

TOP DENTISTS: 236 of the best in our area

Orange Coast

THE MAGAZINE of ORANGE COUNTY

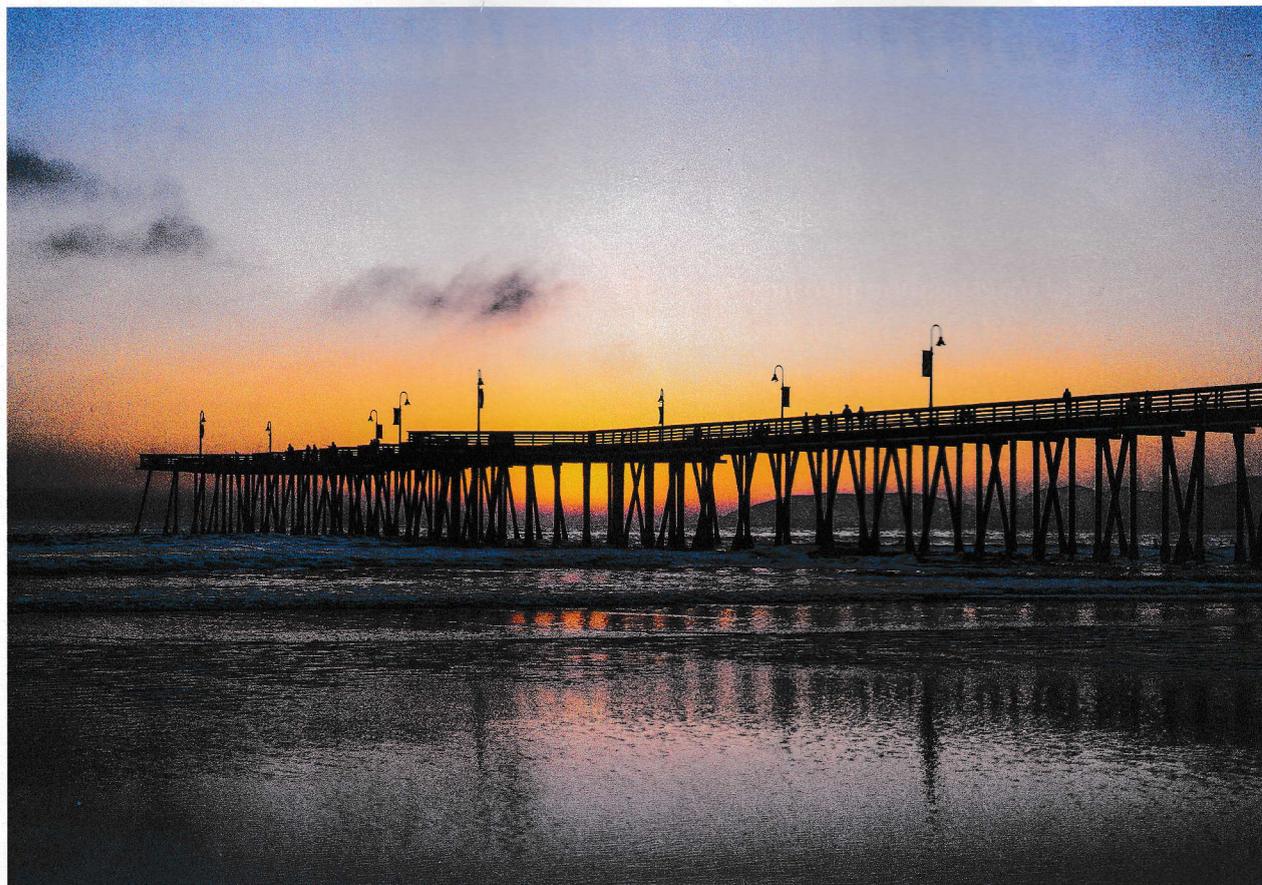
THE O.C. Bucket List



Don't miss these  things to do right here

DINING REVIEW: PARISIAN APPEAL
AT BOUILLON

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PERFECT GETAWAY

PISMO BEACH

This seaside gem offers a surprisingly luxurious stay on the Central Coast. by Alan Gibbons

The quaint town might elicit notions of tourist kitsch or a place to stretch. But the city is experiencing a revival with luxury hotels on the sand, upscale boutiques and coffee shops, and renovations to the pier area. Of course, the main draw is the long, stunning beach. Artistic signs, novelty airstream trailers, a giant slide to the sand, and the pier itself create a picturesque backdrop for watching surfers or taking a stroll. Winter is the time to visit as the coastal fog that hangs on all summer gives way to gorgeous sunshine.

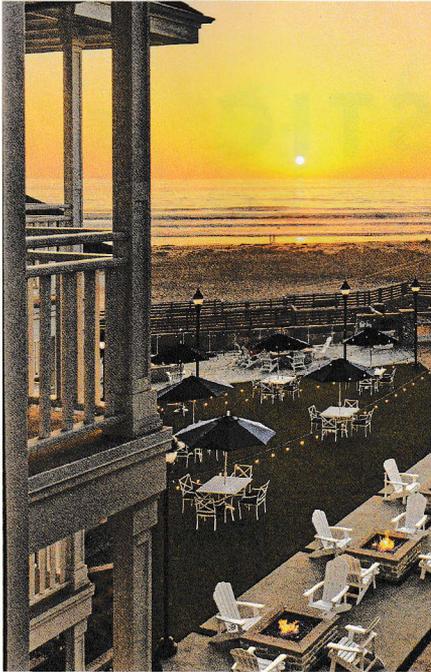
MIGRATING MONARCHS

To get a glimpse of hundreds of overwintering butterflies, head to the Pismo State Beach Monarch Butterfly Grove. The monarchs seek shelter from cold, wind, and storms in this spot protected by eucalyptus and cypress trees, but the season ends this month. The grove is right next to the beach, just south of the North Beach Campground. Trails abound, and children and grown-ups delight in all the butterflies. A walk on the sand from the center of town provides a beautiful view.

TIME FOR TRANQUILITY

To take advantage of the expansive views of the water and pier, there's no better place than Vespera Resort. Open for a little more than two years, the property sits right along the boardwalk and offers fire pits and a lawn for overlooking the action along the sand. Complimentary yoga on the beach in the morning makes a great start to the day, and telescopes in every room provide a

ABOVE The Pismo Beach Pier provides a great vantage point for sunsets and watching the ocean.



TIP FROM A LOCAL

“Definitely go to Avila Valley Barn for the amazing olallieberry pie. If you can’t make it all the way to Cambria, this is a great option.”

—LISA JAY,
ALISO NIGUEL HIGH ALUM WHO
NOW WORKS IN HOSPITALITY
IN PISMO BEACH

LEFT
Relaxation is inevitable at Vespera Resort.

RIGHT
Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort and Spa provides a serene place for a massage or soak.

special opportunity for stargazing at night. There are plenty of places to watch the sun go down, but perhaps none as perfect as the balcony of the ocean-view rooms and suites (\$359 and up). With a heated pool and hot tub, helpful and friendly staff on hand, and beach-chic rooms that include indulgent bathrooms with large showers and some deep soaking tubs, the resort ensures that you never want to leave.

COASTAL CUISINE

Somerset Grill specializes in worldly flavors while never losing sight of the bounty of fresh seafood available at its doorstep. Sit on the covered patio or indoors where you can check out the large bar. A recent special included a just-right spiced curry butternut squash soup with toasted pepitas that was a perfect winter dish. Warm up with grilled swordfish with roasted carrots and lemon caper relish (\$36). For breakfast, go for the diced-fruit parfait (\$10),

which features yogurt, coconut, honey, granola, and nuts.

SECLUDED SOAKING

Less than 10 minutes north of Pismo Beach, Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort and Spa offers hillside hot tubs (about \$25 per hour). Relax and rejuvenate in a private tub in the trees for the ultimate decompressor. Schedule a Swedish or deep-tissue massage (\$145 and up for 60 minutes), and 30 minutes of soaking is included ahead of the treatment. The spa is mostly outdoors—serene and lush. Specials are available for visits Monday through Thursday.

SIMPLY DELICIOUS

For classic seafood dishes such as steamed clams (\$14) or oysters Rockefeller (\$18), head to Ada’s Fish House. The relaxed atmosphere lures locals and visitors alike. California cuisine including grilled artichoke with house-made lemon aioli (\$12) and a spinach and

quinoa salad with shrimp (\$20) will fill your belly while the local wine list and solid cocktails offer delightful drink options.

DELIGHTFUL ROLLS

A family-owned shop since 1972, Old West Cinnamon Rolls offers decadent handmade treats, baked fresh all day, and coffee just a few blocks off the beach. Stop in for the original cinnamon roll, add frosting or nuts, and delight in savoring every lick of stickiness.

CLIFFTOP STAY

For a quiet stay above the bustle of town and perched on top of the bluff, try the 52-room Inn at the Cove and its intimate vibe. The smell of coastal sage abounds, there are trails to the beach, and every room overlooks the ocean from a private patio or balcony (\$170 and up). Rooms are airy and bright, and a continental breakfast is complimentary. This is a lovely spot to get away from everything other than waves and trails. **OC**



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Feb. 26: The SLO Craft Beer Fest celebrates craft brews and music with special food pairings, educational seminars, and more at the Alex Madonna Expo Center in San Luis Obispo (\$50 and up). slocraftbeer.com