

SANTA BARBARA

THE AMERICAN RIVIERA®

CONFERENCE + VISITORS BUREAU + FILM COMMISSION

OUTDOOR & URBAN ADVENTURES IN SANTA BARBARA: *Vacation on the Edge of Adventure*

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — Active travelers shouldn't be fooled by that Santa Barbara bliss, the easygoing attitude that lingers over the city like a sky-written message saying: RELAX. Because there's another side to Santa Barbara, and it's all about action and adventure, a core component of the city's identity. Here, waking up early doesn't mean you'll beat the crowd to the beach. Cruise the oceanfront bike path in the predawn darkness and you'll encounter runners, walkers, cyclists and inline skaters of all ages who like a healthy serving of "go" before their morning cup of joe.

Look out at the glassy ocean as you walk, jog or bike, and you'll spot swimmers getting in their morning mile, paddle boarders and kayakers silhouetted on the horizon, and outrigger-canoe teams training for an upcoming regatta. The pools are full of swimmers, the yoga and Pilates classes are stretched to capacity, and the stadium stairs at Santa Barbara City College are thrumming with the footfalls of the dawn-patrol cardio gang. Up and down the coast, surfers are hitting the waves.

Welcome to rush hour, American Riviera®-style.

As the sun climbs, other activities kick into gear. Mountain bikers roll down rocky trails, bird watchers scan the shoreline for snowy plovers, equestrians gallop their mounts on the beach and fishermen cast their lines into the lakes, streams and surf. Rock climbers scale cliffs, hang-gliders launch themselves into the wild blue, hikers plunge into favorite trailside swimming holes and sailors unfurl their spinnakers. Golfers hit drives while correcting for a mild sea breeze or the extending limb of a California live oak tree, and dolphin and whale watchers cruise the glistening Santa Barbara Channel.

For the traveler who is not content to spend a week in a hammock and call it a vacation, Santa Barbara is a high-octane paradise with unlimited opportunities for fun, excitement and adventure. With a full spectrum of natural facilities – mountains, hills, ocean, lakes and streams – plus a mild climate and 300 days of sunshine per year, the American Riviera® is *always* right where the action is.

HIT THE WATER, BABY

If it can be done on, under or by the water, it's happening in Santa Barbara – probably right now. Come on and take the plunge.

Kayakers from beginning to expert can visit **Paddle Sports of Santa Barbara** (805-899-4925) at the Harbor, rent a kayak, and within minutes be paddling the local coastline. Or Paddle Sports will arrange for boat transit to **Channel Islands National Park & Marine Sanctuary**, where kayaks stand by for naturalist-led tours that take in such highlights as the largest sea cave in the world. Slip inside this natural cathedral and hang with the local sea lions while experiencing the rhythmic breath of the sea.

The park is also home to some of California's best **SCUBA diving**. The islands' kelp forests host more than 800 species of marine life, and underwater visibility is often 100 feet or more. Divers finning past rock reefs can check out such locals as anemones, starfish, sponges, sea fans, moray eels, octopus, abalone, rock scallops, spiny lobsters, black sea bass, halibut, lingcod and rockfish. Dive boats leave for the islands from SEA Landing at the Harbor. No time for a boat trip? No problem, because many great dive spots are readily accessible just a short fin kick from a sandy shore.

With lots of great places to hook calico bass, sand bass, halibut, white sea bass, rockfish, and more, several local companies offer **sportfishing charters**. Of course, if you'd rather secure the catch of the day without spending the day catching it, visit the **Saturday-morning fish market** at the Harbor, and purchase your favorite fresh fish right from the fishermen's boats.

The Channel Islands are also among the world's prime **whale-watching** grounds, with more than two dozen species present at various times as they follow eons-old migratory routes through the nutrient-rich waters around Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel Islands. **Condor Cruises** (805-882-0088) will put you in the right place to spot gray, humpback and minke whales, plus orcas (killer whales) and five types of dolphins along with sea lions, harbor and elephant seals, and sea otters. Summer visitors often spy 50-ton blue whales – the largest creatures ever to have inhabited the Earth.

SURF TRAILS

With 100 miles of Santa Barbara County coastline to choose from, **surfers** have been flocking to Santa Barbara for decades, especially in winter, when Arctic storms send perfect waves to local beaches and reefs. Beginners head to the gentler surf at places like **Leadbetter**, **Campus Point at UCSB**, and **El Refugio** (about 15 miles north of town), while professionals and expert locals can be found shredding powerful waves at **Jalama** (near Lompoc) and **Hammond's** (just down from the Four Seasons Biltmore) or getting endless rides at **Rincon**, one of the premiere point breaks in the world.

While old-school long-boarders mingle with new-school short-boarders at local beaches, die-hards of other kinds don wet suits for wave-riding and water-skimming adventures on a variety of contemporary craft.

Windsurfers can be seen chop-hopping at a number of local beaches, often alongside kite-surfing experts. Aficionados of this new and radical high-speed, big-air water sport use waves as launching pads to reach heights of 20-plus feet and cover distances of 100 feet and more before returning gracefully to the water and continuing at speeds topping 35 miles per hour. WOW!

Those who want the big air without the learning curve – or the risk – can sign up with **Blue Edge Parasailing** (805-966-5206) at Stearns Wharf, and then ride high while strapped to a billowing parachute at the end of a long cable hooked to a speedboat below.

SAIL AWAY

If you prefer to earn your sea spray at lower speeds beneath well-trimmed sails, then visit the **Santa Barbara Sailing Center** (806-962-2826) in the Harbor. They offer lessons, cruises aboard the 50-foot *Double Dolphin* catamaran, and rentals and charters of small and large boats for anywhere from an hour to a week or more. **Sunset Kidd Sailing Cruises** (805-962-8222) offers chartered leisure sails daily aboard their 18-passenger 41-foot Morgan Out-Island ketch.

In summer, follow the walkway to the end of the Harbor seawall for a great view of the competitors in the weekly **Wednesday-evening regattas**. From that same vantage point, you can almost ride “inside the barrel” with surfers at the “**Sandspit**,” who get tubed just yards from the rocks. Note, however, that it does get wet out there and that the wall may be closed during times of high surf.

OK, it's not *exactly* sailing, but a ride over the wine country in a motorless sailplane has a lot in common. **Windhaven Gliders** (805-688-2517) will tow you to altitude by an engine-powered plane, and when your pilot finds the right thermal, he'll pull the release and send you soaring into the wild blue. You will silently ride invisible waves of wind rising from the vineyards below. Or rise to the skies on a hot air balloon tour over the Santa Ynez Valley with **Adventures Out West** (805-882-1214).

GET FRESH

Of course, Santa Barbara offers plenty of freshwater fun, too, and **Cachuma Lake** (805-568-2461) is right in the middle of it all. Located just over the Santa Ynez Mountains from Santa Barbara and accessible via Highway 154, Cachuma offers camping, boating and great fishing for crappie, small- and large-mouth bass, trout, sunfish, bluegill, catfish and more. Because the lake is a Santa Barbara reservoir, swimming,

water-skiing and other activities involving contact with the water are prohibited. Eagle- and other nature-watching tours, depending on season, enhance the lake experience.

When you just have to have that freshwater swim, the nearby **Santa Ynez River** awaits. The wide, normally slow-flowing river is home to a number of popular swimming areas. Among the best is **Red Rock**, an easy hike from the car park, reached via Paradise Road off Highway 154. (Pick up an “Adventure Pass” for \$5 per day at the ranger station.) The fly-fishing is also good along many sections of the river.

Back at **Los Baños del Mar** (805-966-6110) in Santa Barbara, visitors can grab a workout in the 50-meter outdoor pool located steps from the harbor entrance and SEA Landing. In summer, little ones can splash around in the adjacent kiddy pool while Mom and Dad relax in a chaise, soothed by the gently clicking yacht halyards right...over...*there*.

Another good place for wet-set kids is the wading pool at shady Oak Park. Open in summer, the shallow pool charges no admission and has a lifeguard, making it the perfect place to take a break from sightseeing.

FORE! SWINGERS AHEAD

Santa Barbara County is home to six 18-hole championship **public golf courses** – some on the coast, others set inland among the oaks and hills – as well as a handful of private clubs offering reciprocal playing agreements.

Glen Annie Golf Club (805-968-6400) is a stunning hillside course set on 130 acres in Goleta, Santa Barbara’s suburban neighbor to the north. Coast live oak, Monterey cypress and jacaranda trees enhance the scenery, as do the 58 bunkers, two lakes and great ocean views. Narrow fairways and unforgiving greens make the 6,420-yard, par-71 course challenge enough for most amateurs.

The **Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort** (805-686-7613) in the Danish town of Solvang has two 18-hole courses, the public River Course and the Ranch Course, the latter reserved for Alisal guests. Designed by Billy Bell, the 6,530-yard par-72 championship course includes five par-fives and calls for precise ball striking to navigate the tight layout and barrancas in play on 15 of the 18 holes. The River Course is a challenging 6,800-yard par-72 championship layout loved by locals for its setting beside the Santa Ynez River.

Rated by *Golf Digest* as one of the top 25 public courses in the United States, the Billy Bell-designed **Sandpiper Golf Course** (805-968-5252) is a demanding oceanside gem set on a gorgeous bluff just

down the road from the five-star **Bacara Resort**. Another extraordinary choice is **La Purisima Golf Course** (805-735-8395). Situated on 309 acres of gently rolling oak-studded hills just outside of Lompoc and in the heart of wine country, it offers superb scenery and a true test of skill. For super-easy access in the city proper, there's the **Santa Barbara Golf Club** (805-687-7087), a pleasant, slightly hilly 6,100-yard 18-hole public course.

ROCK RHYTHMS: HIKING & CLIMBING IN SANTA BARBARA

Rising behind Santa Barbara are the rugged Santa Ynez Mountains, home to a good many challenging sandstone faces providing excellent challenges for technical climbers. Two companies, **Adventours Outdoor Excursions** (805-899-2929) and **Adventure Company of Santa Barbara** (805-898-0671), lead experienced rock hounds to the best routes, while first-timers can literally learn the ropes to this demanding, adrenaline-pumping "Zen" sport on some of the easier routes.

Hikers and **backpackers** can explore a nearly infinite number of trails of all lengths and levels of difficulty in the **Los Padres National Forest** (805-968-6640), California's second largest national forest. At least a dozen trailheads await less than a ten-minute drive from downtown, including the **San Ysidro Trail**, **Romero Canyon Trail**, **Tunnel Trail**, **Jesusita Trail** and **Rattlesnake Trail**, to name just a few. Trails skirt steep ridgelines and cool bubbling streams, traverse sunny meadows and drop through shaded fern gardens. Visit santabarbarahikes.com for hiking information including trails and maps or contact **Captain Jacks Tours** (888-810-8687) to arrange a guided hike.

For a quick fix of "city-adjacent" countryside, try a speed walk along the 5 miles of trails and 65 acres of native California flora in the **Santa Barbara Botanic Garden** (805-569-5923), just a two-minute drive from the mission. Redwood groves, poppy fields and plantings of Channel Island scrub – and in spring, meadows of wildflowers – offer a soothing eye-opener to another beautiful morning or a fitting end to a sunny afternoon on the American Riviera®.

Over the mountains just outside of Solvang, a visit to **Nojoqui Park** offers a big experience for very little effort: an easy 10-minute walk along an oak-shaded trail leads to a beautiful 100-foot waterfall. And for even simpler backcountry rambling, join **Cloud Climbers Jeep & Wine Tours** (805-965-6654) for some open-air mountain four-wheeling or a soothing meander through the wine country, with sipping stops liberally sprinkled along the way.

As if Santa Barbara didn't already have a substantial wealth of natural riches, it also happens to be a wintering ground for migrating monarch butterflies. From November through March at the 9.3-acre **Coronado Butterfly Preserve** in north Goleta, you can catch the orange-and-black beauties dangling from eucalyptus branches by the thousands in the early morning and launching into silent, fluttering flight

as the sun warms their wings. Beyond the preserve awaits beautiful **Ellwood Mesa**, with its miles of trails crisscrossing a broad grassy meadow and providing easy access to the nearly empty beach below.

BIKE POWER

If you don't believe that Santa Barbara's miles of rolling lowland roads, endless mountain passes and perfect year-round weather make it a cycling Shangri La, just ask the international professional cyclists who train here every winter. (For the ultimate burn, check out Figueroa Mountain in the wine country, one of Lance Armstrong's favorite torture tracks.) If more proof is needed, Santa Barbara County played host to two consecutive stages during the first two annual **Amgen Tour of California** pro cycling races, which spanned 600+ miles through the state of California.

Santa Barbara's killer rides include the grueling but extraordinarily scenic climb up Gibraltar Road and the shorter but even steeper Old San Marcos Pass Road, a former stagecoach track linking Santa Barbara with the Santa Ynez Valley. Or do the Old San Marcos Pass to Painted Cave Road to Gibraltar Road grand loop.

Feeling more carefree than hardcore? Then hire a bike in Solvang and pedal fewer miles while making more visits to some of the area's 80-plus wineries.

Mountain bikers love Santa Barbara, too, thanks to a web of trails linking Camino Cielo Road and 3,985-foot La Cumbre Peak with the foothills far, far below. Los Padres National Forest has tracks for riders of all ability levels, from narrow off-camber thrillers for experts to wide, relatively flat fire roads for beginning and intermediate riders.

Leisure cyclists will find miles of marked bike trails crisscrossing the city and linking it to the sea. Pick up a map at the **Visitors Center**, and then set off up Santa Barbara Street toward historic **Mission Santa Barbara**. From there you can head back downhill to the city center, shop and lunch on State Street or climb a bit to **Mountain Road** and follow the smooth, winding, nearly flat route past streams and lookout points en route to lunch in celebrity-stocked **Montecito**. Make your way down Olive Mill Road to **Butterfly Beach** and the **Four Seasons Resort**. From there it's a short distance to the three-mile paved bike path that runs along **Cabrillo Boulevard** past the **Andree Clark Bird Refuge**, the volleyball courts at **East Beach**, **Stearns' Wharf**, **West Beach**, the **Harbor** and **Leadbetter Beach** to lovely **Shoreline Park**. Continue from there, and you'll soon be grunting up the hills of **Hope Ranch**, past the multi-million-dollar estates and towering palm trees lining aptly named Las Palmas Drive. Loops, out-and-backs, hills, flats, easy and hard – when it comes to bike trails, Santa Barbara has it all. For a map of great rides or companies that offer guided rides, go to the **Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition** website at sbbike.org.

Elings Park is the place for the **BMX** crowd to catch big air while riding the well-maintained course, with its series of steep banked turns, whoop-de-dos, trick jumps and other challenges of a carefully manipulated dirt landscape. Races take place on Tuesday nights in summer; for information call the race hotline at 805-569-0616.

If you don't have your own bike, you can rent one. Whether you prefer a single-speed cruiser, a deluxe 21-speed mountain bike or a family surrey (four-wheel bicycles for six, fringe included), you'll find it about a block from the ocean on State Street.

Street surfers will enjoy **Skater's Point**, a 12,000-square-foot arena of sculpted concrete for skateboarders and in-line skaters. The park sits just off the sand on Cabrillo Boulevard, a few hundred yards east of Stearns Wharf.

SADDLE UP

Santa Barbara County – the Santa Ynez Valley in particular – has long been horse-country and, today, is home to Arabian and quarter horse ranches, a miniature-horse farm and several dedicated riding facilities.

For a taste of the Old West (with all the creature comforts), visit **Rancho Oso Riding Stables** (805-683-5686), located near Cachuma Lake, about 12 miles from Santa Barbara off of Highway 154. After a trail ride during the day, relax in the two heated pools, dine at the "Chuck Wagon," and then gather 'round a campfire before nodding off in a cabin or a western-style Conestoga covered wagon.

Another great choice for an indulgent taste of cowboy life is the **Circle Bar B Guest Ranch** (805-968-1113). Join a morning or afternoon ride, take a private ride or trot off to watch the sunset at this swank ranch and watering hole. Accommodations are in luxe cabins, and the new main lodge is a cozy, elegantly rustic refuge featuring wood, river rock and plenty of western-style adornments. Santa Maria barbecue and lively theatre productions round out the evening offerings. Beautiful palm-lined **Refugio State Beach** is right across the highway.

For all kinds of adventures in one place, try the expansive **Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort** (805-686-7613). In addition to golf, the 10,000-acre playground has 73 guest cottages and suites; its own equestrian center with 100 quarter horses for guest use; a children's petting zoo; tennis courts; and a 100-acre spring-fed lake where fly-fishing lessons are available.

At **El Capitan Canyon** (866-352-2729), the concept is “resort camping” by the sea in cabins with all the right touches. The property, backed by grassy hills and rugged chaparral, recently acquired The Ranch, a top-notch equestrian facility that makes guided horseback rides available to guests and day-trippers alike.

For a different perspective on the equestrian world, there’s the **Return to Freedom American Wild Horse Sanctuary** in Lompoc (805-737-9246). Having taken on the mission of “saving the wild American horse,” the 310-acre ranch offers tours that range from an hour to half a day and give visitors the rare opportunity to encounter horses that have never been tamed or saddled.

GET IN THE RACE

With at least one running or swimming event for every week of the year, Santa Barbarans are always busy getting (or keeping) themselves race ready. Adding a little competition to your great Santa Barbara escape will make relaxing that much more fun. Join a biathlon (swim, run), a duathlon (run, bike, run) or a triathlon (swim, bike, run); compete in a 2K, 5K, 10K or half-marathon run; or swim some buoys in the ocean. For a schedule of events, contact **Santa Barbara Running Company** (805-899-8802), or go to **sbrunningco.com**.

Sponsored by the local daily newspaper, the annual **Santa Barbara News-Press Half Marathon** (805-967-8822) is a big favorite with locals and visitors, who come to compete on the beautiful 13-mile out-and-back course that features ocean views nearly every step of the way.

Equally scenic but a lot more grueling is the **Pier to Peak Half Marathon** (805-564-8879), held every year on Labor Day. Starting at Stearns Wharf, competitors begin by running up gently sloping State Street before hitting the hard hills and eventually gaining nearly 4,000 feet of elevation on the 13-mile route to Gibraltar Peak.

Every year on Father’s Day, a reversal of the lower portion of the Pier to Peak event occurs as contestants in the annual **State Street Mile**, including increasing numbers of elite runners, break fast and run hard downhill through Santa Barbara’s scenic downtown area, ending at the dolphin fountain at Stearns Wharf.

On Thanksgiving weekend, hardcore runners take to the mountains behind Santa Barbara for the annual **Nine Trails Race**. The 35-mile “ultra-marathon” features a total elevation gain and loss of more than 10,000 feet. Painful but pretty!

Another “peak” experience is the annual “**Summit for Danny**” Hike (805-963-1433) in October, named for a local teen who lost his life to a drug overdose. Participants meet at the Sunken Gardens at the Santa

Barbara County Courthouse downtown, and then hike into the hills to raise money for the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse. Similarly, the **Santa Barbara Cancer Center Run/Walk** (805-682-7300) is an annual fundraiser offering events of various distances for entries of all ages and abilities. A series of charity runs fills the calendar year-round, including “**Vicky’s Challenge**,” a 3K race benefiting the Special Olympics.

Participants in the annual **People Powered Ride** (www.goletabike.com) through wine country meet at the Firestone meadow near Los Olivos, then pedal 30, 63 or a full 100 miles. The “century” comes with a brutal 7400 feet worth of climbs!

The **Bike Tour & Fest** (www.santabarbarabiketour.com) is a classic fundraiser for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. After breakfast at Leadbetter Beach, riders choose from 12-, 30-, 60- and 120-mile rides. The outings end with a big beach party.

Another wine country jaunt is the **Solvang Prelude** (www.bikescor.com or 562-690-9693). The fall ride attracts thousands who pedal 25, 50 or 63 miles through the gorgeous countryside and then finish the day with a Santa Maria-style barbecue.

So much ocean, so little time seems to be motto of Santa Barbara’s scores of ocean swimmers. From summer through fall, lines of buoys set about 100 yards offshore mark ocean swimming areas, and local freestylers take advantage, putting in the miles as a regular part of their training.

During the city’s annual weeklong Fiesta Days celebration in August, catch the **Junior Lifeguards Competition** on East Beach. Teams of 9- to 16-year-olds from as far away as Newport Beach compete in a daylong series of paddling, swimming and running events. Youth isn’t wasted on *these* young people.

Thought to be the longest-running festival of its kind, the annual **Semana Nautica Summer Sports Festival** (805-897-2680) is a three-week event that began in 1933 as “Fleet Week,” when locals challenged the crew of five visiting U.S. Navy battleships to a series of contests along the beach. Now thousands of participants of all ages and abilities show up from Santa Barbara and throughout the West to compete in ocean and pool swimming, kayaking, water polo, volleyball, running, biathlon, triathlon, racquetball, softball, outrigger canoeing, sailing and more.

Every Wednesday evening from May through August, Leadbetter Beach Park becomes Santa Barbara’s fitness center, when dozens of athletes of all ages and abilities convene for the seaside party known as **Night Moves** (805-564-8879). The bash features an ocean swim and a run followed by a dinner buffet and local musical entertainment.

Both Santa Barbara and neighboring Carpinteria hold triathlons that attract participants from all over the nation. The two-day **Santa Barbara Triathlon** (805-899-2929) in August features competitions on both a shorter "sprint" course and a beautiful (very) long course, the latter consisting of a 1-mile ocean swim, a 34-mile bike ride and a 10-mile run. The one-day **Carpinteria Triathlon** (805-684-5405 ext. 432) in September has both sprint and Olympic courses.

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