

Shall We Dance? Lafayettes's Afternoon Soirees are a Hit

By Cathy Dausman



The Tea Dances at the Lafayette Community Center are a blast from the past.

Photo Karen Lile

They arrive, nicely dressed from Concord, Rossmoor and Walnut Creek, as well as Lamorinda — the men in hard soled shoes, dress slacks and collared shirts, the women in heels, dresses or skirts. For more than two hours they so-

cialize and practice ballroom dancing skills at the Lafayette Community Center Tea Dance.

The program is 28 years old, says Lafayette Parks, Trails and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell and is pretty much the same as

it has been except now it is hosted by professional dance professionals Karen Lile and Michael Arntz. The pair have taught at the Tea Dance since 2008; they appear thanks to a grant from the nonprofit Building Bridges.

With Scenic Views, Half Moon Bay is a Delight for Day or Overnight Treks

By Fran Endicott Miller



World-class views are part of Half Moon Bay's charm.

Photos Fran Endicott Miller

If your visits to Half Moon Bay are typically for pumpkins and Christmas trees, it's time to schedule a summer outing to this quaint oceanside town.

Less than an hour's drive from Lamorinda, Half Moon Bay provides all the summer fun you and your family seek, with fewer crowds than those found at its seaside neighbors to the south. Compared to Santa Cruz, for instance, Half Moon Bay is an undiscovered gem where time appears to be standing still, yet you'll find all the great shops, galleries and restaurants expected of a funky beach town.

Though growth has indeed been slow and steady in Half Moon Bay, it doesn't show, and visitors will find original farms, plenty of open space, and miles of unspoiled coastline, which can be easily explored by walking the flat, paved California Coastal Trail. Lodging options run the gamut, from quaint bed and breakfast inns, to the luxurious Ritz Carlton, Half Moon Bay — a family friendly resort with the ambience of grand seaside retreats of the past. Its cliff-top placement, surrounding golf course, nattily clad bellmen in plaid knickers and flat caps, and nightly sundown bagpipe serenade cast a Scottish vibe.

Designed to blend into the coastline, the six-story structure reflects the colors of the sand and sky. Communal gathering spots and guest rooms are designed to take advantage of spectacular northern or southern coastal views. Ground floor rooms feature private fire pits. Children ages 5 through 12 can take part in the Ritz Kids Day Program with activities such as sandcastle building, tide pool exploration, swimming, sporting activities and arts and crafts.

For adults, The Ritz is a veritable Disneyland. The property sits among Half Moon Bay Links' two championship golf courses: the historic parkland-style Old Course featuring cypress trees and an 18th

hole overlooking the ocean, and the Ocean Course, offering more challenging links-style play on rugged terrain with an ocean view from every hole. Enjoy the luxurious spa and celebrate the resort's 15th Crystal Anniversary with a crystal-centric massage or facial.

For dining options, you need never leave the resort and its four restaurants — don't miss the Saturday Farmer's Market Brunch, a lavish buffet of locally grown and sourced items, and Bloody Marys "Built for You." But you'll want to explore Half Moon Bay's Main Street, and a great starting point is Cetrella at the quiet south end, where Chef Michael Ellis prepares flavorful Mediterranean-rim and California coastal dishes that source regional farms and artisanal purveyors. A Michelin Guide recommended spot, Cetrella's inviting interior, with exposed beams, a stone fireplace, Matt Farrar paintings and live jazz on Saturday evenings, makes it the most inviting restaurant in town. An accessible fine-dining menu makes it also the most delicious restaurant in town: house-made breads and pastas, the freshest grilled vegetables, fish, fowl, field and game meats, rotating rustic entrées and house-made desserts feed the soul, as do selections from their international wine library. But first, start with a refreshing Pomegranate Cosmo, or a Main St.

Margarita.

For breakfast, check out the pastry selections at Moonside Bakery and Café, also on Main St., or venture to 3-Zero Café, oddly housed at the Half Moon Bay airport. Voted "Best Breakfast on the Coast" by Half Moon Bay Review readers for 12 consecutive years, the quirky, airplane motif spot is named for an optimal take-off compass setting of 300.

For additional activities, nearly 70 wineries exist within an hour's drive of Half Moon Bay. Horseback riding, whale watching cruises, swimming, surfing and biking are also all within reach. But perhaps the most favored Half Moon Bay activity is ocean gazing from The Ritz Carlton's Ocean Lawn. With three large fire pits, Adirondack chairs, and cozy blankets, the expanse is a gathering spot for both hotel guests and day visitors. Purchase a bottle of wine from the resort's lobby wine bar and watch the sunset, or pick up a Recchiuti Confections s'mores kit and put the fire pit to good use.

Whether for just the day, a night, or a weekend, a summer visit to Half Moon Bay reveals that there is so much more to the small coastal town than the area's famed pumpkin festival. After a fantastic day of sea, sun and sand, you'll wonder why you don't make the trek more often.



The Ritz Carlton at Half Moon Bay.

Russell says the program was started by Rilla Hayhurst of Lafayette, a former Senior Center Coordinator who loved to dance. It's a small but loyal group (14 to 20 regulars) as unofficial host Elroy Holtmann explains. He says attendance is lighter in May and October because many senior citizens vacation then.

Kim and Steve Wheeler of Lafayette have learned the basic swing moves and remember their daughter attending Cotillion as a Stanley Middle School student 20 years ago. The couple says they can now recognize the moves they've been taught in old Fred Astaire movies. They appreciate the art that goes into traditional dancing and enjoy it for the exercise and the way it keeps the brain sharp.

"You look pretty jazzy," Steve Wheeler tells his wife.

Madeline Brehme of Lafayette loves to tango, but she'll dance the other dances too. "I am old fashioned," Brehme says. Her parents — an English mother and German father — met on the dance floor. Brehme and her three siblings learned to dance when they were

young. "When I hear the music, I dance!" she says. She means it too — Lile says Brehme has been a regular at Tea Dance for 28 years.

Gail and Bryan Fong of Walnut Creek originally took dance lessons 12 years ago from Lile and Arntz. Lile says their 20- to 30-minute class lessons are "designed to give a little bit of spice to the party."

The focus is on one dance style each month, and each lesson builds on the previous week's work.

Holtmann brushes aside the inevitable hesitation from anyone having two left feet, by saying, "We're a friendly group."

"We all started out as (dance) beginners," Lile says.

The Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Road, hosts the Lamorinda Tea Dance year-round in its Live Oak room. The class runs from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Wednesdays. A professional dance team provides a live DJ service and weekly dance lessons. Classes are \$10 for non-members and free with a \$15 annual membership. For details, call (925) 284-5050.



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