Santa Cruz

Discover surf, brews, hidden gems

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From skydiving to coastal gardens, discover adventure

By Peggy Spear

When someone thinks of outdoor adventures in Santa Cruz, the man thing that comes to mind is enjoying the day at one of the 14 state beaches along the glistening shores of Monterey Bay. But how about seeing them from 18,000 feet in the air as you skydive from an airplane? From skydiving with Skydive Santa Cruz, to digging sandcastles along Rio Del Mar beach to taking a Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, there are many ways to find adventure in Santa Cruz.

Just ask Christina Glynn, who not only works for Visit Santa Cruz County but also takes advantage of unique outdoor experiences whenever she can, especially now that the pandemic threat is easing and more activities are opening to the public. There are "willy adventures, such as taking a sunset Chardonnay cruise or enjoying the Boardwalk, to paddling Threeway, kayaking, and, of course, surfing," she said. However, she also tells travelers that they have a day off from the beach to seek out fun in other areas, such as renting a beach cruiser bike and taking a three-and-a-half-mile spin on West Cliff Drive or discovering the myriad state parks and mountain-attractions nearby. The Roaring Camp Railroad starts in the redwoods above the city of Santa Cruz and can take you all the way down to the Boardwalk," she said. The train travels through Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park along the San Lorenzo River Gorge and through an 1815 tunnel.

Glynn also recommends the Redwood Grove Loop Trail, an easy multi-generational hike for all ages, as it is wide enough for strollers and wheelchairs. If visitors want to explore a unique gem, they should head to the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum & Botanic Garden, a 135-acre living museum full of rare and unique plant species. And this spring and summer, a perfect time to visit, Executive Director Martin Quigley said, "I haven’t seen the gardens this spectacular before." Quigley said, "They’ve been putting on a show since January." That’s despite the drought, but it makes sense. The garden is one of only a handful of places in the world that have the unique climate of just enough moisture from the marine layer and California heat to keep the plants happy, he said. "It’s the perfect Mediterranean climate," Quigley said.

Other areas with a similar climate are on the coasts of Italy, the western cape of South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Chile. The plants featured in the garden are drought-tolerant and the most important aspects when planning your own garden in California, he said. "We’ve been asked to help populate areas after major fires," Quigley said. The garden is also attracting a plethora of wildlife as well, especially raptors. Despite funding cuts by the university since 2008, the botanical garden and arboretum is “holding its own,” Quigley said, thanks mostly to private donations and a thriving gift shop. And while the pandemic closed it for a couple of months, it is now open and ready to welcome visitors again.

A few other remarkable outdoor areas in and around Santa Cruz were closed or limited due to the pandemic but most, if not all, are now open. In fact, the many state parks and beaches are scoring busts for all ages. Santa Cruz County is home to California’s oldest state park, Big Basin Redwoods State Park, and some others that are not as well known but just as fun, like the Trestle Forest at the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park in Aptos. (Don’t miss the world-famous cement frost and the alligator redwood tree.)

Wilder Ranch State Park offers great hikes, creeks, knobby pine, coastal redwoods, Douglas firs, rugged coastline, lighthouse, hidden beaches, barns and even a Victorian farmhouse — not to mention over 34 miles of biking, hiking and equestrian trails wind- ing through coastal terraces and valleys. There are also specialized hikes in the area, including a waterfall hike, a history hike and a redwoods hike.

There are also many camp sites, including New Brighton State Beach and Manresa Lagoon State Beach, a tent-only site. And of course, who can forget our furry companions? Henry Cowell, West Glennwood Open Space Preserve, Manresa State Beach and New Brighton State Beach are just some of the outdoor spots that allow leashed dogs.

Finally, for the next generation of nature lovers, some visitors may want to enroll their kids in Adventure Out, an outdoor school specializing in surfing, camps, rock climbing, canoeing, backpacking trips, mountain biking, wilderness survival in- struction, adventure tours, and perhaps most importantly, outdoor stewardship. That will make sure this outdoor paradise continues to thrill visitors and locals alike for years to come.

The 135-acre UC Santa Cruz Arboretum & Botanic Garden showcases coastal plants that thrive off of moisture in the marine layer and California heat.

Details
GoJump: www.gojump-sanmateo.com
West Cliff Drive: www.santacruz.ca.us/listings/west-cliff-drive
Roaring Camp Railroad: www.roaringcamp.com
Redwood Grove Loop Trail: www.redwoodhikes.com
Cowell/Cowell.html
UC Santa Cruz Arboretum & Botanic Garden: www.arboretum.ucsc.edu
Adventure Out: www.adventureout.com

For lists of Santa Cruz outdoor parks, hikes and camp sites, visit www.santacruz.org/thingsto-do/parksor www.parks.ca.gov.

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Cover photo: The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk has reopened. Photo by Brian Feulner.

Above: The UC Santa Cruz Arboretum & Botanic Garden features a sculpture by Su Gatch, a graphic artist and ceramicist, called Herm Aphrodite, a banana slug decorated with yellow, orange and purple glass tiles. Below: the gardens feature many vibrant flowers.
Many art opportunities, it lives it, Cruz. The city doesn’t just feature local university. In fact, it is world-strong arts program offered at its city’s unique character. In beauty, it is only enhanced by the attracted artists because of its Glyn said. Cruz County its creative flair,” that, when combined, give Santa surroundings, are all ingredients to an immersive, permanent exhibition on Santa Cruz history, to an100 live/work lofts, 28 artists port the arts and arts education. TANNERY ARTS CENTER The Tamany Arts Center, which opened in 2020, is home to 100 low/low-income, 28 artist studios, Cubugo Theater, Tamany World Dance & Cultural Center, Rausch Gallery and the North County offices of Arts Council Santa Cruz County. Visitors are welcome to walk through the campus anywhere or the gallery during open hours. Stop by on the First Friday to experience open studios or check out its calendar for upcoming events. SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAIN ARTS CENTER Up in the quaint town of Ben Lomond, just along the San Lo- bano River, the Santa Cruz Mountains Art Center offers art experiences through hands-on training, displays and cultural events that draw audiences not just from the mountain communities but as far away as San Jose. The art center opened in 1987 as a committee of the local Santa Cruz Cultural Council and incorporated in 1997 as its own nonprofit. The center provides exhibits space, art classes for adults and children, and opportunities for paid teachers. There are also volunteer positions available.

For the little ones Santa Cruz is a great place to teach young children that art can be exciting. Here are some great kid and called green-up museums: SEYMOUR MARINE DISCOVERY CENTER This must-see museum is fun for all ages. Besides being home to an immersive, permanent exhibit on Santa Cruz history and rotating shows spread over three floors of galleries, this dynamic museum hosts weekly community events every Friday. Some of the events include hands-on crafts such as screen-printing, embroidery and fabricating artwork from recycled materials.

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Elaborately carved carousel still spinning at Santa Cruz Boardwalk after 110 years

By Jeanne Cooper

When the oldest ride in the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk takes its first spin of the season May 21, there’ll be little sign of all the storms it has weathered since its 1911 debut, including its long closure due to COVID-19.

Installed just four years after the boardwalk opened, the Looff Carousel and its hand-carved horses largely kept turning during the Spanish flu pandemic, the Great Depression and World War II, and closed for just a few weeks, along with the rest of the amusement park, after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, according to Boardwalk historian Ted Whiting III.

Now, after months of silence, the iconic merry-go-round is ready to add its organ music to the sounds of the Beach Boardwalk’s arcade, concessions and nearly two dozen other rides and attractions that have opened gradually since April 1.

The rides and attractions are currently open on weekends, while the admission-free boardwalk’s food stands, outdoor games, retail, Neptune’s Kingdom mini-golf course and Casino Arcade are open daily. Reservations are strongly recommended, even at press time, the amusement park’s capacity is still restricted by state law to 25 percent of normal operations, according to Boardwalk employee Krist Reyes. The company shared its capacity numbers to the state last fall, but does not disclose them to the public, Reyes said.

“We limit the number of advance ride reservations to keep numbers compliant with state guidelines,” Reyes said. “We monitor entrances, and when headcount gets close to capacity, we close the gates for a time. On a typical weekend day, we do that a couple of times throughout the day, so we encourage people, including season passholders, to make reservations in advance.”

Guests are currently limited to California residents, Reyes added, and everyone age 2 or older must wear a mask at all times, “except when actively eating or drinking,” and observe social distancing.

“We also close the rides for 10 to 15 minutes throughout the day to sanitize and clean them,” he noted. “We always did that before and after rides were open, but now we do it intermittently throughout the day and not all rides at the same time.”

Despite these changes, “it really feels like a typical day at the boardwalk that people enjoyed pre-pandemic,” Reyes said. That includes the whoops and yelps of happy or fearful riders on the Giant Dipper roller coaster, the park’s other signature ride since 1924.

“There was a lot of media attention on whether screaming on amusement park rides had been banned and that has never been true,” Reyes said. “The leadership team and I have been working rides on weekends, and I can assure you that people are screaming under their masks and you can hear them.”

Reyes said executives at the Santa Cruz Seaside Co., which owns and operates the boardwalk, have been pitching in recently since the company is still “actively hiring” new seasonal employees after only three weeks’ notice that it could open.

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vance ride reservations to keep numbers compliant with state guidelines,” Reyes said. “We always did that before and after rides were open, but now we do it intermittently throughout the day and not all rides at the same time.”

Details

Visit www.beachboardwalk.com for updated hours and to schedule a reservation.
The carousel is still spinning at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk after 110 years.
Hawaiian connection celebrated at Santa Cruz Surfing Museum

By Jeanne Cooper

With 23 consistent surf breaks, Santa Cruz has long been an iconic destination for board riders. But unless you’ve visited the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum, tucked in the compact lighthouse above Steamer Lane, you may not be aware its waves of history go all the way back to 1885—the first record of surfing in California, and by extension, North America.

That’s when three young Hawaiian princes, on summer break from their military school in San Mateo, epitomized the surfer ethos of “where there’s a wave, there’s a will.” Spotting the surf at the mouth of the San Lorenzo River, about a mile and a half east of the museum, they had a local lumber mill fashion the heavy, long surfboards of the era out of redwood, and ride the waves, “enjoying it hugely,” according to a local newspaper’s account.

One of the museum’s founders and Santa Cruz surfing historian Kim Stoner has spent years researching and writing about this landmark feat by David La’amea Kawananakoa, then 17, Edward Abnel Keliiahonui, 15, and Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana’ole, 14. It’s the focus of the first display in the free museum, which opened in 1986 in the Mark Abbott Memorial Lighthouse, and the subject of a bronze plaque outside, donated in 2010 by Kawananakoa’s descendants and extended family. Adopted by King Kamehameha and Queen Kapi’olani, their son on their father’s side, the three princes “were all taught to surf by the king in Waikiki,” Stoner said, before being sent to St. Matthew’s Hall for their education.

“David was the oldest and showed up in 1884 in the summer by himself,” Stoner recounted. “He stayed with Antoinette Marin Swan, who had been the queen’s chamberlain… I’m sure when he came back the following year with his brothers, he said, ‘Hey, there’s surf there, we gotta make some surfboards.’” Fortunately for the royals, the Swan family lived on the San Lorenzo River about four blocks from Grover Lumber Co., one of the largest redwood mills in Santa Cruz County.

“They got their wood there, according to a local historian and long-time reporter Ernest Otto, and they probably transported them by wagon to the Swan family property and shaped them on hand-planed boards by draw knife,” Stoner said.

In 2015, the Bishop Museum in Honolulu allowed two of the princes’ original surfboards to be exhibited at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History. The long, narrow shape of the boards reflected a style...
Sunday, May 23, 2021  •  Santa Cruz  •  Advertising Feature

Lane, made a name for himself on the North Shore of Oahu’s epic surf in the 1990s before opening his current surf school in Santa Cruz.

Other displays in the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum tell more about the local evolution of the sport, such as the formation in 1936 of the Santa Cruz Surfing Club and the contributions of wetsuit pioneer and Surf Shop founder Jack O’Neill, who died in 2017. Some 25 surfboards also have a home in the museum—as do the ashes of 18-year-old Mark Abbott.

Two years after his death in 1965 in a body-surfing accident, his parents built the lighthouse as a memorial and donated it to the city.

Before the pandemic, the museum was often “packed to the gills” with visitors, according to Mary Verutti, an attendant there for 15 years. After staying closed for much of the past year, the city-managed museum is now open Thursdays through Mondays from noon to 5 p.m., with five to six patrons allowed in at a time.

“The plaque outside draws a lot of people in, because people didn’t know about that Hawaiian connection for many years,” Verutti said. “And the first thing you see is that this is the world’s first surfing museum—so that’s kind of unique,” Stoner said.
After what we could politely call a challenging year, we would all probably appreciate a cold beer right about now.

In Santa Cruz, the experience can be even more toast-worthy, thanks to the area’s many artisan breweries fashioning craft quaffs, in pilsners, ales, lagers, stouts, porters, malts and more. Add to that plenty of top house patios and gardens for outdoor sipping, delectable dining options to pair with your beers and dog-friendly setups, a visit to a Santa Cruz brewhouse is a well-celebrated adventure.

GREATER PURPOSE BREWING COMPANY

According to the Bible’s Gospel of John, Jesus turned water into wine for a wedding at Cana in Galilee. But for pastor Christopher Vanhall, water turns into beer. That’s because Vanhall, leader of the Greater Purpose Community Church of Santa Cruz, also owns the Greater Purpose Brewing Company on East Cliff Drive off 14th Avenue.

“Before the pandemic, we met for Sunday worship with an open bar, and people could have a drink during church,” Vanhall said, noting that these days, parishioners are welcome to sip at home while watching his YouTubepreaching. “Our politically far-left church is strictly online-only until the pandemic is over, and we also upload sermons in a podcast format.”

All guests are invited to visit the brewhouse, of course, for non-religious drinking any time. In the former East Cliff Brewing Company space, the new operation supports the ideologies of the church, noted Vanhall, “as a safe, inclusive, affirming space for all gender, race, faith and sexual identities.”

All types of taste buds are welcome, too. Greater Purpose crafts a wide range of unusual hazy, sour, India-Tas Lagers and fruited styles of beer, along with stouts, porters, lagers, nut browns, red ales, barley wine, wheat beers and pilsners. Many are served out of traditional English casks.

“A beer for everyone,” and “Pour with a purpose” are our mottos,” Vanhall said. The clever names alone bring good cheer. There’s the light, fruity, Sunday Morning mosaic session IPA, the roasty Inner Peace Ale West Coast IPA and the Nut Up or Shut Up bold brown ale, among others.

The blue paint and wood trimmed taproom is still limited capacity, but guests can spread out at picnic tables on the socially distanced, dog and cat friendly patio, while snacking on tacos and other casual fare from a diverse group of food trucks that rotate through the brewery parking lot.

And guests can feel extra good about spending their money. As a point of pride, both the brewhery and church give back to the community.

“The brewhouse is not a nonprofit, so it does pay taxes, but we designate 30% to 60% of its profits for charities such as Save our Shores, Planned Parenthood, the NAACP, the local Diversity Center for LGBTQIA+ folks and the Hormisit Garden Project,” Vanhall said. “The church donates 100% of its tithes and offerings to similar ventures.”

Unfortunately for beer-with-church lovers, Vanhall is pondering a change for post-pandemic services.

“More than half of our church membership is atheist or agnostic, and we focus on the positive ethical teachings of scripture, not the spiritual aspect of the Bible,” Vanhall said.

Humble Sea Brewing Co. has a nautical themed taproom, food truck offerings and a dog-friendly patio.

By Carey Sweet

Brewhouses offer patios, gardens for outdoor sipping

Details

Greater Purpose Brewing Company:
Humble Sea Brewing Co.:
Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing:

PHOTOS BY BRIAN FEULNER

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Detail

Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing:

By Carey Sweet

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he said. “But going forward, we will likely not meet at the brewery for church services because we do not want those outside the Christian tradition to feel like they were tricked into coming to a religious service. If we ever do elect to use the space for such events, we will meet during coffee hours when the brewery isn’t open to the public.”

HUMBLED SEABREWING CO.

Founded in 2015, the west-side brewery and taproom had a boomier year through 2020, thanks to owner and head brewer Nick Pavlina more than doubling the brewpub’s capacity in 2019.

“The second Santa Cruz area taproom on-site-with plans to open a second Santa Cruz area taproom in Fallton. It does get very busy here, but crowds are well managed with distancing.”

Humble Sea Brewing is more than a place to get a beer; it also hosts rotating events in the taproom.

“We’re not open to the public. During hours when the brewery is not open, we now would do so elect to use the space for such events, we now would do so during hours when the brewery isn’t open to the public.”

HUMBLED SEABREWING CO.


SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAIN BREWING

Seabright Social: The sprawling patio beckons for alfresco, casual drinking and food, with tasty toppings like spiced pork-scallion gyoza and pizzas with tasty toppings like spiced pork-scallion gyoza and pizzas. Dinners, and at the Sunset Bar, the “extra-dank” piney, malty and fruity Hook WestCoast IPA. (1315 Water St., Santa Cruz, 831-316-0800, www.shantyshackbrewing.com)

Discretion Brewing: A large taproom that stocks a dog-friendly garden protected from the elements, and features an expansive patio, it’s so pet-friendly that there’s a cold smoked marinated bone on the menu for Fido—soaking up the late night service until 10 p.m.

Other brewerries to visit on your Santa Cruz trip

Santa Adasıus Ruslul Ales

Santa Cruz Portal: For their small Capitola Brewery and Santa Cruz tasting room, owners Adar Pensaro and Tim Defilippo are inspired by the Belgian beer tradition. They craft four acts like Four Legs Good Blonde Quad fermented in puercoren barrels with extensive oak large vat foeder aging, and Farmhouse

Noir season beer tempting with chocolate and oat notes. They are planning to reopen at the end of May. (3175 Water St, Santa Cruz, 831-201-4141, www.rusticales.com)

Shanny Shack Brewing: Drive through and patio service was the style at this nano-brewery for the past year. But co-owners Brandon Padilla and Nathan Van Zandt draw fans for their innovative beers like the new Jake-Pale-Enyo strong pale ale brewed with sabro, coriander, cinnamon and black pepper. Also check out the kitchen-made lunches, daily changing food truck offerings like soft pretzels with spicy ale mustard, beef tacos with pickled jalapeños, and atouchofbitterness. (1315 Water St., Santa Cruz, 831-316-0800, www.shantyshackbrewing.com)

New Belgium Brewing Co.: Crafting a mix of traditional and experimental beers, the brewery have no plans to open a taproom in Fallton. It does get very busy here, but crowds are well managed with distancing.”


Seabright Social: The sprawling patio beckons for alfresco, casual drinking and food, with tasty toppings like spiced pork-scallion gyoza and pizzas.


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Gayle’s Bakery & Ristoceria in Capitola opened in 1978 and features sourdough bread, eclairs and cookies as well as hot dishes.

Details
Emily’s Good Things to Eat: 1129 Mission St., Santa Cruz, 831-429-8866, https://emilysbakery.com

Gayle’s is legendary—before the COVID-19 pandemic the place was cranking out roughly 150 different items a day. The roster included usual suspects such as sourdough bread, eclairs and cookies. It also featured the famous Downtowners, a croissant-based cinnamon-sugar roll that pay tribute to a bakery in Heidelberg. While locals line up for these sweet treats, what sets Gayle’s apart from other bakeries in the area is the ristoceria, which offers hot dishes served from trays. This part of the business emerged organically in the early 1990s. Gayle and Joe went to Italy for inspiration and noticed that they were buying all their meals from these fast-casual restaurants arranged in this manner. “That’s when it hit us: Why not bring a similar concept back to Capitola?”

“Working out well for us because it brought in customers at off times,” said Gayle Ortiz, looking back. “We added more options and created a whole new line of business for ourselves.”

Today some of the popular dishes on the ristoceria side include chicken enchiladas, teriyaki salmon, spinach gorgonzola pasta and fern, apple and arugula salad. On most days, there are at least 12 to 15 hot-food options in the case, as well as five to seven salads.

Gayle’s also offers a Blue Plate Special every weekday, $22.95 gets you a main course and two sides. If those aren’t enough options, Gayle’s also operates a grab-and-go case with premade sandwiches, pizza kits, salads and cold pastas. Most days a cold version of the Blue Plate Special is also available.

“We’ve really evolved to the point where we offer something for everybody,” Ortiz said. “I’m proud of what we’ve built and the food we make. More than anything I’m delighted we have created a place in the community where everybody can come together.”

Left: Gayle’s Bakery in Capitola is known for many unique items, including kouign-amann, a French pastry. Right: Orlando Comenarez layers cakes with frosting at Gayle’s.