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TRAVEL DIGEST

Visit Half Moon Bay For a California Coastal Vacation

BY VERN HOWEN
THE SACRAMENTO GAZETTE

Located just 30 minutes south of San Francisco, Half Moon Bay offers inviting accommodations, a relaxing walk along the beach, fine dining with wine or beer tastings, numerous art gal-

leries, plus shopping along historic downtown Main Street.

From downtown Half Moon Bay the ocean is just a short distance to the west, and the beautiful hills are to the east where you can find outstanding wineries, such as La Nebbia Winery or the Thomas Fogarty

Winery and Vineyards. This unique vineyard region is the beginning of the Santa Cruz Mountains Appellation, an area that exceeds 350,000 acres and produces some of the finest wines.

I stayed at the Half Moon Bay Inn located at 401 Main St. in downtown Half Moon Bay. This is an excellent boutique inn that was built in 1932 and was recently renovated, while maintaining its Spanish Revival architecture. The rooms are nicely furnished and have a

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luxurious old world feel. The rooms include complimentary wireless Internet access, in-room robes and organic coffee. Dogs of all sizes are welcome. Be sure to visit their Web site at halfmoonbay.com/packages for their special Weekday Getaway package, which offers a 25 percent discount and other special offers, including their Stay & Play Golf packages. For reservations, book online or call 650-726-1177.

I also enjoyed the convenience of eating at the It's Italia restaurant located directly below the Half Moon Bay Inn. I could tell this restaurant was popular the moment I entered the front door of the restaurant. I soon learned why it is a local favorite Italian restaurant. The menu is a blend of Italian and California style recipes and the meats and seafood are grilled on a mesquite wood-fired rotisserie. It is also known for its specialty pizzas, creative salads, pastas and antipasti using local produce. (www.itsitaliaresraurant.com)

Another restaurant I thoroughly enjoyed was the Half Moon Bay Brewing Co. located at 390 Capistrano Road, off of Half Moon Bay Harbor, which is four miles north of downtown Half Moon Bay. This oceanfront restaurant offers California coastal cuisine plus hand-crafted beers and ales. I especially enjoyed their classic prawn cocktail, clam chowder and wild salmon. It's not only known for its Obama and McCain brews but also for its live music every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Across the street from restaurant is their Half Moon Bay Mavericks Event Center where they offer seaside facilities for weddings, business conventions, and anniversary parties. (www.hmbrewingco.com)

Another ocean-front restaurant you will enjoy is Sam's Chowder House located at 4210 N. Cabrillo Highway. It has re-

ceived awards as one of three Top Outdoor Dining Spots in the Bay Area by San Francisco Magazine and was featured on a "Today Show" segment on Best Sandwiches in America for its lobster roll. Since I learned about the famous lobster roll, I had to experience it for myself. Yes, I agree it is one of the best lobster meals I have had, plus you do not have to dig for the lobster meat, which is generously served on a large roll. Not only does Sam's have numerous awards, its ocean view is outstanding, plus it serves other great seafood such as crab, oysters, chowder and more. You can also dine outside under a cozy heat lamp or near a fire pit on the patio and enjoy outstanding ocean views while enjoying your seafood.

Half Moon Bay is also a great place to play because the ocean is to the west, the hills and mountains are to the east and two popular golf courses are just to the south. The Half Moon Bay Golf Links features two world-class 18-hole courses.

Just south of Pillar Point Harbor you can find plenty of waves for surfing, ocean kayaking and windsurfing. Along the beach, a paved coastal trail of some four miles is open to joggers, walkers, bicyclists and skaters. Horseback riding alongside the trail is also popular. Just a short driving distance from downtown Half Moon Bay, I found an excellent paved walking trail to the ocean at Miramontes Road, plus there were a few free parking spaces.

I really enjoyed an excellent art glass demonstration at the La Nebbia Winery, where visitors can enjoy wine tasting and also learn how to produce blown and sculpted art glass in the studio. The owner and glass artist is Douglass C. Brown, and in about 30 minutes he'll teach you how to create a colored glass paper weight, glass pumpkin or heart. The studio is open most