

The Weekender: Santa Barbara

The central coast town's split personality: old-school charm and city grit

There are two sides to Santa Barbara. One is the easy-on-the-eyes Andalusian paradise that rose from the rubble of the massive 1925 earthquake. The other is a scrappy pocket of abandoned industrial sites now dedicated to the pleasures of the palate. To go old-world, head to downtown State Street and pretend it's a day in Seville. Or cross the highway and drop into the Funk Zone, where wine-tasting rooms abound and a former seafood warehouse has been transformed into a culinary hub. The look is urban proud; if not for the glittering ocean, you could be in a reclaimed corner of Detroit. Either way, you're poised for the best of times.

Morning

The **Belmond El Encanto** (\$362-\$1,575) has reigned over the Riviera, a bucolic neighborhood in the Santa Barbara foothills, since 1918. A handful of the original Craftsman and mission bungalows remain after an extensive renovation, while the newer Spanish-style buildings feature such luxury details as heated stone floors. The centerpiece is still the terrace off the lobby, with its unsurpassed ocean views. Closer to downtown is the **Santa Barbara Autocamp** (\$144-\$268), which opened in 2012. Guests slumber in vintage Airstream trailers that have been restored with a minimalist decor. For breakfast treat yourself to creamy grits and fried green tomatoes at **Tupelo Junction Cafe**. It's a good launching point for basking in the celebrated Spanish architecture, tiled sidewalks, and restful greenery along State Street. **Granada Books**, in the shadow of the historic theater, stocks literature about every aspect of the region. Over at the **Italian PotteryOutlet** you'll find a major Southern California outpost for artisan ceramics from Italy. Can't wake up without your morning yoga? Make for **Salt** to consult the map of local studios painted on a window by the spa entrance, and stick around for an ion-charged respite in caves constructed of Himalayan salt.

Afternoon

You'll feel as if you've landed in a plein air painting at the **Boathouse at Hendry's Beach**, a ten-minute drive northwest from downtown. The shrimp taco salad won't weigh you down as you explore the spectacular coastal landscape, which includes relics of antique funiculars that carried Hope Ranch residents from their clifftop homes to the sand. Dolphin and sea lion sightings are a given, and peak whale watching begins in February. Or you can opt for the man-made scenery from a table at **State & Fig**—the name comes from the fig jam that's spread on its burgers and ham *panini*. The restaurant is in the charming outdoor **La Arcada**, designed by Huntington Library architect Myron Hunt. The elaborate ironwork there forms a picturesque backdrop as you shop for tableware at the **Coast 2 Coast Collection**, British goods in **Hampstead Village**, and French artistry from **Chocolats du CaliBressan**. Two blocks away is the **Santa Barbara Public Market**, a communal space where the **Empty Bowl** serves impeccable Asian noodle dishes and **Belcampo Meat Co.** puts together sandwiches of humanely raised beef, pork, and lamb on L.A.'s own Etchea breads. For dessert sample the ice cream from **Rori's Artisanal Creamery**, which churns out flavors like Fresh Mint Patty at its plant in nearby Carpinteria.

Evening

Once a cluster of moldering work yards and warehouses, the **Funk Zone** now bustles with bar hoppers checking out the wine-tasting rooms and microbreweries that line the railway. **Lucky Penny**, covered in copper coins, prepares takeout fare such as chorizo-topped pizza that you can enjoy over a pint at the **Figueroa Mountain Brewing Co.** Around the corner is **Les Marchands Wine Bar & Merchant**, whose sommeliers curate a smart selection from Europe and California. You're steps from what is arguably Santa Barbara's best restaurant, **The Lark**. Everything about the seasonal cuisine shows Jason Paluska's gift for pairings, such as the duck liver mousse with roasted strawberries. Or stroll to **Blue Tavern**, on the Funk Zone's northern edge, for *anticuchos* from L.A.'s Ricardo Zarate, the chef behind Mo-Chica and Picca.