

## TRAVEL

# Pacific Grove gets its first LGBTQ+ boutique hotel, The Charles, and ocean visiting just got a bit more glamorous

After 30 years away, internationally renowned designer Charles Gruwell returned to his hometown to his most personal property to date

Published 24 hours ago on July 23, 2025

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This last Pride month, The Charles, an exquisitely stylish bed and breakfast, opened its doors, making it Pacific Grove's first LGBTQ+ boutique hotel. It isn't just a place to stay; it is a place to belong, boasting an environment of inclusivity. This is a welcome sanctuary of coastal beauty and classic design that is both stylish and warm. Bringing over four decades of global influence and experience to the creation of the property is internationally celebrated designer Charles Gruwell, who, after 30 years away, returned home to Pacific Grove to establish this most personal location.

Gruwell has over 45 years of experience in design. He has designed acclaimed properties that span from the Monterey Peninsula, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Indonesia, and the list goes on. He has earned a name as one of the top names in outstanding design and innovation.

His work ranges from designing over 40 one-of-a-kind boutique hotels and resorts to exclusive residential properties, restaurants, country clubs, and retail spaces – all boasting his signature flair and aesthetic. Gruwell has been featured in a long list of top industry publications that include *Architectural Digest*, *Interior Design Magazine*, and *Metropolitan Home*.





Gruwell was born and raised in Pacific Grove, which is located on the southern edge of Monterey Bay, and has become a popular tourist location because of its charm and location. His journey to become one of the industry's leading names started off with a unique twist. After attending Fresno State College, he came back to Pacific Grove to work as a high school teacher for four years. It was during his teaching that we would meet his lifelong friend, interior designer Johna Ball. He would shadow her on her residential projects in Pebble Beach, and his passion for design came full force.

He went on to work for Hirsch Bedner, the largest hotel design firm in the world, at their location in Santa Monica. From then on, he spent his career away from Pacific Grove, starting his own business and traveling the globe, earning his place in the design world. His hometown was always close to his heart, and he fondly told the Blade about his first-ever professional gig – designing his niece's hair salon in Pacific Grove.

Gruwell shared with the Blade what he thinks sets his work apart, “Every (designer) has their own talents and they all are in their own lane doing whatever they're doing. But I have a really diverse background.” Gruwell's first mentor was Marlene Grant, who had a very classical approach to interior design. He then worked for Michael Bedner, namesake of Hirsch Bedner, who trained him in hospitality design. His really big break came when he went to work with Anita Brooks, and together, they would design the Four Seasons and Mandalay Bay Resorts as well as the multi-million dollar residences of the casino owners. They also received a commission for Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge in Orlando, Florida. Gruwell continues, “All of those add up to life experiences that some designers never get. I have really diverse influences from different high-end design professionals in both the residential and hospitality marketplaces. I think what makes me a little more special.”




After years of travel and design, Gruwell's mother fell ill and eventually passed away at 103. His friends encouraged him to come home, to leave the rat race and enjoy his time where he grew up. He returned to Pacific Grove and turned his mother's lot into his new, customized home, close to the Ocean.


"I came back here because I wanted to be back to my roots. When I was growing up, I didn't realize that I lived in the most beautiful place in the world. Now, at 73 years old, I know."

Don't think Gruwell is retiring or taking it easy. Since returning home, he has designed major hotels and a number of residences in Pebble Beach. But it was a call from a client that really spoke to him.




"Don (and Jay) Desai gave me the opportunity to design The Charles Pacific Grove. He said, 'Let's give you a namesake property, and let's have you design it any way you want to. And let's invite the LGBTQ community to a stylish and inclusive hotel.' And so that brought me full circle."

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Though all of Gruwell's properties have his signature style, The Charles is completely his, from start to finish. The building itself is part of his life; it is a Victorian-style home built by Frank Buck in 1904. Gruwell remembers being fascinated by the building as early as he can remember, passing by it constantly growing up. It turned into a boarding home, back to a residence, and then to a bed and breakfast. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



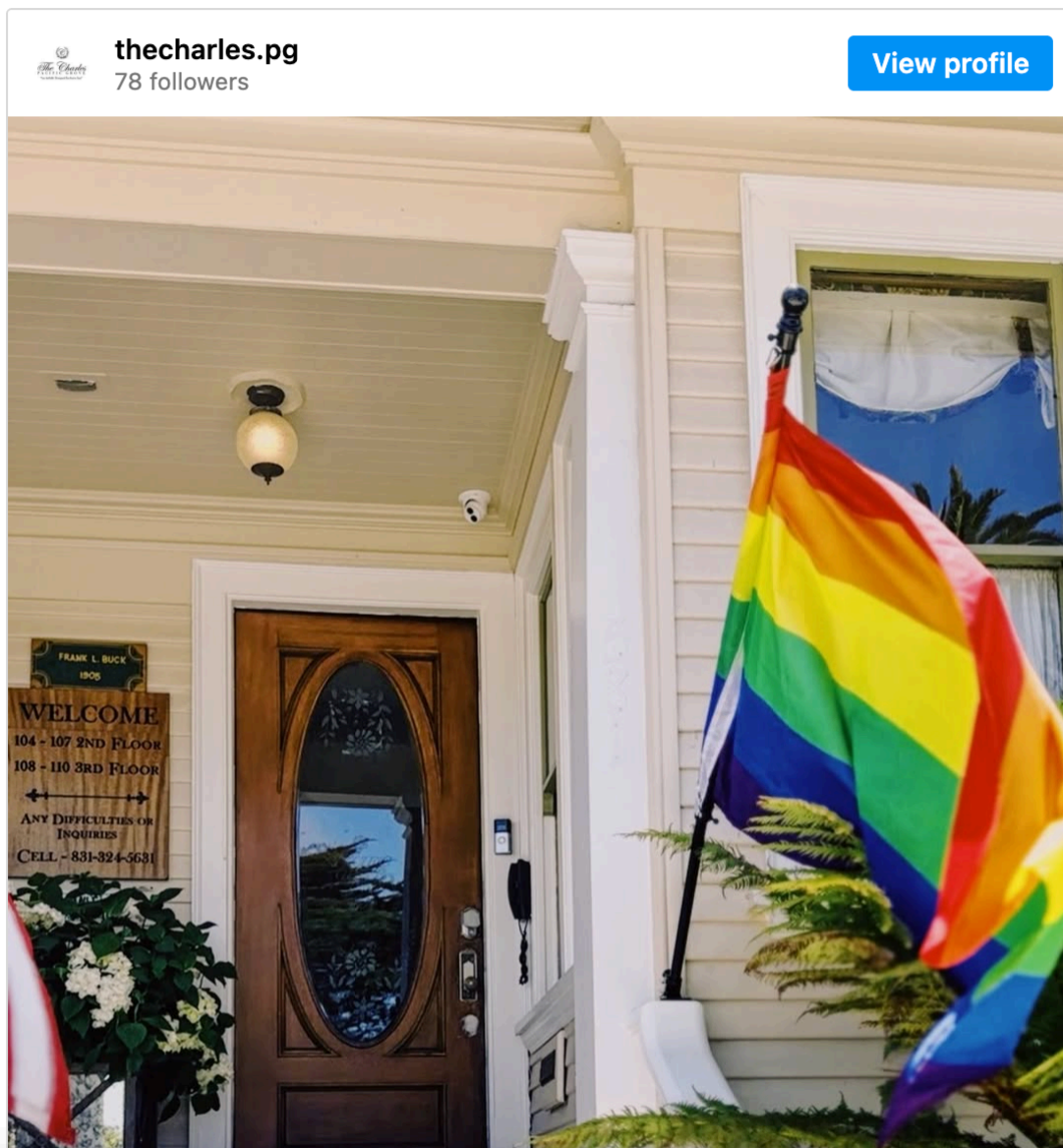
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“The house itself is what spoke to me. The actual architecture of the Victorian House spoke to me and said, ‘Make me a beautiful, luxury, London-inspired residence.’ So, because of the architecture and all the woodworking on the inside, it just had this whole feeling of a grand home; the building is what guided me to do the design.”

Making The Charles truly his own also meant making it inclusive.

“In all my travels, I’ve gone to different hotels and no one ever really talks about them being inclusive, inviting the LGBTQ community to be seen and welcomed, and celebrated. They nod to it, but no one ever really makes a declaration about it. So, don’t we create a stylish, elegant interior and invite the LGBTQ+ community so they know they can come to Pacific Grove and stay in a stylish and inclusive hotel environment where they don’t have to make any explanations about who they are or what their preferences are. They can just come and feel welcome, they can be celebrated, and they can be the individuals that they are in our hotel.”





Because hospitality is more than a service — it's how we care for one another.

📍 Book your stay at our inclusive boutique inn in Pacific Grove and experience a getaway where you belong.

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With queer travel on the decline because of changes and uncertainty in safety and being welcomed, The Charles is a stylish breath of fresh air that is at the center of an oceanside oasis where you can walk the from Lover's Point into Monterey to Cannery Row. Cannery Row is home to the world-class Monterey Bay Aquarium. Restaurants, shopping, kayaking, surfing, paddle boarding, wine tasting, art galleries, and beachside rest are all must-dos when visiting. Carmel By the Sea, just five miles away, boasts one of the most beautiful white sand beaches around. Or you can just spend your time in any one of The Charles' 16 luxury rooms.

And Gruwell's message to the LGBTQ community this Pride season?

"Stand tall in your individuality, your diversity, and your equality, and know that you matter and you are relevant. Be true to yourself, and don't let anyone bring you down."

Visit [The Charles Pacific Grove](#) / 581 Pine St, Pacific Grove, CA, 93950

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