

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

The Best Hotels Along the Pacific Coast Highway

AD travels California's famous Route 1, stopping at the best hotels along the way

TEXT BY [AYESHA KHAN](#) · Posted July 13, 2016



The Pacific Coast of California, as seen from the Monarch Beach Resort in Dana Point.

Courtesy of Monarch Beach Resort

One of the most well-traveled roads in America, California's Route 1—also known as the Pacific Coast Highway—offers some of the most iconic, sun-drenched coastal views on the planet. Starting in Orange Country near Dana Point and continuing as sister highway 101 for a grand finale through the Golden Gate Bridge, a drive up “the 1” (as it's referred to by Californians) is definitely a bucket-list experience. Bearing that in mind, we've selected seven hotels on this scenic thoroughfare that are perfectly perched in the most fascinating towns along the way, from Santa Monica to Santa Barbara to Big Sur. These hotels are sure to impress—some for their grandeur and luxury, some for their quaintness, all for their singular design.



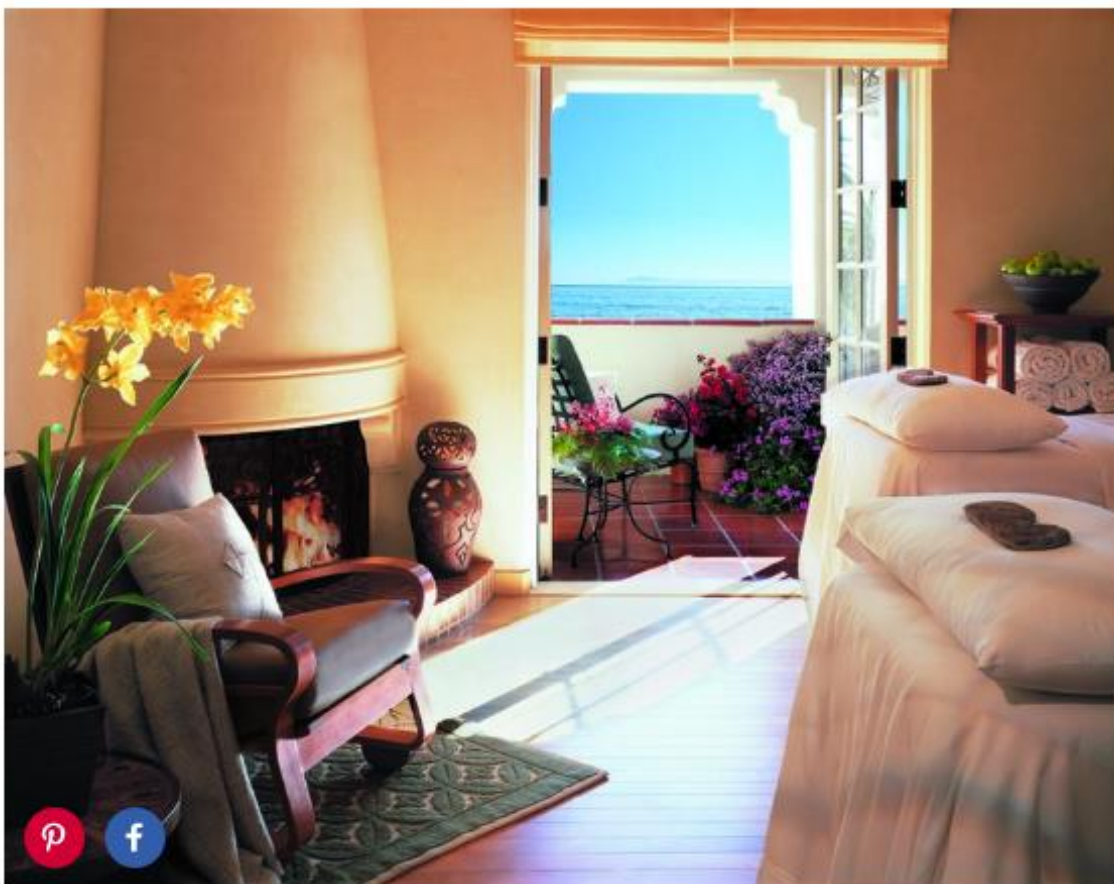
Lily Stein

The Monarch Beach Resort, Dana Point Fresh off a \$40 million renovation, this resort is fast becoming the centerpiece of the Dana Point social scene. There are five new dining outlets, some conceived by San Francisco–based Puccini Group, ranging from an artisanal café and food market to a light and airy Mediterranean eatery. Outdoor spaces conjure a SoCal beach house, with wide-plank floors, oversize seating, and a cool palette of sky-blue and sea-glass-green. Designed by L.A.–based decorator Rodrigo Vargas, the hotel’s 400 guest rooms and suites offer California contemporary furnishings and a neutral palette that lets the views do the talking. The property also features Arizona-based wellness spa Miraval’s first coastal location. *From \$429/night;* monarchbeachresort.com



Lisa Romerein

Hotel Casa del Mar, Santa Monica Built as a beach club for the well-heeled in the Roaring Twenties, this Italian Renaissance Revival building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Nearly a century after its initial iteration, the hotel stands just as glamorous today. Lobby interiors updated by by Obama White House decorator Michael S. Smith feature a monumental double staircase, massive two-story windows, and a custom-made iron chandelier with handblown glass beading. In the 129 guest rooms, rich walnut four-poster beds are paired with caned and ebonized furniture and European linen window treatments, a nod to the hotel's seaside glam past. The property also boasts an eco-conscious spa and two locavore dining outlets. *From \$495/night; hotelcasadelmar.com*



Courtesy of the Four Seasons

Four Seasons Resort the Biltmore, Santa Barbara Built in 1927, during the heyday of this beachside town and before the film studios moved south to Hollywood, the Biltmore Santa Barbara is a red-roofed Spanish Colonial building true to the region's vernacular architecture. Interiors designed by Peter Marino feature wrought-iron railings, cut-metal chandeliers, and handcrafted ceramic tiles. Brick-lined walkways overlook mature tropical gardens and are lit by romantic gas lanterns every evening. *From \$845/night;* fourseasons.com



Kodiak Greenwood

Ventana Inn & Spa, Big Sur Conceived by architectural designer Kipp Stewart, the Ventana Inn & Spa boasts a variety of room types, all with stunning views of the dense forest and ocean beyond. The natural beauty is brought indoors in cedar-lined cottages or suites with baths covered in locally sourced slate. Rustic, handcrafted furnishings definitely offer a sense of place, as Big Sur is one of California's greatest artisan communities. To that end, the hotel also offers its own art gallery and a specially created Art & Seekers program, where guests can partake in drum circles, glassblowing and drawing classes, and music therapy. *From \$450/night, ventanainn.com*



Courtesy of Hotel Carmel

Hotel Carmel, Carmel-by-the-Sea This newly renovated gem in the artsy cobblestone-lined village of Carmel-by-the-Sea has just 27 rooms and suites, all devised by L.A.–based Bishop Pass Design to conjure the effortless, laid-back ethos of coastal California. Interiors are complete with locally sourced wood accents, Big Sur coastal photography by local artist Matt Schwartz, and, in some cases, in-room fireplaces. In public spaces, traditional Carmel-by-the-Sea cottage architecture melds with rustic-modern touches like a farm table check-in counter, a living room with a communal marble-top table, and reading nooks. The lobby’s quirkiest (and perhaps coolest) feature is a vintage cassette player and library of over 300 tapes. Outside, a garden courtyard offers a Jacuzzi and outdoor fire pit, and a landscaped terrace is the ideal spot for an intimate event. *From \$189/night; thehotelcarmel.com*



Courtesy of Casa Madrona

Casa Madrona Hotel & Spa, Sausalito Casa Madrona's crowning glory is the Mansion, an 11-room estate that dates from 1885, when no expense was spared to create a luxe hilltop perch at the edge of Richardson Bay. Updated by Safdie Rabines Architects, Christopher O'Connor Design, and TruexCullins Interiors, the space features walnut millwork, granite countertops imported from Turkey, and a plush palette of Swiss and British fabrics. Floor-to-ceiling doors fold away to open the interiors to the outdoors, while high-tech elements like a video wall and touch-screen controls round out the sleek seaside digs, which also nod to the home's original Victorian heritage.

Mansion rooms from \$399/night, suites from \$10,000/night; casamadrona.com



Courtesy of Loew's

Loew's Regency San Francisco Designed by Michael Booth of San Francisco-based BAMO, this San Francisco hotel offers spectacular views, stretching from the Oakland Bay Bridge all the way to the iconic Golden Gate Bridge, the official end point of the great California coast road trip. The best vantage point for these vistas would definitely be the 40th-story sky deck. Of the 158 rooms and suites, the stunning Bridge to Bridge suites offer the best guest room (and bathroom) views, as well as as French Deco furnishings and a color palette of blue (for the sparkling waters of the bay) and silver (for San Francisco's iconic fog). *From \$349/night; loewshotels.com*