

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA | WEEKEND GETAWAYS

Santa Barbara: fun stuff that's free (or cheap) & easy

Stroll the pier, cruise the coast on a bike, sightsee aboard a trolley. Here's the Sweet 16 of Santa Barbara attractions.

Los Angeles Times Staff Writers,

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Santa Barbara, CA attractions

Photo Gallery



Santa Barbara, CA hotels

Photo Gallery



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SANTA BARBARA HARBOR

Harbor Way at Cabrillo Boulevard.

At the center of it all is the harbor, the heart of maritime Santa Barbara, complete with marina, walkable breakwater, the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum (113 Harbor Way, [805] 962-8404, www.sbrmm.org) and myriad restaurants, including the Breakwater, Brophy Brothers and Chuck's Waterfront Grill. To get out on the water yourself, you can rent a sailboat or take lessons (Santa Barbara Sailing Center, 133 Harbor Way, [800] 350-9090, www.sbsail.com), try a kayak (Paddle Sports, 117B Harbor Way, [805] 899-4925, www.kayaksb.com), or relax on a dinner cruise (Condor Cruises, 301 W. Cabrillo Blvd., [805] 882-0088, www.condorcruis-es.com).

THE URBAN WINE TOUR

There may not be any vineyards, but tasting rooms are scattered around downtown Santa Barbara. The local granddaddy, Santa Barbara Winery, was established in 1962 and has one of the best-developed tasting centers, with a \$5 charge. Several other wineries are within a three-block area, dotting a neighborhood across State Street from the Santa Barbara Railroad Station. Others are found around the city. For more information, see www.santabarbarafresh.com, or contact the Santa Barbara Conference & Visitors Bureau, (805) 966-9222.

SANTA BARBARA MISSION

2201 Laguna St.; www.sbmission.org

In the middle of all the new things Santa Barbara has to offer, it's easy to forget its past. The mission is the place to reconnect with the town's Spanish colonial roots. Surprisingly, Junípero Serra was not its founder (he died two years earlier), but the mission was among his plans. Exhibits show how the Indians and the clergy lived. Weekdays attract the boisterous school tours, but no matter: The sanctuary is beautiful and peaceful as only an old spiritual place can be. Admission \$5.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

1100 Anacapa St.; (805) 962-6464

Talk about photo ops. From the clock tower, you get a great sense of the lay of the city, the red roofs and green hillsides. The lush courtyard, a favorite for school tours, was the site of 16 weddings last Valentine's Day. But most breathtaking of all is the Mural Room. Once used for meetings by the county Board of Supervisors, it ranks among the most spectacular public spaces in America.

SANTA BARBARA TROLLEY TOURS

See the city's main tourist attractions in 90 minutes from aboard a vintage red-and-gold trolley car. Tours run hourly 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (www.sbtrolley.com, [805] 965-0353). You can ride straight through or hop off and on. Tickets cost \$18 (\$16 online) for adults and \$9 for kids. Main pickup stops are at [Stearns Wharf](#) and the Old Mission.

BIKE ALONG THE SANTA BARBARA COAST

From shoreline park to Andree Clark Bird Refuge.

Breathe in the brisk ocean air while riding a rented bicycle along the shore. A paved, 3-mile bike path runs from Shoreline Park to Andree Clark Bird Refuge, past several restaurants and shops along Cabrillo Boulevard. The path is relatively flat, good for family bike riding. For a map, go to www.santabarbaracarfree.org.

WHEEL FUN RENTALS

101 State St. and two other locations in Santa Barbara; (805) 966-2282, www.wheelfunrentalssb.com.

This is a great way to see the beachfront or tour State Street. Rentals include bikes, mopeds and motor scooters as well as pedal-powered surreys that seat 11. Try the three-wheeled Scoot Coupe for a teeth-rattling ride down State Street (\$49 an hour). Or try the scooter (\$50 for two hours) for the ultimate coastal experience. (Note: You need a motorcycle license to rent one.)

FARMERS MARKETS

Six days a week (Mondays excluded), rain or shine, you can find a farmers market, selling fresh produce and handmade souvenirs, within a 10-mile radius of downtown Santa Barbara. The most well-attended farmers market is held Saturday mornings at the corner of Santa Barbara and Cota streets. For schedules and locations, go to www.sbfarmersmarket.org, or call the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers Market Assn. at (805) 962-5354.

SANTA BARBARA ZOO

500 Nifos Drive; (805) 962-5339, www.santabarbarazoo.org.

A small, manageable and beautifully landscaped zoological park with feeding times for giraffes, lorikeets and Humboldt penguins that will please the kids, who will also enjoy the rest of Noah's Ark. \$11 (about a third of the price for an adult ticket to San Diego Zoo), \$8 ages 60 and older and 2 to 12.

PIER FISHING, STEARNS WHARF

Stearns Wharf at Cabrillo Boulevard; www.stearnswharf.org.

This 2,000-foot wharf, once partly owned by actor James Cagney, offers seafood houses, a museum, a pirate cruise and even a palm reader. The best bargain of all might be at Mike's Bait & Tackle, where you can rent a rod and reel for \$5 an hour. What distinguishes this pier from many others in Southern California is the open design of the fishing deck. No rails. Tip: Families with young kids should try the fishing area near the Ty Warner Sea Center, where standard guard rails are in place.

SUSAN QUINLAN DOLL & TEDDY BEAR MUSEUM & LIBRARY

122 W. Canon Perdido St.; (805) 730-1707, www.quinlanmuseum.com.

More than 3,000 dolls and teddies of all sizes and eras inhabit glass cases in this little-known local treasure assembled by Quinlan, a retired librarian. Don't miss the charming tea room, with murals of dolls and teddy bears enjoying a tea party and beach picnic in Santa Barbara. \$6.50 adults, \$3.50 ages 12 and younger.