Santa Barbara

Media Field Guide
Whether you’re just getting to know Santa Barbara for the first time or revisiting old haunts, our media field guide will help you identify destination essentials.
Santa Barbara is a rich environment for creating memorable experiences and inspiring compelling stories. This collection of key facts and story starters is designed to inform and enhance journalistic explorations of our lovely and vibrant habitat, also known as “The American Riviera.” Whether you’re just getting to know Santa Barbara for the first time or revisiting old haunts, our media field guide will help you identify destination essentials and discover off-the-beaten path finds. We’ve highlighted “Indigenous Species” throughout the guide to help you track down uniquely Santa Barbara activities, places and products. We’ve also included “Click Cues” to direct you to online resources where you can find more detailed information and full length press releases on subjects.

Happy trails!
Santa Barbara is located 92 mi/148 km north of Los Angeles and 332 mi/534 km south of San Francisco, spanning 100 miles of pristine California coastline. Part of the Central Coast region, Santa Barbara is considered the northernmost part of Southern California and the southernmost part of Northern California. Santa Barbara lies on an east-west axis, a unique twist of topography that creates south-facing beaches.

Santa Barbara is known as “The American Riviera,” a comparison to the French and Italian Riviera areas, sharing the same dramatic mountains, sparkling seas, lush gardens, white-washed buildings, red tile roofs and abundant sunshine of these Mediterranean counterparts.

Santa Barbara’s architectural style is a key defining feature. After an earthquake in 1925 leveled much of the town, community leaders crafted a plan to rebuild the town in the spirit of its Chumash, Spanish and Mexican heritage, imposing strict building guidelines that preserve views as much as they evoke history. The result is a cohesive, visually appealing aesthetic, as well as an easily-navigated city center and waterfront district.

Santa Barbara is also well-known for its farm-to-table cuisine, boutique wineries, beaches, surf culture, hiking and biking trails, marine life, art galleries, gardens and estates, festivals and luxury resorts. The northern county is home to charming small towns surrounded by vineyards, fields and ranches, and a rugged, remote coastline. Santa Barbara offers a diverse mix of up-market and down-home, making it an affordable, accessible and appealing destination for a wide range of budgets and interests.
Santa Barbara County spans the communities of Carpinteria in the south to Santa Maria in the north, with the City of Santa Barbara as the major hub and the heart of “South County.” When locals say “North County,” they are referring to the wine country and towns of Solvang, Santa Ynez, Los Olivos, Buellton, Lompoc, Los Alamos, Guadalupe and Santa Maria. South County includes Goleta (home of University of California Santa Barbara), Santa Barbara, Montecito, Summerland and Carpinteria.

It generally takes 30-45 minutes to reach wine country from downtown Santa Barbara, depending on where you go and which scenic route you take. Highway 101 offers a gorgeous coastal drive, while Highway 154
(San Marcos Pass) cuts through the mountains yielding dramatic views alongside a few intense curves in the road.

Click Cue:
Go to “Explore Cities” on SantaBarbaraCA.com for descriptions of each city in the county.

Neighborhood Watch

The Downtown Historic Arts District and the Waterfront District are the most popular places for visitors to Santa Barbara, which makes perfect sense because of the high concentration of the region’s top attractions in these areas. Both are easily walkable, and connected by the Downtown-Waterfront Electric Shuttle. State Street (between Sola and Gutierrez Streets) is considered the heart of downtown, lined with shops, cafés, museums, galleries, day spas and theaters. The self-guided Red Tile Walking Tour is an excellent way to get acquainted with downtown and local history. The tour of 22 architectural and historic landmarks, including the stunning County Courthouse and El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park, is contained to 12 blocks. State Street runs all the way down to the waterfront, intersecting with Cabrillo Boulevard at the base of Stearns Wharf. The Cabrillo Bikeway, a beachfront bike and footpath, stretches along Cabrillo Boulevard from East Beach to the Harbor. In addition to wide, sandy beaches, the waterfront area is dotted with hotels and eateries and is the launch for sea-faring pursuits like kayaking, whale watching and sailing.

A couple of particularly fun and funky neighborhoods are worth a detour from the main drags of State Street and Cabrillo Boulevard. The Funk Zone is a mixed-use area east of State Street (between State and Garden and Yanonali and Mason Streets) by the waterfront that used to be an industrial and manufacturing hub. Now it’s known for its eclectic mix of artists, surfboard shapers, skilled craft workers as well as locally-owned shops, art studios, galleries and wine tasting rooms. SoCo, the neighborhood south of Cota Street (just a few blocks east of State Street), showcases the bohemian side of Santa Barbara with urban wineries, a microbrewery, coffee house, hole-in-the-wall Mexican restaurants, art galleries, vintage clothing shops and more.
Everyone loves a top 10 list. Here’s our top 10 of the most iconic Santa Barbara experiences. Most of these classics happen to be free, and if they do have a cost, it’s nominal. That means you can live it up like a local whether you’re just passing through for a day, cutting costs by camping at the beach or retreating luxuriously at an exclusive resort.

1. Soak up local culture, shop and dine on State Street.
2. Take in 360° views of downtown from the Santa Barbara County Courthouse clock tower.
3. Step back in time at Mission Santa Barbara and stop to smell the roses at the Mission Rose Garden.
4. Discover Santa Barbara’s Spanish roots at El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park.
5. Walk (or bike) along Cabrillo Boulevard and take a stroll onto Stearns Wharf.
6. Watch fishermen unloading their catch and dine on fresh seafood at Santa Barbara Harbor.
7. Hit the beach for a sun, swim or surf—East Beach is a hot spot for volleyball, Leadbetter is a family-friendly fave and Butterfly Beach is perfect for people watching.
8. Meander through the downtown Farmers’ Market (Tuesdays and Saturdays) and meet the local growers while sampling their seasonal bounty.
9. Hike to Inspiration Point from the Tunnel Road trailhead.
10. Savor sunset from the bluffs of the Douglas Family Preserve.
“Green” isn’t just a buzz word in Santa Barbara. Protecting the natural world has been a local passion ever since a grassroots environmental movement emerged in the 1960’s. In fact, one of the nation’s first Earth Day celebrations was held here in 1970. Today, local governments, non-profit organizations and residents continue to work together to maintain our sustainable community and preserve the natural elements that make Santa Barbara so special. Visitors are actually helping our efforts, too—a portion of the hotel tax funds important urban-creek restoration projects.

**Click Cue:** The Santa Barbara Car Free Project, created by the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District, presents car-free alternatives for travel to and from Santa Barbara and a guide to experiencing and exploring Santa Barbara car-free.

**Click Cue:** Our GreenSantaBarbara.com microsite provides a helpful planning resource for the sustainably-minded and eco-passionate traveler. From exploring car-free and eating locally-sourced foods to experiencing nature preserves and embracing home-grown businesses, visitors can tread lightly and give back while enjoying our little pocket of paradise.

**Click Cue:** The SantaBarbaraCarFree.org website offers maps and walking tour itineraries, Amtrak discounts, car-free resources and special vacation packages.
Santa Barbara Wine Country was the real-life set of the wine-infused, Oscar-winning film *Sideways*. 
Santa Barbara offers a distinctly regional and utterly delicious epicurean experience. Fresh, seasonal produce grown in nearby fields is readily available at daily farmers’ markets, farm stands and local grocery stores. Fresh catch from the Santa Barbara Channel is served up in local eateries, and you can even buy seafood right off the boat at the Santa Barbara Harbor. Local chefs work their magic with the bounty of ingredients at their fingertips and create seasonal dishes that highlight scrumptious specialty ingredients like mission figs, Meyer lemons and Santa Barbara spot prawns. Walnut and olive oils, family farm finished beef, wild mushrooms and free-range eggs add to the local bounty. All that goodness can be washed down—or elegantly complemented by—local wines and microbrews. A complimentary culinary travel guide, Sip & Savor: A Taste of Santa Barbara, is available for visitors interested in digging into the local food and wine scene.

**Click Cue:** Go to “Food & Drink” and “Sip & Savor” on SantaBarbaraCA.com for more info. You can also download the digital Sip & Savor guide.

**It’s A Wine, Wine World**
Currently home to more than 175 wineries and 22,000 acres of vineyards, Santa Barbara Wine Country was the real-life set of the wine-infused, Oscar-winning film *Sideways*. The area offers well-drained soils and plentiful sunshine, along with unusual east-west-running mountain ranges that funnel cool ocean air and fog to the vines, moderating temperatures and extending the growing season so that grapes of exceptional ripeness, flavor and balance result. The region’s colorful cast of cutting-edge winemakers produces superb pinot noir, chardonnay, syrah, sauvignon blanc and at least 60 other varietals. The broad array of grapes that thrive here is due in part to the diversity of microclimates — temperatures get one degree warmer every mile traveled inland from the coast. The county currently has four American Viticultural Areas (AVAs)—Santa Ynez, Santa Maria, **Continued on next page**
Sta. Rita Hills and Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara, the latter two representing the coolest and warmest, respectively.

One of the simplest ways to explore wine country is to focus on one of the five wine trails: Foxen Canyon & Alisos Canyon Roads, Santa Ynez & Los Olivos, Santa Maria Valley, Solvang Loop and Sta. Rita Hills Loop (Buellton and Lompoc). Eleven wine production facilities and tasting rooms are conveniently located in the heart of downtown Santa Barbara on the Urban Wine Trail, offering a great alternative for those who want to taste but don’t have time to drive to the wine country. Tasting tours, winemaker dinners, wine festivals and harvest parties are some of the many ways to experience Santa Barbara Wine Country.

**Brew Buzz**

Santa Barbara’s seven microbreweries give beer lovers a tasting trail of their own. On the south side, Carpinteria is home to the Island Brewing Company production facility and tasting room. In Santa Barbara, Union Ale, The Brew House and Santa Barbara Brewing Company are lively, full service restaurants pouring their own beers as well as international brews. Telegraph Brewing Company has a tasting room in SoCo, is sold in select local markets and is served in local restaurants and bars. Always hopping Hollister Brewing Company opened its doors May 2007 in Goleta, near the university, and offers gastropub fare along with beers made onsite. And in Buellton, Firestone-Walker Brewery’s Taproom restaurant features their four award-winning beers, in addition to four alternating beers, on tap.
Our natural playground of mountains, hills, ocean, lakes and streams basks in sunshine 300 days a year...
Surf’s Up
Santa Barbara’s surf culture tends to fly under the radar, but the region has always played an influential role in the international surf scene. Pro surfers Tom Curren, Bobby Martinez and Kim Mearig and major brands Mr. Zog’s Sex Wax and Al Merrick’s Channel Islands Surfboards all call Santa Barbara home. World champions Kelly Slater and Shaun Tomson currently live here. Legendary surf spots Rincon, The Ranch and Jalama and living legends George Greenough, Bruce Brown (Endless Summer) and Renny Yater also helped put SB on the map. This rich history is preserved and the story told via the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum’s permanent Surf’s Up! exhibition. The multi-media exhibit features artifacts, photos, classic surfboards and other memorabilia, along with video clips and oral histories. Another vital source of Santa Barbara surf culture is the funky Santa Barbara Surfing Museum, which opens to the public free of charge every Sunday. It’s also just a short walk away from the flagship Channel Islands Surfboards retail store, which is a destination unto itself for surf aficionados from around the globe.

Click Cue: Read the “Find Your Stoke in Santa Barbara” press release in the Media section of SantaBarbaraCA.com for the full scoop.
Santa Barbara’s manageable size, easy-going pace and friendly locals add to the family travel experience — no lines, no expensive admissions, no hassles.
Whether parents have tots or teens in tow, Santa Barbara is a crowd pleaser for kids of all ages. Nature and the great outdoors? Check. Family-friendly museums and historic attractions? Abundant. Affordable and comfortable accommodations? Plentiful. Santa Barbara’s manageable size, easy-going pace and friendly locals add to the family travel experience—no lines, no expensive admissions, no hassles. Hike-friendly mountains, nature preserves, recreational lakes, skateboard parks, numerous beaches and scenic bike paths offer endless outdoor family fun. 20+ interactive museums and kid-centric cultural attractions promise to engage minds and stoke the imagination—all under the umbrella of fun, of course! The County is home to three of California’s 21 missions: Old Mission Santa Barbara, La Purisima Mission State Historic Park and Mission Santa Ines.

In addition to the ever popular Ty Warner Sea Center, Santa Barbara Zoo, Museum of Natural History and Maritime Museum, special interests can be cultivated at the unassuming Carriage and Western Arts Museum, South Coast Railroad Museum, Susan Quinlan Doll & Teddy Bear Museum and Surfing Museum.

**Click Cue:** Go to “Kid Friendly” on SantaBarbaraCA.com for more family travel resources.

### Animal Planet

A land of offbeat animal encounters, Santa Barbara offers families many opportunities to get in touch with the wild side. From the Ty Warner Sea Center and the Museum of Natural History to the Carpinteria Tidepools and Quicksilver Miniature Horse Farm and Ostrich Land, Santa Barbara is home to a wide assortment of Earth’s little (and not so little) creatures. The picturesque Santa Barbara Zoo features over 500 exotic animals, including giraffes, elephants and leopards. The *California Trails exhibit* complex features threatened and endangered California natives like the California Condor, Channel Island foxes, bald eagles, California desert tortoises and threatened reptiles and amphibians native to the nearby Los Padres National Forest, underscoring the Zoo’s dedication to preservation and conservation in the natural world.
You'll find culture and creativity around every corner in Santa Barbara—it's impossible not to notice our community’s artistic spirit and passion for the visual aesthetic. It might sound like bragging, but it’s totally true that few cities of Santa Barbara’s small size can match the quality and diversity of its artistic and cultural offerings, which include 50 museums and galleries and a wide range of stellar performance venues like The Granada Theatre and Santa Barbara Bowl. The performing arts calendar is busy year-round with local theatre groups, opera and dance companies, chamber orchestras, a
symphony orchestra and more taking the stage. Artists and musicians from around the world make frequent stops in Santa Barbara on their touring schedules—the city is the biggest cultural hub between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Santa Barbara also has a thriving literary scene (authors TC Boyle, Pico Iyer and Sue Grafton have homes here), and the film industry has an equally strong presence.

Artistic Adventures
Santa Barbara offers an array of artistic adventures that will tap into your creative side and leave you feeling inspired. Watch artists working in their studios, which are open to the public year-round by appointment through Santa Barbara Studio Artists. Meet your own inner artiste at Artiste Gallery & Tasting Studio, a combination art studio/gallery and wine-tasting room in Los Olivos. Take a paintbrush in one hand to dabble on canvas, while holding a wine glass in the other. Rethink the way you view discarded materials at Art From Scrap. Take a photography workshop with Sheppard Photography or the Brooks Institute of Photography. Sway your hips to the rhythms of Salsa music in Santa Barbara Salsa classes for beginners and intermediates. Dance the night away during Tango Wednesdays at the romantic Café Buenos Aires. Unearth your inner garden designer and master gardening techniques with inspiring classes and workshops offered by the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. The Garden also offers a painting class that teaches how to capture the structure and beauty of native wildflowers in vibrant watercolors.
A thriving floriculture industry stretches from the orchid-growing greenhouses of Carpinteria to the flower fields of Lompoc.
Santa Barbara County’s flower power goes beyond the green movement. A thriving floriculture industry stretches from the orchid-growing greenhouses of Carpinteria in the south to the seed-producing flower fields of Lompoc in the north. Year-round growers like Gallup & Stribling (America’s largest orchid farm), Cal-Orchid and Santa Barbara Orchid Estate welcome the public.

Santa Barbara Botanic Garden is set on 65 acres of sloping foothill land above the city, offering beautiful beds of native plants and 5.5 miles of scenic trails that lead past more than 1,000 California plant species. The extraordinary 37-acre Ganna Walska Lotusland in Montecito showcases an extravagant collection of gardens comprising thousands of varieties of rare and exotic plants. Casa del Herrero, completed in 1925, is an impeccably preserved 11-acre Montecito estate designed by renowned local architect George Washington Smith with extensive gardens created by a trio of local legends: landscape architect Ralph Stevens and horticulturists Peter Reidel and Lockwood de Forest.

Flower lovers can see 20,000 roses in bloom at Rose Story Farm in Carpinteria. The working farm is open to the public for tours April-October. The Mission Rose Garden across from Mission Santa Barbara is also in full bloom during rose season.

Click Cue: Read the “Flora & Fauna” press release in the Media section of SantaBarbaraCA.com.
Santa Barbara’s aphrodisiac credentials are tried and true.
A premier destination for romance, Santa Barbara’s aphrodisiac credentials are tried and true. Countless couples flock here to woo, wed and honeymoon, and to relish in and rekindle romance. Santa Barbara is steeped in romantic history, from the nuptials of Hollywood icons like Sir Laurence Olivier, Clark Gable and Rock Hudson to the weddings of modern day leading ladies like Gwyneth Paltrow, Sandra Bullock and Mira Sorvino. Thousands of “regular” couples wed here every year, too. Not only is Santa Barbara one of the top destination wedding locations in the U.S., it’s also a honeymoon hotspot (we have JFK and Jackie O. to thank for starting the trend) and a popular romantic getaway. Luxurious accommodations popular with the red carpet regulars include San Ysidro Ranch, Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara and Bacara Resort & Spa.

Click Cue: Read the “Amour Along the American Riviera” press release in the Media section of SantaBarbaraCA.com to find out more about Santa Barbara’s romantic side.
Santa Barbara looks as good in real life as she does on the big screen...

**Click Cue:** Visit SantaBarbaraCA.com/filmtour for Santa Barbara film credits, suggested movie tour itineraries, a guide to *It’s Complicated* locations, Film Festival information and a list of hotels with star-studded histories—including Charlie Chaplin’s Montecito Inn.
An ideal place to expand the mind, pamper the body and soothe the spirit
Santa Barbara exudes good vibes, and visitors are encouraged to tap into that calming energy. It’s an ideal place to expand the mind, pamper the body and soothe the spirit. Retreat centers, yoga studios and day spas abound. The Bacara Resort & Spa and Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara sit at the high end of the resort spa category, while many boutique hotels and smaller properties offer spa services onsite or in-room. Canary Hotel partners with neighboring Float Spa, and Harbor View Inn has its own intimate spa facility. In addition to Float, Le Reve and Avia are the top downtown day spas.

For those looking to continue their yoga practice while on the road, Yoga Soup and Santa Barbara Yoga Center offer a broad range of daily classes and cater to traveling yogis with mats for rent. Perched in a tranquil mountain setting overlooking the Pacific, White Lotus Foundation is the place to go for personal yoga retreats, group retreats and yoga training courses. Guests are invited to take advantage of the grounds’ hiking trails, massage services, library, swimming holes and meditation sites.

La Casa de Maria Retreat Center in Montecito has been operating since 1955 and is open to individuals and couples for private spiritual retreats in addition to their ongoing calendar of specialized retreats. Om…

Click Cue: Go to “Spas & Wellness” on SantaBarbaraCA.com for company listings.
Shopping in Santa Barbara is pure bag-filling pleasure, whether you are on the hunt for vintage accessories, original art or stylish souvenirs. Even window shopping is rewarding. Inviting open air malls and a pedestrian-friendly downtown lined with shops and cafés invite you to wander along, exploring at a slow, leisurely pace (a.k.a. Santa Barbara speed). Downtown State Street is full of locally owned boutiques with a smattering of chain stores mixed in. Paseo Nuevo is the retail core of downtown, an open air mall that spans two city blocks from Canon Perdido Street to Ortega Street. Smaller fountain-adorned paseos like La Arcada Court, Victoria Court, El Paseo and Arlington Plaza are big on ambiance and offer eclectic shops and eateries. On upper State Street, La Cumbre Plaza is an upscale, outdoor shopping mall with dozens of retailers including Tiffany & Co., Louis Vuitton and Macy’s. By the waterfront, The Funk Zone is a hotbed of surf shops and beach wear. In Montecito, Coast Village Road (Santa Barbara’s mini version of Beverly Hills’ Rodeo Drive) offers luxury boutiques, galleries and home décor shops, and the Upper Village also has a cluster of charming shops including the iconic Wendy Foster-Pierre Lafond boutiques. Summerland and Carpinteria are the go-to shopping spots for antiques and home and garden wares.

Click Cue: “Shopping” listings for the entire county are on SantaBarbaraCA.com.
Santa Barbara is a hotbed for entrepreneurs, innovation, originals and “firsts.”

The original #1 Motel 6 opened in Santa Barbara in 1962 and is still operating today, offering affordable lodging just steps from the beach. Freshly renovated, it was the first of the hotel chain’s properties to unveil their new modern look in 2009. In 1970, Kinko’s started as a copy shop in an 8-by-12-foot storefront next to a hamburger stand in Isla Vista catering to University of California Santa Barbara students. Today, it’s part of the global FedEx Kinko’s brand.

The original Sambo’s restaurant opened in Santa Barbara in the 1957, and today, it is the only remaining of the once controversial chain which fell into disrepute during the civil rights movement because of its name.

The idea for McDonald’s Egg McMuffin was hatched in Santa Barbara in 1968 by longtime franchise owner, the late Herb Peterson. The Tri Tip cut of beef originated on the Central Coast in the 1950s, and is best known today served in “Santa Maria-style” barbecue.

Al Merrick, arguably the world’s most famous surfboard shaper, started Channel Islands Surfboards in Santa Barbara in 1969, and their surfboard factory is currently located in Carpinteria, a stone’s throw from the legendary Rincon surf break. The flagship retail store in Santa Barbara’s Funk Zone, one block from the beach, is the only place in the world where you can purchase Santa Barbara branded CIS apparel. Another famous surf brand, Mr. Zog’s Sex Wax was invented in 1972 in Goleta by chemist Nate Skinner and surfer Frederick Charles Herzog III. The brand remains a leading surfboard (and now snowboard) wax producer from its Carpinteria headquarters.

Decker’s Outdoor Corp., the company behind UGG Australia Footwear, Simple Shoes and TEVA sandals, is headquartered in Santa Barbara, too.
The American soap opera “Santa Barbara” (1984-1993) was set in Santa Barbara. The show was hugely popular overseas and it introduced people around the world to Santa Barbara. The current cult-hit TV show “Psych” is set in Santa Barbara as well. The lead character is a “psychic detective” for the Santa Barbara Police Department. While some scenic b-roll was filmed of Santa Barbara, the USA Network show is actually filmed in Canada.

Sue Grafton, author of the best-selling crime fiction “Alphabet Series” (A is for Alibi, B is for Burglar...), is a Santa Barbara resident. The fictional town of Santa Teresa, where private investigator Kinsey Millhone lives and works, is based on Santa Barbara. The sights, scents and sounds she describes are pure Santa Barbara, including the beach front path where Kinsey jogs and the Spanish style homes. While State Street keeps its name, she made slight changes for some other recognizable locales, for example, Montecito is “Montebello” and Goleta is “Colgate.”

The late Julia Child lived in Santa Barbara, shopped at the farmers’ markets, frequented local restaurants and actively gave back to the community. Some of her favorite places to dine included La Super Rica Taqueria, Wine Cask, Downey’s, Lucky’s and San Ysidro Ranch. The Julia Child rose, named in her honor, is planted in the Mission Rose Garden as well as Rose Story Farm in Carpinteria.

Michael Jackson’s Neverland Ranch is located in northern Santa Barbara County. His fans continue to make the drive on Figueroa Mountain Road to see the gates and pay their respects to the King of Pop.

Click Cue: Watch the “Inside Santa Barbara” web videos on SantaBarbaraCA.com to find out where high profile local residents like actor Rob Lowe, reality TV star Andrew Firestone and Iron Chef Cat Cora like to eat, drink and play in their home town.