

# The Great Tidepool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA  
by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)



## MY BACKYARD

Pacific Grove is a delight of remarkable sights and scenes and senses in Pacific Grove—the Asilomar Beach sunsets and ice plant displays, the cypress canopies and kelp dances, the fireplace at Asilomar Conference Center and bonfires at Asilomar State Beach, the chiming of the bell tower and the shining of the lighthouse. But my favorite PG experience happens to take place in my backyard. It's not a large backyard, nor is it by any stretch a fancy one. Actually, it isn't much more than a small deck, a walkway, a few lawn ornaments, and a handful of flowering plants. But it's not really the amenities and shrubberies that make the yard. It's the sounds.

When the night grows dark and the wind is right, I can hear the waves crashing rhythmically against Asilomar State Beach. When the breezes shift slightly, I can listen to the sea lions bellowing to each other and the foghorns calling from Monterey Bay. Often, at precisely 10 p.m., I can make out the notes of "Taps" being played at the Defense Language Institute. On Friday evenings in the fall, I can follow the high school football game by simply listening to the P.A. announcer from half-a-mile away.

Still, my favorite sound of all is silence.

I've roamed the country enough to know that this is an unusual commodity. In the Midwest, where I grew up, the crickets at dusk sound like a symphony orchestra—or at least, the part where they all tune their instruments simultaneously. The locals there don't seem to hear it anymore, but when you haven't heard it for a while it can be nearly deafening. I spent enough summers driving an RV around the country to know that a campsite without a nearby early morning train whistle is actually an anomaly. And, of course, I have plenty of city-dwelling friends who swear they don't hear the honking horns and car alarms and ambulances anymore. But that's only because it is so loud that you have to retreat into yourself, and that can't be the way it's supposed to be.



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In my backyard, however, there is a tranquility. As the saying goes, you can hear yourself think. And my backyard reflects the town in full. There is a lot of activity in PG—First Fridays, football games, fantastic community events, four parades a year. But it's almost as if the activity is the color and the serenity is the canvas.

In the fall, a combination of the two often arrives in the form of black-and-orange butterflies. I'll be sitting on my deck, and a monarch will momentarily dance above me before moving on. I generally imagine it as a day-tripper, a tourist of sorts, exploring the town, doing some fly-bys. Right over my backyard.

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