



Sunset at Sierra Mar at Post Ranch Inn. (Courtesy of Kodiak Greenwood)

In Big Sur, Top Notch Nature + Hospitality, Natural Disasters Be Damned

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To live and work in Big Sur means getting used to inconvenience.

It's hardly news that climate and natural disasters hit this famous stretch of California a bit harder than other spots. But just as the winter of 2023 wreaked havoc on many of us, Big Sur was devastated more than the norm, with a chunk of Highway 1 still closed today after all of these months.

Don't let that deter you from planning a weekend getaway here, though, because there is still so much to enjoy even if you have to turn around at Lucia. In fact, there's even more happening than ever.

The constantly changing landscape on this dramatic coastline is also apparent in the shifting culinary and hospitality scene in Big Sur.

Where to Stay in Big Sur



The totally off-grid Autonomous tents have private ocean views.
(Courtesy of Treebones)

Post Ranch Inn (47900 Hwy 1) is epic. Immerse yourself in its magical property and contemplative architecture via three heated infinity pools, hiking paths, sound baths, astounding views...and really great mini bar selections. There's also an onsite gallery, a serene library, a boutique stocked with local goods, and a robust complimentary breakfast for all overnight guests.

Alila Ventana Big Sur (48123 Hwy 1) is a cushy, 59-room adults-only stay that includes everything except the booze (even the super ocean and forest views). There are countless activities here (ax throwing, foraging, etc), so there's no chance you'll get bored. But you can also just lounge around at the clothing-optional Mountain pool or in one of the deep, heated Japanese baths. Fifteen glamping tents and 40 campsites are a lesser known option here.

Treebones (71895 Hwy 1) is a quintessential glamping destination, with famous yurts and campsites in a human nest or twig hut, or the posh twin solar powered autonomous tents.

Big Sur River Inn (46800 Hwy 1) is a happening spot. The first hotel and restaurant to be established in Big Sur, the family-friendly property is celebrating 88 years. There's Mexican food, a general store, an outdoor pool, and accommodations that are a bit less pricey than other nearby options. But an extra bonus is the hidden swimming hole complete with Adirondack chairs set mid-current.

The Best Restaurants in Big Sur



A lunch spread at Coast Big Sur. (Courtesy of Coast)

Coast Big Sur (49901 Hwy 1), founded in the 1950s, has found new life since owners Peter and Merle Mullin took the reins in 2016. After a lengthy renovation and the arrival of chef Nick Balla (Bar Tartine), this cafe-gallery-boutique is now a must-stop. Balla, known for his impressive ferments, preserves and zero waste ethos, has crafted a short but satisfying lunch menu be enjoyed on the rooftop terrace. There's also a small marketplace where you can pick up local beer, wine and provisions for your day's adventure.

Even if you don't stay at Post Ranch Inn, you can eat at its lauded restaurant, **Sierra Mar** (47900 Hwy 1). Culinary director Reylon Agustin and executive chef Il Hoon Kang have made big changes to the menu, with a three-course garden-centric affair at lunchtime plus a more extensive offering come dinner.

Just across the street but at 1,200 feet elevation, Alila Ventana Big Sur is an entirely different, beautiful beast. **The Sur House** (48123 Hwy 1) has an expansive dining patio, a menu featuring local ingredients—think artichoke salad with tarragon coulis and a poached egg from the onsite chicken coop—and a central bar. Start with the Marine Layer, a gin-based cocktail inspired by the local terroir.

Big Sur Bakery (47540 Hwy 1), loved for its incredible wood-fired sourdough levain with cultured butter, is another iconic destination experiencing some shifts. In late 2021 after a Covid hiatus, the spot relaunched its ingredient-driven dinner service highlighting local abundance. (Psst: Look out for an exciting new endeavor from the bakery's former chef, Tim Eelman—with dishes such as duck with cherries and XO sauce and oysters with nasturtium and sea lettuce—set to open at the multipurpose **Village** (46840 Hwy 1).

Treebones (71895 Hwy 1) has been hit extra hard by the road closure since the iconic property sits just across the slide. After a long closure, the camp-style stay has reopened with a new culinary program and menu from chef Kyle Walker. The **Lodge Restaurant** serves treats like deviled eggs with boquerones and wood-fired Basque cheesecake. Also, make reservations for the 15-course omakase at the onsite **Wild Coast Sushi Bar** (closed Sunday and Monday), crafted by chef Yancy Knapp.

The new **Sushi Jawn** food truck parked at the Riverside campground (47020 Hwy 1, *Wednesdays through Saturdays*) serves up Japanese with a Hawaiian flair.

Fun Things to Do in Big Sur



A dramatic sunset at Pfeiffer Beach (Zetong Li, [Unsplash](#))

You'll know you're entering Big Sur (from the north) once you reach the **Bixby Creek Bridge**, one of the most photographed attractions in all of California. While it's only 714 feet long, the way it frames the coastline is worth pulling off for a pic.

A middle-of-the-night hot tub dip at **Esalen** (55000 Hwy 1) should be on your bucket list. To access these cliffside, clothing optional tubs, you'll need to make a highly sought-after reservation for time slots between 1am and 3am. Of course, the famed retreat also offers a myriad of wellness options, seminars, and workshops covering everything from altered states to ancestral plant medicine.

Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park (mile marker 47.2, Hwy 1) is home to diverse hiking trails—including the popular Valley View and Pfeiffer Falls trails—and three miles of Big Sur River access. Take the Gorge Trail to crystal swimming holes perfect respite for warm summer days. Pitch a tent at one of nearly 200 campsites.

Keep a keen eye out for **Pfeiffer Beach** (Sycamore Canyon Rd., Hwy 1). The sharp turn-off is located just about a mile south of Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Actually part of **Los Padres National Forest**, this is one of the most unique beaches in California, noted for its purplish sand and the famous rock arch. Bundle up and stick around for sunset when the light shines through.

When you picture the Big Sur iconic coastline, it's often images of **Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park** (47555 Hwy 1) that come to mind. Here the Santa Lucia mountains run into the Pacific Ocean, forested canyons fill gaps between exposed dry ridges, and near-shore kelp forests buffer the coves and shoreline. The park is best known for its main attraction, 80-foot **McWay Falls**, but there are plenty of other gems. A short walk up McWay Creek from the main parking area accesses a network of trails that explore redwood-lined canyons and traverse the mountainside, offering an elevated perspective on this magnificent landscape. Partington Cove, an inconspicuous spot two miles north of McWay Falls, sits in one of the most dramatic sections of the Big Sur coastline and is certainly worth a stop.

Henry Miller Memorial Library (48603 Hwy 1) is still a library, but you can also catch an evening outdoor concert or event amid towering redwoods. Upcoming shows include Hermanos Gutierrez (Oct. 1) and The Breeders (Oct. 22).

Andrew Molera State Park (mile marker 51.2, Hwy 1) is the largest of the state parks in the Big Sur area. With over 20 miles of hiking trails, a scenic and accessible beach, an abundance of wildlife and Big Sur River access, the park offers something for just about everyone. The **Headlands to Creamery Meadow Loop** is a popular stopover for during the **monarch butterfly migration** in fall.

Sykes Hot Springs is one of California's most popular hot springs, even despite the 10-mile trek to get here. Unfortunately, disrespectful overuse has become an issue, so remember to pack out and leave no trace. Plan your trip mid-week for smaller crowds.

Sand Dollar Beach is Big Sur's longest and widest continuous strand of sand, running nearly three-quarters of a mile. This is an ideal spot for beachcombing, lounging, tide pooling, and surfing. Pitch a tent in one of the 40 sites at **Plaskett Creek Campground** (if you can score a reservation) right across the highway and be the first to hit the waves come sunrise.