



Photo Courtesy of The Milo

WHERE THE COAST MEETS THE VINE

SANTA BARBARA

Few California destinations manage to balance laid-back beach culture, acclaimed wine country, and exceptional dining quite like Santa Barbara. Just a few hours from Los Angeles, the coastal city offers the perfect weekend escape, whether you're traveling with friends, a significant other, or even a pair of four-legged companions.



Photo Credit Hotel Milo

For this getaway, Hotel Milo Santa Barbara served as the ideal home base. Located directly across from West Beach, the pet-friendly property embodies the relaxed charm that has made Santa Barbara a perennial favorite among California travelers. Framed by towering palm trees and Spanish Colonial architecture, the boutique hotel feels less like a traditional resort and more like a private seaside retreat.

Guests are welcomed into a collection of lush courtyards, garden pathways, tiled fountains, and intimate gathering spaces designed for lingering. Fire pits invite evening conversations beneath the stars, while complimentary beach cruisers make it easy to explore the waterfront and nearby attractions. The atmosphere is distinctly Santa Barbara, casual yet refined, with the ocean never more than a few steps away.

The recently refreshed guest rooms reflect that same coastal sensibility. Light wood flooring, woven textures, crisp white linens, and custom crane-inspired wallpaper create a bright, airy environment that feels both sophisticated and approachable. Soft neutral tones and natural materials complement the surrounding landscape, while spacious layouts provide a comfortable retreat after a day spent exploring the city and wine country.

One of the highlights of staying at Hotel Milo is its proximity to some of Santa Barbara's most beloved outdoor spaces. Each morning began with a visit to nearby Hendry's Beach, a favorite among local dog owners and one of the area's most popular pet-friendly stretches of coastline. Watching the dogs race across the sand while waves rolled onto shore offered a reminder that some of the best moments of travel are often the simplest.

Back in town, brunch at Paloma provided the perfect start to the day. The stylish yet approachable restaurant welcomes dogs on its patio, making it a natural choice for travelers exploring the city with pets. The Breakfast Sando was an immediate standout, featuring bacon, fried egg, Gruyère, aioli, arugula, and crispy potatoes on a buttery brioche bun. Equally memorable was the BBQ Bacon Burger, stacked with Wagyu beef, grilled onions, cheese, Coca-Cola barbecue sauce, chimichurri mayo, and crispy potatoes. In true Santa Barbara fashion, the hospitality extended to the dogs as well, with the staff graciously bringing out a freshly prepared hamburger patty for the furry guests relaxing beneath the table.

From the coast, the journey continued north to Buellton, where rolling vineyards and oak-dotted hillsides signal the beginning of Santa Barbara County's renowned wine country. A stop at Hitching Post Wines offered the opportunity to sample several of the region's signature varietals through two tasting flights showcasing both whites and reds. Among the standouts was the Cork Dancer Pinot Noir, a beautifully balanced wine that demonstrated why the area has earned international recognition among wine enthusiasts.

Many visitors will recognize Buellton from the Academy Award-winning film *Sideways*, which introduced audiences around the world to the Santa Ynez Valley wine scene. More than two decades later, the region continues to draw travelers seeking boutique wineries, scenic vineyard views, and a slower pace that feels worlds away from Southern California's larger cities.



Photo Credit Aleah Schepps





Photo Credit Suzanne Lanza

Of course a visit to Buellton wouldn't be complete without stopping at Hitching Post Wines, one of the area's most recognizable names. Located just minutes from the vineyards that have helped establish Santa Barbara County as one of California's premier wine regions, the tasting room offers guests the opportunity to sample many of the wines that have made the label famous. During our visit, we explored two tasting flights, one focused on Pinot Noir and another showcasing a variety of both white and red wines. While each offered something unique, the Cork Dancer Pinot Noir emerged as a clear favorite, delivering the elegance, balance, and bright fruit characteristics that have become synonymous with the region. As the afternoon unfolded, it was easy to understand why wine lovers continue to make the pilgrimage to Santa Ynez Valley year after year.

Fortunately, the experience doesn't end with the tasting room. Just across the street sits the legendary Hitching Post II, where many visitors choose to continue their evening. Known for its oak-grilled steaks, extensive wine list, and longstanding reputation throughout California wine country, the restaurant has become a destination in its own right.

Stepping inside feels like walking into a classic Central Coast steakhouse where locals, winemakers, and travelers gather over great food and even better wine. Warm wood accents, rustic décor, softly lit dining rooms, and the unmistakable aroma of red oak grilling over an open fire create an atmosphere that is both welcoming and distinctly Californian. There is an authenticity here that feels refreshingly untouched by trends. Rather than trying to reinvent itself, Hitching Post II embraces what it has always done exceptionally well, serving memorable meals paired with outstanding local wines.



Photo Credit Jeremy Ball

Dinner began, appropriately, with another glass of Pinot Noir before a fresh vegetable tray arrived at the table. For starters, the grilled corn quesadilla and grilled artichoke proved every bit as satisfying as promised, offering a perfect introduction to the restaurant's menu. For the main course, we opted for both the New York steak and filet mignon, each expertly prepared over the restaurant's signature red oak fire. The steaks arrived alongside garlic bread, a mixed green salad, and a choice of baked potato or fries, creating the kind of hearty wine country meal that never goes out of style.

By the end of the evening, dessert simply wasn't necessary. Between the afternoon tasting, generous portions, and exceptional wines, the meal served as a fitting finale to a day spent exploring one of California's most celebrated wine regions.



Photo Credit The Milo

What lingered most, however, wasn't a single dish or glass of wine, but the effortless rhythm of the entire getaway. Mornings spent walking along the beach, afternoons discovering the vineyards of Santa Ynez Valley, leisurely meals enjoyed outdoors, and evenings gathered around the fire pits back at Hotel Milo captured the essence of Santa Barbara at its best. Relaxed yet refined, coastal yet sophisticated, it remains one of California's most rewarding escapes, where great food, exceptional wine, and unforgettable experiences seem to unfold naturally.