

# LA TRAVEL MAGAZINE

## Escape to Wine Country



As you drive north on the iconic 101 freeway the warm fuzzy memories of past visits to wine country start to come back. There is something special about the picturesque drive from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara County, somehow always displaying the most spectacular crystal blue skies as the energy of the sun shines upon you. As you weave through the gorgeous coastline of the Pacific Coast Highway you can feel the stress melting away, life is just easier in the world-famous American Riviera.

Santa Barbara is a place where the Hollywood elite have been escaping to for decades. The vast stretch of coastline has been a hotbed for tourism since the 1950s with its incredible diversity of stunning beaches, world-class dining, and of course its number one draw, some of the best wineries in all of California. Kick back, grab a glass of vino and take a ride with us as we have put together a flawless weekend itinerary geared towards nature enthusiasts, foodies, and wine aficionados.

Built back in 2017, the Hotel Californian has quickly become the most sought-after hotel stay in the city. Typical of most top hotels, the Hotel Californian is situated on possibly the most sought out piece of real estate in all of Santa Barbara. Located just one block from the beach on the world-famous State Street guests could not ask for a better place to call their home away from home when visiting wine country. Situated at the west end



of the Funk Zone, which consists of boutique tasting rooms, cafes, art galleries, and shopping, guests can simply walk out the front lobby and be in the heart of it all. Although the Hotel Californian is relatively new to the city the building boasts great historical value as the original version was destroyed in the earthquake of 1925. While the hotel was turned to rubble after being open for only eight days it

was later rebuilt along with the entire city in the unified Spanish Colonial revival style that is ever so evident today. The new structure of the hotel blends its rich past with the modern touches of current times thanks to famed designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard. Each room was designed slightly different from the other offering guests many choices when customizing their stay. Opt for a standard room or upgrade to a suite both showcasing rare custom furnishings, plush bedding, flat-screen TVs, fireplaces, and more. Either option you choose, your stay will be as luxurious and comfortable as one can expect from a hotel of this caliber.

Hotel Californian offers several dining and bar options for guests to enjoy during their stay. Goat Tree is their gourmet cafe located directly across the street with alfresco seating. The menu ranges from fresh pastries, baked goods, cold-pressed juices, and coffee. They also offer seasonally curated picnic baskets which are ideal for a day spent in wine country.

Tan-Tan is a poolside dining option where guests can enjoy handcrafted cocktails, appetizers, and snacks while taking in the panoramic views of the Pacific a mere stone's throw away. Looking for something sweet to fulfill that craving while lying in the sun? The staff at Tan-Tan will be more than happy to provide you with one of the city's favorite treats from Rory's Ice Cream.



Djinn the hotel's library bar is named for the mischievous genies of Moroccan folklore. Be prepared for some interesting conversations as their team of mixologists share stories of the famed genies that can be seen throughout the hotel.

The hotel's newest dining option and one of the most talked-about additions to Santa Barbara's downtown scene Blackbird is definitely living up to its much-deserved reputation. An instant classic added to the already action-packed Funk Zone Blackbird is winning the hearts of Santa Barbara's locals and tourists alike with its tantalizing cocktails and incredible light bites. Legendary LA-based mixologist Devon Espinosa serves up alluring concoctions such as the Chateau me the Money (Tito's Vodka, Chateau Aloe Liquor, Basil, Mint, Lime) and the Tekila Mockingbird (Libelula Tequila, Mezcal, Chateau Aloe Liquor, Orange Blossom Water, Honey, Cherry Juice, Muddled Jalapeno) among many others that will make it hard to choose. Blackbird also serves up a few comfort options and each light bite offered is so tasty you may find yourself ordering one of everything. Start light with the Citrus Cured Kampachi Crudo then move to the Memphis Style BBQ Chicken Wings. Do not sleep on the Buffalo Cauliflower and make sure to leave room for the best burger in town, The BB Smash. This decadent smashed Angus Burger is topped with American Cheese, Caramelized Onions, Pickle Aioli and served on a buttery soft Brioche Bun.



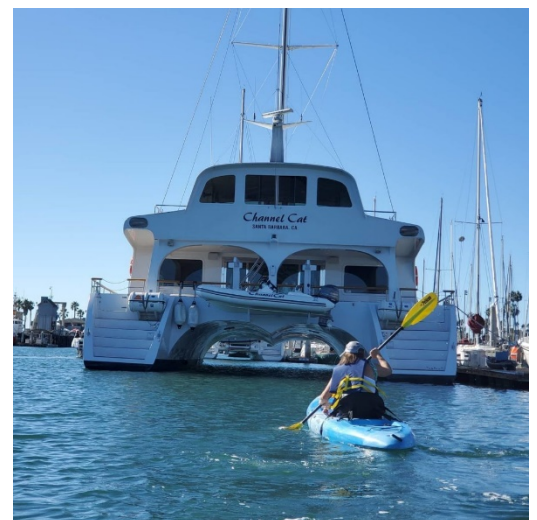


It is safe to say that the Hotel Californian has quickly become the most talked-about hotel in all of Santa Barbara. With its attention to detail, first-rate customer service, a wide list of dining options and let us not forget its outstanding location, there simply is not a better place in town.

For Angelenos looking for an easy way to get to the Hotel Californian from downtown LA, you can now leave your car keys at home. Jump on the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner at Union Station, sit back and enjoy the scenic train ride that will drop you off one block from the hotel.

### **Spend an Adventure Filled Day with Captain Jack's Tours and Events**

There is nothing better than having a personal guide to show you around a new city. Since Santa Barbara is such an amazing place to visit with so much terrain to explore, hiring a local to take you around will ensure you do not miss anything important. Captain Jack's has been servicing Santa Barbara and the surrounding area for years and is a leader in the tour industry thanks to its top-notch customer service. Simply visit their website [captainjackstours.com](http://captainjackstours.com) and scroll through the endless tour packages that are offered. Spend your days indulging in top attractions ranging from horseback riding to hiking, kayaking, sailing, wine tours, historical/architectural tours, and more. If you don't see the exact tour you were looking for Captain



Jack's will customize one for you. Imagine starting the day with a breathtaking kayaking tour where you cruise through the harbor visiting dolphins and local sea lions. Next, take a horseback ride along Santa Barbara's white sandy beaches and finish up with their "Sideways Inspired" wine tour. Next time you pay a visit to the American Riviera make sure you allow Captain Jack's Tours to show you the area's best highlight reel!

## **Visit the Wineries**

### **First Stop: Melville Winery**



Located in the heart of the Sta. Rita Hills, Melville Winery is one of Lompoc's top destinations. When Ron Melville and his sons decided to set up shop in the valley it was with great discernment that the location they chose was prime for growing cool-climate varietals. The land chosen is only ten miles from the ocean and provides consistent morning and evening fog along with steady afternoon winds. Additionally, the ground was a combination of calcareous rock and sand which of course is perfectly suited for growing Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Syrah grapes. The rest is history and today over 23 years later Melville Winery is competing as one of Santa Barbara County's top producers with 120 acres of award-winning varietals consisting of 17 clones of Pinot Noir, 8 clones of Syrah, and 8 clones of Chardonnay.

Beyond producing some of the county's best wines the Melville family has created a warm and welcoming atmosphere that brings locals and tourists alike to visit the property for a day of family fun. During the cooler seasons, the grounds are perfectly decorated with bails of hay as well as a smattering of pumpkins, gourds, and squash.

### **Second Stop: Beckmen Winery**

The Beckmen family only knows how to deliver the best product, from keyboards and synthesizers to award-winning wines, they are born leaders. After years of pioneering the electronic music business Tom and Judy Beckmen along with their two sons, Steve and Jeff are now producing some of the best wines in the county. Since their inception in 1994, their world-class wines have been served throughout the finest restaurants and homes across the country with the ultimate highlight being enjoyed at the highest level, the White House. Their 150 acres of exceptional varietals are spread between their two vineyards, the Thomas and Judith Beckmen Estate Vineyard in Los Olivos and the Purisima Mountain Vineyard in Ballard Canyon. Since 1994 the Beckmens have been tending to both plots of land with one thought in mind, how to produce the best possible grape varietals in all of Santa Barbara County. (Photo Below Courtesy of Beckmen Winery)



Analyzing the unique soils and microclimates of each vineyard they have ensured the highest quality fruit possible and the proof is in the finished product. With peaks reaching 1150 feet and multiple exposures, the Purisima Mountain Vineyard is home to their white wine production which includes Sauvignon Blanc, Grenache Blanc, Viognier, and Chardonnay as well as Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre, and Counoise. The Thomas and Judith Beckmen Estate is primarily planted to yield their Cabernet Sauvignon with small amounts of Grenache, Mourvedre as well as Syrah. With the recent pandemic, the Beckmens have gone above and beyond to keep their wine club members and guests of the winery as safe as possible. With zoom tastings where wines are delivered to your home and an outdoor tasting area that covers extra safety precautions, you will be more than happy during a winery visit. One of the highlights of the outdoor tasting experience is that each guest receives their tastings in a Covid Friendly Wine Kit that includes your take-home wine glasses, bottles of water, breadsticks, anti-bacterial sanitizer, and a description of each wine that is offered that day.



### Third Stop: Pence Winery



Pence Winery is built on a special storied past of how Blair Pence, originally a real estate developer in Los Angeles turned his love for wine into arguably Santa Barbara County's most VIP winery. Blair derived his passion for world-class wines from his many travels to Europe where he was exposed to award-winning varietals from Bordeaux and Burgundy in France. What at first began as a healthy obsession of collecting the world's finest wines for his home in America eventually lead to where he and his family are now, leading wine moguls in Santa Barbara County. The acquisition of his land that is now home to the Pence Winery was originally purchased by him as a ranch to raise a few horses and possibly some cattle. Throughout the purchase of his four ranches in the area one of them turned out to be an outstanding location to grow grapes which opened Pandora's Box. Pence being an educated businessman knew the key to success was to hire and consult with the best viticulturists in the Santa Barbara area and the rest is history. Today the Pence Winery that is set on 200 acres of land is a relatively tiny artisanal winery that produces exceptional wines all organically farmed. The cool, coastal climate of the area is an ideal environment for producing high-quality Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Syrah. The unique variety of soils and microclimates are what Pence says contribute to his award-winning wines and he is a strong believer that the lay of the land tells the story of the finished product.

When you book a tour of the property make sure to ask for a "tasting on the dock" which is one of the highlights of the estate. Kick up your feet and let one of Pence's wine experts bring you a flight of their finest varietals while you take in nature at its finest!

### End the Weekend with a Romantic Dining Experience



Arguably Santa Barbara's finest dining establishment, Toma has been delivering the freshest of ingredients along with impeccable service since its inception in 2013. Located only a short 10-minute walk from Hotel Californian this waterfront classic has been the talk of the town over the years thanks to the passion and love for fine cuisine brought by husband-and-wife team, Tom and Vicki Dolan. With a combined 70 years in culinary arts guests could not be in better hands when they pull up a seat at their old-world historic building on West Cabrillo Boulevard. The menu is a perfected medley of fresh seafood, locally sourced meats, organically grown vegetables all paired with a world-class wine list. It truly is hard to go wrong with anything on the menu. A large part of the overwhelming success that Toma has received over the years is because Tom and Vicki have chosen their team of chefs based on their vision for excellence. Executive Chef Charles de L'Arbe the current master at the helm brings a lifetime of appreciating the finer side of the foodie spectrum being mentored first by his

well-traveled grandmother and later by Chef Nat Ely. Chef Charles uses his passion for sustainability working hand in hand with the local farmers to create his menu which changes season to season based on the availability of the finest local ingredients. With a menu as thought-provoking and flavorful that Chef Charles presents each day guests may find it an arduous task to select only one of many incredible creations. Kick-off your meal with their signature Tuna Cones filled with Ahi Sashimi, Ginger, Sesame, Soy, Chile, and Chives. Next opt for the Grilled Octopus with Romanesco, Fregola Pasta, Olive, Gremolata, Smoked Tomato, and Tobiko Roe. The Gnocchi is a sure-fire winner complete with Rock Shrimp, Dried Tomato, Fava Bean, Roasted Garlic, and Black Truffle Butter. Finish off the evening with a shot of Limoncello and Crème Brule for a perfectly sweet ending.

With fewer crowds now is the perfect time for a weekend getaway and while things may not look the same, you can feel comfort in knowing the extensive measures that have been put in place to ensure guests stay safe and healthy.