follow the 17-Mile Drive past famed golf courses and grand homes, and look out for wildlife – it's common to spot deer, shorebirds, and sea otters along this stretch. Wide-open spaces beckon near Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, where Laureles Grade links Highway 68 and Carmel Valley Road. The grade is all about elevation and wide vistas, while Carmel Valley Road fronts vineyards and ranches tucked into the rolling



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Tarpy's Roadhouse promises steak and seafood just a short distance from the track, while Montrieo Bistro, its sister restaurant in downtown Monterey, prides itself on local ingredients and well-crafted cocktails. With vintage racing photos and American fare, Monterey's Turn 12 Bar and Grill (the name is a nod to Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca) draws a lively crowd. Follow Laureles Grade to Carmel Valley for another car lover's favorite, Baja Cantina. This casual gathering spot offers a Mexican-inspired menu, an outdoor patio, and a display of assorted auto memorabilia.

Several Carmel restaurants offer upscale dining options, as well. Casanova and Aubergine are favorites for romantic evenings out, and Cantinetta Luca presents contemporary Italian food in an urban atmosphere. For a more relaxed alternative, try lunch at Carmel Belle or grab tapas at Mundaka. Resorts throughout the area also dish out top-shelf food and wine. 🍷

WATCH OUT

Want a break? Go for a boat ride.



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WHERE TO...
STAY
BERNARDUS LODGE

415 W. Carmel Valley Rd., Carmel Valley, CA 93924
(831) 658-3400 | bernarduslodge.com

CARMEL VALLEY RANCH

One Old Ranch Rd., Carmel, CA 93923
(866) 318-9766 | carmelvalleyranch.com

QUAIL LODGE

8205 Valley Greens Dr., Carmel, CA 93923
(831) 624-2888 | quailodge.com

CARMEL MISSION INN

3665 Rio Rd., Carmel, CA 93923
(831) 624-1841 | carmelmissioninn.com

LA PLAYA HOTEL

Camino Real at 8th Ave., Carmel, CA 93923
(831) 293-6100 | laplayahotel.com

MISSION RANCH

26270 Dolores St., Carmel, CA 93923
(831) 624-6436 | missionranchcarmel.com

HOTEL ABREGO

755 Abrego St., Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 372-7551 | hotelabrego.com

HOTEL PACIFIC

300 Pacific St., Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 373-5700 | hotelpacific.com

MONTEREY MARRIOTT

350 Calle Principal, Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 649-4234 | marriott.com

MONTEREY PLAZA HOTEL & SPA

400 Cannery Row, Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 646-1700 | montereyplazahotel.com

PORTOLA HOTEL & SPA

2 Portola Plaza, Monterey, CA 93940
(888) 222-5851 | portolahotel.com

SANCTUARY BEACH RESORT

3295 Dunes Rd., Marina, CA 93933
(831) 883-9478 | thesanctuarybeachresort.com

EAT
AUBERGINE L'AUBERGE CARMEL

Monte Verde St. at 7th Ave., Carmel, CA 93921
(831) 624-8578 | auberginecarmel.com

CANTINETTA LUCA

Dolores St. at Ocean Ave., Carmel, CA 93921
(831) 625-6500 | cantinettaluca.com

CARMEL BELLE

Doud Craft Studios,
San Carlos St. at Ocean Ave., Carmel, CA 93923
(831) 624-1600 | carmelbelle.com

CASANOVA

5th Ave. at Mission St., Carmel, CA 93923
(831) 625-0501 | casanovarestaurant.com

BAJA CANTINA

7166 Carmel Valley Rd., Carmel, CA 93923
(831) 625-2252 | carmelcantina.com

MONTRIO BISTRO

414 Calle Principal, Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 648-8880 | montrieo.com

MUNDAKA

7th Ave. at San Carlos St., Carmel, CA 93921
(831) 624-7400 | mundakacarmel.com

TARPY'S ROADHOUSE

2999 Monterey Salinas Hwy., Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 647-1444 | tarpys.com

TURN 12 BAR AND GRILL

400 Tyler St., Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 372-8876 | turn12barandgrill.com

GET AUTO PARTS
AUTOZONE

262 Reservation Rd., Marina, CA 93933
(831) 384-7807 | autozone.com

COAST AUTOMOTIVE WAREHOUSE

597 Brunken Ave., Salinas, CA 93901
(831) 758-0901 | coastautomotivewarehouse.com

NAPA AUTO PARTS

2320 Del Monte Ave., Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 372-4553 | napaonline.com

PACIFIC GROVE TIRES & SERVICE

1224 Forest Ave., Pacific Grove, CA 93950
(831) 646-9100 | seasidefire.com