

Lifestyle

Yes, Bestie, Your Next Trip *Should* Be to Santa Barbara

Come for the beach, stay for the wine.




BY **MADDIE HIATT** PUBLISHED: MAY 5, 2023



Visit Santa Barbara

I'm just a Midwest girlie living in NYC, meaning I've had very little experience with nice weather between the months November and April. No, I didn't grow up in a family that took tropical vacations during the holiday season, nor was I part of a family that leaned into the winter szn with regular ski trips. Nope, we braved the winter like your typical middle class Americans in Missouri. So! When Visit Santa Barbara offered me a lil trip to Cali during the harsh, gray winter on the East Coast, I jumped at the chance. My fiancé and I had been looking for a some relaxation prior to the upcoming hectic holiday season, so we packed our bags and headed across ze country.


And I'm going to let you in on a lil secret, Santa Barbara is actually a *suuuuuper* romantic town. Not only does it have a gorg beach and some of the most beautiful sunsets, but the area is home to incredibly luxe resorts, tons of wineries, and so much more. Read on for the scoop on the lil beach town, including the best restaurants, activities, and the resort-style living accommodations to scope out while you're in town.



maddiehiatt

Santa Barbara, California

[View profile](#)



[View more on Instagram](#)

maddiehiatt

NYC weather could never 🌞🍷🌟

@visitsantabarbara knows how to plan a trip 📅

View all 13 comments

Advertisement - Continue Reading Below

(Psst: JFYI, the writer received comped accommodations, meals, and experiences during this getaway in order to write this review.)

More From Cosmopolitan



Stay

Hotel Californian: When coming to Santa Barbara, we really wanted to see the ~real~ SB, so we opted to first stay near the Funk Zone. The Funk Zone is basically a few square city blocks packed with things to do (think: wineries, restaurants, bike rentals, a salt cave, etc). And lucky for us, Hotel Californian is a picturesque resort that buds up against the Funk Zone. In the shadows of the Santa Ynez Mountains, the property itself features a winery full of local wines, a five-star steakhouse, a gorg spa, a rooftop pool (!!), and, of course, a sexy hotel bar—AKA ev-er-y-thing you

could ever want or need on a Pacific Coast retreat all on one beautiful property. Now, we must discuss the rooms there. The roomy suite they had us in featured an in-room fireplace, the comfiest King-sized bed I've ever been in, and a deep soaking tub (big enough for two...) Moral of the story: I basically cosplayed as a rich-mom on vacay, and I loved every second of it.



[View full post on Instagram](#)

The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara: If words like posh, luxe, and chic AF come to mind when you think of The Ritz, then you win this word-association game that I just made up. My not-so-humble home away from home for two nights was a chic (see? told you) suite complete with a soaking tub just feet from the bed, a fully stocked mini bar, and not one but TWO ocean-view balconies. In the wise words of Lizzie McGuire: This is what dreams are made of. Besides the kick ass suite, the beachfront property also features a top-tier steakhouse with ocean views, multiple pools (yes, multiple), steamy jacuzzis, private beach access, *and* an indoor/outdoor bar. Iconic, to say the least.

Advertisement - Continue Reading Below



[View full post on Instagram](#)

Play

Explore the Funk Zone: Whether you're in town for a weekend or a week, the Funk Zone is a must-hit. As I mentioned before, this is **the** area in downtown SB that

pretty much has everything you could ever want/need. Cosmo tip: We rented bikes from [Fun Wheels Rentals](#) which allowed us to cover way more ground. I highly recommend hitting up [Lucky Penny](#) for lunch—get the roasted maitake mushroom pizza and you won't be disappointed. Next, stop by [Salt Cave Santa Barbara](#) for a relaxing session in one of the pink Himalayan salt in crystal cave rooms. Finally, stop by [Pearl Social](#) for a little post-dinner popcorn, cocktails, and live music.



[View full post on Instagram](#)

Advertisement - Continue Reading Below

Spa time: Spa Majorelle at Hotel Californian treated me to a full-body massage that literally left me feeling like a brand new human. The space was so calming (think: Moroccan blue tiled walls, soft spa music playing in the background, and essential oils diffusing in every room.) The best part—besides the actual massage, of course—was the massive fluffy white robe I was cozied up in as I waited for my masseuse. Over at The Ritz, I was treated to a Body Melt—a treatment that's basically a full-body exfoliation followed by an invigorating Swiss Shower. Basically, I emerged from these treatments a lighter, happier person. Enough said.



The Spa Majorelle lounge at Hotel Californian.
Hotel Californian

Partake in a wine tasting (or three!): Things I didn't realize before this trip but was pleasantly surprised with: Santa Barbara is home to some of the best wines in the world thanks to the cooling ocean influence and nearby hillsides that work together to create different varieties and styles of wine. It's pretty much a requirement that you treat yourself to at least one wine tasting while visiting. Lucky for you, I did three (#YOLO) during my trip so please, take my word on these.

- First up, The Society: State & Mason at Hotel Californian. Their selections from across the extensive Foley Family Wines portfolio, paired with thoughtfully curated and locally inspired creations from the kitchen make this place a must-visit. Pro tip: The hummus plate goes with ~ any ~ wine flight you decide to go

with. Plus, it's on the Hotel Californian property where, if you sit outside, you can literally see the ocean while you sip. Goals.

- Another great option is Frequency Wine Co. Our tasting with them happening outside in their historic courtyard located in the Funk Zone. Not only was the staff super knowledgeable about their selection, they also let us sort of build our own flight based on our taste after the first few glasses.
- And finally, if you're staying at The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara, you pretty much *have* do a wine tasting at the Bacara Wine Tasting Room. I don't make the rules! One of the coolest things about this tasting is that it's exclusively wines from Santa Barbara County. And we loooooove supporting local businesses.

Advertisement - Continue Reading Below

Eat

For a chic brekkie:

Goat Tree: Picture this: A lil gourmet café (that's on the Hotel Californian property!) that features a menu full of fresh pastries, cold-pressed juices and a robust breakfast menu. Whether you're looking for a quick coffee before heading to the beach or you want a lil breakfast ~moment~ before starting your day, this is *the* place to hit up. When I say they have some of the best avo toast I've ever had, I really mean it. Plus, they have mimosas. Need I say more?

Chad's: Mimosa flights! Pre-breakfast muffins! Oceanfront views! Chad's is pretty much the ideal breakfast spot that's literally across the street from the ocean. I opted to sit outside to realllllly soak up those views. I highly recommend the breakfast burrito and please, please, please, get the french toast bites to start. You simply have to.

For a trendy dinner:

Blackbird at Hotel Californian: Sitting on the edge of the Funk Zone on the Hotel Californian property, Blackbird is the upscale, chic restaurant that is just begging to be Instagrammed. One of the coolest parts of Blackbird is the inventive cocktails. My personal fav? The Vallée des Roses that had Leblon Cachaça, guava purée, lime and rose water. Order that and the scallops, and you're in for a treat.

Dinner at La Paloma Cafe: This thoughtfully crafted California BBQ spot has the feel of your favorite neighborhood hangout mixed with unique, made-from-scratch meals. The pork shoulder carnitas were out of this world, and if you're trying to turn up the heat, treat yourself to a lil spicy pre-dinner marg.

For a luxe dinner:

Rare Society: From the craft cocktails to the literal meat platters, this is pretty much as good as it gets. I'm still thinking about the Parker House Rolls that came drizzled with warm truffle butter and topped with the tiniest sprinkle of salt. But the real star of the show here was the meat "boards" which is basically a charcuterie board packed with a selection of chef-determined cuts of meat. That, paired with a side of mac and cheese and a chilled glass of red wine? Unreal.

Angel Oak: What we have here is fine dining at its, *well*, finest. Located on The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara property, this modern steakhouse has it all. Incredible views? Check. Even better cuisine? Check. I'm still thinking about the seafood pasta, and the restaurant's 12,000-bottle wine selection.

Your Santa Barbara Packing List