

The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

by local award-winning author, Brad Herzog

WALKABOUTS

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One of the biggest selling points when I was considering a move to Pacific Grove nearly three decades ago was its walkability - the opportunity to amble into town, saunter to the sea, or simply wander while guided only by random whims.

But sometimes a journey begs a theme. In fact, that's how I've structured my series of American travel memoirs - explorations of tiny hamlets named after virtues (Pride, Alabama... Justice, West Virginia) or international destinations (Rome, Oregon... Paris, Kentucky) or Greek mythology (Iliad, Montana... Ithaca, New York).

So I wondered: Can the themed journey be adapted for the small world close to home? Can you point prospective explorers toward paths based on either concepts or iconic settings or historical insights? The answer is: Yes. Three-decade PG resident Joyce Krieg has been there, done that. A book called Pacific Grove at Your Feet, written by Krieg and illustrated by Judy Obbink, highlights various ways in which you can theme your PG strolls - or as the book describes them in its subtitle: "Walks, Hikes & Rambles in Butterfly Town, USA."

It is Krieg's attention to detail that makes each "walk, hike and ramble" an enlightening expedition. For instance...

Peruse Chapter 1 before you head west along the coastal Recreation Trail - the 1.2 miles from the Monterey Bay Aquarium to Lovers Point - and Krieg will tell you about the history of Hopkins Marine Station, the story behind the 344-foot mural running along a retaining wall, and the difference between harbor seals (basking at Hopkins beach) and sea lions.

Read Chapter 7 - "Walkin' the Ghost Rails," about the old Southern Pacific railroad bed that runs from Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach to the Pacific Grove Golf Links - and you'll learn about the station that used to sit just west of Lovers Point, the replica of an original passenger shelter at the intersection of Sinex and Crocker avenues, and the freight trains (sometimes 30 cars long) that serviced the Del Monte Sand Company until 1978.



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Check out Chapter 12 (roaming around “Historic Downtown Pacific Grove”), and you’ll be informed that The Bank of Pacific Grove Building is the only example of Romanesque revival architecture on the Monterey Peninsula and that the lighted cross atop the tallest spire of the town’s original Methodist church was used by ships for navigation.

Indeed, particularly enjoyable are the factoids embedded in the ambles. The shells and crushed rock mixed in with sand that can be spotted along the Asilomar Coast Trail (Chapter 3)? Called middens, they are remnants of the native Rumsen tribe that once fished and hunted on the Peninsula. John Steinbeck’s original manuscript for *Of Mice and Men* (“Strolling with Steinbeck,” Chapter 13)? It was chewed up by his puppy. The 171-year-old Point Pinos Lighthouse (Chapter 8)? It was actually damaged in San Francisco’s 1906 earthquake. That same chapter suggests a serene stroll around beautiful El Carmelo Cemetery, and it helps to know that the dearly departed therein include Steinbeck’s sister (Elizabeth) and a lead actor in the infamously panned film *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (“Bunny” Breckenbridge).



Along with the aforementioned, Krieg dedicated chapters to everything from the natural wonder of the Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary and the canopied footpaths through George Washington Park to the architecture of Asilomar Conference Center and the holiday humorlessness of Candy Cane Lane. And maybe that’s the overarching lesson – the realization that PG offers myriad wanderings in every direction. Your stroll can be architectural, archaeological, ecological, historical, whimsical. But almost always magical.



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