

The Great Tide Pool

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

A RESPITE'S REVIEWS



A few weeks ago, I was back in my native suburban Chicago, sitting in a brewpub, preparing for a Wednesday night trivia contest. I was with two old friends... and three new acquaintances - pals of my pals. As I chatted with one of the acquaintances, a woman named Erica, she asked where I was from, and I gave her the shortest answer: "California." She pressed further, and I said, "I live on the Monterey Peninsula."

And that's when - I swear this is true - this virtual stranger who lives some 2,200 miles east of Eden blurted out this: "You know what place I love, love, love? Pacific Grove."

She didn't say San Francisco or San Diego or Sonoma. She didn't say Monterey or Carmel or Pebble Beach. She said Pacific Grove.

Our mutual friend gasped and grinned at me. I smiled and responded with three words that filled me with pride: "That's my hometown."

Erica slumped in her seat, melodramatically, then turned to her husband. "Steve!" Then she pointed toward me. "He's from Pacific Grove." Steve's eyes widened. Turns out he's heard his wife gush about Pacific Grove before. A lot. He gave me a thumbs up, which - I would soon discover as we continued down the trivia road - was his go-to sign of respect.

Am I *from* Pacific Grove? It depends on your definition of "from." I didn't grow up in PG, but I chose it carefully following a 48-state where-should-I-live trek. And I've lived here for more than a quarter-century. And it is the place in my world that most subscribes to my daily vibe - a tourist destination, yet a locale that we locals still consider our own secret slice of paradise.

Erica went on to explain that she's visited PG twice, once in the fall, once in the spring. She fell in love with the crashing waves and the harbor seals





and Asilomar Conference Grounds and the authenticity and serenity. It got me wondering what it is about PG that other visitors appreciate, so I climbed aboard the Internet, set a course for Yelp, and explored. Here's what I found from a handful of reviewers:



"A breathtaking town" ... "Super chill atmosphere" ... "charming and absolutely adorable" ... "a welcoming respite... this little city is a perfect example of small town hospitality" ... "It's the perfect beach town, and if you haven't been you're really missing out" ... "The tree lined streets, quaint family-owned restaurants, small hometown movie theatre, the beautiful turn-of-the-century houses all add up to 100% beauty."



But perhaps my favorite was this faux negative review: "Stay away from Pacific Grove. Deer walk around at all hours of the day and night as if they own the place. Beautiful beevies of Monarch butterflies fly in big batches descending like hordes of locusts upon poor Pacific Grove. They cover the poor trees with brilliant multicolor dresses of life. They dare grope each other in wild frantic flappings in broad daylight! Outrageous!... You won't like any of the restaurants either. The food is all delicious."

As we talked further, my new friend Erica explained that she had visited PG twice - once in the fall, once in the spring. I said, "So you saw the magic carpet blooming along the coast..." She shook her head: "No, I think I would remember that." So I showed her a photo of the pink-purple explosion that colors PG every spring.

She slumped in her chair again. "Wow!" Consider that another review.

*The Great
Tidepool*