

With Our Heads in the Clouds and Feet in the Surf

After 150 Years, Santa Cruz continues to solve the enigmatic equation of what makes a great place to live

By Liz Barrett

Everybody has an opinion about Santa Cruz, particularly those who moved here from somewhere else or lived here and had to move away. Digital artist Aaron Koblin, who put in some time at UCSC before he founded Google's data arts team and virtual reality company Vrse, called Santa Cruz "an awesome hippie summer camp." British author Clive Sinclair, who went to UCSC in 1969, told the London Telegraph that Santa Cruz was "part-hippie, part-surfer, but mostly retired chicken farmer." And then there are the anonymous opinions that appear on Internet forums about what it's like to live in this place or that. A woman who was considering relocating to Santa Cruz asked for a list of pros and cons to help her decide. The litany of responses was epic. One local cut through it all: "Pro: Santa Cruz is weird. Con: Santa Cruz is weird. Conclusion: Depends on if you dig the weird."

Locals here do dig the weird, if "weird" means artistic, free-spirited, imaginative, and fully alive. It's part of the enigmatic equation that makes Santa Cruz such a great place to live, surf, sail, hike, tend a backyard garden, play music, make art, start a business, go to school, raise a family, be married, be single, be straight, be gay — this is a place to find and be yourself. Santa Cruz has the intimacy of a small town and the cultural sensibility of a big city. You wake up to foggy mornings but you can get a suntan in the afternoon, even in February. You can surf at the beach and hike in the redwoods on the same day, wear shorts to dinner at a fine restaurant with an award-winning chef, or browse through the Grateful Dead museum in the afternoon and take in a classical music concert at night.

All of this allure comes at a price, of course. Housing costs here are spiraling out of control. Traffic gets worse by the day. And don't even mention the teeming hordes of tourists. Admittedly, grumbling about those annoyances with friends does provide hours of entertainment. And when you're out of town and someone asks you where you're from, the pure pleasure of saying, "Santa Cruz," is priceless.

In celebration of 150 years of official existence as a city — and nearly 250 years since Native residents undoubtedly did a massive eyeroll at Spanish explorers who claimed they "discovered" the area — here is an utterly incomplete but heartfelt list of some things to love about contemporary Santa Cruz, in alphabetical order.

(Above) Due in part to bird droppings and sea lion poop, Cowell Beach sometimes receives bad marks for water quality, even though it remains one of Santa Cruz favorites

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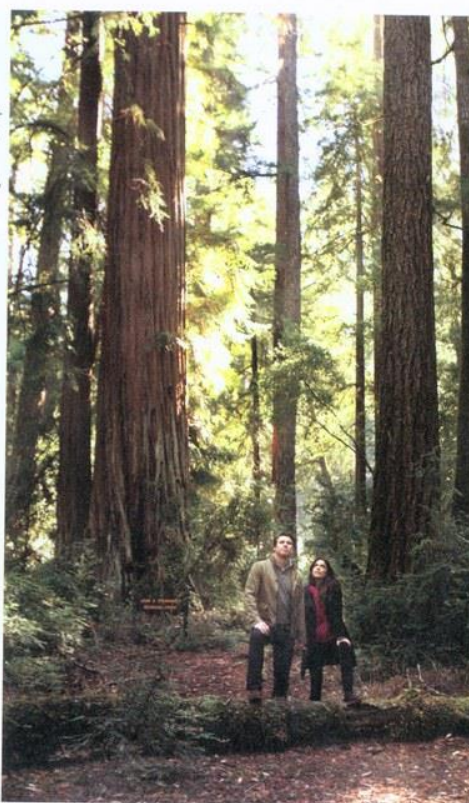
Art: An oft-quoted Atlantic Monthly survey ranked Santa Cruz as having the fifth-largest population of artists per capita in the United States. Evidence is all around, from street art on Pacific Avenue to stunning exhibits at the Museum of Art History (santacruzmah.org). Tannery Arts Center (tanneryartscenter.org), a live/work complex that also houses the county Arts Council (artscouncilsc.org), hosts studio tours and exhibits. It's an outstanding one-stop art hop, but not a substitute for the scenic cross-county adventure to artists' homes and studios during the annual fall Open Studios tour. And on First Friday, you can walk, sip, shop, and take in local art at the same time.

Bakeries: The war on evil carbs hasn't made the slightest dent in pastry consumption here, judging by the lines at Gayle's (504 Bay Ave., Capitola), the Buttery (702 Soquel Ave.), Kelly's French Bakery (402 Ingalls St.), and Buttercup Cakes & Farm House Frosting (1411 Pacific Ave.). It's fun to bitch and moan about tourists causing the long lines, but in the time it takes to finish that rant you could park your car on a side street, get in line, and walk away with a chocolate ganache cupcake in your hand.

Beaches: There are tons of great surf breaks here (see *Surf*), but that's not the only reason people love the beach. Each beach has its own unique allure. Skinny-dippers can go au naturel without raising an eyebrow (or getting windburn) at Scott Creek and Bonny Doon. Dogs rule at Mitchell's Cove and Its Beach AKA Dog Beach (Lighthouse Field State Beach), but must be kept on leashes at Rio Del Mar. Bonfires are allowed at Seabright, Twin Lakes, and New Brighton.

Beer: With around a dozen craft breweries in our midst, you could drink a different beer seven nights a week for a month and not taste the same one twice. In fact, you could become a regular at 99 Bottles (110 Walnut Ave.), try all of the beers on their "By the Numbers" list, and get an engraved plaque on their Wall of Fame. Or you could give your liver — and wallet — a break and just drink on Tuesdays, when it's Neighbor Night at Seabright Brewery (519 Seabright Ave.) and the pitchers are cheap(ish). It's also trivia night at New Bohemia (1030 41st Ave.); if you get on a decent team you might win a \$20 NuBo gift card.

Begonias: The unofficial complain-about-tourists marathon reaches a peak on Labor Day Weekend, when navigating the hordes at the Capitola Begonia Festival (begoniafestival.com) can challenge the best of moods. But



(Above) A hike in the redwoods of Big Basin State Park provides an opportunity to experience some of California's tallest trees.

despite the sweaty crowds squeezed onto the bridge — and most everywhere else with a view — watching the begonia-covered floats drifting down Soquel Creek is still a singular delight.

Bikes: It goes without saying that the home of Santa Cruz Bicycles, a breakout company founded by skateboarders in the Seabright Cannery, has some amazing bike trails. Too many to mention here, for sure. A ride through Wilder Ranch State Park will take you from the coast through the forest and to the meadows, with gentle trails for beginners and challenging terrain for experts. Braille Trail in Soquel Demonstration State Forest — Demo or SDF for short — is an awesome ride, but getting to it can be a challenge when slides close Highland Way; for \$25 you can take a shuttle from Aptos to the top of Nisene Marks and save your legs for the trail (shuttlesmithadventures.squarespace.com).

Blues: They changed the name from the Blues Festival to the American Music Festival

(santacruzamericanmusicfestival.com) last year. You still can see blues greats like Trombone Shorty and Bonnie Raitt at the Memorial Weekend event in Aptos Village Park, but they've added country/Americana to the lineup. A little bit Aptos and a little bit Austin.

Boardwalk: Time travel at its best. When you step onto the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk (400 Beach St.) you automatically go back to the age you were the first time you rode the big wooden Giant Dipper rollercoaster — or saw it in "The Lost Boys." Everything at this historic amusement park takes you back. Tater twists, corn dogs, saltwater taffy, funnel cake. You can still try to grab the brass ring to toss in the clown's mouth on the circa 1911 Looft carousel. Admission is always free and on Retro Nights ride tickets are just \$1.

Books: Nothing can stop Bookshop Santa Cruz (1520 Pacific Ave.) from keeping the freak flag flying. The Loma Prieta Earthquake crumbled it, but a few weeks later it reopened as Booktent Santa Cruz. After the store finally reopened in its permanent location, a Crown Books chain store opened across the street. Crown later went bankrupt and the home of "Keep Santa Cruz Weird" remains a beloved downtown institution. Another indie bookstore that survived the quake is Logos (1117 Pacific Ave.), which has the best deals anywhere on used books, records, CDs, and DVDs. That store and the Literary Guillotine (204 Locust St.) are favored by UCSB students looking for deals on required reading.

Boxes: Red lights are not so bad when there's art nearby. The "Graphic Traffic" program actually pays artists to paint traffic signal boxes. Some of us crazy cat ladies especially love Bruce Harman's "Pug Photobomb" at Ocean and Water streets. Go see it and you'll know why. Margo Mullen's adorable robots adorn several signal boxes; "Robot Love" (Soquel Ave. and Morrissey Blvd.) is super fun and you can watch a video of her painting it on YouTube. The painted boxes are all over town, so stop speeding through those yellow lights.

Brunch: Everybody loves brunch. As author Guy Beringer noted, "It sweeps away the worries and cobwebs of the week." The wait for a table can be crazy long, but it's worth it. The best sea view is upstairs at the Crow's Nest (2218 E. Cliff Dr.). People used to love the outdoor seating at Aldo's (616 Atlantic Ave.), but the entire building and the seawall beneath it are being demolished and replaced. They'll be back. Linda's Seabreeze Cafe (542 Seabright Ave.) is a congenial neighborhood eatery with

amazing cinnamon rolls, and the Harbor Cafe (535 7th Ave.) is a bit rough around the edges but it has a full bar and it's dog-friendly.

Chocolate: Those of us who worship at the altar of chocolate have many temples in this county, starting with the 2015 and 2016 Santa Cruz Chocolate Festival best in show winner, Ashby Confections (16 Victor Square, Scotts Valley). They also make caramels straight outta heaven. Most true chocoholics already know that Richard Donnelly, of Donnelly Fine Chocolates (1509 Mission St.), was named one of the top 10 chocolatiers in the world by National Geographic. But did you know that he also makes a killer vanilla ice cream bar covered in dark chocolate, caramel, almonds, and sea salt? And if that doesn't bring on a sugar coma, there's always the 2017 Chocolate Festival on January 22 at Coconut Grove. It's guilt-free: The event funds scholarships for UCSC re-entry students.

Coffee: There's nothing quite like a happy little coffee buzz, and the local brew is the best. BuzzFeed put Verve Coffee Roasters on their Top 25 list for the entire country. You can get a cup o' heaven made from locally roasted beans downtown (1540 Pacific Ave.), in Seabright (104 Bronson St.), at Pleasure Point (816 41st Ave.), or on the Westside (1010 Fair Ave.). Surf City (9105 Soquel Dr., Aptos) is a quintessential local hangout: employee-owned, organic, and dog-friendly.

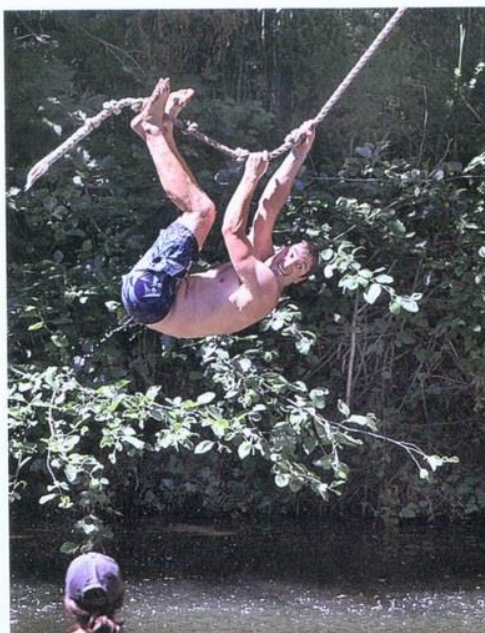
Co-working: The tech community by its nature includes a surplus of digital nomads, all dressed up with nowhere to work. Well, not dressed up, but definitely ready to work. The solution is co-working spaces, where you can purchase memberships, pay by the hour, or

stay overnight, depending on the location. One tech blogger described the members at Cruzio works (cruzio.com) as "a laid-back bunch who might wander in with sand between their toes or come spruced and ready to meet an investor in one of the private meeting rooms." NextSpace (nextspace.us), which started in Santa Cruz but now has seven locations in California and one in Chicago, suggests the following agenda: "Check emails, check the surf report, drink a coffee, quick Skype call, go for a surf, repeat." Outsite (outsite.co) is more of a sleep-in situation, with two overnight work-and-play houses on the beach.

Dives: There's no shortage of dive bars in Santa Cruz. Every neighborhood has its own favorite. What matters is that the drinks are strong and cheap, there's a decent pool table, and the natives are friendly. The Asti (715 Pacific Ave.), sometimes called the Nasty Asti, stands out because it started as a speakeasy in the 1920s — and because the bathrooms are really clean. Callahan's (507 Water St.) is run by some badass women and is a comfy escape from gentrified reality, especially if you ride a Hog. Monty's Log Cabin (5755 Hwy 9, Felton) has been open since 1936 — and some of the dedicated clientele look like they've been drinking there since then.

Dogs: They're welcome just about everywhere. (See *Slurps*.) But you can't have one with you when you panhandle for cash downtown. That's against the law. As is letting them do their business on a downtown sidewalk. Just saying.

Durbin: Yes, it must be stated. James Durbin is the coolest not-winner of American Idol ever, and not just because his music rocks. He got famous but stayed in Santa Cruz, dyed his hair blue like the rest of us, and still posts DIY videos on Facebook. Like.



(Above) Boulder Creek's swimming hole, sometimes called Turkey's Foot, provides a cheap thrill on a summer afternoon.



(Above) The Great Morgani (L) and the umbrella guy are two of the many street performers who were often seen on Santa Cruz's Pacific Avenue.

Flip-flops: All year long. That is all.

Fungus: Shroom science is kind of a big deal here. For 42 years, the Fungus Federation of Santa Cruz (ffsc.us) has presented a three-day Fungus Fair in January, where people can learn all about the hundreds of species of wild mushrooms that grow in this area. And of course, there's food. And wine. And beer.

Gardens: Grow justice, grow peace. Mesa Verde Gardens (mesaverdegardens.org) has more than 220 member families who grow their own food in seven gardens that cover a total of more than three acres. The Homeless Garden Project (homelessgardenproject.org) provides job training, transitional employment and support services to homeless people on its three-acre organic garden, and sells beautifully hand-crafted products in its downtown store (110 Cooper St.). Beach Flats Community Garden (beachflatsgarden.org), or El Jardín de la Comunidad de la Playa, has had its share of battles with the city over garden boundaries and murals, but it remains "an oasis the of fresh air and living soil in a desert of concrete, noise pollution, and traffic jams."

Grocers: No need to fight the crowds or the attitude at Whole Foods. Shopper's Corner (622 Soquel Ave.) has been called an island of sanity in an ocean of crazy. It's the oldest

family-run full-service grocery market in Santa Cruz. New Leaf Community Market started as a funky co-op and grew up to be a well-run community market with eight area stores. Staff of Life (1266 Soquel Ave.) has a mind-boggling selection of vegan options, while the butcher and deli departments at Scotts Valley Market (14 Victor Square) and Ben Lomond Market (944 Mill St.) are beloved by carnivores.

Halloween: The treat is when Pacific Avenue gets closed to cars for the afternoon and becomes a multicolored sea of adorably costumed youngsters collecting goodies from local merchants. The trick is to stay safe and sane when night falls and 15,000 revelers from who-knows-where descend on downtown to get their freak on.

Ice cream: One scoop of Highway 17 from Marianne's (1020 Ocean St.; 218 State Park Dr., Aptos) will make you a believer—it's Rocky Road with cashews instead of almonds. A local tradition since 1947, Marianne's is cash-only and gets really crowded, so grab a number as soon as you get there. Polar Bear Ice Cream (389 Coral St.) is almost as big a local favorite as Marianne's. Their small-batch ice cream is available "by the scoop, by the paw, by the pint, or by the pie" at a couple dozen cafes and markets around the county. The Penny Ice Creamery (913 Cedar St.; 1520 K2 Pacific Ave.; 820 41st Ave.), a relative newcomer, serves artisanal ice cream made in-house from locally sourced, sustainably farmed, organic ingredients. Their flavors are a bit more unconventional, from Devout Stout to Wild Fennel and Black Tea Peach.

Jazz: Santa Cruz is one of the only places in the world that nurtures and trains jazz musi-

cians from the time they are kids until they take their place as world class professionals — and keeps supporting them until they become elders in the jazz community. They start in school music programs, get coached by Ray Brown at Cabrillo College, play in honor bands, and spend their summers in jazz camps at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center, the Stanford Jazz Workshop, and the Monterey Jazz Festival. Kuumbwa (320 Cedar St.) is the center of the jazz universe here, but there is something to be said for places like Severino's (Seacliff Inn, Aptos), where local legend Don McCaslin and his Amazing Jazz Geezers still play every Thursday night.

Lighthouse: This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum at the Mark Abbott Memorial Lighthouse (701 W. Cliff Dr.), but the going hasn't been easy. The little museum overlooking Steamer Lane has survived budgetary crises, lawsuits, and other obstacles. There's more than a century of local surf memorabilia inside, and awesome waves outside.

Mom-and-Pops: Corner stores are alive and well here. If you run out of half-and-half or need a quick pregnancy test, Santa Cruz Market (214 California Ave.) has been in the same funky Westside shack since 1866. Circle Market (508 Errett Circle) is a neighborhood favorite, but check the expiration dates before you buy. Deke's (334



(Above) Jack O'Neill, surf pioneer and creator of the wetsuit, climbs into one of his new designs in 1982.

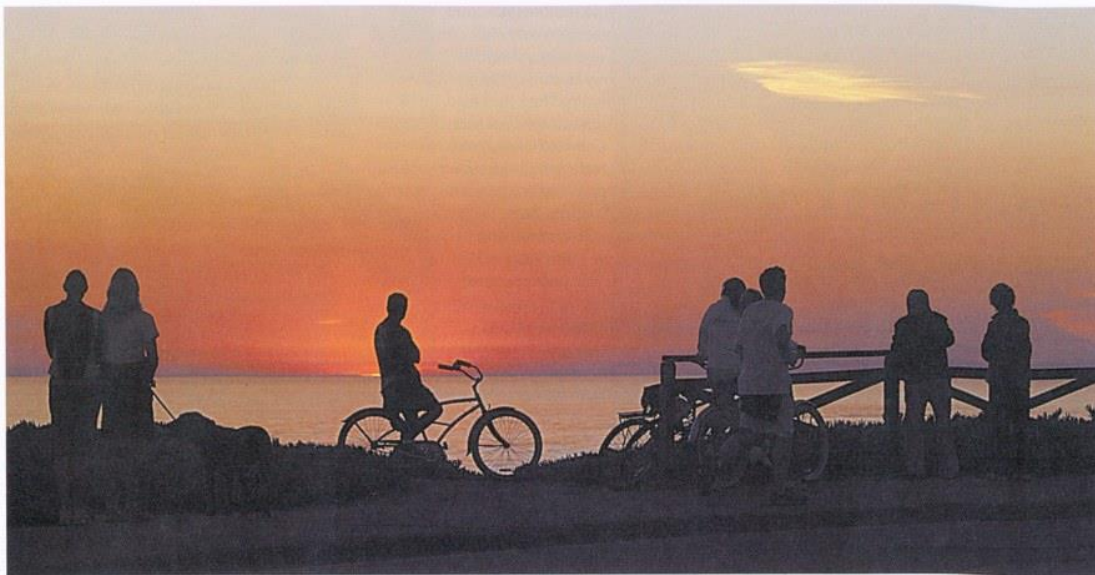
Seventh Ave.) houses the wonderful In Mah' Belly Deli; Kong's Market (400 26th Ave.) is egg roll heaven; and Point Market and Cafe (23040 E Cliff Dr.) is Pleasure Point's stop for breakfast burritos. Corralitos Market & Sausage Company in Watsonville (569 Corralitos Rd.) has the best sausages on the central coast. Two words: Cheesy Bavarian.

Mountain towns: Boulder Creek and Felton are hidden gems, often upstaged by spectacular beaches a few miles away. People joke about mushrooms growing out of the carpet in these redwood-shaded towns, but their time-honored sense of community is unmatched elsewhere. Boulder Creek still celebrates its logging tradition with Lumberjack Days competition for the coveted titles of King and Queen of the Woods during Fourth of July weekend. And the local parade, with townspeople lined up three-deep on the sidewalk to watch, feels like Mayberry in the Mountains.

Murals: If you're ever called upon to describe what it's like to live here without saying a word, just point to the surfer girl toting a board and pedaling a beach cruiser in Stephen Hosmer's 18-by- 80-foot "Welcome to Santa Cruz" mural (1730 Mission St.). Or go



(Above) In canine friendly, Santa Cruz pandemonium breaks out at the start of the All-Star Dog run at Aptos Village Park — as dogs go one way, owners another.



(Above) Celebrating the end of another day in paradise, a group of locals gathers on West Cliff Drive to watch the setting sun.

back in time with Ann Thiermann's trompe l'oeil "People's Bank" street scene on the side of the Sockshop & Shoe Company building (1515 Pacific Ave.) and the historic apple crate murals in downtown Watsonville. Get mural tour info at Santa Cruz City Arts (santacruzcityarts.com/tour).

Museums: The life-size gray whale in front of the Museum of Natural History (1305 E Cliff Dr.) is a local landmark befitting the area's first museum, founded more than a century ago. The three-floor Museum of Art and History (705 Front St.) is more interactive than most, and admission is free on First Friday. But don't forget the Surfing Museum (see *Lighthouse*), the Agricultural History Project Center & Museum in Watsonville (2601 East Lake Ave.), and last but by no means least, the Bigfoot Discovery Museum in Felton (5497 Hwy 9).

Music: Live. At Moe's Alley (1535 Commercial Way, moesalley.com), the Blue Lagoon (923 Pacific Ave., thebluelagoon.com), the Catalyst (1011 Pacific Ave., catalystclub.com), the Crepe Place (1134 Soquel Ave., thecrepeplace.com). Or Dead. At Dead Central, the Grateful Dead Archive's exhibition space at UCSC (McHenry Library, library.ucsc.edu/grateful-dead-archive).

Netflix: Binge watching. It's the best thing that ever happened to TV, and it all started right here back in 1997 when Marc Randolph and Reed Hastings bought a used CD at Logo's, walked over to a little gift shop nearby to buy a greeting card, stuck the CD in the

envelope, took it to the post office, and mailed it to themselves with a single First Class stamp. The CD was delivered the next day in perfect condition, and the mail order movie rental business was born. That's Randolph's story, anyway. (Read "Netflixed" by Gina Keating.)

O'Neill: Jack O'Neill didn't just create a legendary surf business, he pretty much built the sport as we know it. Without the neoprene wetsuit he introduced in 1952, nobody in their right mind would have spent more than a few minutes in the cold waters of the northern Pacific coast, or anywhere else with less than tropical water temperatures. The Surfing Hall of Famer's many innovations have molded the sport, but what really matters in the end is his lifelong dedication to protecting our oceans. His free Sea Odyssey program (oneillseaodyssey.org) takes kids out on his 65-foot research catamaran, where the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is their classroom. And in true O'Neill style, they pay it forward: Participants are required to take part in a community service project to earn their free tuition.

Rivers: The San Lorenzo River has both challenging rapids (up to Class III-IV) and family-friendly swimming holes. Turkey Foot, where two creeks merge with the river, is the classic swimming hole, with a high cliff to jump from and a wonderful rope swing. Garden of Eden and Big Rock also are great swimming holes, and both are an easy walk inside Henry Cowell Park.

Rollergirls: Skaters named Hellth Hazard, Sharon D. Payne, and Liv N. Letdie play for teams called Organic Panic, Redwood Rebels, Steamer Janes, and the Boardwalk Bombshells. The Bombshells are the A-team, competing against the highest-ranking roller derby teams in the country. No joke, sister. They're ranked No. 23 in the world. The Derby Girls (santacruzderbygirls.org) jam, slam, and whip at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium.

Sculptures: If you don't love Michael Eckerman's "Rocky Dogs" on Pacific and Soquel avenues, no one can help you. Not to shortchange the many incredible sculptures all over town, but come on, these are dogs. Made of rocks. One of them is in the irresistible hands-up puppy position. No way to go wrong there. Santa Cruz City Arts' SculptOUR program rotates the art works along Pacific Avenue every few years.

Slugs: There are dozens of local legends about the UCSC "Fiat Slug" T-shirt that John Travolta wore as Vincent Vega in "Pulp Fiction." Some say director Quentin Tarantino got it at a garage sale. Others say he had a girlfriend who went to UCSC. Does it matter? Travolta made the shirt a cult classic.

Slurps: By some counts, you can bring your dog with you to more than 100 places that serve food in Santa Cruz County. BringFido.com lists about four dozen in the area, but just about any place with outdoor seating welcomes dogs. Many craft breweries have



(Above) A lone surfer is silhouetted against a glassy wall at one of Santa Cruz's premier surf spots. *Surfer* magazine ranks Santa Cruz as the best surf spot in the country, partly because there are "rideable waves almost every day of the year."

dog-friendly patios (see *Beer*) and a number of eateries, like the Harbor Cafe (535 7th Ave.) and Cafe Limelight (1016 Cedar St.) welcome your pup with a water bowl by the table.

Spirit: Call us crazy New Age hippies if you want to, but spirituality and religion are embedded deep in our Santa Cruz DNA. From the first Ohlone shamans to today's yoga studios and retreat centers, this area is steeped in both Eastern and Western spiritual and metaphysical traditions. Among the most beautiful places to refresh the spirit are Land of Medicine Buddha (5800 Prescott Rd., Soquel; landofmedicinebuddha.org), Mount Hermon (37 Conference Dr., Felton; mounthermon.org), St. Clare's Retreat (2381 Laurel Glen Rd., Soquel; stclaresretreatcenter.com), Pema Osel Ling Retreat Center (2013 Eureka Canyon Rd., Watsonville; polmountainretreat.com), Mount Madonna Center (445 Summit Rd., Watsonville; mountmadonna.org), the Quaker Center (1000 Hubbard Gulch Rd., Ben Lomond; quakercenter.org), and the Sequoia Retreat Center (11445 Alba Rd., Ben Lomond; sequoiaretreatcenter.com).

Startups: Santa Cruz is such fertile ground for startups that companies from Ireland to Israel have chosen to relocate here. Ideas are hatched, apps are born, and companies are founded every single day. (See *Netflix*.) Paystand, Tuul, Looker, Inboard Technology, and literally hundreds of other tech companies started here. The Santa Cruz New Tech MeetUp gathers at Cruzio (877 Cedar St.) on the first Wednesday of every month to network, invent, and keep the high-tech sector growing. At one of their most recent meet-ups, Invoice2go, iControl, Smith Micro, and Pearl Auto were presenters. Pearl, which was started by three guys who developed the iPod and iPhone for Apple, just launched its new

RearVision, a wireless, solar-powered backup camera and alert system that installs on the back of your vehicle. Yes, please.

State parks: All 14 of them. Treasures include a winding path past majestic old-growth redwoods and lush waterfalls in Big Basin Redwoods State Park, sandstone outcroppings at Castle Rock State Park, a wheelchair accessible trail that circles the oldest and tallest trees at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, 200-foot-high sand dunes at Sunset State Beach, and the epicenter of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. The other nine

state parks in Santa Cruz County are Castro Adobe, Lighthouse Field State Beach, Manresa State Beach, Natural Bridges State Beach, New Brighton State Beach, Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park, Seacliff State Beach, Twin Lakes State Beach, and Wilder Ranch State Park. Get out there.

Street performers: For the record, a hell-fire-and-damnation preacher may have free speech rights in downtown Santa Cruz (perish the very loud thought), but his shtick does not count as entertaining street performance because it does not make people happy. Nor do all of the commercial vendors whose stalls



(Above) The Santa Cruz Derby Girls guarantee an evening of excitement as they slam and whip at Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium.



(Above) A patron carries his bag of groceries past the Shopper's Corner mural, one of the many murals painted by local artists throughout Santa Cruz.

have pushed out many street performers. The Great Morgani, on the other hand, does make us happy. Well, he did until he was chased away by city ordinances. The local accordion legend, whose costumes rivaled Lady Gaga's, was a fixture on Pacific Avenue for years. You can still catch him every once and while at the Aptos Farmers Market.

Surf: *Surfer* magazine ranks Santa Cruz as the best surf spot in the country, partly because there are "rideable waves almost every day of the year." Steamer Lane, Wadell Creek, and Pleasure Point are their favorite spots, but stay away if you're not an experienced surfer. You can find other less challenging breaks at the Hook, Rivermouth, 26th Avenue, and Manresa. Beginners probably should stick with 38th Avenue and Capitola beaches. Cowell's had to come off of the list this year because environmentalists ranked it as the worst water quality in California, thanks mostly to bird droppings and sea lion poop.

Sustainability: We're totally committed to it.

Theaters: Before the days of 3-D, the Rio Theatre (1205 Soquel Ave.) was a fancy "cyclotron" movie palace with a curved screen to create an illusion of depth. It even had a "crying room," a soundproof glassed-in enclosure where mothers with crying babies could sit and watch the show. After it fell into disrepair, it was closed and then resurrected as special film screening theater (think Bruce Brown) and concert venue. The crying room is now a green room for performers (no judgment intended). The beautiful art deco Del Mar Theatre almost bit the dust as well, but the building was renovated — most of the art deco features were preserved — and

the technology was upgraded. They screen both indie and first-run features, and you can wear jammies to their overnight Secret Film Festival. The secret part is that you don't know what's playing until the movie starts.

Thrift: Like the song says, one man's trash is another man's come-up. The come-up at Rescued Treasures (325 Front St.) was never trash, and the place looks like a cute shabby chic boutique. All proceeds go to Project Purr, a nonprofit rescue organization for feral cats. St. John's Helpful Shop (101 Capitola Ave., Capitola) has better prices than the Goodwill and donates all proceeds to local organizations such as the Homeless Services Center, Save Our Shores, and 21st Century Vet.

UCSC: What's not to love about a university in the redwoods with a long list of famous

alumni that stretches from Huey P. Newton to Jello Biafra? Not to mention Marc Okrand, who created the Klingon language. His Klingon dictionary was featured in a game of Klingon Boggle during an episode of "The Big Bang Theory," but we digress.

Walking: If you're going to take the time to put one foot in front of the other, you might as well see — or eat — something interesting. Take a walk among the historic homes of Mission Hill, Walnut Avenue, Ocean View Avenue, and Beach Hill. Wander around the Cowell Lime Works. Take a free garden tour at the UCSC Arboretum (arboretum.ucsc.edu) on the first Saturday of the month. Or just set aside a few hours on a lazy weekend day to walk around downtown and graze. Sample a little nosh here, a little treat there.

Warriors: Dub Nation starts here, with the Golden State Warriors development team (santacruz.dleague.nba.com). Like their parent team, the Santa Cruz Warriors won the 2015 league championship. 2016 didn't go as well. Courtside tickets aren't cheap, but you can get a general admission seat for less than 20 bucks.

Whales: Santa Cruz is a year-round haven for whales. On a single day this August, a local sightings list reported at least 30 humpback whales, six blue whales, and six fin whales, along with porpoises and dolphins.

Wharf: Yes to the view. Yes to the restaurants. Yes to the sea lions. Hellz yeah to more than 200 classic woodies at Woodies on the Wharf in June (santacruzwoodies.com) and 16,000 runners in the Wharf-to-Wharf race from Capitola to Santa Cruz in July (wharftowharf.com). And despite all of the tourists, there's nothing like being on the Wharf on a big surf day and watching the waves roll through the Lane. 🌊



(Above) Santa Cruzan Steve Hoberg sets out on the one-mile Roughwater Swim, wearing a tux and shoes as a comment on entrants who insist on wearing wetsuits.