



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

The Lynch House on West Cliff Drive, left, will be turned into an upscale bed and breakfast with rooms at \$150-\$350 a night. The first two weeks already are sold out.

Historic home becomes newest inn

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SANTA CRUZ — The newest place to stay in Santa Cruz isn't even open yet, but the first two weeks already are sold out.

West Cliff Inn, with a beach view and across the street from the hotel everyone knows as the Dream Inn, is scheduled to open June 15 at the historic Lynch House, at 174 West Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz.

"It's so exciting to have a new bed and breakfast in town," said Christina Glynn of the Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council. "And you can't beat the location."

A \$2.5 million restoration is nearing completion at the Italianate Victorian with a wraparound porch. Built by Sedgewick Lynch in 1877, it was once considered the finest residence in Santa Cruz.

By the turn of the century, other mansions had sprung up along the oceanfront cliff, prompting the name "Millionaires' Row." But the years and the cost of upkeep took a toll and the building was vacant

when city officials reviewed the bed and breakfast proposal five years ago.

Today, Corbet Wright owns the inn. It will be managed by the Monterey-based Four Sisters group, which runs a dozen other similar properties in California and Washington State.

West Cliff Inn will offer nine guest rooms, each with a fireplace, king bed, marble tile bathroom, and most with jetted spa tubs. High-tech features include high-speed Internet access, an iPod compatible player, and a flat panel television with built-in DVD player.

The posted room rate is \$150-\$350 a night. People who want a sneak preview can sign up for the Saturday tour sponsored by the Architects Association of Santa Cruz County at www.aascs.org.

"I love going to Santa Cruz," said Sharon Rooney of Four Sisters Inns, noting that Boardwalk is marking its centennial just before the inn opens. "It's a perfect dovetailing."

Glynn said a spike in county-wide hotel/motel occupancy in March bodes well for the tourism season. Occupancy hit 60.9

percent in March, up from 51.5 percent a year ago, as tracked by Smith Travel Service. The county has 5,819 units and 155 properties for rent.

Glynn said the March increase in booking followed a flat February. She attributed the upswing to a relatively early Easter season, combined with spring break occurring throughout March and April. Fewer available rooms resulted in higher room rates, which translates into higher tax revenues for local municipalities. The average daily rate in March was \$118.54, compared to \$108.57 a year ago.

Statewide, the occupancy rate remained a steady 71 percent for March 2006 and 2007.

Although gas prices are reaching an all-time high, Glynn said it may be less expensive for travelers to opt out of air travel and choose a driving vacation. The typical Santa Cruz visitor travels from within a three-hour radius.

Summer visitors will find renovated accommodations at four other locations in the county:

■ The Seacliff Inn Best Western, a short walk from Seacliff State Beach in Aptos, spent \$500,000 to renovate all 149 guest rooms.

■ The former Sandpiper Lodge at 111 Ocean St., Santa Cruz, is now the Ocean Gate Inn. Guests will find new carpeting, microwave ovens and refrigerators in all the rooms. High-tech amenities include free Wi-Fi and cable television with premium channels.

■ The Darling House, an eight-room bed and breakfast at 314 West Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, is spruced up with new paint, wallpaper and artwork. The home was built in 1910, three years after the Boardwalk opened.

■ The Davenport Road House Inn, on Highway 1 in Davenport, is going green. The owners aim to have the first inn between Marin and San Luis Obispo to earn the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification.

For information, visit www.santacruz.org.

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