

## Santa Barbara Vacation Ideas



### Everything in Santa Barbara is New Again

There is something totally freeing about escaping the busy commuters in LA to discover that you are suddenly following the open, glittering coastline along the Ventura Highway, dotted with surfers bobbing in wait for a wave and little beach communities with casual fish and burger stops. I was on an expedition to check out one of Santa Barbara's newest chic hostelries in Goleta, The Goodland, but ended up discovering more new riches that beg for a trip all over again.

Spanning 100 miles of pristine coastline is Santa Barbara, affectionately known as the "American Riviera." Visitors arrive year-round to enjoy its virtues of mission history, ocean splendor and idyllic Mediterranean weather. It is the Central Coast's "utopia" of nearby wineries, haute cuisine and celebrity homesteads, from Oprah to Jeff Bridges. There is plenty to discover every time you visit, and this spring is no exception with lots of new offerings, from edgy hotels to a few unique experiences. Take a magical drive up the 101, hugging each curve of the sparkling coast, and get ready for another unforgettable foray into a setting lush with dramatic mountains, colorful gardens and white-washed buildings topped by red tile roofs.

## Santa Barbara originals

Santa Barbara with its rich mission history is also known for spawning innovators and "firsts." The original Motel 6 opened in Santa Barbara in 1962, and it's still operating today with a completely updated look. Even the idea for McDonald's Egg McMuffin was hatched in Santa Barbara in the 60s. Great hotels and resorts fill the region, from the stately and iconic Four Season's Biltmore on the water's edge to the canyon-secretd El Encanto, as well as copious bed & breakfasts that fill the residential lanes.



The Goleta area, just north of town, unveiled the luxury Bacara Resort in recent years, and now it has another new hotel claim, The Goodland. Situated a short distance from Bacara, The Goodland is nestled on the inland side of the town without the ocean vistas but close enough for someone to be a beach-goer throughout the stay. The Goodland, which opened in August, is Kimpton's newest boutique property, and second in Santa Barbara County joining Canary Hotel. A stay at Goodland is never dull—think fun, lively and sand-in-your-toes casual.

The 158 guest rooms are centered around a heated pool where morning Yoga is common. Rooms feature a variety of nostalgic Americana amenities, including your own record player accompanied by a collection of vintage vinyl, a lobby with cozy fireplace and a curated art program—even a photo booth. An airstream sits outside with another in the process of being converted to a food truck. The renovated hotel has a funky, millennial feel that already has a large audience, from young to old.

Outpost is the hotel's casual dining spot with innovative choices. Try a homemade pop tart for brunch and don't be surprised to find Mexican Coca-Cola in the lobby Good Bar. Events are part of the stay and range from Trivia Nights to Sunday DJ sessions which are free to hotel guests. Special events are the norm, mostly centered around music by musicians "on the brink of greatness."

## **Cave time**



A little salt can be good for your body, at least the way Santa Barbara "salts" you. The Salt Cave is now open on downtown's State Street and stands as one of city's most unique experiences. The caves are crafted from 45 tons of 250-million-years-old Himalayan crystal salt, thought to be the most pristine and unpolluted salt on earth. Guests to the "caves" can choose from Salt Cave Therapy sessions, salt scrubs, massages and NexNeuro vibration treatments.

Cave-goers dress comfortably; just your socks and shoes are removed. The dry microclimate in the caves is kept at a temperature of 72 degrees and 40 percent humidity. Cozy into some blankets, then settle into the zero-gravity chair. The session begins as the lights are lowered, and gentle relaxation music plays. All you need to do is sit back, relax and breathe. The air in the cave is saturated with micro particles of salt that are easily absorbed through the skin and deep into the lungs.

## **Get funky**

Caves and retro hotels might put you in the mood for Santa Barbara's new "Funk Zone." Just east of State Street, the former 12-block warehouse manufacturing area is now an edgy, popular region filled with art galleries,

wineries, microbreweries and bistros. Just steps from the ocean, the bustling area is growing quickly and gaining a reputation for innovation on a local level. Just a few of the highlights include: Al Merrick's Channel Islands Surfboards, Santa Barbara Art Foundry, Red's Urban Wine Bar, Segway of SB, Figueroa Mountain Brewery and Seven Bar and Kitchen.



## Spring into events

The Santa Barbara County Vintners' Spring Weekend takes place April 23-26. It's your chance to sip and savor world-class pinot noirs and chardonnays in a simple, down home atmosphere. This event attracts wine lovers from near and far for an opportunity to meet local vintners, taste their wines and enjoy great food and music over a long spring weekend. ([www.sbvintnersweekend.com](http://www.sbvintnersweekend.com))

Often considered the birthplace of the modern environmental movement, Santa Barbara boasts "Ecotopian" roots that run deep. You know this is a fact at the city's nationally acclaimed **Earth Day Festival** which takes place April 18-19. From a cutting-edge green car show to more than 200 exhibitors, Santa Barbara's Earth Day Festival draws thousands of eco-minded attendees each spring. ([www.sbeearthday.org](http://www.sbeearthday.org))