



SANTA CRUZ

## Keep the Dream Inn alive

**OLD TRIP:** BEACHSIDE AMBLES AND WILD RIDES  
**NEW TRICK:** HIGH-TECH HIKING AND A JAZZED-UP BEACHFRONT STAY

It just doesn't get old: strolling along the boardwalk on a warm summer night, funnel cake in hand and roller coaster on your to-do list. But this funky little city has acquired some 21st-century sheen that only adds to its appeal. A beloved local hotel has been given a mod makeover; the cuisine has been kicked up a notch; **Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park** has a spiffy newish visitors' center with a theater, an environmental library, and even Wi-Fi. For on-call Silicon Valley types, this might just be the perfect weekend away.

**STAY:** It's like something out of a Frank Capra movie. A big hotel corporation (Joie de Vivre) buys a small town's legendary beachfront hotel (Coast Santa Cruz Hotel), then announces a contest to pick the new name. The townspeople insist on the original, **Dream Inn**, only to discover that it's already trademarked. But

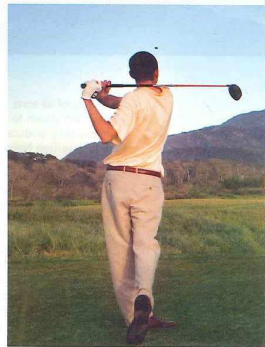
locals hold that name so dear—one woman claims her husband proposed to her "in room 421 in 1966"—that the big corporation convinces the trademark holders to share the name, and the news is delivered to a cheering crowd. The renovation that followed is a juicy story in itself, with amenities like iPod docking stations, a '50s-era look, and a new restaurant (Aquarius), due to open in June, that features organic, sustainable fish. The result is more funky than four-star, but the unbelievably comfy beds and linens alone still make the Dream Inn the best place to stay in Santa Cruz.

**DINE:** Long a culinary wasteland, Santa Cruz is now home to two truly memorable sister restaurants, **Soif** and **La Posta**. Seven-year-old Soif is a combination restaurant, wine bar, and wine shop, and its goal is to satisfy

both thirst (that's what the name means in French) and hunger. Two years ago, owner Patrice Boyle decided to expand with La Posta, a quietly sophisticated Italian eatery with wonderful housemade pastas and authentic regional entrées, such as whole-roasted branzino. Each Sunday, the restaurant prepares a single prix fixe meal from a particular place. On a recent visit, it was Florence night: duck liver-and-arugula crostini, pork roast with cannellini and fresh tomato sauce, and crispy rice fritters for dessert—the perfect prelude to an evening in front of the TV in one of those Dream Inn beds.

**NAN WIENER**

Above, left: Dream Inn's ocean-facing rooms overlook the hotel's own pool and hot tub, as well as the masses on the public beach below. Top right: one of Silver Safari's Airstream trailers. Bottom right: After a multimillion-dollar remodel, the course at Rancho San Marcos feels gorgeous and slightly wild, like the former ranchland it was built on.



LEFT: COURTESY OF JOIE DE VIVRE