

Santa Barbara is a beautiful seaside city in central California, some 100 miles north of Los Angeles. The surrounding mountains and breathtaking ocean views make the quiet, old mission town a great destination for senior visitors. Well, at least most of the year. However, senior tourists could get overwhelmed during Spring Break. The University of California, Santa Barbara, is there. Those students and thousand of others from colleges and high schools arrive from thousands of miles away to celebrate the sea, surf, sex, suds and other youthful excesses. For two weeks, the city's population swells from about 90,000 to half a million. Check your calendar, and stay away if you don't want to join in on Spring Break fun.



At all other times, the easy-going town is just right for seniors, peaceful and serene. The beach and surf are among the cleanest and most beautiful in California, and on the city's outskirts are several championship golf courses. Nearby, there are many restaurants, cafes and all kinds of shopping, both bargain and upscale.

On any day in town or by the ocean, you may see Hollywood celebrities strolling along with you. Among those who maintain homes in the area are John Travolta, Bo Derek, Oprah Winfrey, Fess (Davey Crockett) Parker, Kirk Douglas, Carol Burnett and many others. They're just folks in Santa Barbara, and unlike in star-crazed Los Angeles, people give them their privacy.

The city is host to many permanent attractions and annual events including the Santa Barbara Zoological Gardens, Cinco De Mayo, Old Spanish Days Festival, Solstice Celebration, and the Santa Barbara Film Festival.

There are many inexpensive motels and medium-priced hotels. Among the most posh are Hotel Oceana, Hotel Santa Barbara, the Inn of the Spanish Garden and the Four Seasons Santa Barbara.