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**What’s New in Santa Barbara: Winter 2015**

A new year and a change of season is the perfect time to try something new ­– and Santa Barbara delivers myriad novel experiences in the coming months, from international festivals to new restaurants and tasting rooms, sure to please winter travelers.

While the nights get darker, the stars shine more brightly, as Oscar nominees converge downtown at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival in early February. The same month brings the International Wine Film Festival – the first of its kind to combine wine-centric cinema with premium tastings. Santa Barbara Beer Garden puts the region’s fast-growing craft beer scene front and center on Feb. 20. Then exotic blooms get ready for their close-up at the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show in March.

Read on for a round-up of Santa Barbara’s newest attractions and key events this winter, from the landmark anniversaries of beloved family-friendly institutions to a barbecue joint that’s on tap to become the area’s hottest new eatery.

1. **6th annual Film Feast (Feb. 3 to 13)**

Coinciding with the Santa Barbara International Film Festival (Feb. 3 to 13), the sixth annual **Film Feast** features 11 days of unforgettable VIP prix-fixe menus, premier plates and pours, and exclusive lodging packages celebrating Santa Barbara’s vibrant food and film culture. This year’s Film Feast theme is “The Perfect Pairing.” Explore the area’s diverse culinary scene while theater hopping throughout the city. As part of the promotion, select restaurants and hotels will offer bottles of limited-edition **“Red Carpet Red” wine**. [**www.SBFilmFeast.com**](http://www.SBFilmFeast.com)

1. **31st** **Santa Barbara International Film Festival** **(Feb. 3 to 13)**

Filmmakers, moviegoers, business insiders and Hollywood stars alike will flock to The American Riviera for the **31st** **Santa Barbara International Film Festival**,Feb. 3 to 13. Presenting the best in independent and international cinema, the world-renowned festival takes over the area’s historic theaters and movie houses, transforming downtown Santa Barbara into a must-visit destination for film lovers. SBIFF features 200+ film screenings, tributes honoring film stars (this year, Johnny Depp!), and panels with Oscar nominees. [**http://sbiff.org**](http://sbiff.org)

1. **Monarch butterfly season (November through February)**

Goleta is aflutter with monarch butterflies November through February, when these orange-and-black beauties return to spend the winter in the **Goleta Monarch Butterfly Grove** (part of the 137-acre Ellwood Mesa open space) and 9.3-acre **Coronado Butterfly Preserve**. The monarchs dangle from eucalyptus branches in the early morning and launch into silent flight as the sun warms their wings — a bewitching sight! Docents are on hand on weekends at the Goleta Monarch Butterfly Grove to share facts and lore. [**www.goletabutterflygrove.com**](http://www.goletabutterflygrove.com)

1. **Coral** **Reef** **Bar**

Guests of Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara can now experience California's only aquarium cocktail bar. The striking, oval-shaped **Coral Reef Bar** is a 275-gallon aquarium built to support more than 350 species of fish. Located in the open-air atrium in the center of Tydes Restaurant (inside the legendary and exclusive Coral Casino Beach and Cabana Club), the bar features a crudo menu, as well as specialty cocktails and local craft brews and wines, and a spectacular view of the ocean. [**www.fourseasons.com/santabarbara/dining/lounges/coral\_reef\_bar**](http://www.fourseasons.com/santabarbara/dining/lounges/coral_reef_bar)

1. **Inaugural International Wine Film Festival** **(Feb. 14 to March 5)**

The inaugural **International Wine Film Festival** is a first-of-its-kind film fest running Feb. 14 to March 5 in Santa Barbara County. Screenings of wine-themed movies, short films and videos will be accompanied by tastings in idyllic vineyard settings. “There are other traditional film festivals in wine country locations, but this is the first that solely focuses on films using wine as a theme and brings audiences into the vineyard to watch them,” says Wil Fernandez, the festival’s founder. The three-week festival culminates with an award ceremony during the 16th annual World of Pinot Noir event at Bacara Resort & Spa. [**www.winefilmfestival.com**](http://www.winefilmfestival.com)

1. **Channel Islands National Park** **documentary (March 5)**

Channel Islands National Park celebrates the 2016 U.S. National Parks Service centennial all year long with screenings of a new documentary, **“West of the West: Tales from California’s Channel Islands.”** Filled with footage of these stunningly beautiful and lesser-known islands off the Central Coast, the filmshares remarkable stories from people who were an indelible part of the Channel Islands’ history, including the “Lone Woman of San Nicolas,” who was portrayed in the children’s classic, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. The film premieres at The Arlington Theatre on Sat., March 5. Film: [**www.thecifilm.com**](http://www.thecifilm.com)Islands:[**www.nps.gov/chis/index.htm**](http://www.nps.gov/chis/index.htm)

1. **Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History centennial**

Known for the huge blue whale skeleton outside its entrance, the **Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History** celebrates its centennial in 2016. Set in a scenic oak grove in Mission Canyon, the museum has inspired generations with its hands-on exhibits about the region’s plants, birds, paleontology, Chumash folk culture and more. The museum will host a Community Birthday Party on Jan. 24 with free admission and birthday cake. Don’t forget to visit the newly renovated Palmer Observatory and the Gladwin Planetarium — the only one found between San Francisco and LA. [**http://sbnature.org**](http://sbnature.org)

1. **Santa** **Barbara Orchid Show** **(March 4** **to 6)**

Flower fans and admirers of exotic beauty, save the dates. From March 4 to 6, the **Santa Barbara International Orchid Show** returns to Earl Warren Showgrounds with a new theme: “Wild World of Orchids!” Now in its 71st year, the event is one of the largest and oldest celebrations of orchids in the country, showcasing thousands of blooms in every imaginable shape, color and texture. The three-day orchid show highlights horticultural innovations and features more than 50 exhibitors, plant sales and demonstrations. [**https://sborchidshow.com**](https://sborchidshow.com)

1. **The Bodega**

Take a step back in time at Standing Sun Wines’ new tasting room, **The Bodega**, located in the 200-year-old original *bodega* (wine cellar) of the historic Casa de la Guerra. Built in the 19th century, Casa de la Guerra was home to José de la Guerra, the fifth *comandante*, the highest ranking officer, of the city’s presidio (or fortress). The 400-square-foot room, which now displays white-washed adobe walls that help keep the wine cool, is the oldest Santa Barbara wine cellar on record. Stop by The Bodega Thursdays through Sundays, and toast to Santa Barbara's rich — and aromatic — history. [**www.standingsunwines.com**](http://www.standingsunwines.com)

1. **Santa Barbara Beer Garden (Feb. 20)**

Celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2016, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden will host its third annual **Santa Barbara Beer Garden** on Sat., Feb. 20. This outdoors, small-scale beer fest showcases local craft brews uniquely paired with the garden’s scenic horticultural displays. Beer stations spring up among wildflower meadows, redwood groves and other special places. Some vendors even create special brews for the event, incorporating locally sourced botanicals. Come by and taste extremely rare, small-batch beers. This event always sells out. [**www.sbbg.org**](http://www.sbbg.org)

1. **M. Special Brewing Co.**

After making movies and music videos for some of the hottest artists of our time (The White Stripes, Jack Johnson, The Shins), brothers Emmett and Brendan Malloy have set their sights on crafting something even more provocative: tasty craft beer. Named after their grandfather’s race car, **M. Special Brewing Co**. opened its Goleta taproom to showcase a variety of brews, from crisp lagers and pale ales to saisons and interesting IPAs – all brewed on site. [**http://mspecialbrewco.com**](http://mspecialbrewco.com/)

1. **Wildwood Kitchen**

Julienne’s sister restaurant, **Wildwood Kitchen**, opened its doors in December 2015 inside The Mill — the new food-and-libations epicenter of Santa Barbara’s emerging SoCo (South of Cota) neighborhood. Acclaimed chef and owner Justin West fuses traditional southern-style American barbecue with a Santa Barbara ranch influence for a mouthwatering menu. Made of reclaimed wood from an early 20th-century mill, the complex boasts a vintage patio with outdoor picnic tables where diners can dig into fall-off-the-bone pork ribs, moist Santa Maria-style trip tip, chicken-fried trout, braised market greens, basil mashed potatoes and more. [**www.WildwoodKitchenSB.com**](http://www.WildwoodKitchenSB.com)

1. **Marbella** **restaurant at Hyatt Santa Barbara**

With sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean, **Marbella** at the Hyatt Santa Barbara provides an ultimate American Riviera experience, serving Spanish cuisine infused with locally sourced produce and ingredients. This new bistro-style restaurant combines modern and traditional cooking styles to create exceptional dining. Try the sea bass with sage butter or the empanadas with caramelized bananas. Marbella offers an unmatched setting at the water’s edge. [**SantaBarbara.Hyatt.com**](http://santabarbara.hyatt.com/en/hotel/home.html)

1. **Winter olive oil releases**

’Tis the season to visit **Global Gardens**, a charming farm stand in Los Olivos, where guests taste and learn about award-winning olive oils and other artisanal products. The winter releases are ready to savor: extra virgin olive oil (olive juice obtained and packaged only days after harvest) and organic Cerignola (oil from uniquely large, Italian olives), available for limited time only. Those who join the Global Gardens Club January through March receive a fresh jar of Artichoke Ambrosia, a vegan wonder-food spread![**www.globalgardensonline.com**](http://www.globalgardensonline.com)

1. **Gray whale migration (through May)**

From December through May, the Santa Barbara Channel hosts one of nature's greatest spectacles: **the** **Pacific gray whale migration**. More than 28,000 of these graceful mammals hug the coastline in their migration from Baja California, off the coast of Mexico, to Alaska. As they make their way north in mid-February, mothers and calves can be spotted swimming just yards away from shore. Book a whale watching tour with the Santa Barbara Sailing Center or Condor Express for a rich and rewarding voyage with these magnificent animals.

**ABOUT SANTA BARBARA**

Voted [“**Best Beach Town**”](http://www.sunset.com/travel/sunset-travel-awards-beach-town) by *Sunset* magazine in its 2015 travel awards and one of *Condé Nast Traveler*’s [**“30 Best Small Cities in America**”](http://www.cntraveler.com/galleries/2015-07-29/the-30-best-small-cities-in-america-readers-choice-awards-2014?mbid=nl_072915_Daily&CNDID=27536286&spMailingID=7943581&spUserID=NDk0OTY2MTIyMDgS1&spJobID=723886198&spReportId=NzIzODg2MTk4S0) in its 2015 Readers’ Choice Awards, Santa Barbara is located just 92 miles north of Los Angeles and 332 miles south of San Francisco, on the Pacific coastline. Visitors can arrive via scenic Highway 101, train, bus or by flying into Santa Barbara Municipal Airport (SBA) or Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). For travel and accommodation information and to request a free copy of the official *Santa Barbara Visitors Magazine*, contact Visit Santa Barbara at (800) 676-1266 or (805) 966-9222, email [**tourism@santabarbaraca.com**](mailto:tourism@santabarbaraca.com) or visit [**SantaBarbaraCA.com**](http://www.santabarbaraca.com)**.** Visitor information is also available at the Visitor Center, 1 Garden St. (at Cabrillo Boulevard).

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**FOR MEDIA ONLY**

**High-res photos available at** [**https://www.dropbox.com/sh/l47hygdxclfe3ol/AADLxvwK9UAwVemylcZWNqs8a?dl=0**](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/l47hygdxclfe3ol/AADLxvwK9UAwVemylcZWNqs8a?dl=0)**. Contact** [**PR@santabarbaraca.com**](mailto:PR@santabarbaraca.com) **for additional images.**

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