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 **FIRST IN**

T+L's First In Review of The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara, just reopened after an extensive renovation, and Travel + Leisure was the first to see it.

By **Carole Dixon** | Published on June 18, 2025



Scenic overview of The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara.

Credit: The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

About 90 miles from Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, a.k.a. ["the American Riviera,"](#) is still a highly sought-after [Central Coast](#) escape for [world-class hotels](#), Michelin-level dining, wine tasting, surfing, polo, antique stores, and botanical parks where you might spot a celebrity or even royalty. However, if you venture a little further north, closer to Goleta, the scenery becomes quieter, less flashy, and less crowded. It's here, on a 78-acre coastal bluff along the Gaviota Coast, once inhabited by the Chumash, that [The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara](#) awaits.

The resort's name is derived from Barbara (the patron saint of Santa Barbara) and Anacapa Island. The sprawling hotel sits atop the former Chumash village of Hel'apunitse at the mouth of Tecolote Canyon, with Haskell's Beach, a renowned surf break, below it.

This year, in honor of its 25th anniversary, the resort has undergone a multi-million-dollar revamp of the lobby, guest rooms, restaurants, pool experience, and public spaces, overseen by the renowned hospitality design firm [Meyer Davis](#). "What excites us most is the immediate sense of place guests will feel as they arrive," Gray Davis, co-founder of Meyer Davis, tells *Travel + Leisure*. "There's a quiet elegance throughout, with places defined by natural materials, rich textures, and a deeper connection to the land and its history. The experience is intuitive and grounded, inviting a slower pace and offering a refined kind of escape."

Having grown up near the area and lived in [Los Angeles](#) for most of my adult life, Santa Barbara is an easy weekend getaway that I take advantage of as often as possible. I have stayed at every top hotel here (and so has my mom), so I picked her up on the way as a mea culpa for missing Mother's Day this year, and we headed off for a staycation adventure.

Driving down a lush tree-lined road just off the 101 Freeway, we came upon the resort's grand circular entrance with a large fountain. While the vast lobby wowed us with cream-colored sofas and a stone fireplace, the real star was the Chandon Champagne trolley, where a cheerful greeter offered us complimentary bubbles.

Our room wasn't quite ready, so we headed to The Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge near the spa and the dedicated adult pool area. I've stayed in many Ritz-Carlton resorts around the world and have always enjoyed the all-day Club Lounge amenities available to members. We arrived during high tea and had a few finger sandwiches and pastries before a staff member escorted us to our oceanfront one-bedroom suite.

Sloping pathways lead to 358 rooms and suites located within 19 villa buildings, ranging from one to four stories. Our suite was in Villa Six, not far from the spa and Club Lounge, and close to the lower-level pools and Lulio, the resort's Mediterranean restaurant with an indoor dining room decorated with woven tapestries, rattan chairs, and a warm color scheme, along with a large ocean-facing patio featuring an outdoor fireplace.

While we had come to Lulio that first evening just for a snack of pita bread and tzatziki, we ended up ordering delicious black garlic meatballs, seabass, steak, and a spin on pasta alla vodka made with Greek ouzo, tomato, chili, kefalotyri cheese, and rigatoni. However, the surprise hit was the Brussels sprouts cooked in a pineapple liquid. "The burnt Brussels sprouts work well with the sweet fruit," chef Ren Weigang says. The dish also paired well with an olive oil martini and ouzo lemonade, as I was trying to stay on theme. I also loved seeing the local wine selection from a few longtime favorite vineyards, such as Alma Rosa, Margerum, Grassini Family, and Story of Soil.

Below, my full review of the renovated The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara.

The Rooms



A one bedroom King Suite in The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara.

Credit: Ron Starr/The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

The resort's new design draws inspiration from its natural landscape. "Our intention was to preserve the property's deep connection to place. Taking inspiration from the land, we created a design language that feels both grounded and elevated, one that honors the property's original hacienda-style architecture while reimagining it for the next generation of travelers," Will Meyer, co-founder of Meyer Davis, tells T+L.

Here, accommodations range from king guest rooms to the signature Ritz-Carlton Suite and Channel Islands Suite. The timeless decor features soft earth tones, terracotta tiles, reclaimed wood furniture, and walls lined with modern artworks.

The connecting rooms in our oceanview suite allowed my mom and me to spread out comfortably (the two terraces were also a nice perk). The sectional sofa in the living area was converted into a bed, and complemented by another bathroom with a shower, closet space, and a small desk. The main bedroom included a four-poster mahogany bed, a fireplace, a love seat, and a small table, while the bathroom offered dual vanities, ample closet space, and a deep soaking tub. Plush Frette robes and slippers, along with Diptyque toiletries, rounded out the suite's luxe touches. We also got a kick out of the elaborate towel art on the bed—swans one night and dogs the next.



Guests enjoy Mediterranean seasonal fare and refreshing cocktails at Lulio.
Credit: Ron Starr/The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

With three full-service restaurants and bars, a grab-and-go coffee shop, and a poolside snack bar, in addition to The Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge, there were plenty of diverse dining options during our stay. Lulio also serves daily breakfast, offering an abundant buffet of pastries, fruits, salads, charcuterie, and an egg station. We ordered duck confit hash from the à la carte menu, a chef's specialty.

Light, shareable bites and sandwiches are available at the poolside SunBar menu, which also offers a few fun options for kids, including flatbread, chicken wings, chips, and guacamole.

Off the lobby, 'O' Bar & Terrace, named in honor of the single-letter Chumash word for water, treated us to one of the best meals: blackened mahi mahi fish tacos, grilled prawn bucatini with zucchini in a beurre blanc sauce, and Goat Bubbles sparkling rosé.

For sweeping coastal views, head to [Marisella](#), the newest restaurant by chef Danny Grant of Maple Hospitality Group, who has worked in Michelin-starred kitchens worldwide and was *Food & Wine's* Best New Chef in 2012.

The California mission-style space, which officially opens to the public at the end of this month, features a large marble bar and several dining areas, including an ocean-view patio, private dining room, a speakeasy-style wine cellar, and a Bluffs Room with an open kitchen view. The menu blends Italian and California coastal flavors, inspired by the Amalfi Coast and Mediterranean cuisine. Highlights include hamachi crudo, carpaccio with caviar, tableside salt-crusted branzino, and spaghetti alla Nerano with summer squash and cheese. The drink options are a nod to Italian aperitivo culture, alongside a wine selection of classic Italian varietals.

At the hotel porte-cochere, we discovered a new coffee shop that offers artisanal coffee and pastries, snacks from local businesses like Rori's Artisanal Creamery, along with supplies ranging from sunscreen to candles.

Activities and Experiences



The main pool at The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara.
Credit: Ron Starr/The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

The resort features three pools, including one in the spa, along with a gym equipped with workout machines, free weights, and personal training options. Unless you have a specific daily workout routine you wish to follow, you can easily get plenty of cardio exercise by walking around the hilly grounds and climbing the long, winding staircases adorned with Spanish tiles, taking you from your villa to the lobby, pools, spa, and various dining and drinking spots. (We adopted the detox-to-retrox approach and regret nothing.)

Additionally, I took the beach walk several times at my leisure, but guests can also enjoy it in a group or with a guide —just check the daily fitness schedule. A naturalist-led hike through the resort's nature reserve is also an excellent option for staying active.

Classic wellness offerings, such as yoga and Pilates classes, as well as sound baths and circuit training, are also available.

The Spa



Exterior of the spa and spa pool.

Credit: The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

The four-story spa boasts 42,000 square feet, 36 treatment rooms, a redwood sauna, an eucalyptus steam room, and a whirlpool hot tub. This is also where you will find the adult-only pool, flanked by black-and-white striped umbrellas.

While waiting for your therapist at the Serenity Lounge, you can unwind with Therabody LED face masks, jet boots, and smart goggles with virtual reality-guided meditation. Don't leave without checking out the views from the rooftop lounge.

While my mom had a pedicure in the salon downstairs, I opted for the Sleep Ritual treatment. It started like a standard massage, but also included a guided breathing segment and a visualization exercise to help quiet my mind and release physical tension and emotional anxieties. The idea is to switch off and restore balance, ensuring a blissful night's sleep.

I wish I could say I slept like a baby that night, but I had too much caffeine that day—complimentary teas in my room and The Art of Tea in the Club Lounge, plus a chocolate truffle latte in the coffee shop—so it was my own fault. I also couldn't stay for the entire two-hour treatment because of a work call. What *did* almost put me to sleep was the deep tissue full-body hot stone massage.

Family-friendly Offerings

The resort has two family-friendly pools and hot tubs. Cabanas with private fridges and TVs are also available for booking. Additionally, a kids' club offers seasonal activities and programming (ages five through 12), including arts and crafts and outdoor games.

If you want to stay close to shore and engage in an educational activity, consider the naturalist-led tour of Haskell's Beach, which includes a discussion on local wildlife, neighboring ecosystems, and unique flora and fauna. The resort's Jean-Michel Cousteau-trained naturalist can also take guests on a two-hour Ellwood Bike and Hike through an eucalyptus grove and along ocean bluffs. Birding adventure tours are another good option, while night owls might want to explore the coastal stargazing activities.

Accessibility and Sustainability

The hotel has several accessible accommodations, including a Garden-Level Guest Room and a Fireside King, both with large balconies or patios, wheelchair-accessible vanities, hearing kits upon request, lowered night guards and outlets, and roll-in showers. Guests with disabilities can also take advantage of the jitney cart service to navigate the resort's grounds.

The outdoor spaces incorporate sustainable landscaping with native plants, reflecting the region's commitment to environmental preservation.

During the construction of the original Bacara Resort & Spa, archaeologists collaborated with Chumash descendants of Hel'apunistse to preserve and protect the cultural area, as well as identify areas that Chumash can use today for ceremonial purposes, plant gathering, and community events.

Location



The resort's arrival entrance.

Credit: Jim Bartsch/The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

This is an all-encompassing village-like resort, so you really don't need to leave the grounds. There is a wealth of activities, dining options, and a beautiful beach, but when you do decide to explore further, the [Sandpiper Golf Course](#) is just next door, and the hotel provides transportation. Grab an electric bike and cruise to the [Ellwood Mesa](#) Butterfly Preserve or ride along the bike path.

If you decide to travel by rail or plane, the [Amtrak Goleta](#) train station and the [Santa Barbara Airport](#) (SBA) are about 10 minutes away. The small airport services a handful of major airlines, including Alaska Airlines and American Airlines, which operate from major U.S. cities such as Chicago and Seattle.

How to Get the Most Value Out of Your Stay

The [Marriott Bonvoy membership](#) perks are vast—from Silver Elite benefits, which include late checkout and complimentary Wi-Fi, to Gold, Platinum, Elite, and Ambassador member benefits, such as a welcome gift, room upgrades (based on availability), and 4 p.m. late checkout (based on availability).

Guests who book their stay with certain American Express or Chase cards receive a welcome amenity and breakfast credit for two, a daily \$100 credit to be used only in Lulio, priority early check-in, a \$100 incidental credit, complimentary Wi-Fi, and complimentary 4 p.m. late check-out, and upgrade based upon availability.

Access to [The Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge](#) at The Ritz-Carlton Bacara starts at \$200 per guest and includes a [dedicated concierge](#), as well as all-day meals and drinks.

Nightly rates at [The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara](#) start from \$499 based on seasonality and availability.