

“The Secret Santa Barbara”

By J.R. Wudel
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Santa Barbara, California, often called America’s French Riviera, bustles with tourist activity. The year-round temperate climate attracts visitors from California and beyond. State Street, the main artery of the town, teems with restaurants and shops eager to cater to tourists’ every need, but what secrets of this paradise do only its natives know? Where do they find the sweetest strawberries and oranges whose calyces and peels end up in the beautiful trashcans in the beautiful alleys behind their beautiful homes? How do they dine without struggling with the crowded tourist district? Where do they find the intimate sights to enjoy with their sweetie? If you ask a local, they might répondre with the following.

The scent of orchids in full bloom at the start of a busy day imprints a lasting memory of a morning at the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate. The estate offers the finest variety of orchids in the region. Walking the orchid lined hallways you just might find a piece of Santa Barbara to take home with you. Perhaps you would prefer the bounty of the local harvest that awaits at the Farmer’s Market to be the first impression of the day. The locals find the tastiest strawberries and oranges here.

Before an afternoon at the park, pick up a picnic Lunch at Cantwell’s Market. Cantwell’s Market boasts an all organic deli section. Lisa, behind the counter, recommends the salmon sandwich. With picnic lunch in hand, an easy walk down Arrellaga take you to the Alice Keck Park Memorial Gardens. Tranquility and reflection awaits by the koi filled ponds at the gardens.

The area around the ponds offers some of the best picnicking in Santa Barbara. The flower-lined walks of the gardens invite an afternoon stroll perfect for letting lunch settle. Once your lunch has settled, escape the congestion of downtown Santa Barbara beaches by finding privacy at Henry Beach. Few tourists to Santa Barbara find the classic California coast-lined cliffs jutting into the sea during their trips to Santa Barbara, but locals know they exist at Henry beach—the most intimate place to take your sweetie.

A short sprint up the 154 into the mountains of Los Padres National Forest puts you at Cold Spring Tavern, a favorite watering hole for Santa Barbara locals. Return from your moment of privacy, enjoy conversation with fellow day-trippers and forget your urban worries over a beer as your favorite oldies play on the tavern's Wurlitzer. Or, find peace of mind, again, outside the tavern and the trickling springs.

For an elegant dinner, well worth the fare, try dinner at The Wine Cask. The Wine Cask specializes in bistro style dining blending foods with a European influence. True to its namesake, the Wine Cask offers a wide variety of both local and exotic wines on its Grand Award wine list. With this list inscribed to memory, the gracious wait staff can easily recommend the proper wine to suit your meal. After your glass is empty, you put your fork down, lean back and reflect on your day—the any nearby Visitors will mistake you for a Santa Barbarbra local.