



March 2009

[Suzy Gershman's Postcard from Pescadero, California](#)



Dear Peter,

Although there is absolutely nothing wrong with the 42-inch flat-screen TV we have at home, Sarah (my BFF and the Editorial Director of *Born to Shop*) and I decided that to make Oscar night as thrilling as possible, we'd go away for Oscar weekend.

We dutifully saw all nominated movies and researched the San Francisco Bay area for just the right hideaway to provide a true respite from the real world ... as well as down pillows and a large-screen TV.

A TV AS BIG AS THE RITZ

We chose the Ritz-Carlton at Half Moon Bay, about 25 miles south of San Francisco and on a bluff overlooking the ocean (www.ritzcarlton.com). The weather forecast was for rain and more rain, so we wanted to be able to hole up in luxury and not worry about too much sightseeing, or [shopping](#).

Well, maybe some shopping. Hotels have gift shops, right?

Going on a weekend was also a wise move to truly exploring the area since many of the venues—such as the local cheese and goat farm—are only open on weekends. You can't miss the hand-painted girl and goat signs to **Harley Farms** (205 North Street, Pescadero; www.harleyfarms.com) which is only open 11 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Naturally, there's a cheese shop.

The Ritz Carlton is one of those full-swing resorts that caters to golfers (two courses) and also has a huge program for kids. Indeed, many of the nearby activities are for families—several farms where you ride horses or ponies, elaborate play yards are built on the grounds of country stores and many pick-it-yourself fields line the roadside for those who want more activity than loading up at the farm stand.



For us, the big adventures would be eating, spa-ing and TV watching. We arrived in time for the hotel's famous Sunday brunch and pigged out while visiting with Executive Chef Xavier Saloman who is from the Savoie region of France.

This is not particularly near where I live in France, but thankfully I come from the same village as Patricia Wells and every chef in America knows who she is and where she lives. As a result, we got extra heaps from the buffet and happily mixed sushi, roast beef, caviar and blini, Thai food, oysters, and layers of dessert.



By the time we finished, we could only collapse in our feather beds to watch the Oscar arrivals.

FLORICULTURE & PUMPKINS

As it turns out, this part of coastal California is a portion of the state's fruit bowl. Both agriculture and floriculture thrive in the black

dirt and foggy air—orchids alone bring in over \$15 million in revenue to the area.

Pumpkins are popular all year round and while there is a pumpkin festival in October, there are pumpkin flavors and products all year round. Here it was almost March and I saw plenty of fat juicy pumpkins on doorsteps to farms and homes.

At the spa at the Ritz-Carlton Resort I indulged in a pumpkin scrub, one of the spa's signature treatments. In the spa's shop (you know [I can't go a day without a little shopping](#)) there are numerous pumpkin products, even pumpkin fizzy bath balls.

As we drove around the hood, we discovered many farms and flower fields near the junction of Route 92 and Highway 101, which sort of serves as the heart of Half Moon Bay. The “historic downtown” has unfortunately been hit by the dismal financial conditions in the U.S. and seems very depressed, but the farms and greenhouses on Route 92 are brimming with color and bargains.

At Repretto's Farm, there were long stem roses for \$5 a dozen.

At the nearby Pastorino Farms we popped into eplantworld, an orchid grower with a greenhouse packed solid with a variety of orchids.

Up front near the cash register was an assortment of large—and I mean giant—stems and roots and branches filled with pale rusty cymbidium blossoms, on special for \$17. The most expensive (and expansive) of plants was \$25 a tub; I got a \$5 orchid—slim but elegant with one long branch of seven white flowers in a small tub—for \$5! Am I good, or what?



As we happily drove from farm to farm, past horses and cows and Victorian farmhouses and hand-painted signs for strawberries and artichokes, I kept reminding myself that Dorothy Parker was right—you can drag a fleur to culture but you can't make her drink ... or something like that.

PASSIONATE FOR PESCADERO

We left the coastal road for the back country and tiny towns such as Pescadero and San Gregario.



Both are charming not in their charm (they actually have very little natural charm) but in the fact that they remind us of the heart of America and what's real between a family, the land and the products they harvest.

In Pescadero we ate at the town tavern—famous to many—which was adorable as a movie set but not great as a culinary treat.

The high point was the town bakery where we bought still-warm-from-the oven loaves of artichoke and garlic bread.

Later in the day, we stopped at Safeway and bought a rotisserie chicken, a bottle of local wine and some fresh strawberries to have a picnic in our room.

We made thick chicken sandwiches and then called room service to order the Recchiuti S'mores Kit which came with homemade marshmallows, graham crackers, dark chocolate, and two long skewers.

With a flip of a switch, our outdoor fire pit ignited and we were the chic-est girl guides in history.

Decked out in our thick terry R-C robes, we perched on our Adirondack chairs, listened to the ocean pound in the black of night and made s'mores.



Kumbaya Kisses,
SuzyKG

By [Suzy Gershman](http://www.suzygershman.com) for PeterGreenberg.com. For 25 years, Suzy Gershman has written the popular “Born to Shop” series, now published by Frommer’s. Her most recent book, *Where to Buy the Best of Everything*, is available now. For more information, visit www.suzygershman.com.