



From left: Cocktail hour at Ventana Inn's firepit; hidden coves make the perfect post-hike picnic spots; lemon meringue pie from Big Sur Bakery, whose owners recently published *The Big Sur Bakery Cookbook*. **Below:** Henry Miller Library.



To Sur With Love

The must-do itinerary for a weekend in the inimitable coastal enclave. BY ROBIN RINALDI

You won't be in Big Sur long before someone mentions the fire of 2008. The Santa Lucia Mountains, rising straight up from the ocean, are as magnificent as ever, emerald-green swaths of new growth the only reminders of the flames that ravaged 130,000 acres and evacuated the town for two weeks in July of that year. But the close call has made this nearly mythical outpost—where artists, hippies, healers and now luxury seekers unite—feel all the more precious.

STAY **Ventana Inn and Spa** just narrowly escaped the fire, which came within yards of the sprawling 243-acre property. And then, 10 days later, its restaurant burned down in an electrical fire. Now rebuilt, it's back to serving fresh and local Cali inside a rustic-chic dining room or outside on two expansive terraces with sweeping Pacific views. The resort proper—along with its spa, pools (one clothing-optional) and Japanese mineral baths—is located an eighth of a mile away via a winding wooded path. It got an \$18 million makeover while the

restaurant was being rebuilt, and it shows: The 60 rooms—each with its own balcony or patio, most with fireplaces, and some with private hot tubs—are upscale yet earthy and modern. They blend gracefully into the surrounding landscape and offer every imaginable comfort inside. It's hard to tear yourself away from them—until you open the door and look around.

DO Hiking is the primary activity here; trails abound that lead you through whatever type of terrain and scenery strikes your mood. **The Pfeiffer Falls Trail** is a 2.4-mile loop that snakes through redwood forest, past a waterfall, and opens to a vista of Big Sur Valley. If it's coastal bluffs you want, **Andrew Molera Loop** winds 8.8 miles high above the coast with access to several secluded beaches. Be sure to schedule a stop at the small **Henry Miller Library**, which not only houses Miller's archives and a bookstore, but hosts worthy acts like Bonnie Prince Billy and Animal Collective in an intimate space (look for Pink Floyd tribute band House of Floyd on July 21). And though you can't just walk into the famed **Esalen**

"Big Sur is the California that men dreamed of years ago."

—HENRY MILLER



Institute—you need to be attending one of its New Age workshops—you can experience its legendary hot baths perched over the Pacific. They're open to the public, by reservation, from 1 to 3 a.m.

TASTE **Big Sur Bakery** is a lot more than its name implies—but one bite of its wood-fired pizza crust (topped with butternut squash and serrano ham) explains the wise emphasis on baking. Its locally-focused menu is nothing fancy—wood-roasted chicken, butter-braised halibut—but the fresh ingredients, chef's attention to detail and charmingly hip atmosphere are noteworthy. Lunch should definitely be at **Nepenthe**, where the "ambrosia burger" and triple-berry pie come replete with sweeping views of the coast from its deck. And breakfast is best had at **Deetjen's**, the 1930s roadhouse attached to a ramshackle inn. Duck in among the antiques, order the eggs benedict, and watch salty locals, Europeans tourists and young families spilling from refurbished VW vans all congregate to enjoy the Big Sur specialty: decent food made delicious by a place unlike any other. x

Andrew Molera Loop and Pfeiffer Falls Trail, hikinginbigsur.com **Big Sur Bakery and Restaurant**, 831-667-0520, bigsurbakery.com **Deetjen's Big Sur Inn**, 831-667-2377, deetjens.com **Esalen Institute**, 831-667-3000, esalen.org **Henry Miller Library**, 831-667-2574, henrymiller.org **Nepenthe**, 831-667-2345, nepenthebigsur.com **Ventana Inn and Spa**, 831-667-2331, ventanainn.com



Clockwise from left: Easterners are excited about NYC-based Shake Shack's arrival in South Beach; the downtown skyline; Art Deco abounds on Ocean Drive; the private beach at the Mandarin Oriental.



Miami, No Vice

Forgot to pack your thong and hangover meds? No worries. There's more to Miami than meets the eye. BY ROBIN RINALDI

I used to think Miami's charms — drunken 20-somethings, wee-hours clubbing — would be lost on me. But after finding myself there for a conference last year, I discovered some of the city's understated joys. With roundtrip fares from SFO hovering around \$300, it might be time you do the same.

You'll need those airfare savings if you want to position yourself away from the faded decadence of South Beach. Book a room at the **Mandarin Oriental**, the south-of-SoBe celeb hideaway. Situated on the small, man-made island of Brickell Key, its amenities are many: A luxe and uncrowded pool, a serious spa, and a sexy destination restaurant, **Azul**, which features chef Clay Conley's Mediterranean-Asian dishes alongside a 700-bottle wine list.

South Beach's neon allure can look undone by day, but its design cred is real: It boasts one of the world's largest concentrations of Art Deco hotels and apartment buildings, most of them completely restored. The **Art Deco Welcome Center** offers guided 90-minute tours daily, or you can rent a self-paced iPod tour and do it on your own.

But Miami's main draw, in my opinion, is its beaches — by far the best swimming beaches in the continental U.S. Miami's sand is golden, its water so Caribbean clear you can see your toes in it. Best of all, many of its lifeguard-studded public beaches are loaded with services including padded lounge chairs and umbrellas. The Art Deco Welcome Center sits adjacent to **Lummus Park**, SoBe's main stretch of sand, and if you don't spend your afternoons here swimming and sunning, you're missing the point.

Afterward, bow to tradition with a stop at the nearly century-old **Joe's Stone Crab**, where you can pause your Dungeness habit to experience the big, tender, sweet claws of the Florida stone crab, served chilled with mustard sauce. Finish up with a slice of key lime pie. Should you be craving meat instead of fish, your best post-beach bet is **Shake Shack**, a recent South Beach addition of the crazy-popular Manhattan burger joint. Here, it's all about super-fresh burgers and shakes, or "frozen custards" as those whacky Easterners like to call them. There's no Shake Shack on the West Coast (as of yet), so you may as well try it here.

"Miami Beach is where neon goes to die."

—LENNY BRUCE



Same goes for Cuban food. Miami is home to as many Cuban-Americans as SF is to San Franciscans — that is, about 800,000 of them, and though they don't all live in Little Havana, their food, drink, and customs abound there. Spend a morning wandering the main drag, Calle Ocho. **Los Pinarenos Fruiteria** is a colorful produce stand, but at its wooden counter, you can order a moist, pork-studded tamale as the owner presses stalks of sugar cane through an old-fashioned grinder to make a fresh juice called *guarapo*.

A few blocks down, browse hundreds of spiffy Cuban shirts (called *guayaberas*) — sporting tuxedo ridges, angled hems, and other hipster-friendly details — at **Pepe y Berta**. The place to get a Cuban coffee is **El Pub**, a no-frills diner with a walk-up coffee window. Strong, sweet, and served in a little cup, it's guaranteed to fuel you. Caffeine in hand, wander down to **Maximo Gomez Park** (aka Domino Park), where dozens of old Cuban men and a handful of elderly Asian ladies spend the day playing dominoes and chess and drinking shots. Wander about, watch, and feel free to join in. It's about as far away from home as you can get for \$300. ✕

Mandarin Oriental and Azul, 500 Brickell Key Drive, 305-913-8288, mandarinoriental.com/miami **Art Deco Welcome Center**, 1001 Ocean Drive, 305-531-3484, mdpl.org **Lummus Park**, 10th Street and Ocean Drive **Joe's Stone Crab**, 11 Washington Ave., 800-780-2722, joesstonecrab.com **Shake Shack**, 1111 Lincoln Road, 305-434-7787, shakeshack.com **Los Pinarenos Fruiteria**, 1334 SW Eighth St., 305-285-1135 **Pepe y Berta**, 1421 SW Eighth St., 305-857-3771, pepeandberta.com **El Pub**, 1548 SW Eighth St., 305-642-9942 **Maximo Gomez Park**, 801 SW 15th Ave.

SHAKE SHACK: WILLIAM BRINSON; SKYLINE: ISTOCK; BEACH: COURTESY OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL; OTHERS: COURTESY OF GREATER MIAMI CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



From left: Paddleboarding is big on Oahu's North Shore; the Royal Hawaiian's smallish "adult" pool looks out over the pink-umbrella-lined beach; Matsumoto's famous shaved ice.



Hip Replacement Therapy

As if idyllic weather, delicious seafood, and a perfect beach weren't enough, Waikiki is getting a makeover. BY ROBIN RINALDI

Waikiki Beach may have its strengths—cerulean skies, crystal waters, white sand—but you don't get much world-traveler cred back in

SF for it. That's too bad, because not only is it one of the most gorgeous destinations on the planet, but it's also been getting a facelift, by resort, over the past decade.

Case in Point: **The Royal Hawaiian**, the 83-year old "Pink Palace of the Pacific." Its salmon-hued exterior and sprawling Spanish-Moorish architecture is intact, but the grand, open-air lobby is new, and the guest rooms have been refurbished in a kind of glam colonial style. Pink umbrellas still line its beachfront and small, round pool, a perfect place to relax with a book and a cocktail. If you want a larger, more festive setting, head to the pool shared with the Royal's next-door neighbor, the **Sheraton Waikiki**. Although the Sheraton still looks like a beige high-rise from the outside, its recent mid-century makeover has rendered it practically groovy. Plan to toast the sunset at its beach-

level bar, **Rum Fire**, where you can sip a mai tai while gazing at Diamond Head.

Many dinner options revolve around Oahu's abundant seafood. **Azure**, the Royal's new, airy, Hollywood Regency-themed restaurant, features whatever chef Jon Matsubara fetches from the Honolulu fish auction each morning. If they've got it, try the moi, a native fish so delicious, it was historically reserved for the Hawaiian royalty. For an equally tempting but much more casual experience, head downtown to **Side Street Inn**, where you can dip into Hawaiian comfort food like Korean-style short ribs, pan-fried pork chops, and Manila clams with Portuguese sausage and peppers, and wash it all back with cold beer. Sushi is a good choice in sea-centric Oahu. At low-lit lounge **Doraku Sushi**, they offer the works: A wide selection of sake, a long list of strong, cold cocktails, and a selection of toro, uni, and unagi—plus some Kobe—that leaves one feeling heady and happy.

Activity-wise, you could spend an entire week simply frolicking in Oahu's clear-to-the-bottom, 80-degree waters, and the cost

"Hawaii is not a state of mind but a state of grace."

PAUL THEROUX



would be worth it. Should you require more, your choices will out-number your hours. Surfing, snorkeling, diving, and kayaking outfits abound, but if you want to try the island's latest sport, enlist **Hans Hedemann Surf School** for stand-up paddleboard lessons in Kahuku on the North Shore, about an hour's drive from Waikiki. Easier than surfing but more difficult than snorkeling or diving, paddleboarding provides a nice workout and smooth pace (hint: bend your knees slightly, remember to breathe, and look ahead, not down). Afterward, refuel at **Macky's Sweet Shrimp Truck**, one of several shrimp trucks along the North Shore. Oahu caught on to the food-cart concept much earlier than us, and whether you order it doused in garlic butter or coconut-fried, prepare to have all past shrimp-eating memories erased. Finish off at **Matsumoto**, a rickety general store serving shaved ice in 20-plus tropical flavors. The *lilikoi* (passionfruit) is a local favorite. You'll leave with a huge paper cone of ice soaked in Crayola-colored syrup, thinking that some places become tourist magnets for good reason. ✕

Royal Hawaiian/Azure, 2259 Kalakaua Ave., Honolulu, 808-923-7311 **Sheraton Waikiki/Rum Fire**, 2255 Kalakaua Ave., Honolulu, 808-922-4422 **Side Street Inn**, 1225 Hopaka St., Honolulu, 808-591-0253, sidestreetinn.com **Doraku Sushi**, 2233 Kalakaua Ave., Honolulu, 808-922-3323, sushidoraku.com **Hans Hedemann Surf School** at Turtle Bay Resort, 57-049 Kuilima Drive, Kahuku, 808-447-6755, hhsurf.com **Macky's Sweet Shrimp Truck**, 66-632 Kamehameha Highway, Haleiwa **Matsumoto**, 66-087 Kamehameha Highway, Haleiwa, 808-637-4827, matsumotoshaveice.com