

# CALIFORNIA NEWS IN BRIEF

## The state tightens environmental regulations for new-build homes

The California Energy Commission is considering plans to tighten the rules on gas appliances in new, energy-efficient homes. Turning its attention to gas for home heating and hot water, the commission is reviewing a code update that would take effect in 2023. Environmental groups are calling for a complete ban, while officials suggest the new regulations will likely feature incentives for the use of electric options, such as heat pumps. A tougher mandate may then be introduced later on. This comes after the state was the first in the USA to mandate rooftop solar panels on all new build homes, which came into force in early 2020. New state building codes also feature incentives for those installing batteries to store solar energy, and outline requirements for improved insulation and air filtration. Evidence from the California Air Resource Board suggests the use of natural gas in buildings contributes 10% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions.

## Alila Marea Beach Resort to open north of San Diego

Luxury hotel brand, Alila Hotels, is set to launch its second Californian property with the opening of the Alila Marea Beach Resort, scheduled for late February 2021. Located in Encinitas, just north of San Diego, the beachfront resort will have a total of 130 rooms and suites, and a coastal inspired décor, along with three dining establishments and a lavish spa and wellness centre. An environmentally-conscious design has used natural building materials and colours to help the hotel blend in with the coastal bluffs upon which it is perched. A superb ocean view infinity pool is available for guests to enjoy, along with a programme of activities inspired by local passions, including surfing, scenic flights and beachside yoga. The main VAGA restaurant features breathtaking sea views and a rooftop terrace, while some suites even boast their very own outdoor firepit. A range of generous and versatile events spaces rounds off the list of luxurious facilities.



Images by: @alilamarea

## Revolutionary start-up brings driverless delivery vehicles to California

An innovative robotics start-up called Nuro has been given the green light for its state-of-the-art autonomous delivery service. The first of its kind in California, this service will use the company's driverless R2 electric vehicles to make takeaway and grocery deliveries, which are futuristic in design and rely on thermal imaging, radar and 360-degree cameras for operation. With no pedals, steering wheel or space for passengers, the R2 will be limited to 35mph and can only operate in fair weather conditions. The firm has been testing the service since 2017, and it was used by the state in 2020 to deliver medicine to the Sacramento field hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic. The new permit allows the company to charge for use of the service, with plans to begin commercial operations at some point in 2021. Founded by former Google engineers, Nuro's revolutionary vehicles also feature temperature-controlled compartments and a code-operated locking system.



Image by: NBC

## Southwest Airlines to add two new destinations in California

Major U.S. domestic carrier, Southwest Airlines, has revealed plans to add Santa Barbara and Fresno to its roster of Californian cities, following the recent addition of Palm Springs in November 2020. With the new outposts, the Texas-headquartered airline will serve a total of 13 Californian airports, establishing its position as a dominant player within the state. There has been no word yet on the exact routing for the new services, although Southwest bosses have confirmed they will begin during the second quarter of 2021. The move is thought to be part of a larger strategic bid to assert dominance in the West Coast area against rivals Alaska Airlines. "Our arrival in the heart of California, both on the Central Coast and in the Central Valley, will round out nearly four decades of investment in our California customers and communities," Southwest Airlines Chief Commercial Officer and Executive Vice President, Andrew Watterson, said in a statement.

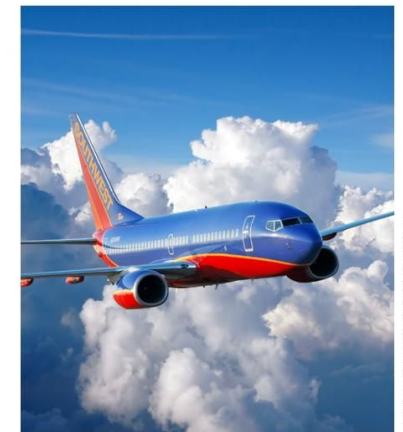


Image by: Carlos E. Sarmiento/Moray / Shutterstock.com