

Santa Barbara South Coast FAQs following the Thomas Fire and Montecito Mudslide (Dec. 2017-Jan. 2018)

TRAVEL CONDITIONS

How can I get the most current information on travel conditions in Santa Barbara?

Visit Santa Barbara's travel advisory page is updated regularly and includes the most current information to guide travelers: <http://www.santabarbaraca.com/travel>

HOW TO HELP

How can we help the communities of Santa Barbara and Montecito?

Visit Santa Barbara is heartbroken for the families, neighbors and businesses in Montecito impacted by the December Thomas Fire and subsequent January 9, 2018 mudslide (also known as the 1/9 debris flow). However, our community spirit is stronger than ever. There are many excellent local nonprofits raising funds either directly for those impacted or through charitable organizations that serve them. Several are listed on our travel advisory page: <http://www.santabarbaraca.com/travel>

One of the absolute best ways to support our community is for visitors to come experience the special place that the Santa Barbara South Coast is—including the cities and towns of Santa Barbara, Montecito, Goleta and Summerland.

While the majority of area businesses were not damaged, many experienced significant loss of income during both the Thomas Fire and the temporary Highway 101 closure. We encourage you to visit our hotels and restaurants, shop at local retailers, and explore the many attractions The American Riviera has to offer. With support of our visitors, we look forward to brighter days ahead in Santa Barbara.

CONDITIONS IN SANTA BARBARA

Have the mudslides in Montecito and Thomas Fire affected Santa Barbara?

The main impacts from the mudslides and fire are isolated to the remote mountains above Montecito, where the Thomas Fire took place in December 2017, as well as the Montecito area, where the mudslides and flooding took place on Jan. 9, 2018.

Fortunately, all other Santa Barbara South Coast cities, including Santa Barbara, Goleta and Summerland were NOT in the impact zone. Flooding and mudslides did NOT take place in these cities. All hospitality businesses in these cities, including hotels, restaurants and attractions, are open for business.

What does Santa Barbara look like right now, following the Thomas Fire and Montecito mudslides?

The mudslides were isolated to the Montecito area and did not impact Santa Barbara. Highway 101 through the area is fully open. The Santa Ynez Mountains that are visible from downtown Santa Barbara are regular shades of green and tan. They remain uniquely beautiful.

Are Santa Barbara-area beaches or ocean water affected?

All beaches in Santa Barbara County are open. Storm runoff has NOT affected the most popular beaches for visitors, including downtown beaches at East Beach, West Beach and Leadbetter Beach, as well as Arroyo Burro Beach, Butterfly Beach near Montecito, Hope Ranch Beach, Summerland Beach, Sands Beach at Coal Oil Point, and the northern beaches of El Capitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, Gaviota State Beach, Guadalupe Dunes and Jalama Beach. All recreational activities, including swimming and surfing, are permitted at these beaches.

Recreational activities such as swimming and surfing in ocean waters near three lesser-known beaches—Carpinteria State Beach in Carpinteria, Hammonds Beach near Montecito and Goleta Beach in Goleta—are currently not advised, due to storm runoff. However, land-based activities like strolling on beaches are fine. (The Santa Barbara County Department of Public Health tests water quality twice a week and expects this advisory to lift soon.) For ocean quality and beach updates, call the county's 24/7 Ocean Water Quality Hotline at 805-681-4949 or go to Santa Barbara County's Environmental Health Services page: <http://bit.ly/2hAvMC7>

What are the conditions at beaches like? Has mud been deposited at local beaches?

The majority of beaches are clean, free of debris and beautiful as ever. As of Feb. 22, 2018, mud is not being deposited on local beaches.

Background: Santa Barbara County officials previously approved transport of mud to two beaches in January and early February 2018: Goleta Beach in Goleta and Carpinteria Beach at Ash Avenue in Carpinteria. However, this practice was discontinued on Feb. 22, and mud is no longer being deposited at these beaches. According to Heal the Ocean, truckloads were inspected at both beach sites by environmental monitors. In addition, samples of mud from throughout Montecito were tested by an independent laboratory and were found to be non-hazardous.

CONDITIONS IN MONTECITO

Which businesses/attractions are affected in Montecito?

The Jan. 9 mudslide damaged or led to temporary closures of some businesses in Montecito. A handful of residential streets within Montecito remain closed to through traffic, but the major arteries, such as Coast Village Road, have reopened.

Shopping: Coast Village Road, a popular shopping corridor, is open to traffic. The majority of area attractions, boutiques and restaurants along Coast Village Road and the Upper Village have reopened.

Hotels/Retreats: San Ysidro Ranch, Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara and La Casa de Maria (a retreat center) remain closed. Four Seasons will reopen by June 1. Montecito Inn reopened March 3.

Attractions: Ganna Walska Lotusland and Casa del Herrero, two private estates and gardens that offer public tours by reservation, were not affected and are open.

Hiking: Most hiking trails in Montecito, including Cold Springs and Romero Canyon, are closed while they are being restored. However, Santa Barbara's most popular trails, Tunnel Trail leading to Inspiration Point, and Rattlesnake Trail are open and were not affected. Likewise, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden located in Santa Barbara's Mission Canyon offers scenic hikes.

If you are planning to visit Montecito in early spring 2018, please call ahead to check the hours and availability of individual businesses not listed.

What caused the mudslides in Montecito?

The unprecedented mudslides that took place the morning of Jan. 9 in Montecito, California, located 5 miles east of the city of Santa Barbara, were caused by a combination of factors. First, the history-making Thomas Fire burned areas of the mountains behind Montecito in December. Then a rare, "200-year" event—an extremely concentrated rainfall—took place directly over the burn scar on Jan. 9, triggering debris flows and mudslides. More than half an inch of rain fell in 5 minutes.

Are mudslides likely to happen again?

Although mudslides can occasionally happen on California's coast during heavy rains, Santa Barbara County officials have taken a proactive approach to mitigate the impact should they happen again in the county, particularly Montecito, Carpinteria and the coastal canyons of the Gaviota Coast near Goleta (where two state campgrounds are located). County public works teams have been working non-stop to ensure that debris basins are cleared and ready should there be any future storms. During the rainy season (usually December through March), if a major storm arrives, visitors can go to the Visit Santa Barbara's website, <https://santabarbaraca.com/travel>, to check road conditions.

THOMAS FIRE IMPACTS

Did the Thomas Fire affect Santa Barbara?

The Thomas Fire took place in December in the remote mountains above Montecito and did NOT burn within the cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta or Summerland, nor the main, public areas of Montecito. The fire was 100 percent contained on Jan. 12.

Did the Thomas Fire affect Santa Barbara County vineyards or wine?

The Thomas Fire was isolated to the remote mountains above Montecito, some 40 minutes south of the nearest vineyards in the Santa Ynez Valley. The wine-growing areas in the Santa Ynez Valley and north to Santa Maria and Lompoc were not affected. The wine-tasting rooms and urban winemaking facilities in the city of Santa Barbara (such as the Urban Wine Trail and Wineries of the Presidio Neighborhood) were also not affected.

What is the air quality like?

The Santa Barbara County Department of Public Health and Air Pollution Control District reported healthy air quality for Santa Barbara County on Dec. 29, and that has remained in effect. For the latest air quality conditions, visit www.OurAir.org

ADDITIONAL TRAVEL RESOURCES

Visit Santa Barbara's website lists suggested itineraries that you might enjoy (www.SantaBarbaraCA.com) and the area has some terrific events coming up, including the 73rd annual [Santa Barbara International Orchid Show](#) (March 9 to 11), the [Santa Barbara Jewish Film Festival](#) (March 15-19), [Vintners Festival Spring Weekend](#) (April 20-23) and [I Madonnari Italian Street Painting Festival](#) (May 25-28).

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