

Where to Go in 2018

TRAVEL+ LEISURE



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WHERE TO

Find Renewal





Sand Dollar Beach, in Big Sur.

BIG SUR

In the wake of destructive landslides, this coastal California retreat has rebuilt and emerged better than ever. *By Jonah Weiner*

When historic rainfall pummeled California last February, the damage to Big Sur was severe. Mudslides cut off access to Highway 1, the region's only thoroughfare, from the south; then a crack ripped through the Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge, blocking the northern end. Almost overnight, this 90-odd-mile stretch of craggy coastline—long beloved for its sense of remoteness—became an island.

Nearly a year later, Big Sur is stirring back to life. The bridge has been replaced and a major slide has been cleared. At the **Post Ranch Inn** (post-ranchinn.com; doubles from \$875)—a compound whose tony accommodations, first-rate restaurant, and stunning Pacific views have made it a gem for decades—bartender Vanessa Share remarked on the closure's unlikely upside: "It brought Big Sur back in time to what it used to be." Even now, there's a lingering aura of wild seclusion: you feel it at **Deetjen's Inn** (deetjens.com; entrées \$24–\$38), a cozy 1930s-era landmark whose restaurant serves local chanterelles and small-production California wines by firelight, and at the old-school **Big Sur Bakery** (bigsurbakery.com), where surf rock chimes from the speakers and locals congregate over hot coffee and gooey slabs of strudel.

In other words, it's an ideal time to get to Big Sur, where renewal is in the air. After an elaborate renovation, the 160-acre **Ventana Big Sur** (ventanabigsur.com; doubles from \$675, campsites from \$325) has reopened as the first Alila property in the U.S.—and a luxurious rival to Post Ranch. The place is a stunner, whether you're facing a forested canyon from the pool or enjoying pink-and-orange sunsets from the terrace. In addition to the plush ocean-view suites, clad in weathered wood, there are now glamping tents nearby that marry rusticity and comfort. Adirondack chairs and a fire pit sit out front; a creek burbles past. Overhead, the redwood canopy rises into the sky.

DON'T MISS

Nepenthe, an iconic cliff-top restaurant with album-cover-worthy views. nepenthe.com.

Jonah Weiner is a writer in Oakland. He visited Big Sur in November.