

The Great Tide Pool

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

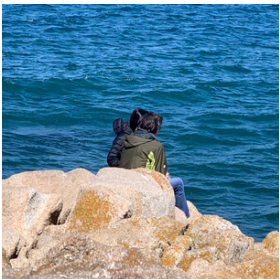


LOVE IN THE AIR

Back in 2002, Life magazine, referred to Pacific Grove as America's "Most Romantic City," offering a cover photo of a pink blanket of ice plant blooming along the coast, like a love letter from Mother Nature. As Valentine's Day approaches, I'm here to second that emotion.



It's appropriate that much of *Sweet Thursday* (perhaps my favorite John Steinbeck novel) takes place in Pacific Grove because much of *Sweet Thursday* is about love. It's about the love that the residents of town—a cast of colorful Cannery Row characters—has for their discontented marine biologist, Doc Ricketts. And it's about Doc, struggling to write a paper about octopus emotions... and finally finding a soulmate in a young woman named Suzy.



Doc searched for specimens amid the tide pools of Pacific Grove's rocky coast. Take a simple stroll along that coastline, and you'll find romantic possibilities at nearly every twist and turn. You can start at Berwick Park, where artist Jorge Rodriguez turned a pair of dying cypress trees into a sculpture of two whales breaching. To me (and many others), it looks like they're actually dancing.

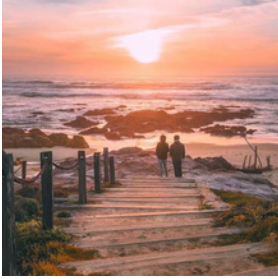
Then make your way to Lovers Point, of course, where you'll spot lovers picnicking or cuddling as a rocky overlook or lounging side by side at the beach. It is arguably PG's emotional epicenter, and, in fact, some 300 wedding permits are requested there each year. While the origin of the name is debated, one writer as early as 1880 wrote (rather sordidly for the time) the following:

"It is not only among the stately solemn pines where a friendly bush invites lovers to exchange confidences and plight their troth, but it is on the beach, where the discreet sea would no more reveal the stolen trysts along its boisterous margin than it would give up the dead, that one can see visions and hear sounds that should make the outgoing tide linger."

Whoa. Maybe it should be called Lusters Point.



Amble another mile or so, and you catch sight of a dramatic granite arch rising above the waves. It's actually two rocks meeting and, from all appearances, locked in a perpetual kiss. Since PG's early years, it was known by a name that references the smooch, and in 1970, the city made it official, designated the "Kissing Rocks."



I envision an ever-changing series of photographs taken at that spot over the decades—sepia-toned Victorian-era images of ladies in petticoats and men with prodigious mustaches, flapper-era photos featuring fedoras and bob haircuts, grainy 1970s Polaroids of bell-bottomed couples, crisp 21st-century selfies. There's been a lot of kissing at Kissing Rocks.



Finally, you'll reach Asilomar State Beach, where couples hold hands as they tiptoe along the fringe of the tide, or cozy around a fire, or stand arm-in-arm and watch the sun sizzle its farewell into the sea. Those seem to be the times—and Pacific Grove the place—that offer what Steinbeck once described as the best kind of love: *"an outpouring of everything good in you."*

*The Great
Tidepool*