



# Santa Barbara County

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Lark (p404)
- ➔ Lure Fish House (p424)
- ➔ Santa Barbara Shellfish Company (p403)
- ➔ Succulent Café (p417)
- ➔ Lucky Penny (p402)

## Best Places to Stay

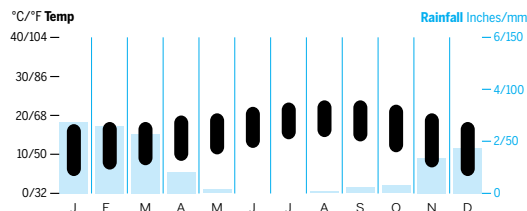
- ➔ El Encanto (p401)
- ➔ Inn of the Spanish Garden (p401)
- ➔ Santa Barbara Auto Camp (p400)
- ➔ Blue Iguana Inn (p422)
- ➔ Hamlet Inn (p417)

## Why Go?

Frankly put, this area is damn pleasant to putter around. Low-slung between lofty mountains and the shimmering Pacific, chic Santa Barbara's red-tiled roofs, white stucco buildings and Mediterranean vibe give credence to its claim of being the 'American Riviera.' It's a surprisingly bewitching place to loll on the beach, eat and drink extraordinarily well, shop a bit and push all your cares off to another day. The city's car-free campaign has brought electric shuttle buses, urban bike trails and earth-friendly wine tours. Mother Nature returns the love with hiking, biking, surfing, kayaking, scuba diving and camping opportunities galore, from off-shore Channel Islands National Park to arty Ojai, surrounded by hot springs. Meanwhile, winemaking is booming in the bucolic Santa Ynez Mountains, where over a hundred wineries vie for your attention. But if all you want to do is relax, no worries – plenty of sunny beaches await.

## When to Go

### Santa Barbara



**Apr** Balmy temperatures, fewer tourists than in summer. Wildflowers bloom on Channel Islands.

**Jun** Summer vacation and beach season begin. Summer Solstice Celebration parade.

**Oct** Sunny blue skies and smaller crowds. Wine Country harvest festivities.



## Santa Barbara County Highlights

- 1 Strolling **Stearns Wharf** (p393), then lazing on Santa Barbara's cinematic **beaches**.
- 2 Ambling between wine-tasting rooms, hip bars, art galleries and shops in Santa Barbara's **Funk Zone** (p404).
- 3 Exploring Spanish-colonial historic sites, such as **Mission Santa Barbara** (p392).
- 4 Eyeing panoramic views atop the *Vertigo*-esque clock tower of the **Santa Barbara County Courthouse** (p393).
- 5 Pedaling past vineyards and organic farms through the **Santa Ynez Valley** (p413).
- 6 Following the **Foxen Canyon Wine Trail** (p411) to taste top-rated pinot noir.
- 7 Kayaking sea caves and watching whales in **Channel Islands National Park** (p425).
- 8 Rejuvenating your body and soul in new-agey **Ojai** (p421).
- 9 Eating *ableskivers* (panacke popovers) by a kitschy windmill in the Danish village of **Solvang** (p415).