



# Los Altos Town Crier

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## Half Moon Bay: Pumpkin festival highlights weekend trip

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If the Great Pumpkin really does exist, he's probably local and sustainable and stems from a Half Moon Bay farm. Dubbed the "**Pumpkin Capital of the World**," Half Moon Bay is scheduled to host its 41st annual Halloween Art and Pumpkin Festival Saturday and Sunday (visit [www.miramarevents.com](http://www.miramarevents.com) for a schedule). A pumpkin weigh-off contest that pays the winner \$6 per pound of gourd occurred after press time: last year's champion- 1,500 lbs.!

The local Chamber of Commerce expects 300,000 people to attend the weekend spree, which features 5K fun runs, pie-eating contests and a "Smashing Pumpkins: Battle of the Bands" concert that showcases young musicians. To survive the ensuing parking and traffic snags, checking into a hotel for the duration makes sense, if you can still find a spot.



Half Moon Bay offers its share of Halloween spookiness, too – there's a haunted house set up next to the historical Spanish Town Jail, 505 Johnston St., about a block from Main Street. We witnessed several Scotch tourists line up in front of the building, pretending to be handcuffed for the camera, so it's on the global radar.

Moss Beach Distillery, with Prohibition-era roots, attributes strange phenomena occurring at a certain table to a beautiful former pianist – The Blue Lady – murdered at the restaurant during a lover's quarrel. In the 1920s, the Distillery, 140 Beach Way in neighboring Moss Beach, was the place to go to get a stiff drink. Rumrunners liked to use Pillar Point Harbor to

traffic their wares – the area's relative isolation and fog made it easy to bypass the law.

### Local lodging

If staying overnight, local lodging rates start at \$26 for dormitory-style, gender-separated rooms at the historic Point Montara Lighthouse or Pigeon Point Lighthouse hostels (reserve these or private family rooms at [www.norcalhostels.org/montara](http://www.norcalhostels.org/montara) or [/pigeon](http://www.norcalhostels.org/pigeon)).

South of Half Moon Bay, Pescadero's Pigeon Point Lighthouse measures 115 feet tall and has been guiding sailors since 1872. To the North, Montara's Lighthouse has been operating since 1875. **Hotel choices include the oceanfront boutique Beach House Hotel, 4100 N. Cabrillo Highway, with Nantucket architectural influences. Standard rooms start at \$200, with Port and Godiva or champagne and chocolate-covered strawberry add-ons available to enhance the romance.** Oceano Hotel & Spa, 280 Capistrano Road, will also have you living on the edge – of the Pacific – with its 95 luxury rooms on Pillar Point Harbor.

If you want to stay downtown closer to the pumpkin action, the restored Half Moon Bay Inn, 401 Main St., offers packages for its smallish yet plush rooms, starting at a budget-friendly \$105 for Piccola Stanza, the smallest room. For families, Bella Vista Villas amount to apartments with kitchens. You can't miss the Spanish revival building, built in 1932, with its arches and orange-stucco coloring. No elevators, so it's a climb upstairs with luggage. Dog-friendly amenities include pet beds.