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GUIDE

# The best hotels in Santa Barbara

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With miles of beaches, a backdrop of rugged mountains, beautiful Spanish Colonial-style architecture and a vibe that's equal parts outdoorsy energy and laid-back laissez faire, it's easy to see why the coastal California city of [Santa Barbara](#) is dubbed "the American Riviera."

Although the area received its current name from Portuguese explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo in the 16th century and was colonized by the Spanish in

the 18th century, the region had been home to Chumash Indians for over 10,000 years by the time Europeans arrived. And no wonder. The fertile soils, teeming seas and hospitable climate (it gets over 300 days of sunshine each year) – all of which continue to make Santa Barbara a popular destination and agricultural hub to this day – had everything they needed to thrive.

Visitors will find some of the best [California beaches](#) to sunbathe and surf, hiking trails galore ranging in difficulty from beginner to expert, a historic town core sprinkled with landmark buildings, and even an urban wine trail with a few dozen tasting rooms representing some of the region's best wineries. Also, since it's just 90 miles north of Los Angeles, it's easy to make it part of a longer road trip throughout California or just a one-off destination on its own.

Whether you're considering Santa Barbara for a romantic weekend or a longer [family vacation](#), there's plenty to see and do for every type of traveler in this seaside city, including a passel of pleasant places to stay the night.

Here are nine of the best hotels in Santa Barbara (including some of the [best California hotels](#) in general) and what to take advantage of at each.

## Hotel Californian

Santa Barbara, California, USA





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**Why stay here:** Though located in Santa Barbara’s happening Funk Zone, this hotel is anything but funky thanks to its eye-catching interior design by Martyn Lawrence Bullard, a rooftop pool with coastal views and a trendy restaurant serving craft cocktails and seasonal fare.

**Best for:** Folks who want an upscale taste of this iconic beach town.

**Best way to book:** Book through our partner Skylark to enjoy elitelike benefits and on-property credits.

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Anchoring Santa Barbara’s so-called Funk Zone — a 13-block district near the shoreline that was once an industrial neighborhood but now houses artists’ studios, restaurants, bars, winemakers and galleries — the 121-key Hotel Californian is a Moorish-style gem that had fallen on hard times in recent decades. After a top-to-toe rebuild with new grand spaces and rooms by designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard, it reopened in 2017 and quickly became one of the hottest spots in town.

Guest rooms have an art deco-forward aesthetic with sculptural furniture in rich primary colors, more than a few bold geometric patterns in the textiles and tile work, not to mention marble bathrooms stocked with bespoke body products. Some suites even feature working fireplaces.

The hotel's Majorelle spa is meant to evoke the riads of Marrakech thanks to intricate white-and-blue tiling, as well as a lengthy menu of customizable massages and facials. Signature treatments include the "Quake Rescue" massage that incorporates aromatic ingredients like sandalwood, cedar and bergamot to boost immune function and improve sleep.

The hotel is also home to five restaurants and bars, including upscale Central Coast cuisine at chef Travis Watson's Blackbird, casual grab-and-go options like baked goods and picnic baskets at Goat Tree, and Djinn Library Bar for tasty libations (rather than genies) poured from its many bottles. The hotel was acquired by Foley Entertainment Group in 2021, so it also now has a new wine-tasting room called The Society: State & Mason, showcasing Foley Family Wines releases from around the world.

*Rates at the Hotel Californian start at \$603 per night.*

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