



The Carmel Pine Cone

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(Excerpts)

By ELAINE HESSER

If you could see it through their eyes — you might learn something

Tim Thomas, a fourth-generation Monterey resident, was curator and historian for the Monterey Maritime Museum (now the home of the Dali museum) for 16 years. He's written books on the history of the city and its fishing industry, and leads lively excursions through local sites. With a call or email to Thomas ((831) 521-3304, timsardine@yahoo.com), you can set up an outing. Groups are limited to 10 people, and masks are required. The first Saturday of each month, he leads a walking tour of Fisherman's Wharf from 10 a.m. to noon for \$20 per adult (16 and older), or \$10 for kids 10-15. Groups are limited to 10 people, so if you're interested, you should make reservations early.

During the wharf walk, Thomas explains how "Pop"

Ernest Doelter, an enterprising restaurateur and German immigrant, figured out how to prepare abalone — a shellfish thought to be chewy and tough — by slicing and pounding it thin, coating it in egg and cracker crumbs and sautéing it, like wienerschnitzel.

That was quite an improvement, as locals had tried boiling the shellfish and even treating it with lye to make it edible. Thomas' book, "The Abalone King of Monterey," explores the history in depth. On his tours, he also discusses the salmon and sardine industries, using props and old photos to illustrate his stories.

Whale Watching Cruise

Still not close enough to nature? Head over to Fisherman's Wharf for a whale-watching cruise. Locals get two hours' free parking in the gated section Monday through Thursday with a driver's license, military ID or student ID. Monterey Bay Whale Watch (montereybaywhalewatch.com) has been around since 1992, when Nancy Black, a marine biologist, got into the business. She loves what she does, but wishes more locals would come out on the bay.

"A lot of people in this area say, 'I've lived here 20 years and I've never gone whale watching,'" Black said. "But you can see so much wildlife here without traveling. People from Europe and all over the world come here to see the sea life and take the cruises."

At this time of year, Risso's dolphins (named for Antonio Risso, who first described them in 1812) are plentiful, along with humpback whales. "It's peak season for humpbacks. They're the most active whales. They breach, or lunge-feed — they come up out of the water with their mouths open to catch food," Black explained. Sad octopus A blue whale — the largest of the whales — has been spotted recently, and if you're lucky, you may get to see an orca. "Killer whales, the top predators, are unpredictable. That's what I've done my research on over the last 30 years," said Black. There is no minimum age to take the tours, but pregnant women aren't permitted on board because of the risk of illness and injury. Sunscreen, sunglasses

and hats are advised, along with dressing in layers. You're welcome to bring your own food. Cruises last upwards of three hours and start at \$60 for adults. The company has three boats, a 65-foot catamaran called the Blackfin, the 70-foot Sea Wolf, and the Point Sur Clipper, which is 55 feet long. Tours are not sold to capacity because of social distancing, and masks are required. Whale watching is not affected by the coronavirus shutdown, and Black is proud of how her crews have been keeping everyone safe. "People have already given us great reviews on how well we're cleaning the boat and keeping up on disinfecting," she said.