

Santa Barbara South Coast FAQs **About the Thomas Fire and Montecito Debris Flow (Dec. 2017-Jan. 2018)**

GENERAL:

If you saw the news coverage from last winter, you might be wondering if it's a good time to visit the Santa Barbara South Coast. Please rest assured that nearly a year later, conditions are back to normal and the region is as stunningly beautiful, inviting and unaffected as ever. In fact, *Travel + Leisure* named Montecito a [Best Place to Visit in 2019](#).

In addition, exciting new chef-driven restaurants and attractions like wine-tasting rooms and mini food complexes have opened in the area, and others are coming soon, making this year and next a perfect time to visit. We look forward to welcoming you!

CONDITIONS IN SANTA BARBARA:

Did last winter's events affect Santa Barbara?

The impacts from the mudslides and fire primarily were isolated to the remote mountains above Montecito and a handful of residential neighborhoods in the Montecito area not visible to most visitors. (See below.) Fortunately, all other Santa Barbara South Coast cities, including Santa Barbara, Goleta and Summerland, were NOT affected. All hotels, restaurants and attractions in these cities are open for business. Highway 101 through the area is open.

What does Santa Barbara look like now?

The area looks just as beautiful as it did before—the Santa Ynez Mountains visible from downtown Santa Barbara and the sweeping views of the ocean are gorgeous.

CONDITIONS IN MONTECITO:

Which businesses/attractions were affected in Montecito?

Following last winter, 99 percent of businesses in Montecito are open and unaffected.

Shopping/Dining: Coast Village Road, a popular shopping and dining corridor, is open. Considered the “Rodeo Drive” of the region, this is the place to see and be seen by celebrities. Many new restaurants have opened along Coast Village Road, including The Monarch and Bettina.

Hotels: Only one hotel of nearly 100 on the South Coast remain closed. San Ysidro Ranch, located in a remote residential area, is aiming to reopen restaurants in January and the hotel in spring 2019. (In 2018, Montecito Inn reopened March 3 and Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara reopened June 1.)

Attractions: Ganna Walska Lotusland and Casa del Herrero, two beloved private estates and exquisite gardens that offer tours, were not affected and have remained open the whole time, except for during regularly scheduled winter breaks.

Hiking: Cold Spring Trail in Montecito sustained damage and is closed; other trails located in Montecito are open but may have some damage. However, Santa Barbara’s most popular trails, like Inspiration Point and Rattlesnake Trail, were unaffected and are open. SantaBarbarahikes.com has information on specific trails.

What caused the mudslides in Montecito?

The Jan. 9 mudslides/debris flow were an extremely rare, unprecedented event. They took place in the town of Montecito, Calif., located 5 miles east of the city of Santa Barbara, and were caused by an unusual combination of factors. First, the historic Thomas Fire burned areas of the mountains behind Montecito (not currently visible) in December 2017. Then what experts have called a rare, “200-year” event—an unusually 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 occasionally can 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.

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

No, the Thomas Fire was isolated to the remote mountains above Montecito, some 40 minutes south of the nearest vineyards in the Santa Ynez Valley. There was no impact to Santa Barbara County wine.

TRAVEL RESOURCES:

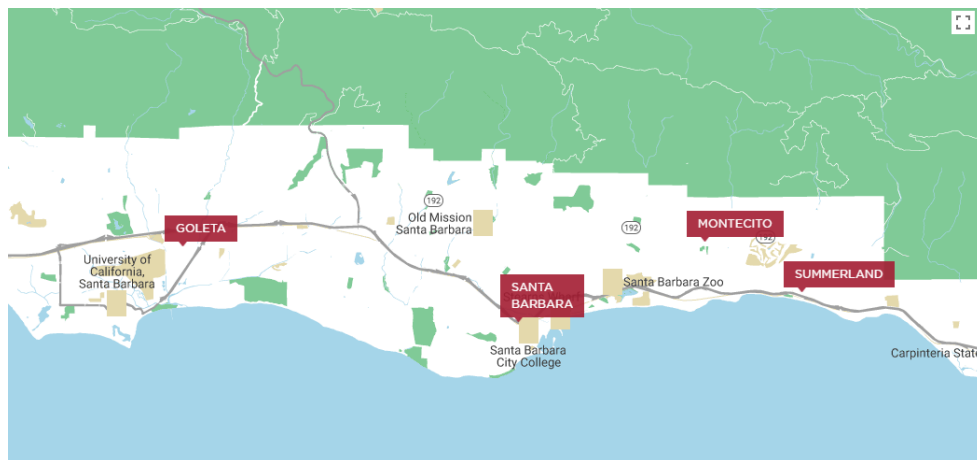
Where can I go to plan a trip to Santa Barbara?

Visit Santa Barbara’s website, www.SantaBarbaraCA.com, is a great resource for trip planning, with suggested itineraries, a calendar of events, links to hotel offers and more.

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

Visit Santa Barbara’s website, www.SantaBarbaraCA.com, and social media pages (links available on the website) regularly post the most current information to guide travelers.

Map of Santa Barbara South Coast:



Updated: December 2018