

SANTA BARBARA

THE AMERICAN RIVIERA®

CONFERENCE + VISITORS BUREAU + FILM COMMISSION

AMOUR ALONG THE AMERICAN RIVIERA®: *Santa Barbara's Seductive Setting Rings the Bell for Romantics*

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — Like a Siren, Santa Barbara seduces every sense. From its sweet, heady fragrance to its soothing 100 miles of palm-studded surf, this region has long been an epicenter for romance. Evoking the charms of the Côte d'Azur, the Amalfi Coast and Portofino, this city of just 95,000 is a world-class *cuveé* of all things romantic. Add to the mix a variety of unique wedding venues, scenic wine country and 300+ days of sunshine a year and it's a ready-made sultry haven for some 3,000 couples that wed here annually.

CELEBRITY CACHE

Since the early days in the 1930s and 40s, when the Duponts and Rockefellers arrived via private rail car, word spread that Santa Barbara was an untapped Shangri-La. From the sparkling sea to the Santa Ynez Mountains, lush vegetation and balmy climate, the city quickly evolved into a haunt for the rich and cultured who built, partied and invested piles of currency to enhance the already beautiful surroundings. Given its isolated setting and accessible location, just 92 miles north of Los Angeles, Santa Barbara quickly became an ideal escape for celebrities seeking to slip out of the spotlight.

Santa Barbara also set the stage for the stars' romantic moments. In 1940 Sir Laurence Olivier married Vivien Leigh at the **San Ysidro Ranch** (www.sanysidoranch.com). Gwyneth Paltrow wed Chris Martin in one of the Ranch's private bungalows in 2003. Clark Gable road into the 10,000-acre **Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort** (www.alisal.com) in 1949 to wed Sylvia Hawkes, wife number four. Rock Hudson said "I do" to Phyllis Gates at a private cottage ceremony at the **Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara** (www.fourseasons.com/santabarbara) in 1955. Other luminaries have honeymooned at the San Ysidro Ranch, including JFK and his bride Jackie (1953), Julia Roberts and Danny Moder and J-Lo and Marc Anthony. You can still check into the Kennedy Suite (\$1875.00) and bed down where John Boy slept.

A steady stream of notable visitors continues to catapult Santa Barbara to the "A-list" of wedding locales. **Bacara Resort & Spa** (www.bacaresort.com) opened with the wedding of "Beverly Hills 90210" actress Jenny Garth and the honeymoon of Debra Messing; sink into the "Tea For Two" bathtubs for the ultimate romantic tryst. Other celebrities who have tied the knot in Santa Barbara include Mira Sorvino, Jim Carrey, Will Farrell, Heather Locklear, Halle Berry and Sandra Bullock.

UNIQUE VENUES

From missions to ranches, Santa Barbara offers one of the most diverse selections of wedding sites in the nation. Mutli-million dollar estates, authentic Spanish adobes, fragrant rose gardens, mesmerizing vineyards and palm-lined beaches are just some of the romantic venues.

Estates abound in Santa Barbara (rates start around \$5,000), and they offer a high level of security, on-property guest accommodations and one-stop shop event services. For the right price, brides-to-be can set their fairytale wedding at one of Montecito's grandest works of art and architecture, the **El Descanso Estate**. Built in 1925, this authentic Spanish Colonial affords stunning views of the Pacific from every room. The mansion's 13,000 sq. ft., complete with 10 fireplaces, a billiard room, movie theatre and additional 6,000 sq. ft. of service area, set the stage for an unforgettable event. The beautiful gardens offer an ideal ceremony setting; another option is a formal setting inside the palatial residence. Equally alluring is the opulent **Hahn Estate**. Reminiscent of a European chateau set on 10 exquisitely landscaped acres, this private buy-out combines terraced grounds and courtyards with a decadent Old World feel.

For intimate *soirees*, Montecito's **Peppers Estate** is awash with floral gardens including the New Orleans Garden and formal Ballroom Garden. Built in 1885, the elegant Paladium-style mansion also boasts a 3,000 sq. ft. ballroom set in lavish oak and mahogany with a grand fireplace, chandeliers, an orchestra balcony and plenty of room for an elegant sit-down dinner (maximum 50 people). Added to the residence in 1914 by Hearst Castle architect Julia Morgan, the ballroom is legendary for hosting the debut of modern dance guru Martha Graham (at age 21) in 1917 and setting the stage for an all-night piano concert by Pederewski in 1920.

For a more down-to-earth option, rent a ranch. Set in a secluded wooded area four miles down a dirt road, **Circle Bar B Guest Ranch** (www.circlebarb.com) features 14 romantic cabins and ranch rooms, a string of 40 horses and 1,000 acres to romp around. **Rancho Oso Guest Ranch & Stables** (www.rancho-oso.com) is another outback option for rustic enthusiasts. Pack your own horses or tap into the ranch's string; bunk down in 10 traditional Conestoga wagons ringed around the fire and let the flames begin.

The **San Ysidro Ranch** (www.sanysidroranch.com) tips the scale in the opposite direction with 38 deluxe guestrooms, award-winning dining, meandering flower gardens and 540 acres of prime turf to tie the knot; the full buyout runs \$33,000/weekend. Deep in the wine country, the **Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort** (www.alisal.com) hands over the reins for \$38,000/day. The lucky wedding party can rule the ranch's 73 deluxe cottages and suites, 100-quarterhorse equestrian center, 18-hole championship golf course and resident French chef Pascal Godé. Set on 10,000 lush acres, couples can wed on horseback, lakeside, on the golf greens or deep in the sycamore groves.

Wine country is another delectable option, given the rich mix of wineries throughout the Santa Ynez, Santa Maria and Lompoc Valleys. Just 29 miles northwest of Santa Barbara, 100+ wineries are strewn in vineyard-studded landscapes straight out of a Monet painting. For a taste of Provence, tap into lavender-imbued **Sunstone Winery** (www.sunstonewinery.com) with its sandstone façade, intimate wine caves and glorious views. The multi-million dollar **Bridlewood Winery** (www.bridlewoodwinery.com), set on 105 acres with a lake, weeping willows, gardens and vineyards, is also an idyllic setting. Other lovely settings include **Rideau Vineyard** (www.rideauvineyard.com) with its beautifully restored 1884 winery/tasting room; **Fess Parker Winery** (www.fessparker.com) with its immaculate grounds and lush backdrop; **Firestone Vineyard** (www.firestonewine.com) on picturesque Foxen Canyon Road; **Gainey Vineyard** (www.gaineyvineyard.com); and **Melville** (www.melvillewinery.com).

For traditionalists, Santa Barbara offers three missions. A favorite among locals is the photogenic “Queen of the Missions,” **Mission Santa Barbara** (www.sbmission.org), with its dual bell towers, stately façade and elegant mass services. The 10th of California’s 21 missions and the only one to be continuously occupied since its inception, Mission Santa Barbara has an added highlight adjacent to the grounds: **A.C. Postel Memorial Rose Gardens** which boasts 1,000 varieties of roses created as a fragrance garden for the blind. Step up for a photo opportunity worthy of *Town & Country*.

A *soiree* at sea is always memorable, especially with the variety of charters available for rent at **Santa Barbara Harbor**. Hire a captain — many are licensed to officiate — and set out for a sizzling sunset sail. For the ultimate in luxe, step aboard the **Channel Cat** (www.channelcatcharters.com), Charlie Munger’s private 85 ft. vessel — the largest composite built catamaran in the world — which can accommodate a party of 149 people. Sleek, white and waiting for its close-up, this yacht offers such on-site luxuries as a theater screen for immediate digital camera downloads, audio/visual system, satellite surround-sound, full galley for catering and 25-ft., “John Wayne” long bar.

Garden enthusiasts have a vivid choice of backdrops: from orchid, rose and lavender farms to public parks festooned with exotics. The sunken gardens at the **Santa Barbara County Courthouse** (www.sbparks.com) is a sought-after wedding location with lush gardens, swaying palms and sub-tropical plants. Completed in 1929, the graceful Spanish-Moorish courthouse is the jewel in the city’s architectural crown and is regarded as one of the most magnificent public buildings in the nation. For those seeking fragrance, **Rose Story Farm** (www.rosestoryfarm.com) can host a wedding party of 300 in one of its four wedding gardens studded with 18,000 blooming roses. The 15-acre working farm is backed by a clever owner who can create just about any setting imaginable. The six-acre **Clairmont Farms** (www.clairmontfarms.com), a working lavender farm in Los Olivos, is also a wonderful setting with a purple sea swaying in the backdrop.

The county has a host of old world hotel properties evoking Santa Barbara's true spirit and romantic charm, including the aristocratic **Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara** (www.fourseasons.com/santabarbara), built in 1927 across from Butterfly Beach.

HONEYMOON HIDEAWAYS

Honeymoon hideaways are plenty. After your dream wedding, snuggle up in pampered seclusion at one of Santa Barbara's premier hotels. Cozy cottages, hillside haciendas, wild west style ranches and luxurious beachfront resorts provide the perfect post-wedding sanctuary.

In a category of its own, **The Simpson House Inn** (www.simpsonhouseinn.com) raised the bar in 1998 when it received AAA's only North American Five Diamond Bed & Breakfast rating. The elegantly restored 1874 historic landmark Victorian estate has all the perks of a luxe hideaway set on an acre of fragrant English-style gardens—and even offers a Fantasy Elopement package. The original house includes six rooms, each re-created in traditional Victorian style with period artwork, private baths and hand-printed Victorian wallpaper. Nearby, four English cottages are nestled under an ancient English oak, each room with a private fountain patio, wood burning fireplace and whirlpool tub.

Another option is the **Cheshire Cat Inn** (www.cheshirecatinn.com), known for its expansive English gardens flush with delphiniums, garden roses, foxglove and hollyhock marking the entrance. Comprised of two graceful Victorian homes (built in 1894), it features 17 exquisitely decorated guestrooms. The owner who is from Cheshire, England has gone to great lengths to make the property a true original. Antiques were shipped from England, the wallpapers and draperies are Laura Ashley and flowers and fountains bedeck the open spaces. Breakfast is gourmet and served on Wedgwood china. A full spa provides facials, healing body wraps and six types of massage. "The ultimate for romantics" is the *Tweedledum Suite* with a king brass bed, Jacuzzi, oak beams and flooring, English antiques, a wet bar and gas-burning fireplace.

Nestled in the heart of downtown Santa Barbara, within easy walking distance of museums, shops and theaters, the boutique-style **Inn of the Spanish Garden** (www.spanishgardeninn.com) offers sophisticated Spanish-Mediterranean design, quality amenities and personal service. Guestrooms feature luxurious beds with Frette linens, fireplaces, air conditioning, honor bars featuring Santa Barbara specialties, French press coffee makers, deluxe bath amenities with Frette towels, robes and more.

Santa Barbara Wine Country is the perfect stop for couples seeking to chill and swill after a hectic wedding. Try the Victorian-style **Santa Ynez Inn** (www.santaynezin.com) featuring 14 rooms stocked with Frette linens, DVD/CD systems, beautiful gardens, afternoon wine tasting, gourmet breakfast and spa treatment rooms for massage. Set in the country-western town of Santa Ynez, the inn's guestrooms sport

fireplaces and expansive balconies with valley and vineyard views. Top picks include #202, set in soothing celadon tones with a dual steam marble shower or #207 with an antique bed, chandeliers and a Jacuzzi tub for two set in the bay window.

For those who truly want to check out, the quaint **Ballard Inn** (www.ballradinn.com) features fifteen beautifully decorated rooms, each evoking a particular aspect of the area's history. This elegant two-story gray and white building in the quaint town of Ballard sets the bar for guest services. From arrival to check out, expect a seamless stay steeped in serenity; roses dot the entrance, the intimate restaurant serves up stellar global cuisine and a wealth of nearby excursions offer adventure.

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. Visitor information is also available via www.santabarbaraCA.com.

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