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Contributing Editor Tracey Minkin Indulges in a Weekend of Mediterranean Revival and Wine in Santa Barbara

It's no wonder the California coastal town is nicknamed the American Riviera.

Contributing Travel Editor Tracey Minkin shares an itinerary for three days of leisure in our favorite destinations around the world. Find more travel inspiration in [Weekend Hop](#).

I hope the genius who coined Santa Barbara "The American Riviera" gets a nickel every time I call this most beautiful of California coastal cities by its tagline. Because they were right; Santa Barbara is a gorgeous testimony to the mesmerizing power of Mediterranean (Revival) architecture.

Some palm trees and the cobalt blue Pacific Ocean don't hurt, either. And in doing the OG Riviera one better, Santa Barbara is one of the most fun, high-quality wine towns there is. I bet Gerald and Sara Murphy could have used a good beach taco and pour of natural wine. Here's my favorite way to drink in the local vintages and the views in glorious Santa Barbara.

But First, Wine



Bibi Ji restaurant

Courtesy Bibi Ji

The buzzy nexus of pours from this exciting wine region is the Funk Zone, formerly home to industrial buildings on the wrong side of the tracks (literally) but now home to more than 15 tasting rooms in a 10-block radius. Start with the Riesling at [Municipal Winemakers](#) while snagging some vitamin D the natural way on their outdoor patio. Then pay homage to circa-1962 [Santa Barbara Winery](#) with a glass on their outdoor patio and a cheese plate from [Pierre Lafond Market & Deli](#).

And Then, Food (and More Wine)

Power up with local [Dart Coffee Co.](#) brewing and breadly wonders at [Helena Avenue Bakery](#). Head to the Santa Barbara Public Market for [Corazón Cocina's](#) superb spread of ceviches and tacos. There's not just fertile wine country out there—there's farmland out there. So make the most of it with farm-forward restaurants like [Satellite](#), a wine bar and vegetarian restaurant in the heart of downtown, and [Bibi Ji](#) for chef Jessi Singh's contemporary Indian, which pairs perfectly with standout local labels like [Lo-Fi](#) and [Storm Wines](#).

Historic Mini-Hops



Santa Barbara County Courthouse

John Penney // Getty Images

It's easy to get swoony and captivated by the overall beauty of the city's wealth of historic Mediterranean Revival architecture; get the real story and take in the myriad of examples with the experts at **Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara**, which runs private walking tours by appointment for groups up to 10 people (arrangements should be made at least two weeks in advance and are subject to docent availability). To schedule a tour, email info@afsb.org or call 805-965-6307.

Hotel Californian designer [Martyn Lawrence Bullard](#) wasn't shy about sharing his favorite cultural hideout in the city: the Mission Museum at [Old Mission Santa Barbara](#). "It's like stepping back in time," he says of the "Queen of the Missions" founded by Spanish Franciscans in 1786 (the current buildings date to the early 19th century). "You really feel the spirit and history of old Santa Barbara," he says.

For a new Santa Barbara vision, check out local-born architect (and [author](#)) Jeff Shelton's buildings that reimagine Spanish Colonial Revival wildly and compellingly. The [Jeff Shelton Architecture Tour](#) is a self-guided walk among eight of his buildings in the downtown area ([download the map here](#)).

The Shopping Edit



Showroom whimsy at Raoul Textiles

Matt Wier, courtesy of Raoul Textiles

First stop: Santa Barbara design legend The curated rooms of this workshop/showroom hybrid are IRL look books for the art of California living in a Mediterranean Revival world. Keep an eye peeled for this season's new wool-linen stripes, plus the workshop's latest Engle & Deutch armchair, based on a 19-century French side chair (open by appointment Monday-Friday).



Heather Taylor Home at the Montecito Country Mart

Courtesy Heather Taylor

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You won't mind the drive, because it ends up at [Montecito Country Mart](#), and you'll want the car for your shopping brags. Look for favorites like [Clare V.](#) and [Poppy Store](#), and new arrivals [Doen](#) and a pop-up shop with [Heather Taylor Home](#). Leave time for pizza (and more wine?) at [Bettina](#).

Sleep in Splendor



Hotel Californian

Courtesy Hotel Californian

Who better than Martyn Lawrence Bullard to envision a new vision for the American Riviera? That's the magic spun at [Hotel Californian](#), which blends Spanish Colonial Revival architecture with Moorish-influenced interiors (both California design crazes in the 1920s and one of the designer's trademark gestures). Here, black and white geometries play with emerald and saffron pops of color, Moroccan tiles lead down winding paseos, and an oasis of a rooftop pool offers freshwaters and sweeping views over rooftops to the Pacific. The latest: [The Society: State & Mason](#) is the hotel's new, intimate wine

tasting room that's going to be offering classes, winemaker dinners, special events, and more in addition to tastings.



The bright lobby at Palihouse Santa Barbara

Courtesy Palihouse Santa Barbara

Meanwhile, the 2021 arrival of [Palihouse Santa Barbara](#) showcased designer and hotel impresario Avi Brosh's guestroom and suite revival of the Santa Barbara School of the Arts' circa-1920 landmark building in the historic downtown Presidio neighborhood. It's all pops of color playing amid the Spanish Colonial Revival, and it's a stunner.

The Essential Excursion



Olive Allee at Lotusland

Photography by Kim Baile. Copyright Lotusland.

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One cannot—*cannot*—come to this part of the world and not journey to Montecito to pay homage to the legendary [**Madame Ganna Walska's Lotusland**](#), her former home and extraordinary gardens that feature remarkable collections of dry garden plants, including some of the most famous bromeliads in the world. Mark off a half-day for this fabulous pilgrimage—you'll be so glad you did.