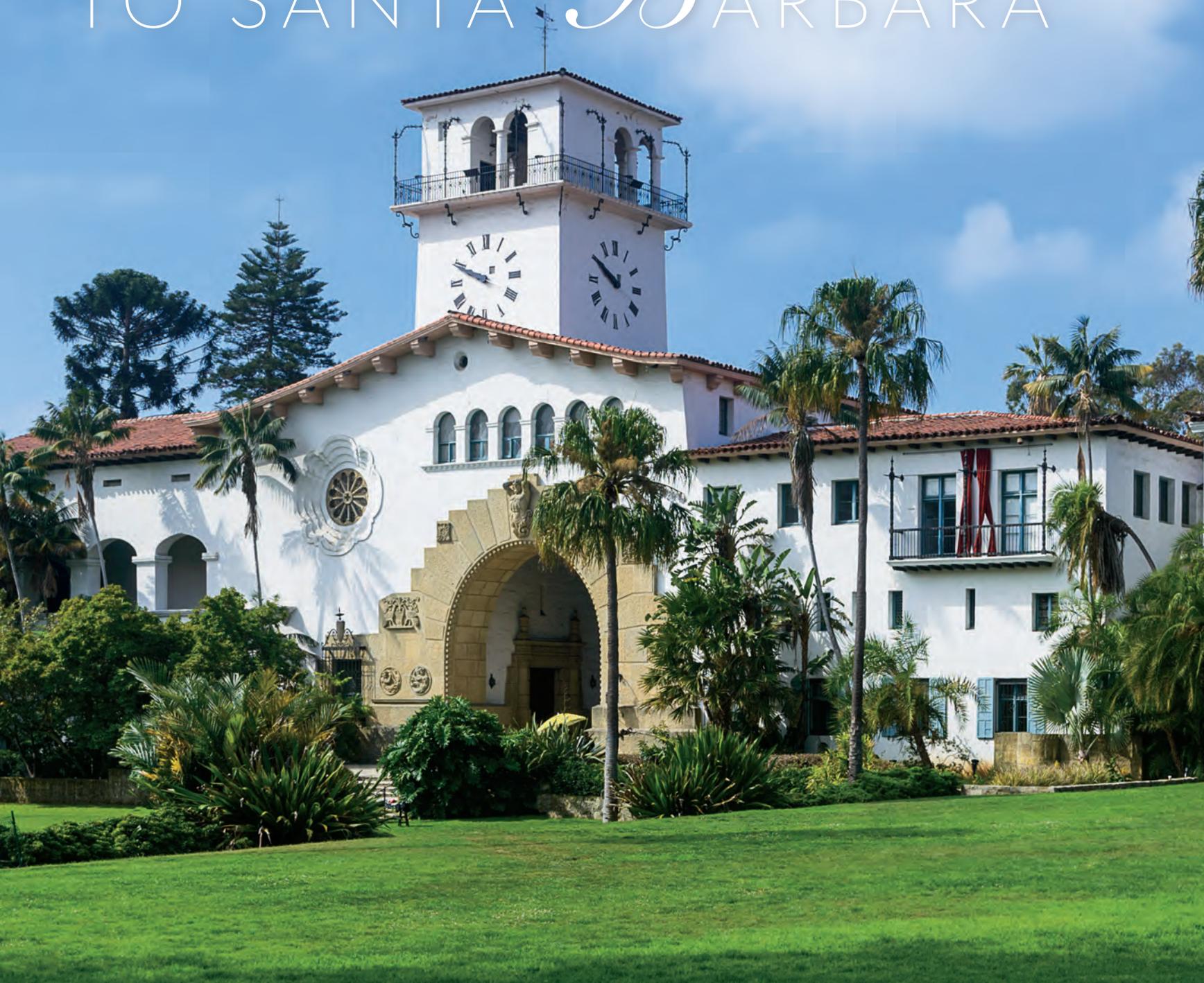


# ESCA

TO SANTA *B*ARBARA



# PE

As temperatures rise in the Valley, California's coastal jewel beckons.

BY REBECCA L. RHOADES

SITUATED ON THE SHORES of California, about 2 hours north of Los Angeles and 5 hours south of San Francisco, Santa Barbara County is known as America's Riviera, thanks to its moderate year-round temperatures, oceanfront breezes and street after street filled with charming red-tile roofed Spanish Revival buildings.

Founded in 1602 by Spanish explorer Sebastián Vizcaino and named for the patron saint of miners, Santa Barbara sits on a stretch of coastline that faces east-west. The county runs from Carpenteria on the east to Lompoc on the west and north to Santa Maria. The placement of the Santa Ynez Mountains to the north and the ocean and Channel Islands to the south makes way for the highly regarded Mediterraneanlike weather. The region receives about 300 days of sun per year; coupled with fog-soaked mornings and cool evenings, it offers the perfect climate for a diverse plant palette, resulting in a verdant backdrop filled with lush meadows and riparian woodlands.

"Its unique topography evokes the European Riviera but with a care-free California spirit," says Karna Hughes, director of communications for Visit Santa Barbara.

Notes architect Jeff Shelton, "If you go to Spain, you'll realize that it looks the same as it does here. It's kind of funny that the Spanish found a place just like their home."

In the early 1900s, the city of Santa Barbara was a hodgepodge of commercial buildings and wood-framed homes. Then on June 29, 1925, a 6.8-magnitude earthquake rocked the city, killing 13 people; destroying or damaging more than 400 buildings, including the Old Mission; and, following failure of the Sheffield Dam, flooding most of the east side. But out of the rubble, a new city, one with a clearly defined architectural style that evokes the area's Spanish Colonial past, was born.

Leading the restoration was a community activist named Pearl Chase. Seizing an opportunity, she spearheaded the preservation of historic buildings and helped create what has since become Santa Barbara's iconic look. She is known for saying, "A city that develops

Courthouses typically aren't tourist destinations, but the Santa Barbara Courthouse is considered one of the most beautiful public buildings in the U.S. Its clock tower offers panoramic views of the city, beaches and mountains.

finely should delight the eye, feed the intellect and lead people out of the bondage of the commonplace.”

Chase’s efforts led Santa Barbara to develop the country’s first architectural review board with strict design standards. Without her, the city would be a very different place. Almost a century later, all structures, residential and commercial, built within the city’s historic district still must comply with these guidelines.

“Santa Barbara used to look somewhat similar to San Francisco in style, with many tall buildings lining State Street. But following the earthquake, community leaders made a conscious decision to rebuild the city in the dreamy Spanish Revival style, characterized by red-tile roofs, whitewashed walls, painted tilework and wrought-iron fixtures,” says Hughes. “To this day, buildings are rarely more than two or three stories tall, and architectural plans are vetted carefully so that the city preserves its charm.”

Shelton, who is known for bending the limits with his colorful, curvy designs, notes that the guidelines are both a curse and a blessing. “If you keep everything the same, it can get very boring,” he says. “But at least we don’t have a bunch of mini-malls lining the corners. It brings a sense of uniformity.

“I have a responsibility to add to the street,” he continues. “I tell my clients, ‘You get what you want, but the city does, too.’”

## A Grape Escape

While the Spanish-inspired architecture is a major attraction for visitors, the region’s wine country is another pull. More than 200 wineries and 150 tasting rooms call the Santa Ynez and Santa Maria valleys home.

“We are in the shadow of Napa and Sonoma valleys, but we’re on the same level as European wineries, and the wine scores we get from international reviews are right there, too,” says Phil Carpenter, director of operations for Santa Barbara Vintners, a nonprofit organization that supports and promotes Santa Barbara County as a world-class wine territory.

“Technically, we’re one of the oldest wine-producing areas in the country,” he adds. “We’ve had missionaries making wine here since the 1700s.”

Those same east-west running mountains that give the town its pleasant conditions also contribute to the area’s agricultural success, resulting in six American Viticulture Areas, or designated wine grape-growing regions, that produce 70 different varietals. The transverse valley captures the cool, wet and windy ocean influences, which allows grapes an extended hang time to develop mature flavors. There’s pinot, chardonnay, syrah and grenache in the Santa Rita Hills and sauvignon blanc and cabernet in the Santa Ynez Valley, to name

## Don’t-Miss Attractions

While Santa Barbara’s laid-back vibe, bountiful beaches and easily walkable small-town streets provide an ideal escape from the daily grind, the coastal city offers plenty of other activities that blend past with present and will entertain and delight all members of the family. Here are seven experiences you shouldn’t miss:

### Old Mission Santa Barbara

While the city is known for its Spanish Revival architecture, few buildings define its heritage like the Old Mission, situated on a hill with outstanding views of downtown. Founded by Spanish Franciscans in 1786, it’s the 10th of 21 missions built in California; it remains an active Franciscan friary today. The only mission with two bell towers, it is referred to as “Queen of the Missions” for its graceful beauty. Its facade, with six pink-hued columns, was inspired by a picture of a

Greek temple. Visitors can explore the courtyard, cemetery and church, as well as a small museum that displays historical artifacts. ([santabarbaramission.org](http://santabarbaramission.org))

### Casa del Herrero: House of the Blacksmith

Designed by renowned architect George Washington Smith, this 1925 Montecito estate is one of the finest examples of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in the U.S. and incorporates a multitude of antique metalwork, tiles and stone carvings from throughout Spain and Europe. Docent-led tours take guests through the 11-acre property, where they can view original owner George Fox Steedman’s collection of 15th- and 16th-century art, books, drawings and horticultural records. The property is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Landmark. ([casadelherrero.com](http://casadelherrero.com))

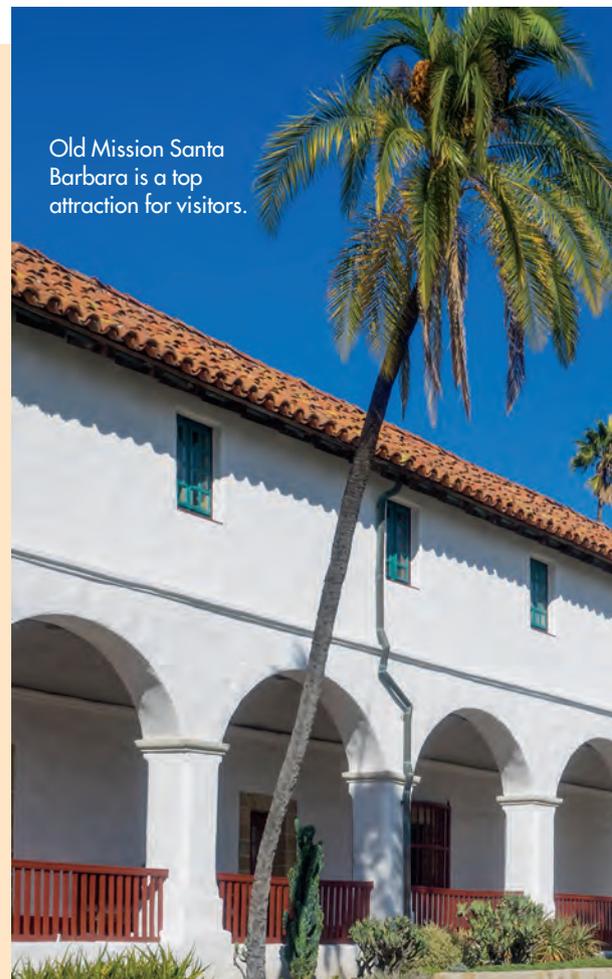




PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT SANTA BARBARA BY KIRK IRWIN

a few. The newest AVA, Ballard Canyon, offers a Rhône that holds its own against those produced in France.

If you can't get out to the vineyards, make sure to stop by any of the growing number of tasting rooms that are popping up around the county. In Santa Barbara, the Funk Zone offers about 20 tasting rooms in a few blocks' radius, while some of the city's oldest wineries, including award-winning Jamie Slone and Au Bon Climat, are centered in a small shopping district just off State Street.

An hour's drive north brings you to Santa Maria, home of Foxen Winery, which was featured in the 2004 hit film "Sideways."

"That movie really shined a beautiful spotlight on Santa Barbara," says Carpenter. "We're still reaping the benefits of it. People come here following those trails and going to the places that were seen in the film." The Hitching Post II restaurant, another location in the movie, is also thriving and is "the place to eat when you come here," notes Carpenter.

For more information about Santa Barbara's wine scene or to receive a touring guide or customized itinerary, contact the Santa Barbara Vintners at [sbcountywines.com](http://sbcountywines.com).

Santa Barbara's cool breezes, moist air and foggy mornings combine for an ideal wine grape-growing climate.



### Stearn's Wharf

Santa Barbara's most visited tourist attraction was completed in 1872 and is named after local lumberman John P. Stearns. Once serving as a passenger and shipping terminal, it's now home to seafood eateries, including the Harbor Restaurant, which opened in 1941; souvenir shops; an ice cream parlor; and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Sea Center, a kid-friendly space that offers interactive encounters with local marine life. ([stearnswharf.org](http://stearnswharf.org))

### Santa Barbara Courthouse

Considered one of the country's most beautiful public buildings, the 1929 Spanish-Moorish structure celebrates its 90th birthday in August. Spiral staircases with colorful tile details, thick wooden doors, hand-painted murals, elaborate ceilings and wrought-iron chandeliers serve as a backdrop for one of the city's most treasured art collections. Surrounding the building is the Sunken Gardens, which boast a collection of palms

and specimen trees from 25 countries. Enjoy a picnic on the lawn, and then climb the Clock Tower to see the rare Seth Thomas clock and take in the best views of downtown and the surrounding mountains. ([sbcourthouse.org](http://sbcourthouse.org))

### MOXI, The Wolf Museum of Exploration + Innovation

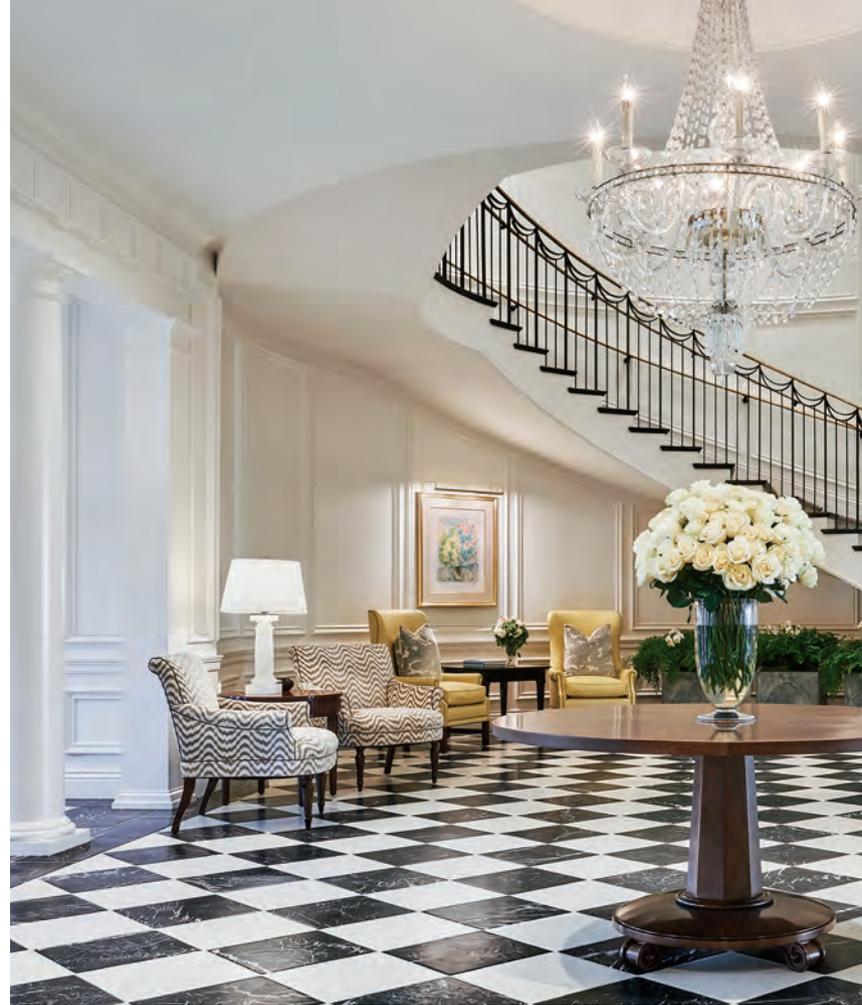
Opened in early 2017, the child-friendly science-driven museum features three floors of interactive displays designed to appeal to curious minds of all ages. Sound, technology, speed, light and media arts receive a hands-on approach in the 17,000-square-foot space, located next door to the Hotel Indigo. Guests can step inside an 8-foot-high, 24-foot-long guitar and learn how their favorite riffs begin, create their own sound effects in the Foley Studios, build their own race car and send it down a test track, or control the Lois + Richard Gunther Color Mixing Machine that hangs above the entryway—just a few of the more than 70 exhibits found at the country's first LEED-certified museum. ([moxi.org](http://moxi.org))

## Funk Zone

Santa Barbara has undergone a lot of changes in recent years, thanks to the emergence of revitalized neighborhoods. The Funk Zone, a 12-block district located to the east of State Street, is a former industrial area that's been transformed into the city's trendiest destination thanks to the addition of artist studios, hip restaurants and bars, wine-tasting rooms and microbreweries, and a plethora of quirky shops. Art walks and other festivals offer the perfect opportunity to explore all the community has to offer. (funkzone.net)

## Santa Barbara Museum of Art

Located right in the heart of downtown in the city's early 1900s post office on State Street, the museum houses a collection that rivals those in larger metropolitan areas—in fact, it owns more Monets than any other museum on the West Coast. More than 27,000 works cover American, Asian and Classical art, including sculptures, paintings, ceramics and 20th-century photography. Current exhibitions include the museum's first ever devoted exclusively to sculpture, as well as the display of Kehinde Wiley's masterpiece, "Equestrian Portrait of Prince Tommaso of Savoy-Carignan." (sbma.net)



## Stylish Stays

Santa Barbara has long been a playground for celebrities and those seeking an escape from the hectic pace of nearby cities. Here, among lofty palm trees and golden beaches, sheltered by the Santa Ynez Mountains, life rolls along at an unhurried pace. Summer brings the biggest crowds, with July through September offering the warmest temperatures. Enhancing the city's reputation as a world-class destination are its elegant hotels and resorts, many of which have undergone major renovations in recent years.

Opening its doors in March 2019, **Rosewood Miramar Beach** (rosewoodhotels.com) is the region's most highly anticipated resort. Built on the site of the former Miramar by the Sea Hotel, which opened in 1889, this ultimate in waterfront luxury features 161 rooms—including 26 with direct beach access—spread across 16 acres in Montecito. Spearheaded by Rick Caruso, developer of The Grove shopping district in L.A., the pet-friendly property is filled with lavish touches, including an elegant curved staircase in the Manor House that pays tribute to California architect Paul Williams of Beverly Hills Hotel fame; a scallop-shaped swimming pool modeled after one at the Monaco Beach Club; a Goop store; and a curated collection of more than 600 art pieces by renowned masters such as Norman Rockwell, Fernando Botero and Slim Aarons, among others. Be sure to book a ride in the resort's Instagram-friendly pink Fiat Jolly car, a jaunty open-air beach mobile that shuttles guests into town.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT SANTA BARBARA BY JASON RICK

Santa Barbara's newest museum, MOXI, The Wolf Museum of Exploration + Innovation, delights young and old with sound, light, speed and technology.



**COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT**  
The grand staircase at the Rosewood Miramar Beach recalls Hollywood's glamorous heyday. • The funky, colorful Hotel Indigo offers a hip stay. • The main entrance of the newly opened Hotel Californian sports traditional design.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VISIT SANTA BARBARA

Also basking in new-kid-on-the-block popularity is the lavish **Hotel Californian** ([thehotelcalifornian.com](http://thehotelcalifornian.com)), which began welcoming guests in September 2018. Preserving the original facade of its namesake property, which was destroyed by an earthquake less than a month after its 1925 opening, the glam hotel fuses Spanish Revival architecture with Moroccan-modern influences courtesy of interior designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard. Ideally located on the edge of the trendy Funk Zone and steps away from the beach and the Amtrak station, this four-story hot spot features a rooftop pool with sweeping views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

A block up State Street from the Hotel Californian is the boutique **Hotel Indigo** ([indigosantabarbara.com](http://indigosantabarbara.com)). While the compact guestrooms showcase chic European styling, with pop art decor and mod furnishings, the property's best hangouts are its captivating common areas, including a library filled with local-interest and art books and situated near a verdant vertical garden, and a hip Mexican restaurant and bar. Dedicated to promoting local artists, the hotel is also a satellite for the Museum of Contemporary Arts Santa Barbara and regularly hosts rotating exhibits, openings and events.

Hollywood favorite **San Ysidro Ranch** ([sanysidroranch.com](http://sanysidroranch.com)) in Montecito recently reopened in April 2019 following a devastating mudslide that struck in January 2018. Dating back to 1893, the resort, a former working ranch that sits on 500 acres in the foothills of the Los Padres National Forest, is considered one of the country's finest—

and most exclusive—accommodations. President John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, honeymooned here, while Vivien Leigh and Sir Laurence Olivier chose it as their wedding spot. Private bungalows are scattered throughout the garden-filled landscape, and hiking paths lead directly off the property and into the surrounding mountains. An on-site library includes books by famous guests, including Sinclair Lewis and W. Somerset Maugham.

Also affected by the mudslide, the **Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara** ([fourseasons.com/santabarbara](http://fourseasons.com/santabarbara)) began welcoming back guests in June 2018, marking a new chapter in its 90-year history. Renovations of the Reginald Johnson-designed property tucked away on 22 acres on Butterfly Beach uncovered original materials from the 1920s and '30s, including glorious art deco tiles and light fixtures. Sweeping wood beam ceilings and gilt accents add to the authentic charm. The hotel also debuted its new Anacapa Suite, which features 2,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space, a private driveway, fire pits, two outdoor terraces and a private plunge pool.

The city's only Forbes Five-Star hotel, the **Belmond El Encanto** ([belmond.com/elencanto](http://belmond.com/elencanto)) is perched on 7 acres above the Old Mission, with 92 bungalows that overlook the downtown and beaches. Opening in 1918, it underwent a \$134 million renovation in the early 2010s. Featuring a casual elegance, the property celebrates Santa Barbara's early architecture, fusing Spanish colonial style with California Craftsman. The full-service spa is open to guests and local residents.

# Garden Paradise

Thanks to its mild Mediterranean climate, Santa Barbara nourishes a variety of plants from tropical blooms to desert-friendly succulents. A walk down Cabrillo Boulevard, which parallels the city's beaches, finds exotic bird of paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*) flowering among heat-loving agaves and totem pole cacti, while blankets of bougainvillea spill over walls and off rooftops. Prize roses flourish in Spanish-style gardens, while ancient Moreton Bay fig trees tower over parks, their roots spreading across the grassy surfaces. With such a diverse collection of flora, it's no wonder the city attracts botanical enthusiasts from around the globe.

One of the region's—and the world's—top garden treasures is **Ganna Walska Lotusland** ([lotusland.org](http://lotusland.org)) in Montecito. Polish opera singer Walska purchased the verdant 37-acre property in 1941—it was originally meant to serve as a retreat for Tibetan lamas—and dedicated the next 43 years to transforming it into an unparalleled collection of plants, trees and natural oddities. Today, the grounds include more than 20 distinct gardens, each devoted to a specific theme, including Cacti & Euphorbias, Blue Garden, Palmetum, Orchards, Cycad Garden and Topiary Garden. The Japanese Garden, which has been closed for two years for renovations, reopens June 1.

Naturalists will enjoy the **Santa Barbara Botanical Garden** ([sbbg.org](http://sbbg.org)), a 78-acre wilderness focused entirely on native plants. From meadow to redwood forest, canyon to desert, a stroll through the garden's 5.5 miles of wheelchair-accessible pathways is like touring the entire state.

Stop and smell the roses—literally—at the fetching **A.C. Postel Memorial Rose Garden** ([sbrose.org](http://sbrose.org)), an accredited show garden of the All-America Rose Selections located in front of the Old Mission. It contains more than 1,500 rose plants in a multitude of glorious hues, including ancient varieties that were cultivated as far back as the 9th century.

The 4.6-acre **Alice Keck Memorial Garden** ([santabarbaraca.gov](http://santabarbaraca.gov)) occupies the former site of artist Albert Herter's El Mirasol mansion and is named for the then-anonymous donor who gifted the funds for the land's conservation (her identity was only revealed after her death). The informal landscape features 75 native and drought-tolerant species, a man-made koi pond and a sensory garden for the visually impaired that focuses on scents, sounds and textures, complete with interpretive Braille signs.

Many historical sites also present unique and lovely garden spaces. The Old Mission ([santabarbaramission.org](http://santabarbaramission.org)) offers **La Huerta Gardens**, a 1-acre plot that includes seasonal crops as well as edible perennials and herbs, trees, shrubs and a section devoted to native plants and ethnobotanical flora. In Montecito, **Casa del Herrero's** ([casadelherrero.com](http://casadelherrero.com)) Moorish-inspired landscape incorporates fountains, tiered hedges, citrus orchards, colorful perennials, cacti, a hidden rose garden and a trio of looming dragon trees, all surrounded by stands of eucalyptus and palms.

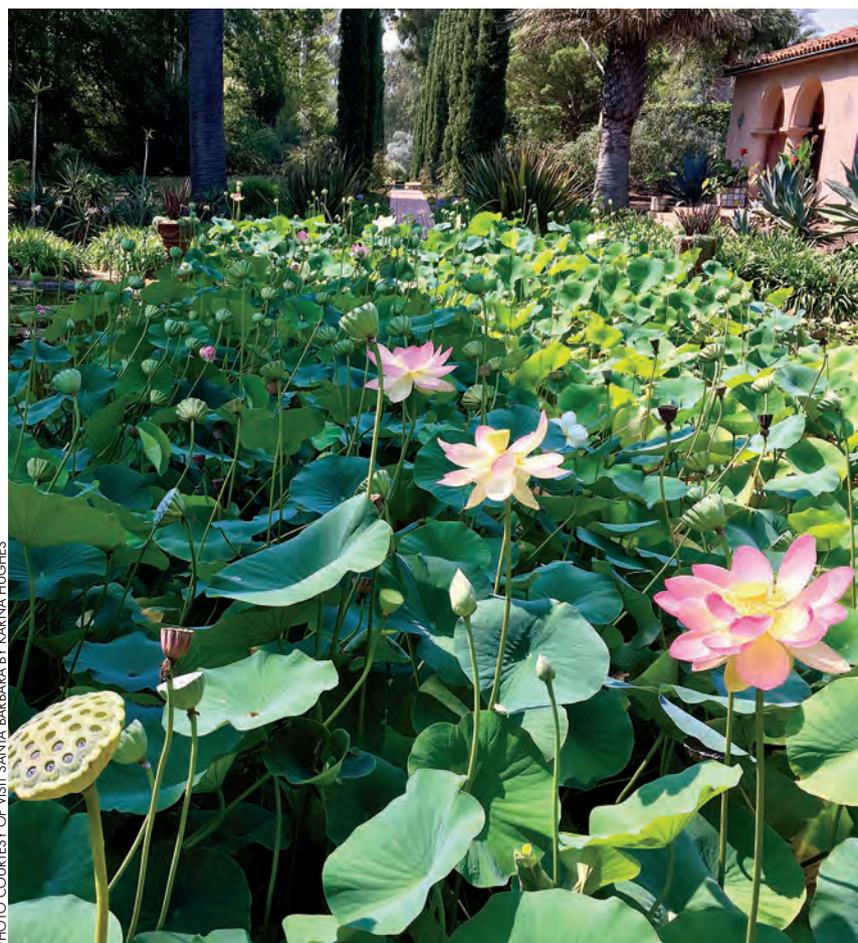


PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT SANTA BARBARA BY KARINA HUGHES

In the Water Garden at Ganna Walska Lotusland, Asian lotus flowers blossom in what was the estate's original swimming pool.



Fresh herbs and vegetables are grown in the on-site chef's garden at San Ysidro Ranch.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT SANTA BARBARA BY SAN YSIDRO RANCH

### **How can Arizonans capture Santa Barbara's look and feel at home?**

Bring the outside in and the inside out as much as possible. Blur those lines—not just with plants but also with texture and color. Take advantage of whatever is happening at your local farmer's market and display your finds throughout your home. Appreciating local bounty is a very big part of the Santa Barbara lifestyle.

### **What are your favorite local places to shop for home goods?**

For timeless decor pieces, I like Upstairs at Pierre LaFond ([upstairsatpierrelafond.com](http://upstairsatpierrelafond.com)), William Laman Furniture.Garden.Antiques ([williamlaman.com](http://williamlaman.com)), Hudson Grace ([hudsongracesf.com](http://hudsongracesf.com)) and Maison K ([maisonkstyle.com](http://maisonkstyle.com)), all in Montecito. Mate Gallery ([mategallery.com](http://mategallery.com)), also in Montecito, brings a touch of New England to California. I also like poking around the antique stores in Summerland as well as the newly opened Summerland outpost of L.A.-based homeware shop, Garde ([gardeshop.com](http://gardeshop.com)).

## My Santa Barbara: 6 questions with Slim Paley

Lifestyle blogger Carolyn Epsley-Miller has had her finger on the pulse of Santa Barbara's style for the past decade. Her blog, "Slim Paley" ([slimpaley.com](http://slimpaley.com))—a nom de plume she created by combining the names of two style icons, Slim Keith and Babe Paley—covers the coastal city's fashion, decor, art and gardening scenes, and provides peeks into her home in Montecito, where she and her husband, actor and comedian Dennis Miller, have lived for the last 25 years.

Here, she opens up about the many reasons she loves Santa Barbara and offers her suggestions on getting the most out of your vacation there.

### **What is Santa Barbara's aesthetic?**

The Santa Barbara "look" is most commonly associated with Mediterranean architecture, but there are so many different types and styles of homes and gardens within Santa Barbara and Montecito. While photos of the region

offer an instantly recognizable if not iconic cityscape, scratch the surface and you'll find that it's not by any means a cookie-cutter community. Our home, which we recently built, is Cape Dutch style. It just feels right because Santa Barbara greatly resembles South Africa in natural beauty, with the mountains being so close to the sea.

### **How is Santa Barbara different from other Southern California towns?**

I'd say the most significant feature setting it apart is its unique geographical orientation. Our coastline actually faces south instead of west, and I believe it is the longest if not the only stretch of the entire West Coast blessed with this perspective. Coupled with the Santa Ynez Mountains that run east to west, this creates one of the most appealing microclimates in the world in which to live.



### **What is your ideal date night in Santa Barbara?**

Walk to the San Ysidro Ranch ([sanysidroranch.com](http://sanysidroranch.com)) at dusk for outdoor cocktails and a fire-side dinner under a canopy of loquat trees and magical starry night skies. You'll want to get a lift home, though, as there are

strict street light restrictions in Montecito in order to preserve our inky black heavens for stargazing.

### **What should first-time travelers to Santa Barbara not miss seeing?**

I highly recommend visiting world-renowned Lotusland ([lotusland.org](http://lotusland.org)) in Montecito. Loving gardens as much as I do and having traveled extensively over the years, I always try to visit unusual or important gardens whenever possible. Lotusland is without a doubt in the top three I've ever seen. It also has a fascinating history, which makes it that much more enchanting.