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**Visit Santa Barbara’s Annual Tourism Luncheon to Honor Travel Industry**

***Event coincides with National Travel & Tourism Week;***

***Features keynote speech by acclaimed travel writer Pico Iyer***

What: **Annual Tourism Luncheon**, presented by **Visit Santa Barbara**

Keynote speaker: Renowned travel writer **Pico Iyer**

When: **Wed., May 4**. Registration at 11:30 a.m.; program noon to 1:30 p.m.

Where: **Coral Casino Beach & Cabana Club**, 1260 Channel Drive in Santa Barbara

Cost: $65 for Visit Santa Barbara members; $75 for non-members

Registration: [Santabarbaraca.com/rsvp/](http://santabarbaraca.com/rsvp/)

Public info: [membership@santabarbaraca.com](mailto:membership@santabarbaraca.com) or (805) 966-9222

**Santa Barbara, Calif. (April 29, 2016)** — [**Visit Santa Barbara**](http://santabarbaraca.com/) will host its **Annual Tourism Luncheon Wed., May 4** at the **Coral Casino Beach & Cabana Club**, 1260 Channel Drive in Santa Barbara. Registration is at 11:30 a.m., and the program runs from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Coinciding with [**National Travel & Tourism Week**](https://www.ustravel.org/events/national-travel-and-tourism-week), which is celebrated nationwide May 1 to 7, the annual luncheon honors the hospitality industry and highlights the vital importance of travel and tourism to Santa Barbara’s economy. Visit Santa Barbara will present its Annual Destination Awards, the Rivvies (named after “The American Riviera”), to exceptional members of the community who have contributed to the success of the travel industry.

This year’s keynote speaker, celebrated travel writer Pico Iyer, will discuss “Perspectives on Place: A New View of The American Riviera.” Iyer has spent his lifetime exploring places near and far, from Easter Island to Ethiopia. His popular TED talks have been viewed by millions, and his singular outlook promises a fresh look at the paradise enjoyed by South Coast workers, residents and visitors alike.

At this year’s luncheon, Visit Santa Barbara will focus on thanking the region’s many industry partners whose efforts spark visitor interest, provide unforgettable experiences and keep visitors coming back. From frontline workers to behind-the-scenes managers, from volunteers to friendly locals who help tourists find their way, everyday people make Santa Barbara the special place it is, and are the spirit and soul of this destination that attracts 6.1 million visitors annually.

Annual spending by travelers to the South Coast totals more than $1.5 billion, supports more than 12,000 jobs and generates more than $45 million in yearly tax revenues, according to Destination Analysts, a tourism market research firm.

Nearly 200 community members, including hospitality professionals and elected officials, are expected to attend the luncheon. In addition to honoring industry partners, Visit Santa Barbara will introduce new incoming members of its board of directors, and outgoing board members will be recognized for their contributions and service.

The Annual Tourism Luncheon is open to the public. The cost of the luncheon is $65 for Visit Santa Barbara members and $75 for non-members. Attendees will receive a copy of Pico Iyer’s new book, “The Art of Stillness.” To purchase tickets, visit [SantaBarbaraCA.com/rsvp/](http://santabarbaraca.com/rsvp/), contact [membership@santabarbaraca.com](mailto:membership@santabarbaraca.com) or call Visit Santa Barbara at (805) 966-9222.

**ABOUT NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK**

Now in its 33rd year, National Travel & Tourism week spotlights the wide impact of the American tourism industry on jobs and local economies nationwide. Travel is more than just an enjoyable experience: It bolsters the economy in significant ways. According to the [U.S. Travel Association](https://www.ustravel.org/answersheet), during 2015, direct spending by resident and international travelers in the U.S. averaged $2.6 billion a day — that’s $108.1 million per hour. Direct spending totaled $650.8 billion for the year. Travel spending supported 15.1 million jobs, and $147.9 billion was generated in tax revenue for federal, state and local governments. One of nine U.S. jobs depend on travel and tourism. As part of National Travel & Tourism Week, [Visit California](http://www.visitcalifornia.com/) will release its annual economic impact report on May 2, which will detail state statistics.

**ABOUT VISIT SANTA BARBARA**

Visit Santa Barbara is a nonprofit 501(c)(6) organization jointly funded by the City of Santa Barbara, the County of Santa Barbara, the South Coast Tourism Business Improvement District and by a membership of hospitality-related businesses. The primary mission of Visit Santa Barbara is to enhance the economies of the City of Santa Barbara, South Coast communities and Santa Barbara County areas through tourism marketing that increases business revenue, tax revenue and creates jobs.