

SANTA BARBARA

THE AMERICAN RIVIERA®

CONFERENCE + VISITORS BUREAU + FILM COMMISSION

SEDUCTION BY THE SEA:

Santa Barbara's Top 10 Spots to Make Your Sweetheart Swoon

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — It's a potent cocktail: 100 miles of stunning surf, Mediterranean architecture, 300+ days of sunshine annually and enough world-class wine to keep the kingdom of Bhutan buzzed. Santa Barbara's lure as a romantic haunt is well documented, from the weddings of Clark Gable, Rock Hudson and Sir Laurence Olivier to the honeymoons of JFK, Julia Roberts and J-Lo. Add the region's unique line-up of wedding venues to the mix — from ranches to mansions, missions to resorts — and it's romance as usual along the American Riviera®.

TOP TEN SPOTS TO SWOON OVER

- 1) **Clairmont Farms:** If the scent doesn't get you, the scene definitely will. A sea of purple, this six-acre lavender farm off a quaint road in Los Olivos puts a new spin on swooning, Santa Barbara-style. Graceful 150-year-old olive trees dot the entrance drive; after a walk among the fields, pick up some massage oil and sachets for an *apres* adventure. (Roblar Road, Los Olivos; free)
- 2) **Francheschi Park:** With panoramic views of the Pacific, red tile roofs cascading into the sea and a fragrant array of exotic plants, this park, created by Santa Barbara's famed grandfather of horticulture Francesco Francheschi, is an offbeat and isolated find ideal for a romantic picnic. (Mission Ridge, Santa Barbara; free)
- 3) **Knapp's Castle:** High above the cloudline sits a stone ruin reminiscent of a Grecian temple. Built in 1916, this once elaborate sandstone mansion commands a rocky point with stunning vistas in all directions. The remains — rock arches, fireplaces, rock stairways and chimneys — provide a powerful backdrop for budding love. (East Camino Cielo Road, Santa Barbara; free)
- 4) **Swing at the Lily Pond, El Encanto Hotel and Garden Villas:** Where else can you delve into another space in time when *Great Gatsby* era couples sipped champagne around the wisteria-ringed lily pond? This private oasis sets the ideal prelude to an intimate dinner-for-two overlooking the city and Pacific on the restaurant terrace. (Lasuen Road, Santa Barbara) *Note: reopening in 2008 after a major renovation..*
- 5) **Thousand Step Beach (a.k.a. Mesa Lane Beach):** Thousand Step is an insider haunt for romantic romps along the beach without crowds. Walk down the 241 wooden steps to the beach; as you descend, the dramatic path is festooned with fuchsia bougainvillea and a lone cypress tree. The pristine beach goes for miles in low tide. (Mesa Lane, Santa Barbara; free)

- 6) **Pritchett Bench, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden:** Get up close and personal with Mother Nature at this 65-acre garden featuring more than 1,000 species of native California plants. Wander through the redwood forest and manzanita grove, and then cut onto the Pritchett Trail, which ascends along a small dirt path. The stone “Pritchett” bench is tucked high among the canopy of live oaks with whispers from a babbling stream below. (Mission Canyon, Santa Barbara; \$7)
- 7) **Santa Barbara County Courthouse Clock Tower:** This stately gem, built in 1929, is the essence of Spanish-Moorish architecture and one of the most beautiful public buildings in the nation. Take the elevator to the top and climb a few steps to the Clock Tower for a stunning 360-degree view of vibrant red tile roofs, the Santa Ynez Mountains, palm-studded shoreline and Channel Islands. This is *the* place to steal a kiss and quick photo op. (Santa Barbara Street, Santa Barbara; free)
- 8) **Vendanta Temple:** Step out of Santa Barbara and into southern India at this tranquil architectural masterpiece with a quiet perch overlooking the Pacific. Enjoy a hand-in-hand stroll among the tranquil grounds tucked deep within a residential area in Montecito. The adjoining Sarada Convent Bookstore offers local artisan works should baubles be needed. (Ladera Lane, Montecito; free)
- 9) **A.C. Postel Memorial Rose Gardens:** Created as a fragrance garden for the blind, this stunning park with Mission Santa Barbara as its backdrop is drop-dead gorgeous. More than 1,000 varieties of roses stretch up to the sky in a heady salute certain to rev up even the most jaded cupid. (Los Olivos Street, Santa Barbara; free)
- 10) **Kayak the Pacific:** Santa Barbara Harbor offers a variety of tandem kayak rentals for couples seeking love at sea. An easy launch at the harbor enables beginners to float among the world-class crafts before venturing out to sea for a sizzling sunset. (Santa Barbara; \$35)

WEDDING & HONEYMOON RESOURCES

Contact the Santa Barbara Conference & Visitors Bureau for a wedding planners kit, including a ***Meeting & Event Planners Guide to Santa Barbara County*** with wedding planning resources; free for the asking. Contact the **Santa Barbara Conference & Visitors Bureau and Film Commission** at 800/676-1266, 805/966-9222, or sales@santabarbaraCA.com. Or, visit www.santabarbaraCA.com.

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