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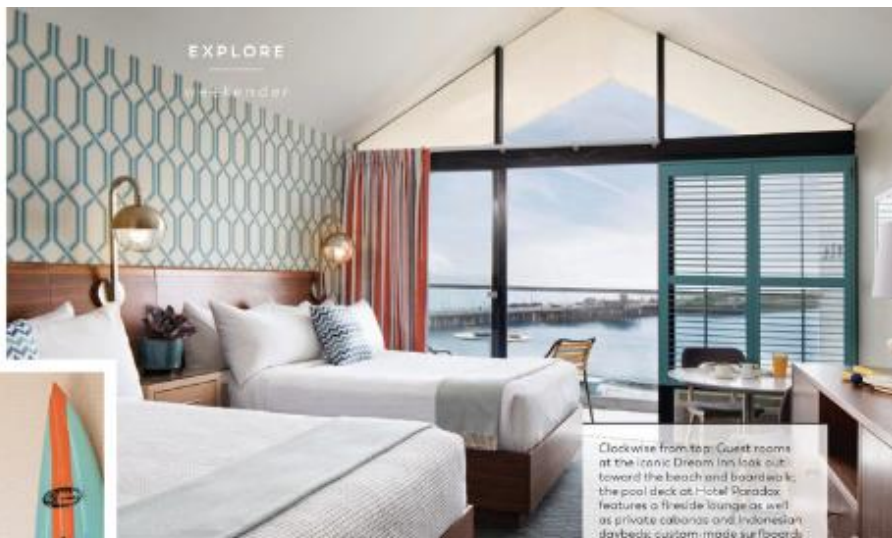


IN US LIFE BUSINESS

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ASPIRE

MODERN LUXURY INTERIORS
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EXPLORE

WILDLIFE

Clockwise from top: Guest rooms at the iconic Dream Inn look out toward the beach and boardwalk; the pool deck at Hotel Paradox features a freestyle lounge as well as private cabanas and Indonesian daybeds; custom-made surf boards at the Dream Inn's lobby speak to the area's favorite pastime and honor surf legend Jack O'Neill.



SANTA CRUZ RISING

A once sleepy West Coast beach town wakes up.

By Allison McCarthy

Santa Cruz has developed a reputation among certain Californians as a dazed surf town visited almost exclusively by beach bums and tourists. But a lot has changed over the past few years, and the locale is now attracting creatives, small-business owners, and artisans seeking inspiring environs and a more laid-back lifestyle.

"Santa Cruz has this Shangri-La mystique," says Colby Barr, who launched **Verve Coffee Roasters** (vervecoffee.com) with Ryan O'Donovan in their beloved hometown back in 2007, satiating a real need for expertly crafted, local, artisanal products. "People settle here for quality-of-life reasons," he says. "You mix that with a long history of thinkers and artists, a top research university and the proximity to Silicon Valley, and you have something special."

They're not the only locals making their mark with rustic-chic new shops, studio spaces and cafes. Former *The New York Times* reporter Sonia McMoran (who regularly wrote about interiors) opened **Home/Work** (shophomework.com), a modern bohemian shop of carefully curated gifts and housewares, including Lili Arnold cactus prints and clay-and-macrame planters by Mendocino artist Jason Sanovich. "Santa Cruz's passion to shop small and local led me to open my shop here," she says.

About a mile away in downtown Santa Cruz is **Agency** (shopagencyhome.com), a design store

with a Scandinavian sensibility and the second retail space from longtime residents and husband-and-wife duo Peter James and Linnaea Holgers James. "Santa Cruz has stepped up its game with shops and restaurants," says Linnaea. To that effect, Peter sells his own line of handcrafted furniture called Telegenic California, and the shop is the West Coast dealer of Christiania Bikes from Denmark. Also downtown is the nearby **Abbott Square** (abbotsquare.org), a brand-new community plaza and marketplace with an emphasis on public art, free concerts, maker workshops, elevated California cuisine and craft cocktails.

While hotels like **Dream Inn** (from \$299 per night, dreaminnsantacruz.com) and **Hotel Paradox** (from \$349 per night, hotelparadox.com) may still draw tourists from all over the country, they've updated their looks with multimillion-dollar renovations to reflect the refined tastes of the local community. Dream Inn, made over by Oakland architecture firm Arcsine, is a nod to surf legend Jack O'Neill with custom surfboards alongside a handcrafted raw-edge maple-wood table in the lobby; while S.F.-based design studio ODADA updated Hotel Paradox with luxe pool cabanas and decor inspired by coastal redwoods. Leave the boardwalk and the pier for the tourists and discover the cultured side of Santa Cruz instead.

