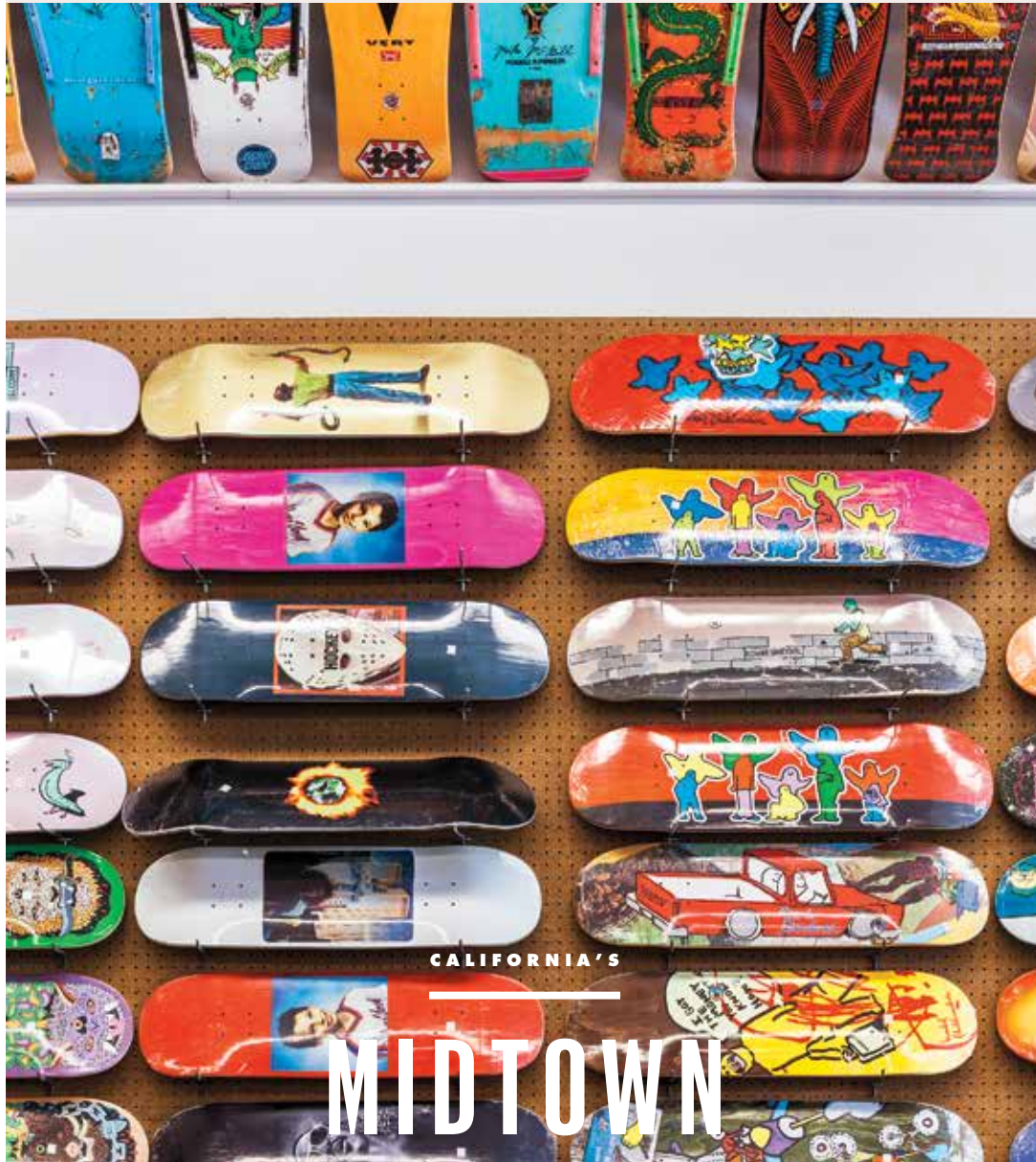

Deviate from the flip-flop-beaten path in favor of a lively little neighborhood that rivals a day at the beach. By Chantal Lamers



CALIFORNIA'S

MIDTOWN

SANTA CRUZ

PERFECT DAY

The boardwalk may be the marquee attraction in Santa Cruz, especially since its recent \$14 million re-vamp. But the truth is the city's mix of surf and nostalgia extends beyond the saltwater taffy and Skee-Ball. About 2 miles inland, new businesses are popping up in largely untapped neighborhoods such as Midtown. Like the boardwalk, the strip in and around Soquel Avenue keeps things retro-modern, with spots to have a drink, catch a show, or find a locally carved skateboard and call it a souvenir. Take the kids, or not—after all, adults deserve a day of old-fashioned fun too.



9 A.M. Start your day with a fresh look at **Montgomery's Barber Shop** (831/431-7704). This textbook red, white, and blue shop with a rockabilly kick does up cuts the locals swear by.

10 A.M. Sugar highs meet fresh air at **The Buttery** (butterybakery.com). Pull the trigger on a galette or twist from the counter. Then park it on the lawn, where people-watching is good and plenty.

11 A.M. Opt for a handmade keepsake from **Home/Work** (shophomework.com). Mixed among vintage wares is a collection of Santa Cruz-made pottery, macramé plant holders, and colorful cutting boards crafted from salvaged skateboard decks.

11:30 A.M. Roll on over to **Bill's Wheels Skateshop** (bills-wheels.com). The ramps built around the 40-year-old shop's shoe displays are faux, so no ollies, please.

12:30 P.M. The 15-minute walk to **Earthbelly** (eatearthbelly.com) is worth it. The non-GMO restaurant puts out a vegan vibe, but carnivores need not fret: It offers a BLT and barbecue beef sandwich, as well as an organic burger.

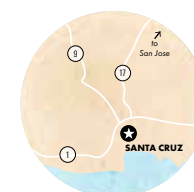
2 P.M. Reminisce around the rink at



Clockwise from above: Home/Work's Sonia McMoran; the renovated boardwalk; patio dining at The Crepe Place. Previous page: Bill's Wheels Skateshop.

the **Santa Cruz Roller Palladium** (santacruzrollerpalladium.com). On weekends, there's an excellent chance you'll participate in a wheels limbo contest.

4 P.M. After unclasp your skates, try on some old cowboy boots at **Tomboy** (tomboysc.com). The shop also stocks records and Mexican blankets displayed between cactus



GETTING HERE
Santa Cruz is 33 miles southwest of San Jose. Midtown is off State 1, along Soquel Ave.

and dreamy desert landscapes.

4:30 P.M. **Childish** (childishsantacruz.com) has the toys all the cool kids (and their parents) want: rainbow scooter tassels, road-trip bingo, David Bowie coloring books, and more.

5 P.M. Head over to **The Crepe Place** (thecrepeplace.com), and order the Famous Last Words—vodka, honey lemonade, Chambord—to take back to the enchanting patio. Stay for a turkey crepe and live music or a movie screening.

9 P.M. You're on your way home, but one thing's missing: a scoop and a cone. At **Marianne's Ice Cream** (mariannesicecream.com), just outside of Midtown, try the 1020 flavor, a caramel-chocolate-cookie combo.



LOCAL LOWDOWN "Midtown has a strong community feel. Everyone is friendly and the streets are bright, which adds to the positive vibes."
—Lili Arnold, artist