

Getaway to Half Moon Bay: It isn't just pumpkins and big waves

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After the summer sojourners leave and the pumpkin hunters have celebrated Halloween, Half Moon Bay is my choice for a mellow weekend escape. The miles of white sand beaches and dunes, redwood hikes, huge waves, wildlife, hotel deals and great food add up to the perfect recipe pre-summer trip. Here you'll find a families flying kites on the beach, people lining up at the bakery when the pumpkin bread comes out of the oven just because it smells so good, and all independently owned shops lining Main St. It's a good ole town, right in the heart of the Bay Area.

Where to stay: If you are on a budget the [Pigeon Point Lighthouse](#) hostel is super cheap and right on the ocean. Romantics head for the [Beach House](#) to splurge on an oceanfront room that bridges beach cottage style and contemporary design. If you want style that won't break the bank, the [Half Moon Bay Inn](#) feels like a hip hotel on Mexico's coast.

What to do: If I were to plan to perfect day in Half Moon Bay, I would start with coffee and pumpkin bread at the Half Moon Bay Bakery on Main St. Make sure to fill up, because next you'll head over to the [Fitzgerald Marine Reserve](#) (at low tide) to play in the tidepools and see the starfish and seals. Check the tide chart, if you don't, you'll wonder what all the hype is about.

Next up, drive down to [Ano Nuevo State Reserve](#) (if it is winter, make a reservation first) to see the elephant seals mate (the fighting and machismo makes bar hopping look tame). Wear walking shoes because you need to hike a bit to view the blubbery mammals.

By this point, you'll be hungry, so drive over to [Duarte's](#) for artichoke and chili soup. The classic old stagecoach stop begs you to roll up your sleeves and chill out for awhile.

If you still have energy, don't want to miss an easy stroll through the [Purisma Creek Redwoods](#) just above Half Moon Bay. Or head to the [Ritz Carlton](#) for wine and chocolate, with views of the sea. And maybe even treat yourself to a pumpkin wrap at the Ritz Carlton spa. Ahhhh.

Top your day off with dinner at [Cetrella](#), where the Mediterranean specialities like sea bream, served with fresh vegetables, remind you that you are in fact on the Northern California coast.

By the time you return to your hotel, you'll probably be plotting how you can stay a bit longer in Half Moon Bay. Lucky you, it's just a twenty minute drive from San Francisco.