

# SANTA BARBARA

THE AMERICAN RIVIERA®

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## SPANISH ACCENTS:

### *Architecture on the American Riviera® Takes its Lead From the Sunny Mediterranean*

**SANTA BARBARA, Calif.** — Few cities can claim architecture as unique as Santa Barbara's: a satisfying blend of Moorish, Spanish Baroque, Spanish and Portuguese Colonial, Andalusian and other Mediterranean styles, plus aspects borrowed from Hopi and Pueblo adobes in our own American Southwest. The result is a consistent, and consistently pleasing, central aesthetic, with a series of subgenres – chief among them Spanish Revival and Mission Revival – that have created a distinctive architectural identity. Characterized by red tile roofs, heavy wood beams, plaster walls, soft lines, arched facades, cozy balconies, intricate tile work, garden courtyards and flower-strewn wrought iron details, Santa Barbara's buildings reflect a unified vision forged in a crucible of diversity.

A watershed in local architecture occurred after the 1925 earthquake, which leveled scores of buildings throughout the city. After the disaster, the newly established Architectural Board of Review created stringent guidelines requiring that all buildings in the downtown area be designed in the Spanish Mediterranean style. What sounds, perhaps, like a radical stroke simply reaffirmed the style that had been popular in California since the 1890s.

Today, restored 19th-century adobes blend with Spanish Revival and Mission Revival mansions and homes, while a smattering of Cape Cod cottages, California bungalows and Victorian grande dames round out the architectural pastiche. But it is structures that have their antecedents in the Mediterranean, and Spain in particular, that have made Santa Barbara's soothing architectural aesthetic among the most recognized in the world.

## RED TILE WALKING TOUR

Many of the city's 70-plus designated landmarks can be enjoyed on the self-guided **Red Tile Walking Tour** (see Visitors Guide for map and info). Encompassing a 12-block area of downtown, the tour highlights the city's major red-roof landmarks, among them the **Santa Barbara County Courthouse**, **Casa de la Guerra**, **El Paseo** and its famous "**Street in Spain**" and the **Lobero Theatre**.

## **SPANISH COLONIAL ADOBES**

In the beginning there were the stick-and-reed huts of the original Chumash inhabitants. Next came the adobes, thick-walled whitewashed buildings with arched arcades and courtyards favored by Spanish colonizers. A few of those original structures remain. One of the best examples awaits at **El Presidio de Santa Barbara Historic Park** (805-965-0093). The landmark **Presidio Chapel** is the largest of the El Presidio buildings, which were built in 1782 as part of the last Spanish military outpost in California. Reconstructed on the original foundation, the chapel contains the padres' and *commandante's* quarters and reproductions of 18th-century-era décor. A 15-minute slide show provides a fascinating impression of life in colonial California. Across the street from the Presidio Chapel is Santa Barbara's oldest adobe, **El Cuartel** (1788). It was the residence of José Jesus Valenzuela, the fort's gatekeeper in California's pre-statehood period.

One of the city's most famous architectural landmarks is **Casa de la Guerra** (805-966-6961). Begun in 1819 and completed in 1827, the casa is among the most coveted remnants of Santa Barbara's Spanish-Mexican heritage. The U-shaped adobe built by **José de la Guerra** was remodeled in 1923 and became a popular public gathering place. Today, it is a museum reflecting the period from 1828 to 1858, when de la Guerra resided in the casa. Nearby are three other prominent homes in this style: the **Hill-Carrillo Adobe** (1826) at 11 East Carrillo Street, the **Lugo Adobe** (1830) at 114 East De La Guerra Street and the **Rochin Adobe** (1856) at 820 Santa Barbara Street.

## **GRECO-ROMAN LANDMARK**

The most visited landmark in the city, **Mission Santa Barbara** (805-682-4713), was founded in 1786 as the tenth of 21 Franciscan missions in California. **Antonio Ripoll**, who designed the "Queen of the Missions," chose a Greco-Roman architectural style that features columns and statuary on the cornice. The Mission has a famous sandstone facade based on a plate from the Spanish edition of a Roman architecture book by Vitruvius, dating to 27 B.C., and is distinguished by twin bell towers, which no other California mission has. The edifice stands on a plateau offering a spectacular view over the city to the Channel Islands. Visitors can attend mass on Sundays and take a self- or docent-led tour through the Mission museum, the gardens, the courtyards, the chapel and the cemetery, where 4,000 Chumash Indians are buried.

## **MISSION REVIVAL MASTERWORKS**

As early as the 1890s, Santa Barbara architects were looking to the California missions for inspiration. Among the most important local practitioners of the resulting Mission Revival style was **Arthur Page Brown**. His residential works, five large homes on upper Garden Street completed in 1895 and known collectively as **Crocker Row**, feature such benchmark design elements as scalloped and pointed-arch

windows. You'll know you've reached Crocker Row when you see "Rover," a 300-pound bronze dog sculpture that stands guard in the front yard at 2010 Garden Street.

**Francis W. Wilson** was another revivalist architect. His **Southern Pacific Railroad Depot** (1905) on Chapala Street, now the Amtrak station (located next to another landmark, the historic Moreton Bay Fig Tree), is one of Santa Barbara's few remaining structures in this style.

### **SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL**

The most important 20th-century building in Santa Barbara, second only to the mission in overall architectural significance, is the Spanish-Moorish **Santa Barbara County Courthouse** (805-962-6464), designed by **William Mooser III** and completed in 1929. The ornate edifice is considered one of the most impressive examples of the style in the United States.

The building includes numerous impressive details: a Roman triumphal arch framed by a magnificent sandstone entrance, gorgeous sunken gardens, elaborate tile work, open loggia corridors, painted ceilings, wrought-iron chandeliers, carved wood doors, and an 80-foot clock tower offering 360-degree views of the mountains, the ocean and the city. Don't miss the second-floor Mural Room, home to a stunning life-size wall painting created by Cecil B. De Mille's scenic designer, Dan Sayre Grosbeck, and depicting the history of Santa Barbara.

The first result of the Architectural Review Board's post-earthquake conversion of Santa Barbara architecture from Anglo Main Street to Hispanic *pueblo* was **El Paseo**. Completed in 1924, the collection of shops, linked by intimate passageways and surrounding a courtyard, still exudes the spirit and charm of an old-world plaza. Visitors delight in the cool "Street in Spain" walkways, which partially encompass the historic **De La Guerra Adobe**.

Spanish Colonial Revival architecture is reflected in several landmarks, two by architect **Reginald Johnson**. One is the **United States Post Office** (1937), which, with its Spanish architectural bones and decorative motifs derived from the then-popular Moderne style, is also not your average government building. Johnson's other building is the exquisite **Four Seasons Resort** (805-969-2261), whose gorgeous lines and impeccable grounds typify gracious Santa Barbara living at its best.

Another Spanish Revival landmark is the **Arlington Center for the Performing Arts** (805-963-4408), designed by architect **James Pluckett** and completed in 1931. The Arlington's details include a magnificent rooftop spire, a gracefully arched loggia, an interior that features a mock Spanish village sketched along the interior walls and a curved ceiling that creates an illusory night sky.

Santa Barbara's most famous architect was **George Washington Smith**. Film star Mary Pickford chose Smith to design a house for her and husband Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. (It was never built). While Smith created some lovely estates in various styles, his name is synonymous with Spanish Colonial architecture. Known primarily for his residential designs, Smith also joined architect Lurah Riggs in 1924 to design the **Lobero Theatre** (805-966-4946), California's oldest continuously operating theater.

Smith is also credited with designing the 11-acre Andalusian-style **Casa del Herrero** (805-565-5653) estate in Montecito. Built in 1925 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the property is now a living museum comprising not only the house but also its elaborate Moorish gardens and a treasure trove of European paintings and decorative arts and antiques dating from the 13th to the 18th centuries. Dazzling Mediterranean tile work, Spanish doors and window shutters, heavy corbels and a ceiling from a 15th-century Spanish convent are just some of what awaits the architecturally interested visitor at this storied destination. Reservations required.

Another grand home created in the Spanish Colonial vernacular is **Casa Dorinda** (805- 969-8011), designed by architect **Carlton Winslow** for Henry W. H. Bliss and his wife, Anna Dorinda Blaksley. One of the largest of the early Montecito mansions when it was completed in 1919, the 48-acre property is a retirement community today. Private tours are available.

### **BED, BREAKFAST AND ARCHITECTURE**

Adding some enticing fillips to Santa Barbara's tasteful architectural mélange are a collection of historic bed-and-breakfast inns built in styles ranging from Italianate to Victorian to California Craftsman. Among the more impressive are the **Cheshire Cat Inn** (805-569-1610), which boasts two Victorian structures dating to 1894; the Italianate Victorian **Simpson House Inn** (805-963-7067), built in 1874; the California Craftsman-style **Old Yacht Club Inn** (805-963-8191); and the purely Italianate **Upham Hotel** (805-962-0058). Built as a banker's residence in 1871, the stately two-story clapboard Upham features carved cornice pieces, brackets, cupolas and other elements reminiscent of New England's architectural vernacular.

While Victorian, Craftsman, Italianate and other styles are scattered around town, Santa Barbara's identity is uniquely linked to Mediterranean architectural forms. The white walls, the rounded windows and corners, the Moorish towers, the red roofs, the wrought iron and the hand-painted tile – these elements define Santa Barbara, emblazon the city into the memory of visitors, and call them back time and again to the singular beauty of the American Riviera®.

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4/2007