

MARIN

Destination: Santa Cruz's Dream Inn

The ideal 48-hour Bay Area escape.

BY MIMI TOWLE



Planning our summer-girls-getaway with my daughter and friends (another mother/daughter duo) with our busy schedules, was so daunting our 48-hour escape almost didn't happen. It had to be a weekend, we wanted to get **out of town and truly relax...preferably** at a beach. Hence given the above restraints Santa Cruz was the natural choice and with the lure of the newly renovated Dream Inn, our decision was made.

While this location, 175 West Cliff Drive, has housed a beachfront hotel for decades, the hip, mid-century, surf-inspired Dream Inn opened in 2009 with the famously fun Joie de Vivre. Now almost ten years later, with **Woodside Hotels at the helm it's even** better. A family run business, Woodside, Hotels has a few gems in their group, including Hotel Drisco; Bodega Bay Lodge; Bernardus Lodge & Spa; and Indian Springs Calistoga. During the renovations they expanded

and improved the pool and hot tub area as well as added a coffee cart to the lobby. All guestrooms and suites were refreshed and offer private balconies, beach-inspired art, HD flat panel televisions.

Knowing we would be exhausted from the drive from Marin through Friday traffic, we planned on stopping at the nearby Whole Foods just before getting to the hotel. After a quick toe dip in the cool ocean water, we settled into the evening on our balcony with sushi and a chilled bottle of Rombauer (my friend has higher wine standards than I do). **We didn't** need to go anywhere - the summer concert series was happening at the beach, we could hear the music from the comfort of our room in our PJs. Lulled to sleep by the sounds of the ocean, we all slept a solid eight hours, and woke up ready for the Acai bowl quest. Samba Rock Acai cafe was our destination and we were psyched to be one of the first customers in the brand new Starbucks, located just across Water Street. On a tip from our friend at the front desk, we headed to Rio Del Mar state beach for a banner day of boogie boarding and sleeping on the sand (sporting UV shirts and sunscreen for the moms).

Before dinner the girls talked us into a few rides on the Boardwalk. Considering my grandfather, great grandfather and his mother were all born in Santa Clara County, just over the hill, I made a remark that my daughter would be the sixth generation of our family to be thrashed about on The Giant Dipper a 70-ft, historic wooden roller coaster. Thanks to Wikipedia, I quickly learned that it took 47 days to build in May of 1924 and travels up to 55 miles per hour. The girls did some more rides, while my friend and I headed to the restaurant via a few surf shops.



Aquarius, attached to the Dream Inn **could easily be called the “crown jewel’ of restaurants in Santa Cruz.** **There isn't a better view of the Pacific** and the kitchen helmed by Chef Ken **Drew just won a Diner's Choice award** by Open Table this year. Natalie and I shared the California mussels (they were huge and delicious) and seafood pasta, the others got a delicious looking burger with bacon and avocado and kale salad with salmon. The Brussels sprouts were so good, we had to order two dishes. The entire

space has also undergone a renovation and has added a meal program featuring a street taco truck by the pool every day and paella or BBQ on weekend nights.

Our night concluded with the four of us squished into our bed to watch Amy Schumer and Goldie Hawn work out their mother daughter differences in South America in the **movie Snatched, you couldn't write a better mother/daughter movie to watch for the four of us.** We had a full day ahead of us, and as I dozed off to enjoy another eight hours of **slumber, I knew I couldn't have chosen a better destination for our 48-hour escape.**