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Welcome to the Hotel Californian, Where Wellness Meets Indulgence

You won't ever want to check out of the Hotel Californian.

By [Margaret Abrams](#) • 07/14/23 11:40am



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This stunning [Santa Barbara](#) hotel is luxurious, yes, but still feels approachable and, best of all, incredibly relaxing. The dreamy property is somewhat spread out; Hotel Californian's spa, tasting room and restaurant are all located within walking distance on State Street, so you'll feel like you're exploring the SoCal Funk Street neighborhood when you head to brunch or your massage.

It's easy to traverse the hotel's restaurants and spas, as well as wander through the coastal California town's "Funk Zone" neighborhood, making Hotel Californian the ideal destination [for a long weekend getaway](#), and especially for the ultimate wellness retreat.

Whether you're planning a girls' weekend or a romantic getaway, Hotel Californian embraces its coastal surroundings and offers the perfect balance between wellness and indulgence. Here's everything you need to know.

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Hotel Californian. Visit [Santa Barbara](#)

How do you get to Hotel Californian?

If you're in Los Angeles, it's only about a two hour drive, making it a super convenient option for a long weekend away. It's also a relatively painless ride from LAX, especially if you rent a car for the weekend (although many places are walkable in the Funk Zone). For another transportation alternative, The Pacific Surfliner Amtrak train arrives directly at the hotel, and provides coastal views throughout your journey. Santa Barbara also has its own airport, with nonstop flights from cities including San Francisco, L.A., Dallas and Denver, though anyone arriving from the East Coast will need to either take a connecting flight or fly into a major SoCal airport, and then take one of the aforementioned modes of transport.



The Hotel Californian. Hotel Californian

What's the backstory here?

Santa Barbara was once the center of the film industry; the first movie theater in California was located in this bustling coastal town. It was during this era that the original Hotel Californian was constructed in 1925, but a major earthquake

destroyed much of the city, including the hotel, the same year—only the facade and two side walls were kept intact.

In the aftermath of the destruction, architects began to design white, uniform locations throughout the city that could easily work as film backdrops, leading to the Santa Barbara we know today. When the Hotel Californian initially reopened in the years following the earthquake, it embraced that coastal aesthetic made popular in the American Riviera.

In 2012, the hotel was completely demolished, and work began to bring it back to its former glory. The newly built property, now a member of Preferred Hotels, officially opened its doors in 2017. While the hotel has been entirely redone, the 1925 facade was painstakingly preserved, to pay homage to the original building.



A room at the Hotel Californian. Hotel Californian

Now, onto the design and decor.

The architecture is Spanish Colonial Revival meets Moroccan, and everything from the snake lighting fixtures to the furniture was custom-designed for the hotel. The interiors are courtesy of celebrity designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard, who has worked on residential projects for names including Elton John, the

Kardashians and Cher, as well as hospitality ventures such as the Sands Hotel in Palm Springs and the Prospect Hollywood.

The 121-room boutique hotel has 11 different accommodation types, and each one has its own personality. Bullard wanted to guarantee that guests had a different experience every time they checked into the property, but many loyal guests check out a few of the different rooms, and then request their favorite for every stay.

During a recent stay at the property, my room featured a portrait of Marilyn Monroe with tattoos, while an ink-covered Audrey Hepburn is another option. Many of the bright, airy rooms open up onto balconies, which make for the perfect place to enjoy your morning room service breakfast. The sophisticated rooms are outfitted with lush velvet furniture, glamorous golden snake sconces and custom Martyn Lawrence Bullard finishes. Each night, you'll experience an elevated version of turn down service, with a special poem or note left for you next to your cozy bed.



Hotel Californian. HotelCalifornian

Any celebrity sightings?

John Mayer, Michael Keaton, Bo Derek, John Corbett, Jane Lynch, RuPaul, Liam Hemsworth and Miley Cyrus have all visited the hotel, with several attending the star-studded opening in 2018. Many celebs opt for the two-bedroom Alcazar Suite, which is situated in a separate building and offers everything you'd need for a private, paparazzi-free vacation, complete with a kitchen and dining room—you truly won't ever have to leave your room (although you'd probably want to, simply to take in the sights).



Blackbird. Hotel Californian

How's the food situation?

If you don't want to leave the hotel, there are plenty of dining options on-site. The lobby bar, Djinn (the Arabic word for genie—a cheeky nod to a spirit in a bottle), is especially dramatic and stylish, and it's a hit with visitors and locals

alike. Check the calendar during your visit, because they offer plenty of buzzy events with DJs, tarot card readings and more.

Then there's Blackbird, a gourmet restaurant with hyper-seasonal ingredients and a Michelin designation. Goat Tree is good for brunch and offers room service—make sure to try the inventive avocado toast, which includes fresh cherry tomatoes and pickled red onions for an unexpected kick. The freshly baked croissants are also must-orders; you might just want to pick one up for your trip home.



Majorelle. Hotel Californian

Tell us about this wellness component.

I visited during a dedicated wellness weekend, complete with an expo, sound bath and multiple workout classes, but the hotel also offers fitness options like dance cardio and Pilates on its rooftop overlooking the water every weekend. If you can't make it to the class, the Hotel Californian shares Instagram Lives with the line-up of fitness instructors.

The spa, Majorelle, is another standout. The minute you walk in, you'll feel as though you've been transported to a glamorous getaway, as the tiles were all

hand-painted in Morocco, and the gorgeous, almost glowing geometric dome was hand-painted by an artist, sans stencils. The treatments are all customized, and the massages are truly the ultimate indulgence.



Tan-Tan. Hotel Californian

Guests can visit the rooftop pool, suitably named Tan-Tan, to sunbathe and take in incredible views of the Pacific Ocean while sipping on tropical cocktails. Tan-Tan does double duty as an events space, and it's the best place to take in fireworks over the water.



Santa Barbara. Visit Santa Barbara

What exactly is the Funk Zone?

The funk zone is a trendy district with more than 25 tasting rooms (including the Hotel Californian's, The Society) and plenty to explore outside the hotel's doors, with many converted warehouses and chic boutiques. The entire area is extremely walkable, making this the best destination if you want to hit the beach (and perhaps enjoy a sunset sail, a must-do amenity the hotel offers) as well as walk to the local shops and restaurants.

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