



(Travel)

A Santa Barbara Road Trip Was The Mental Health Respite I Needed



For starters, I'm a tad bit embarrassed that it's taken me this long to visit Santa Barbara as a native Californian and Angeleno of three years, but I was finally able to see the beautiful city on a recent road trip to the Hotel Californian, a swanky seaside Moroccan-inspired hotel, nestled right at the heart of downtown Santa Barbara.

To be transparent, this trip couldn't come at a better time. I've been grieving the loss of my beloved mother since 2023, which is when I lost her to an arduous journey with glioblastoma cancer. We typically celebrate our birthdays around this time, as we're both very proud Leos and our birthdays are just a few days apart. Her birthday happened to fall on the Saturday I was scheduled to travel to Santa Barbara. When I received the opportunity to explore the city's eclectic shopping scene, indulge in decadent fare and delicious wines, and receive some much-needed rest, I couldn't pass it up.

Additionally, I genuinely love taking road trips, and I believe there's a specific art to executing one. I've gained experience over time and found that it's better to be prepared at least a week in advance of the trip.

What I Researched Beforehand

This may seem like obvious advice, but it's crucial to know a bit about the area you're visiting ahead of time. You should know the hot spots to visit, how far the area is from your home, and have a general sense of what you'd like to accomplish during your time away. For this trip, I knew I would mainly be resting. Still, I also had plans to spend adequate time on the beautiful beach and do some wine tasting at Hotel Californian and Pali Wine Co and eat at Loquita Santa Barbara, which is known for its crudo tapas and margaritas.



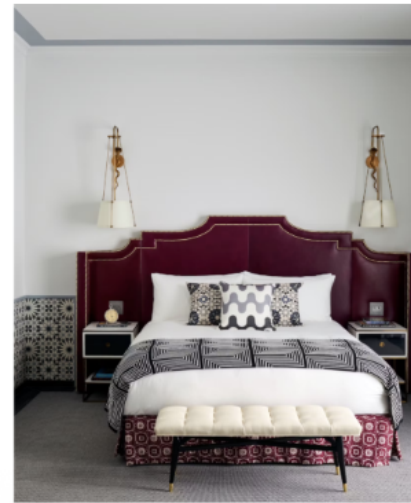
Where I Stayed

As mentioned earlier, the picturesque Hotel Californian was the ideal place for the holistic rest I desperately craved. The property recently celebrated its 100th anniversary of the original opening date. The hotel, conveniently located in the Funk Zone of Santa Barbara (which is essentially a tourist haven that features wine tasting rooms, galleries, fashion boutiques, and restaurants), is known for its stylish atmosphere and eclectic decor. The 121-room hotel has also been a magnet for Hollywood's elite, like John Mayer, Michael Keaton, Bo Derek, John Corbett, Jane Lynch, RuPaul, Liam Hemsworth, and Miley Cyrus.

The Funk Zone also caters to the pursuit of getting lost in the beach-town experience, but with cutting-edge gastronomy at its signature restaurant, **Blackbird**, where I enjoyed a delicious blackened cod with lentils and arugula, as well as oysters, paired with a fabulous glass of merlot. During my on-site wine tasting at the hotel's **Society: State & Mason**, I enjoyed samples of Banshee “Ten of Cups” Sparkling Brut and Roth’s 2022 chardonnay.



Hotel Californian



Hotel Californian

Given that the property was just steps away from the beach, it was easy for me to walk over and spend several hours resting and reading there. After the beach, I walked over to a local favorite, **McConnell's Fine Ice Cream**, to get one scoop of its delectable coffee ice cream.

Later in the day, I enjoyed receiving a much-needed massage at the hotel's state-of-the-art spa and tanning at its sun-soaked rooftop pool, which offers views of the Pacific Ocean.

What I Took Away

From this pleasant escape, I learned how important it is to prioritize rest and center your needs, as well as being open to exploring new places, even if it is only a few hours away and right in your backyard. The experience in a new environment might change and inspire you to continue discovering parts of yourself that you might've thought were long buried and lost.