

BIG SUR REBOUNDS

Devastated by nearby wildfires last year, California's most scenic stretch of coastline, with its great inns, restaurants, and outdoor activities, is rebuilding.

Big Sur, CA BY 1957, WHEN HENRY MILLER DUBBED BIG Sur the "California that men dreamed of years ago," naturalists, writers, artists, and adventurers had already revered the dramatic marriage of mountains and sea. In recent decades little has changed — despite a respectful influx of luxe hotels and restaurants along the hairpin turns of Highway 1. But then massive wildfires

struck the Santa Lucia Range and Los Padres National Forest last summer, charring some 240,000 acres and closing every trail east of the Pacific Coast Highway. Thankfully, concerted community effort has nursed the rustic wonderland back to health. This spring beloved paths leading to hidden redwood forests and waterfalls should reopen, so plan now for a trip to this resurgent playground.

Where to Stay

The famed Ventana Inn & Spa, affected by the fires, is open again after an \$18 million renovation — but **Treebones Resort**, a rustic collection of yurts boasting redwood decks perched just above the ocean, offers the most innovative lodging. Many of the structures, overseen by owner and volunteer firefighter **John Handy**, offer views of the Pacific, as well as pillow-top beds, skylights, and smooth pine floors. Guests use restrooms in the lodge, which also houses the restaurant. The truly adventurous can book the new "human nest" — a roofless sleepover (from \$155; treebonesresort.com).



fast at **Big Sur Bakery and Restaurant**, set in a cabin with branches dangling from the ceiling. Co-owner **Mike Gilson** served firefighters last summer, even after he lost his own home to the blaze. In the kitchen you'll find a married chef couple (**Philip Wojtowicz** does the savory stuff, **Michelle Rizzolo** the baking) whose cookbook, *The Big Sur Bakery Cookbook* (written with Gilson), hits shelves this summer. Good thing, because the recipe for their heralded bacon-and-egg breakfast pizza from the wood-fired oven is worth cribbing. There are also local fishmongers who supply perfect California

Where to Eat

From Ventana's new restaurant, opening in summer, to the oceanfront **Nepenthe** and **Deetjens**, a legendary, century-old rustic inn, Big Sur is known for its posh eateries. But for a break from the tourist treatment, take break-

yellowtail that Wojtowicz roasts with lemon and thyme (\$28; bigsubakery.com). For something even more low-key, spend a lazy night under the stars at Treebones, where you can order BBQ pork ribs or grilled ahi.

What to Do

Once inland trails are open (green shoots and redwood sorrel cover much of the singed ground), guide **Stephen Copland** recommends hiking **Partington Canyon**, a moderate 3.5-mile jaunt some 35 miles north of Treebones (from \$75; bigsurguides.com). Another option is **Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park**, which has the coast's only beach waterfall and a 30-mile drive to **Cone Peak**, one of the tallest coastal mountains in the lower 48. Surfers can find moderate swells and a great

picnic area at **Sand Dollar Beach**, just off Highway 1, and for kayaking, guide **Todd Potter** recommends exploring the sea caves in **San Simeon Cove** with sea otters, dolphins, gray whales, and seals (tours from \$45; kayakcambria.com). Kayak fishing excursions can also be arranged, and bay fish such as halibut and cod will take the bait. (To make a donation to the *Big Sur Fire Relief Fund*, visit surcats.org.) —ADAM BAER

