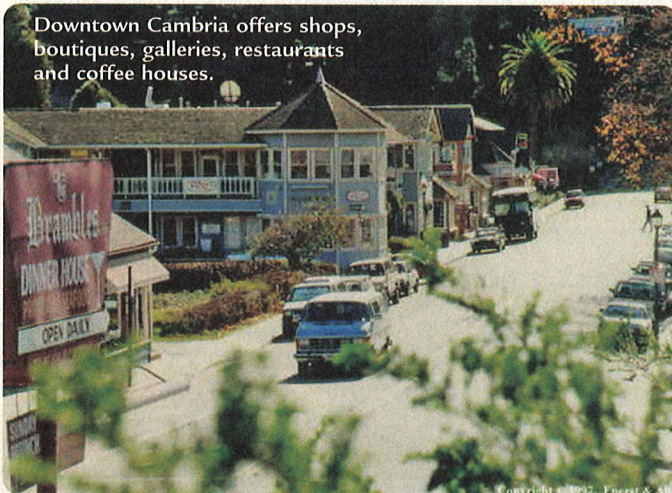
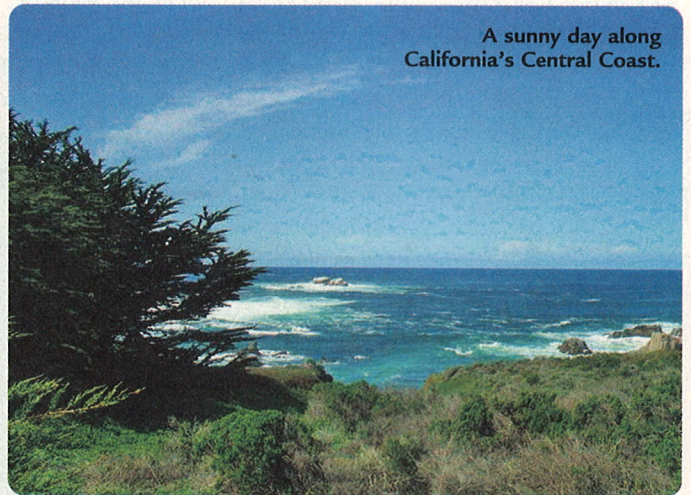


# Cambria Up the Coast

Central Coast town is peaceful, picturesque and lots of fun.



Downtown Cambria offers shops, boutiques, galleries, restaurants and coffee houses.



A sunny day along California's Central Coast.

**C**ambria is a little bit California Beach town, a little bit quaint English village by the sea. It is just close enough to get to in a half a day (240 miles from Los Angeles) and just far away enough to be a real getaway. Located on the central coast between Morro Bay and San Simeon this picturesque town offers lots to do and see, and has a nice variety of restaurants and shops.

It takes between five hours to reach Cambria from Orange County, following the 405 to the 101. On the first leg of the journey, there's not much to see as you fight the tangled L.A. traffic. But as you drop down into Camarillo you are treated to a green patchwork of California farmland. The verdant valley is the first of many beautiful sites. The road soon meets the ocean, and the scenery changes to rocky cliffs and magnificent wind swept sea as you pass through Carpinteria, Santa Barbara and Pismo Beach. At San Luis Obispo, you pick up Highway One, a gentle ribbon passing through rolling green hills where cows graze under the branches of old oak trees. Cambria is about 40 minutes beyond

the intersection of 101 and Hwy. 1.

## Fog and fireplaces

Here the air is cooler and foggier than at OC's beaches. The water is greyer and more turbulent, crashing on rocky coves. Wisps of fog creep in early in the afternoon. Along Moonstone Beach Road there's a chain of charming inns and motels. Among them is the Fireside Inn, which offers cozy rooms with fireplaces and patios. Your stay at the inn includes a continental breakfast with cereal, fruit, fresh juices and warm oven baked goods. Another option is pre-measured waffle batter and a hot griddle to cook your own waffles on.

The highway that runs parallel to Moonstone Beach Road is bordered by grassy hills topped with the dark silhouette of a forest of Monterey pines. Here the sea and forest converge in a magnificent brooding landscape - nature's elements contrasting and complimenting at the same time.

Cambria is known for its serene and tranquil pace. It's an ideal place to relax on your patio as you watch the waves spreading out on the sand, the gulls

swooping above and magical dawns and sunsets. Still there is lots to do.

## Out and about

Just across the highway from the Inn is the beach walk, perfect for walking, jogging or biking. A wooden walkway takes you down the length of Moonstone Beach. December through March, you can catch the passing parade of whales from Leffingwell Landing. The tide pools are home to crabs, sea anemones and an occasional sea star or octopus. Sea life shouldn't be disturbed, but you can collect shells, driftwood and semi-precious jasper stones of all colors on the beach.

Twelve miles beyond on Highway 1 is Piedras Blancas, a haul-out spot and rookery for Elephant Seals. In the cove, these immense seals mate, rest and raise their pups. It is one of the few places in the world where you can observe and take pictures of these amazing creatures up close. On a winter morning, we spied the brownish-green mammals lolling on the sand like overweight tourists.

Just six miles from Cambria is Hearst Castle, a provocative slice of California

BY ANN C. SHULTZ

