

TOWN & COUNTRY

MAY 2002

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 OF
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By Jay McInerney

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SHORE THIN
 Montecito isn't a draw on
 for visitors. Residents of th
 tony California town hav
 included Oprah Winfrey, Elle
 DeGeneres, and music manag
 Scooter Braun, a Rosewoo
 Miramar Beach club membe

but in 1998 it closed, and hotelier Ian Schrager stepped in to buy it. He was unable to get his plans for improving it off the ground, however, and it sat vacant for years. Beanie Babies mogul Ty Warner bought it from Schrager but didn't hold on to it for long. In 2007 he sold the Miramar, still untouched, to Caruso.

Years of neglect meant that the structures weren't salvageable. "We couldn't knock it down quick enough," Caruso says. Before he could, there were emotional, 10-hour city council meetings, with pushback from locals, as well as California's lengthy environmental review process. Beresford admits that that's the way things are in Montecito. "We have a reputation," she says. When the recession hit a decade ago, Caruso put the project on hold.

Then, last year, with construction finally underway, Montecito was hit by wildfires and devastating mudslides. The Miramar wasn't damaged, but the long closure of a local freeway delayed construction. Today the town looks nothing like the news footage from a year ago, though there are still neighborhoods that remind you of how the area has suffered. "The people of Montecito have a really strong backbone and a very positive attitude in general," Avant says. "That's why it has come back so fast."

One of the things you'll notice at the Miramar is that an active train track runs through the resort. It's something other developers might have seen as a deal breaker, or at least as something to obscure. Caruso decided to take the opposite tack: bill the train as part of the property's charm. He put a bar next to the tracks that has a view of both the ocean and the trains. The bartender rings a bell when one goes by. (A 24-hour guard helps guests cross the tracks.) "It was a big gamble," Caruso says, but one he thinks is going to pay off. Staffers say they have already seen early guests cheering as trains go by. FROM \$800 PER NIGHT, ROSEWOODMIRAMARBEACH.COM



SANTA BARBARA BULLETIN

Where to go in and around the American Riviera.

RESTAURANTS A coveted spot at the ambitious **Silver Bough**—an eight-seat place famous for its multicourse tasting menu and helmed by *Top Chef* alum Phillip Frankland Lee—will set you back \$550. SILVERBOUGHMONTECITO.COM

WINERIES At **Jonata**, the sister vineyard of cult classic Screaming Eagle, you'll find outstanding cabernets—even though you're six hours south of Napa. JONATA.COM

REAL ESTATE For \$85 million you can put down roots at **Rancho San Carlos**, a sprawling 237-acre estate (complete with orchards and equestrian facilities) designed by Reginald Johnson in 1931. SUZANNEPERKINS.COM

SHOPPING Pick up some Tom Dixon tableware or lighting accessories at the second outpost of design gallery **Garde**, in nearby Summerland. GARDESHOP.COM

COURTESY MIRAMAR (VINTAGE SANTA BARBARA)