

Weekend Getaway: 48 Hours in Santa Barbara

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A few hundred miles down the California coast, sandwiched by both mountains and sea, stands Santa Barbara. A city of fewer than 100,000 people may seem like it has little to offer, but Santa Barbara manages to defy expectation. Property prices are sky high, and celebrities like Oprah and Julia-Louis Dreyfus call Santa Barbara County home (earning it the nickname “the American Riviera”), but the vibe still manages to be more beachy chic than overly frou-frou elite. Whether you’re just passing through on your way to LA or making a weekend of it, Santa Barbara has plenty to keep you occupied.

FRIDAY

DINNER AND DESSERT

After a long drive down the 101 or maybe hopping off your flight from the adorable SB airport, you’re probably hungry. We recommend dropping off your bags wherever you’re staying* and heading to [Arigato Sushi](#), where you can fill up on fresh nigiri or enjoy some of their creative rolls (ever heard of pesto on sushi?). For some local flavor, ask for a Gold Shot, which often features local uni; if you want to eat on the lighter side, try the yellowtail carpaccio.



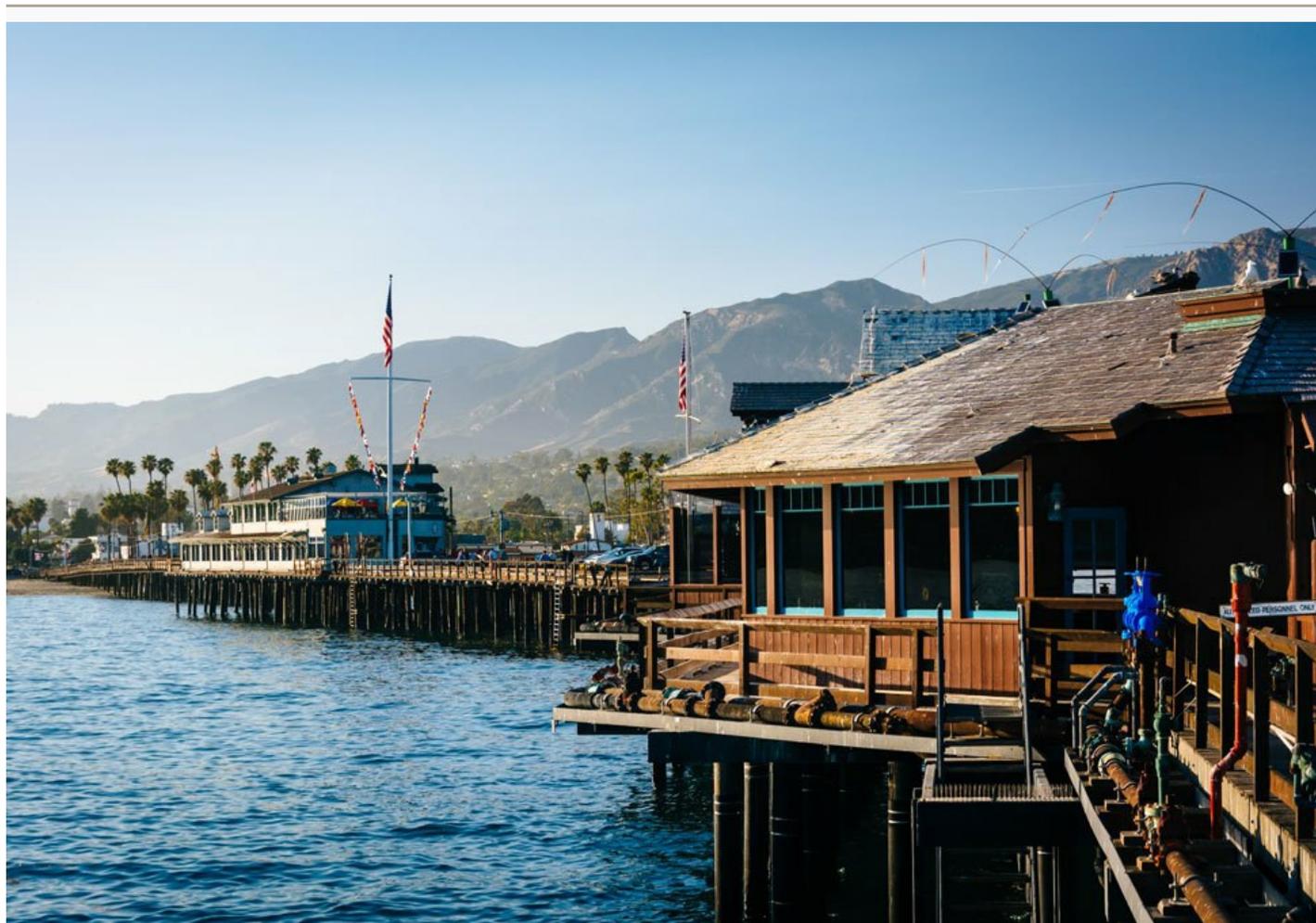
Get a flight of six cupcakes for \$10 (Kevin W. via [Yelp](#)).

After stuffing yourself silly with fish, walk it off by going around the corner to the [Public Market](#), where you'll find stalls of local, artisanal food, beer, and wine. We're directing you here specifically for dessert — carbo-lovers will adore [Enjoy Cupcakes](#), with a rotating menu of baked amazingness, and [Rori's Artisanal Creamery](#) sells "itty bitty" cones at \$1.50 a pop. For a nightcap, stick around and have a drink at The Garden.

SATURDAY

START YOUR DAY THE FRENCH WAY

For the perfect breakfast pick-me-up and a delightful latte, go to [Renaud's](#). Sit down for a full *petit déjeuner* or snag some of their pastry creations for your day's stroll. You can't really go wrong ordering here, but we recommend the chocolate croissants, macarons, and any tart you can get your hands on.



The always scenic Stearns Wharf.

STROLL DOWN STATE STREET

A pedestrian's dream, State Street is perfect for window shopping (or, you know, actual shopping) thanks to a diversity of boutiques, galleries, eateries, and shops. Tree-lined and picturesque, the main drag also has a few nooks and crannies to explore. Along the way, take a couple-block detour to the [Santa Barbara County Courthouse](#), a beautiful example of Colonial Revival architecture with even more beautiful views from the clock tower. If you're feeling peckish, grab a bite somewhere back along State, and end your trek at [Stearns Wharf](#), Santa Barbara's most visited landmark.

GET FUNKY

You've earned a glass of vino (or two). Adjacent to the beach is The Funk Zone, a trendy district known for its warehouses-turned-wine-tasting-rooms, culinary experimentation, and overall artistic bent. Looking to sample a spirit? The [city's first distillery](#) since that pesky old 18th amendment passed is here. Hunting for your favorite new California grenache blanc? Look no further than [Municipal Winemakers](#). And for the Instagram-obsessed, there's even a [foodie photo tour](#). Huzzah!



Tri-tip at Barbareño, one of Santa Barbara's best restaurants (Lisa D. via [Yelp](#)).

THEATER ISN'T DEAD

So you've indulged in the history, food, drink, and atmosphere of Santa Barbara. What's next? Dinner and a show, my darling! You've probably eaten plenty today, but in case you haven't, order some tacos at [Romanti-Ezer](#), whose motto is "weird name, delicious food." If you want a more upscale dining experience, [Barbareño](#) has some exciting regional offerings. And for the show, SB has an active theater scene. Take in a film, a live concert, some stand-up, or keep it classic with the symphony or opera any one of the handful of theaters in town. Performers like HAIM and Samantha Bee headline at [The Arlington](#) alongside showings of first-run movies, or catch some Broadway, dance, symphony or opera at [The Granada](#). Both buildings still retain their historic charm — just like the rest of the city.

SUNDAY

FUN IN THE SUN

You can't leave Santa Barbara without making a stop at the beach, and there are plenty of options to catch your rays. West Beach is right downtown, or a few miles away beckon the fine sands of Butterfly Beach. Rent a kayak or stand-up paddleboard on weekends at either beach from [Cal Coast Adventures](#). If your pooch is in tow, head a tad north of the city to Arroyo Burro, dubbed Hendry's Beach by locals. Be sure to bring the SPF.

SURF & TURF



This Santa Barbara gem isn't to be missed (May..Lene D. via [Yelp](#)).

To recover from your oceanic adventures, hop in the car and enjoy the scenery through the serpentine 154-West and prepare yourself for a meal at [Cold Spring Tavern](#). Open since 1865, Cold Spring Tavern is not only a historic watering hole where you might see some familiar faces (Blake Shelton and Gwen Stefani stopped by while we were there last time), it's also home to the best tri-tip barbecue sandwich you'll ever have. Vegetarians, take note — there's not a ton of options for you on this menu.

Pro-tip: the cash line moves faster.

LONG AND WINDING ROAD

If you're driving, it might be time to hit the road. But fear not — the way back to the Bay Area is paved with wine. Lots and lots of wine, all worth stopping for. Oh, also [a Danish town](#). But that's for a whole other weekend.

*Note: Santa Barbara lodging is quite pricey and Airbnb and its ilk recently experienced a setback with the county supervisors, so be prepared to pay a little more or look in nearby Carpinteria or Goleta for some lower prices.

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