

# A Local's Guide to Visiting Del Mar: 10 Things Not To Miss

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Del Mar is a city best navigated in the mindset of a local. A coastal community located twenty minutes north of Downtown San Diego, Del Mar teems with restaurants, beaches, and activities beloved by residents who know where to be and when. This intimate guide to discovering Del Mar sheds insight on how to capitalize on everything this beach town has to offer.



- The Beach, But Not Where You Think:** The anchor of the Del Mar coastline is Powerhouse Park, which provides spectacular views, rolling grassy hills for picnics, and playgrounds for the little ones. But for a more authentic, private excursion to the shore, make like a local and head to the right or left of the park. This will allow you to experience total peace and relaxation, away from crowds. Here is where you can lay out your beach towel, soak up the rays, spot pods of dolphins, and watch the surf, all in your own space. **Tips:** After walking down to the sand, head left towards 15th street or right towards 20th street to discover your own oasis.
- Oceanfront Dining:** Enjoying front row seats to exquisite sunsets never goes out of style, and natives of Del Mar know this. Jake's Del Mar and Poseidon Restaurant, two celebrated eateries, are situated on the shore's edge, giving visitors the opportunity to experience a real Southern Californian sunset. Indulge in fresh seafood and delicious dishes while absorbing the view in casual and friendly environments. Around Happy Hour, both restaurants evolve into hubs of excitement, great for people watching. **Tip:** During summer, take the kids to the Del Mar Snack Shack after a day at the beach. There's nothing quite like eating an ice cream cone in the sun.
- Architecture and History:** Integral to Del Mar is its rich history and beautiful design. Historic structures include the Canfield-Wright House, the Alvarado House, and the Olde Del Mar Train Station. Prominent architects involved in the development of Del Mar include John C. Austin, who later went on to design Los Angeles City Hall and the Griffith Observatory. Today, Del Mar's not-to-be-missed design destinations include Stratford Square, a stunning example of English Tudor architecture and a community landmark, and the L'Auberge Hotel, designed by Barclay Butera. **Tip:** Book a reservation at L'Auberge far in advance of Race Season; rooms fill up fast! (July 18-September 5)
- Animal Attractions:** As a pet-friendly community, Del Mar hosts fun events for the area's furry friends. Each September, the biggest dog surfing competition in the world takes place at Dog Beach during Surf Dog Surf-a-Thon. Owners and canines participate in 20-minute heats, showing off their best moves to earn a placement in the finals. Across the lagoon, at the Del Mar Fairgrounds, people and pooches exercise for a cause in the Petco 5K9 Walk Run, held in January. Families will flock to Freeflight, an exotic bird sanctuary open to the public seven days a week. Get to know the facility's resident Macaws, Cranes, Cockatoos, Parrots and more. **Tip:** Don't forget to find a souvenir for your pet. Stop by Dexter's Deli before your departure for premium health foods, toys, fashions, and supplies.
- Award-Winning Cuisine:** Seven Del Mar Village restaurants earned eight top titles in Ranch and Coast magazine's Best Restaurant's 2013 List. Pacifica, Kitchen 1540, Rendezvous, Board & Brew, Café Secret, Smashburger, and Prepkitchen were awarded highest honors in their respective categories, confirming Del Mar as a certifiable culinary destination and a hotspot to watch in San Diego's burgeoning food scene. **Tip:** Ask for the secret sauce with your sandwich at Board and Brew, a favorite local hangout.
- New Faces at the Del Mar Plaza:** An exciting change at the Plaza has been the entrance of two new venues: Del Mar Chocolate Bar and Erik Skoldberg Gallery. The Chocolate Bar is a one-stop shop for gourmet chocolates, coffee, tea, gift baskets, pastries, and retail wines and champagnes. The confectionary and its adjacent patio are located on the second level, and boast unobstructed views of the Pacific Ocean. The newest member to join the Plaza family is Erik Skoldberg, a San Diego-bred painter whose work portrays passion, movement, and vivid color combinations. Skoldberg's gallery displays the artist's impressive portfolio, a collection of modern, contemporary, and colorful pieces designed to uplift visitors' moods. **Tip:** The Plaza's ocean view deck, which is just outside the gallery on the third level, is the perfect place to enjoy sunset cocktails and a savory chocolate treat.
- Summer Concerts:** In 2001, singer Jack Johnson put Del Mar on the musical map after his performance at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. Since then, well-known acts like Billy Idol have performed during Del Mar's Summer Concert Series. This year, twelve bands are scheduled to perform on the Seaside Stage, and tickets are free for fans attending the races. For a more relaxed, family-friendly venue, set up lawn chairs at Powerhouse Park during Del Mar Summer Twilight Concerts. These concerts are a Del Mar tradition, and provide families the opportunity to socialize, picnic, and listen to music together as the sun sets over the ocean. **Tip:** Clear the calendar for September 1st, when Del Mar Fairgrounds hosts Reggae Festival with Ziggy Marley plus Beer Fest.
- The Race Track:** Race season is arguably Del Mar's most buzzed about moment. Both locals and visitors look forward to trying out their gambling hands and placing bets on the sport's champion thoroughbreds. Whether taking a seat in the Turf Club or in the grand stands, the atmosphere swells with excitement, and a little competition. Hollywood legends and former patrons of the track include Bing Crosby, Jimmy Durante, and Lucy and Desi Arnez. **Tip:** Park at the racetrack and ride the new, free shuttle that will take guests to and from the track and the village of Del Mar. Enjoy ocean views, shopping, and dining before, during or after the races.
- Spa and Wellness:** Life can get hectic, so what better way to unwind than with a soothing treatment at one of Del Mar's luxury spas? Spa L'Auberge serves as a sanctuary for those



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seeking pampering and rejuvenation. The spa menu features a diverse selection of treatments that utilize organic, vegan products, as well as exotic plant extracts. Enter a realm of relaxation at Place360, an integrated lifestyle center offering acupuncture, homeopathy, nutrition services, skin care, and massages. Tip: Celebrate your birthday at Spa Namara, a peaceful spa retreat housed within Hotel Indigo that offers ocean views. Show your ID during your birthday month to receive a complimentary spa enhancement with any 50-minute service, or book a spa party with friends to receive special pricing.

10. **Outdoor Recreation:** Del Mar is an ideal setting for outdoor activities. Sign up for a surf lesson during summer at Surf Sessions, which offers private lessons, day camps, overnight camps, and weekend clinics. Boards and suits can be rented from Rusty Surfboards Del Mar. After the water, join a game of beach volleyball, take a tennis lesson at Surf and Turf Tennis Club, or embark on a scenic hike up Torrey Pines State Reserve. For a special adventure, take a hot air balloon ride with Skysurfer Balloon Company. Tip: Book the sunset balloon ride for incredible views of the coast and picturesque landscape.

*Editor's note: If you're planning on visiting this part of California you may want to check out [Taste California Travel's Resource Directory](#). In it you will find links to the websites of hundreds of Lodging and Dining options. Also there are links to San Diego County wineries (there are some) and most of the brewpubs and beer-centric hot spots.*

(TravMedia.com contributed information for this TASTE News Service article.)

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