

# Carmel

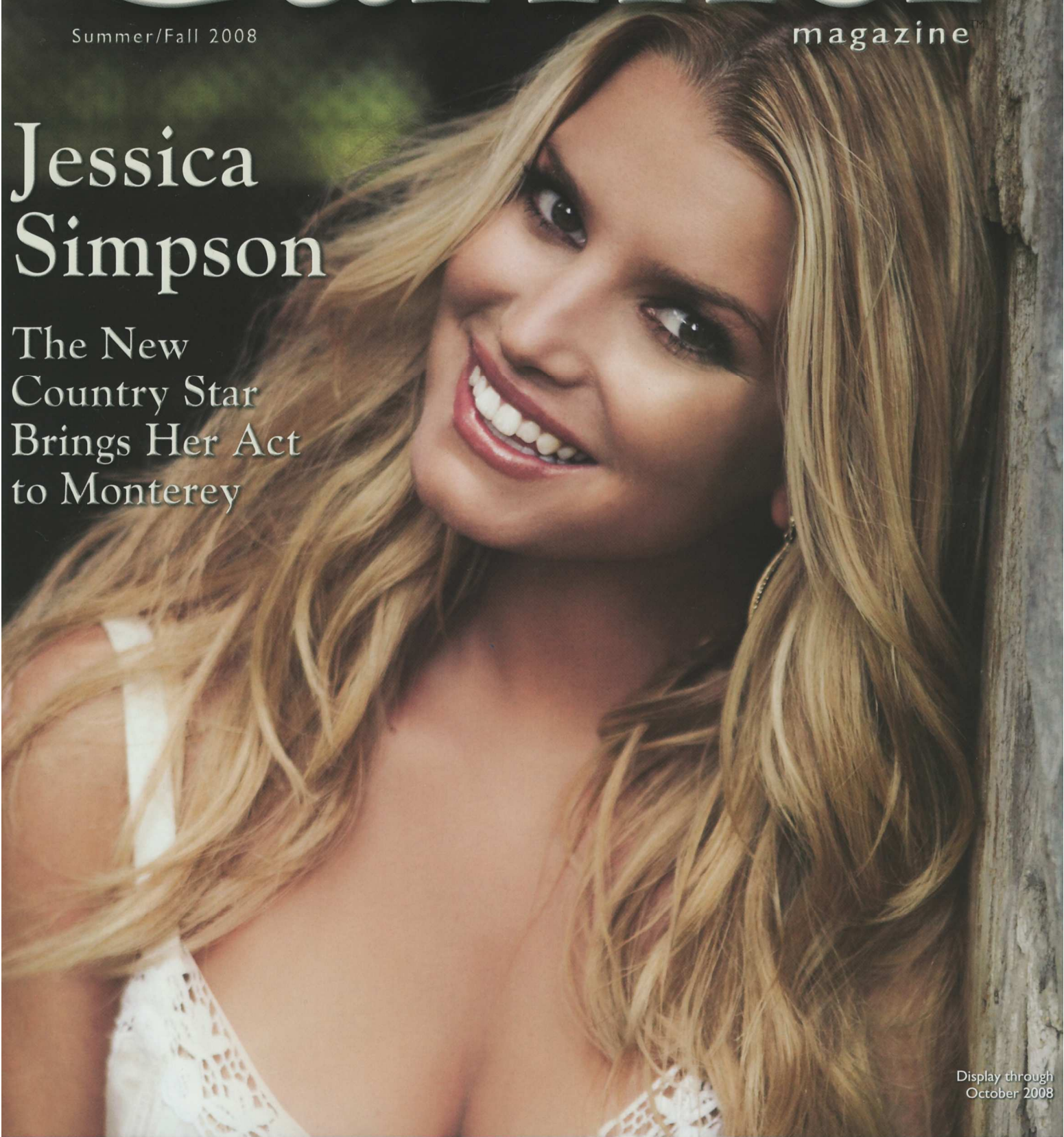
The Lifestyle Magazine of the Central Coast

Summer/Fall 2008

magazine

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Photo: Jeremy Reddington

## DESTINATIONS



# AMSTERDAM

BY RENEE BRINCKS

**T**he best way to see Amsterdam is from 275 feet above the tidy, circular city.

Here, atop the Westerkerk (Western Church) Tower, views stretch to the very reaches of the community's wide waterways and gabled structures. The Westerkerk opened in 1631; its brick and wood tower, with bells weighing more than 8 tons, was completed seven years later. Rembrandt is buried here and Anne Frank listened to the church's chimes when she was hiding less than a block away.

While millions of travelers photograph the church from street level, few take the guided tour to the tower's peak. In welcoming, walkable Amsterdam, such off-the-tourist-track opportunities reveal some of the city's most impressive treasures.

West of Amsterdam's teeming Dam Square is the Jordaan, a historic neighborhood where many of the austere brick buildings contain hidden garden courtyards sometimes open to the public. Once home to mainly working-class residents, the Jordaan has become a hot spot for artists, academics and young entrepreneurs. Still, it retains its traditional character thanks to tree-lined canals, small shops and neighborhood pubs.

A walk through the district, just west of the Westerkerk, provides a glance at Amsterdam's more authentic side. Anchoring the Jordaan's north end, the Noorderkerk (Northern Church) hosts a weekly farmer's market where visitors can sample fresh, organic fare plus local cheeses, spices, herbs, breads and fish. The Noordermarkt, held each Saturday morning, provides a tasty



Photos: Eric Gevaert

**(Above)** The Rijksmuseum is the Netherlands' largest history and art museum, with more than one million objects and paintings on display.

**(Left)** Brilliant spring blooms—including famous Dutch tulips—color the Keukenhof gardens, 23 miles southwest of Amsterdam's city center.



introduction to Dutch culinary culture.

Along the Jordaan's eastern edge, the Amsterdam Tulip Museum showcases the spring flower through historic displays and interactive exhibits. A shop stocked with books, gifts and souvenirs also includes bulbs in vivid colors and assorted varieties. While packing orders to ship back to the United States, the cheery staff dishes out helpful gardening advice and local information.

Blocks away, laid out like a tic-tac-toe board along the city's western canals, De Negen Straatjes (The Nine Streets) offer boutique shopping at its best. Part kitsch, part class, this eclectic assortment of independent stores supplies everything from designer handbags

# TRAVEL GUIDE TO AMSTERDAM

**After a day of exploration, the large square known as Leidseplein is a prime spot for people watching and a quick snack.**

to specialty cheeses to vintage fashion to quirky toothbrushes.

Back on the well-traveled path, the attractions that make Amsterdam famous hold their own merit, particularly for first-time visitors. The poignant Anne Frank Museum honors the family that hid from Nazi soldiers for more than two years during World War II, and much of the Frank house remains today as it was during those years. Inside, diary pages, photos and video clips capture the struggles of young Anne and the people who endured concentration camps. To bypass long lines, purchase tickets

**Exquisite gabled roofs dress up the narrow homes and converted warehouses lining Amsterdam's 165 canals. For an overview of local architecture and history, consider a canal boat tour.**



## WHILE IN AMSTERDAM



Dylan Hotel

### Where to Stay

**College Hotel** – [www.collegehotelamsterdam.com](http://www.collegehotelamsterdam.com)

This stylish inn is housed in a former brick school building steps from the Van Gogh Museum, the Rijksmuseum and the Vondelpark, Amsterdam's lush city playground.

**Dylan Hotel** – [www.dylanamsterdam.com](http://www.dylanamsterdam.com)

Kick back along the Keizersgracht canal in this sophisticated hotel that features distinctive, modern design and convenient access to top attractions and restaurants.

**Heren B&B** – [www.herenbedandbreakfast.com](http://www.herenbedandbreakfast.com)

Tucked on a quiet street near the Anne Frank Museum, this inviting bed and breakfast boasts sunny rooms, a flower-filled rooftop terrace and impeccable service.

### What to See

**Amsterdam Tulip Museum**

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

**Anne Frank Museum**

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

**De Negen Straatjes**

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

**Noorderkerk**

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

**Rijksmuseum**

[www.rijksmuseum.nl](http://www.rijksmuseum.nl)

**Van Gogh Museum**

[www.vangoghmuseum.nl](http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl)

**Westerkerk**

[www.westerkerk.nl](http://www.westerkerk.nl)

boutique



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ahead of time on the museum's website.

The lines also get long at the Van Gogh Museum, but it's worth waiting for a peek at the landscapes, still lifes and sketches of the Netherlands native and his contemporaries. Van Gogh's vibrant "Sunflowers" and "The Yellow House" are on display, as are a selection of self-portraits and letters. Art from Van Gogh, Rembrandt and Vermeer hangs among more than 1,000 exhibitions in the nearby Rijksmuseum, which spotlights Dutch art and history in a grand brick building that blends gothic and Renaissance-style architecture.

After a day of exploration, the large square known as Leidseplein is a prime spot for people watching and a quick snack. Settle in at one of the outdoor cafés. On any given evening, dancers and jugglers might offer entertainment while lively accordion players serenade travelers planning their next Amsterdam adventure.

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