

# SANTA BARBARA

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## FIND YOUR STOKE IN SANTA BARBARA: VACATION IDEAS FOR THE SURF-CURIOUS

*New Surf Exhibit Highlights Santa Barbara's Surf Culture, Local Legends and  
Their Impact on the International Surf Scene*

**Santa Barbara, CA** — Surf culture is synonymous with the laid-back, carefree California lifestyle. Most Californians appreciate the spiritual connection between man and the sea, and many share a fascination with watching surfers in action. Matt Warshaw, surfer and author of *The Encyclopedia of Surfing*, rightly observes, "Surfing, alone among sports...turns not a skill into an art, but an inexplicable and useless urge into a vital way of life." Surfing is an integral part of the Santa Barbara lifestyle, which attracts visitors from all over the world who come to experience life on "the American Riviera" firsthand.

Santa Barbara has always played an understated but influential role in the international surf scene. Pro surfers Tom Curren, Bobby Martinez, Kim Mearig, Kelly Slater and Shaun Thomson, and major brands Mr. Zog's Sex Wax and Al Merrick's Channel Islands Surfboards all call Santa Barbara home. Legendary surf spots, such as Rincon, the Ranch and Jalama, and living legends George Greenough, Bruce Brown and Renny Yater have also helped put Santa Barbara on the surfing map.

With museums dedicated to surfing, plentiful opportunities for surf instruction, and breaks that attract surfers from all over the world, Santa Barbara offers an accessible cultural immersion for the budding surfer and surf-curious. And shoppers will be stoked about the surf niche retail scene. From the flagship Channel Islands Surfboards shop to custom board boutiques, Santa Barbara offers an array of contemporary surf fashion and equipment.

### **SURF'S UP: MUSEUMS & MEMORABILIA**

Santa Barbara's rich surf history is now preserved and the story told via the [Santa Barbara Maritime Museum's](#) new permanent *Marilyn S. Tennity Surfing Exhibit: Surf's Up! Santa Barbara. Surf's Up!* includes artifacts, photos, classic surfboards and other memorabilia, along with oral histories of famous local surfers, surf spots, board shapers and others who made Santa Barbara a leader in the sport. Video clips include Gates Foss, who first surfed Rincon back in the 1930's, and interviews with Renny Yater, Al

Merrick, Tom Curren, Davey Smith, Kim Mearig and rising star Bobby Martinez. In keeping with the museum's interactive theme, a nine-foot high, twelve-foot long wave with sound and video allows visitors to get a sense of what it feels like to ride a wave. And a surfboard framed by a wave is perfect for photo ops—and figuring out whether you are goofy or regular footed. (The museum is closed Wednesdays.)

Upstairs from the Maritime Museum, the [Endless Summer Bar-Café](#) has filmmaker Bruce Brown's official endorsement and is decorated with memorabilia from the film *Endless Summer* (1964), a world-famous surfing film that helped define the genre and mirrored the surf culture which has become such a part of the California lifestyle. The restaurant's collection of surfboards includes one of the first boards made by Renny Yater in 1953 and an abalone inlay board made by Renny and installed in honor of Bruce's 70th birthday, celebrated at the restaurant. The casual restaurant has great harbor and mountain views, a lively, inviting atmosphere—and you might just spot Bruce himself savoring fish and chips.

For more surf culture, head to the Funk Zone (near Stearn's Wharf) to visit the [Santa Barbara Surfing Museum](#). Not your average museum, the impressive collection curated by photographer and founder James O'Mahoney includes collectible surfboards, skateboards, skimboards; surf music, books, art and movies; and vintage clothing and antiques. The museum is open Sunday afternoons from noon to 5pm and admission is free.

Round out your surf education with a visit to [Sullivan Goss Gallery](#) to see iconic paintings of surfboards and beach scenes by local artist (and surfer) **Hank Pitcher**. And stop by [Jaffurs Wine Cellars](#) in downtown Santa Barbara, near the waterfront, to taste the wines of surfer-winemaker Craig Jaffurs. The tasting room/production facility is decorated with rare, vintage surfboards, and Jaffurs collaborates on a limited edition wine with label artwork by Hank Pitcher.

### **THE BREAKS: BEACHES FOR BEGINNERS & EXPERTS**

Over the years, surfers “discovered” breaks once known only to locals. The most notable, **Rincon**, is considered the “Queen of the Coast” set on the Santa Barbara-Ventura county line. Waves peel flawlessly for up to half a mile, and it has long been a testing ground for surfboard technology and design by Santa Barbara's most famous surfers and shapers. **Leadbetter**, Santa Barbara's downtown surf spot, provides small breakers perfect for those learning to surf, located just west of the Harbor, across the street from Santa Barbara City College. At the University of California, Santa Barbara, the aptly named **Campus Point** also has a great break for novices. Although a relatively mellow surf spot, winter swells can produce classic top to bottom barrels (perfect waves) off this shale-layered point. **Sandspit**, at the Santa Barbara Harbor, is best in winter and is not for novices! The waves break with heavy backwash and long-spinning tubes and are often crowded with surf-stoked locals.

**El Capitán State Beach**, one of the best cobblestone point breaks in California, is fifteen miles northwest of the Santa Barbara Harbor. El Capitán produces hollow waves (tube rides) when a good-sized west swell reaches around the Channel Islands. There are a myriad of “secret” surf spots in and around the **Channel Islands**. Exposed breaks, swift currents, and rocky reefs make surfing there very dangerous. **Jalama Beach Park**, north of Point Conception and quite a bit off the beaten path, is often exposed to high wind conditions. Jalama features both beach and reef breaks, and the dramatic conditions require experience and higher skill levels.

### **LEARNING CURVE: SURF LESSONS & CAMPS**

A variety of surf schools, seasonal camps and instruction options are available for beginners of all ages and group sizes: [Santa Barbara Adventure Company](#), [Surf Happens](#), [Santa Barbara Surf School](#), [Santa Barbara Seals Surf School](#) and [Ocean Adventures/A-Frame Surf Shop](#). Rentals are available at **A-Frame**, **Channel Islands Surfboards** and **Surf N’ Wear’s Beach House** surf shops. And, for a different approach to surfing, try Stand Up Paddle Surfing with the help of [Paddle Sports of Santa Barbara](#). *Note: Novices are strongly encouraged to learn the etiquette—unofficial “rules” that surfers follow to create order and foster safety in the water—before heading out to ride the waves.*

### **LOCAL FLAVOR: SURF GEAR SHOPPING GUIDE**

Santa Barbara offers a number of locally-owned and operated surf retail shops that have managed to survive the competition from major chains. While Channel Islands Surfboards might have gone big time (now owned by Burton), the brand has distinctly local roots and the flagship Santa Barbara retail store, located in the Funk Zone, boasts the largest number of boards shaped by Merrick.

- [A-Frame Surf Shop](#) (3785 Santa Claus Lane, Carpinteria): Run by brothers Sam and Rob Holcombe, A-Frame is right on the beach at Santa Claus Lane and carries apparel, wetsuits, sunglasses and boards. Rentals available for visitors.
- [Beatty Products Surfboards](#) (111 Santa Barbara Street, Suite E, Santa Barbara): Long and shortboards by shapers Clyde Beatty, Wayne Rich, Kevin McClelland, Casey McCrystal, Mike Cloonan, Chris Bauer and Butch Towers.
- [Blueline Stand Up Paddle Surf](#) (24 East Mason Street, Santa Barbara): Blueline has one of the largest inventories of Stand Up Paddle Surf equipment in the nation, and offers a retail shop in the Funk Zone.
- [Channel Islands Surfboards](#) (36 Anacapa Street, Santa Barbara): CIS was started in Santa Barbara by legendary shaper Al Merrick in 1969, and sponsors some of the best surfers in the world including Tim Curran, Tom Curren, Taylor Knox, Rob Machado, Yadin Nicol, Dane Reynolds, Kalani Robb, Kelly Slater, Lisa Anderson, Rochelle Ballard and Sofia Mulanovich. The flagship retail shop is the only place in the world where Santa Barbara branded CIS apparel is available for purchase.

- [J. Seven Surf Designs](#) (24 East Cota Street, Santa Barbara): The newest addition to Santa Barbara's surf scene, J7 offers custom boards hand-shaped by co-owner Jason Feist, as well as stylish clothing and accessories with a more fashion-forward bent than typically found in a surf shop.
- [Rincon Designs](#) (659 Linden Avenue, Carpinteria): Carp local Matt Moore shapes custom boards and carries apparel by the usual suspects including Quiksilver, Rip Curl and Hurley.
- [Surf Country](#) (5668 Calle Real, Goleta): Locally-owned by Goleta born and bred surfer Doug Yartz, this shop receives praise for the staff's positive, open attitude. New and used boards are for sale including designs by Yartz himself, and the apparel includes local lines like Low Tide Rising.
- [Surf N' Wear's Beach House](#) (10 State Street, Santa Barbara): Open since 1962, The Beach House is a massive retail store, jam-packed with boards, wetsuits, apparel, shoes and accessories. They carry vintage boards as well as Renny Yater's designs. Rentals are available for visitors.
- [Wilderness Surfboards](#) (317 Alisos Street, Santa Barbara): Founded in 1966 by George Greenough and Michael Cundith, who influenced the development of the shortboard at that time, the shop carries a wide variety of boards and shapes.

#### **VISITOR INFO**

Santa Barbara—The American Riviera®—offers a captivating blend of history, distinctive architecture and Southern California lifestyle in a breathtaking setting of glorious palm-lined beaches, majestic mountain ranges and bucolic wine country. A city of white-washed buildings with red tile roofs tucked between the mountains and the sea, Santa Barbara resonates with an irresistibly sensuous and laid-back allure. Set on the Pacific with 100 miles of sweeping coastline, Santa Barbara and its environs lie just 92 miles north of Los Angeles and 332 miles south of San Francisco. Visitors may arrive via scenic Highway 101, daily stops on Amtrak or via air service to Santa Barbara Airport or Los Angeles International Airport. Santa Barbara County offers 168 diverse lodging options, ranging from deluxe resorts and stylish boutique hotels to romantic inns and rustic guest ranches. Visit [www.SantaBarbaraCA.com](http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.com) for visitor information and Hot Deals.

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