

The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, Brad Herzog

COMPACT CARS

August 1, 2025



Car Week is a big deal on the Monterey Peninsula every August. The Concours d'Elegance, dating back to 1950, is considered the premier celebration of the automobile, an annual display of historical and beautiful cars that draws the rich and famous (and proud enthusiasts) to the 18th fairway at the famed Pebble Beach golf links. There you'll find assorted and impressive Bugattis and Ferraris and Bentleys and Austin-Healeys.

But the Peninsula and its surrounding environs are positively brimming with more than 30 events over the course of the week – from the Prancing Ponies Women's Car Show in Carmel... to the Monterey Race Car Show Kickoff beginning at Laguna Seca raceway... to the Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance that winds along 17-Mile Drive and Highway One... to the Concours d'Lemons in Seaside. These events raise millions of dollars for scores of organizations.

Pacific Grove is an integral part of the proceedings with a events like Legends of Autobahn West at the PG Golf Links, and the Pacific Grove Rotary Concours Auto Rally, an annual affair for more than three decades, featuring more than 200 vintage cars and a roundtrip coastal cruise along Ocean View Boulevard and into Pebble Beach.

So again, Car Week is a big deal in these parts. But my personal favorite thing about this big-deal week... is arguably the smallest: Pacific Grove's Little Car Show.

Something about the event fits the environs perfectly. Gather 125 tiny vehicles with internal combustion engines no larger than 1,800cc in displacement. Display them along Lighthouse Avenue in PG. Then parade them along the coast to Asilomar State Beach.

This year will be the 15th Annual Little Car Show, taking place from 12–5 pm on August 13. Last year's felt like a little bit of whimsy on display in 125 different ways. Among the trophies handed out were "Mayor's Choice" and the "Dare to be Different Award" and "Most Smiles per Mile." But everyone was a teeny, tiny winner.



Every little car had a story to tell. The owners of a 1956 Fiat 600 Elaborata found it in a barn in Italy. A 1960 Austin Seven Mini was uncovered in a shed in Carson City, Nevada. A 1948 MG TC was discovered by American Air Force pilots stationed in England after World War II. And a wood-bodied 1947 Crosley Station Wagon was purchased as a joke after its owner was refused entry to a car club by friends who owned normal-sized versions.



There was a red-and-white 1958 BMW 600 Isetta with a "refrigerator door" that opens from the front, a 1979 Volkswagen Karmann Ghia converted to electric power, a 1965 Austin Mini Moke ("moke" being an Australian slang term for mule), and a three-wheeled 1936 Morgan MX that was a response to a British tax on four-wheeled automobiles in the 1930s.

Of course, that whimsy was ubiquitous. A cigarette-smoking skeleton sat in the passenger seat of a green Lotus 7. A 1966 VW Short Bus, cut down from regular size, featured a propane-powered flame-throwing exhaust system. A 1967 Morris Mini Minor from the British Motor Corporation was adorned with the Union Jack on its top and a license plate that read "DINKY67." And a 1983 Mazda Porter Cab was decked out as a full coffee shop on wheels. There was even a 1953 MG TD with a red plaid top to match its owner's cap. "I had the cap," she joked, "so I had to buy the car to match it."

Little cars. Big smiles all around.

