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## With Scenic Views, Half Moon Bay is a Delight for Day or Overnight Treks

By Fran Endicott Miller



World-class views are part of Half Moon Bay's charm. Photos Fran Endicott Miller

luxurious Ritz Carlton, Half Moon Bay - a family friendly resort with the ambience of grand seaside retreats of the past. Its clifftop placement, surrounding golf course, nattily clad bellmen in plaid knickers and flat caps, and nightly sundown bagpipe serenade cast a Scottish vibe.

Designed to blend into the coastline, the six-story structure reflects the colors of the sand and sky. Communal gathering spots and guest rooms are designed to take advantage of spectacular northern or southern coastal views. Ground floor rooms feature private fire pits. Children ages 5 through 12 can take part in the Ritz Kids Day Program with activities such as sandcastle building, tide pool exploration, swimming, sporting activities and arts and crafts.

For adults, The Ritz is a veritable Disneyland. The property sits among Half Moon Bay Links' two championship golf courses: the historic parkland-style Old Course featuring cypress trees and an 18th hole overlooking the ocean, and the Ocean Course, offering more challenging links-style play on rugged terrain with an ocean view from every hole. Enjoy the luxurious spa and celebrate the resort's 15th Crystal Anniversary with a crystal-centric massage or facial.

For dining options, you need never leave the resort and its four restaurants - don't miss the Saturday Farmer's Market Brunch, a lavish buffet of locally grown and sourced items, and Bloody Marys "Built for You." But you'll want to explore Half Moon Bay's Main Street, and a great starting point is Cetrella at the quiet south end, where Chef Michael Ellis prepares flavorful Mediterranean-rim and California coastal dishes that source regional farms and artisanal purveyors. A Michelin Guide recommended spot, Cetrella's inviting interior, with exposed beams, a stone fireplace, Matt Farrar paintings and live jazz on Saturday evenings, makes it the most inviting restaurant in town. An accessible fine-dining menu makes it also the most delicious restaurant in town: house-made breads and pastas, the freshest grilled vegetables, fish, fowl, field and game meats, rotating rustic entrées and house-made desserts feed the soul, as do selections from their international wine library. But first, start with a refreshing Pomegranate Cosmo, or a Main St.

Margarita.

For breakfast, check out the pastry selections at Moonside Bakery and Café, also on Main St., or venture to 3-Zero Café, oddly housed at the Half Moon Bay airport. Voted "Best Breakfast on the

Coast" by Half Moon Bay Review readers for 12 consecutive years, the quirky, airplane motif spot is named for an optimal take-off compass setting of 300.

For additional activities, nearly 70 wineries exist within an hour's drive of Half Moon Bay. Horseback riding, whale watching cruises, swimming, surfing and biking are also all within reach. But perhaps the most favored Half Moon Bay activity is ocean gazing from The Ritz Carlton's Ocean Lawn. With three large fire pits, Adirondack chairs, and cozy blankets, the expanse is a gathering spot for both hotel guests and day visitors. Purchase a bottle of wine from the resort's lobby wine bar and watch the sunset, or pick up a Recchiuti Confections s'mores kit and put the fire pit to good use.

Whether for just the day, a night, or a weekend, a summer visit to Half Moon Bay reveals that there is so much more to the small coastal town than the area's famed pumpkin festival. After a fantastic day of sea, sun and sand, you'll wonder why you don't make the trek more often.



The Ritz Carlton at Half Moon Bay.

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