

Beach Bound

Head south of Newport this summer to visit three quintessential oceanfront communities in sunny San Diego.

BY KATHERINE DUNCAN, SHARON STELLO AND STEVE ZEPEZAUER

Summer is an endless whirlwind of sun and fun. From dawn to dusk, days are packed with trips to the beach, barbecues with friends and family, and boardwalk bike rides. But, for a change of scenery, cruise along the coast for a weekend getaway—even those chained to their desks from 9 to 5 can sneak away for a quick trip to nearby San Diego.

Three distinct beach destinations even entice those of us who have the ocean in our backyards. Just an hour south, Del Mar's famed dog beach is perfect for families with canine companions. La Jolla offers rest and relaxation, with plenty of dining and shopping to keep you entertained. And, finally, Coronado's island charm provides an escape from the chaos of city life.

Embark on a weeklong road trip or visit each community one by one. Either way, San Diego's beach cities promise an unforgettable vacation for summer travelers.

La Jolla: Torrey Pines State Reserve

Del Mar Dreamin'

FROM THE SHOPS TO THE SAND, THIS COASTAL DESTINATION OFFERS ENTERTAINMENT FOR ALL.



Del Mar racetrack



North Beach



L'Auberge Del Mar



Del Mar Plaza

Del Mar might be known for its fairgrounds and racetrack, but there's no need to wait for racing season to visit this iconic beach town. With a variety of unique shopping, dining and outdoor activities available, it's an inspired getaway year-round.

L'Auberge Del Mar, situated on 5.2 acres with 120 rooms, is conveniently located near all of the city's must-visit destinations. Its coastal accommodations are luxurious, yet they still feel homey. Many guest rooms include cozy fireplaces and private balconies or patios for embracing the salty sea air; the beach is located just across the street via a private walking path. If you dread leaving four-legged family members behind, L'Auberge welcomes pups less than 15 pounds.

Just a four-minute drive from the hotel is **North Beach**. Visitors travel from all around Southern California to bring their pets to this half-mile stretch, located just north of 29th Street by the mouth of the San Dieguito River. Dogs of all sizes are free to run through the sand off-leash during most of the year.

If you feel like hitting the shops rather than the sand, a quick walk across Camino Del Mar from L'Auberge will take you to **Del Mar Plaza**, home to about 30 high-end retailers and restaurants. The open-air, multilevel complex includes fine art galleries, jewelers and other stores nestled between a variety of American and international dining.

Just as there's a cuisine to suit nearly any preference, the shops are equally diverse. Major brands like Banana Republic neighbor smaller stores that

are unique to the San Diego area, such as Urban Girl Accessories. Located on the street level, this retailer offers home decor, apparel, beauty products and more. It's a great opportunity to pick up clever gifts and souvenirs from local manufacturers, like salt from La Jolla Salt Co. in delicious flavors like bacon. But come late afternoon, take a break and head to one of the upper levels for an unforgettable view of the sunset over the Pacific.

Walk farther down Camino Del Mar and you'll find shopping with a more historic vibe; the area dates back to the 1880s. Numerous specialty boutiques and dining options are located between Ninth and 15th streets.

No vacation is complete without memorable culinary experiences. After you check in at L'Auberge, enjoy gourmet comfort food for dinner at **Kitchen 1540**. A Southern influence is evident throughout the menu—chicken and dumplings, as well as shrimp and grits—but dishes are also crafted with fun flavors like coconut-curry gravy.

When you're ready to head out to the sand, stop by the beachside **Jake's Del Mar** for lunch. Just a short walk from L'Auberge, it's the quintessential Del Mar experience, with fresh seafood (try the mixed seafood hot pot), creative cocktails, tropical decor and unbeatable ocean views.

Those in the mood for Italian can take a short drive over to **Cucina Enoteca**, which combines traditional Italian and Californian flavors using local, seasonal ingredients. The dining experience, extensive wine list and delectable cuisine are sure

The Del Mar racetrack summer season kicks off July 16—opening day is a festive affair complete with a contest for the best hat—and runs through Sept. 7. There's a lineup of thoroughbred horse racing, concerts and family events every weekend at this iconic venue "where the turf meets the surf!" (dmtc.com)

ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Hotel Indigo
710 Camino Del Mar
858-755-1501
hotelindigosddelmar.com

Les Artistes Inn
1140 Camino Del Mar
858-755-4646
lesartistesinn.com

to create a longtime fan after one visit. Luckily, you don't have to travel all the way to Del Mar to relive it: The small chain has a location at Fashion Island, so you can stop by and reminisce about your San Diego exploration over a glass of quality vino. —*Katherine Duncan*

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Inside “The Jewel”

HISTORIC AND SOPHISTICATED, LA JOLLA IS THE QUINTESSENTIAL CALIFORNIA BEACH TOWN ALL GROWN UP.



Birch Aquarium



Torrey Pines State Reserve

The village of La Jolla, 15 miles north of San Diego, transcends the sleepy subtlety of its descriptor. A mashup of vintage California and Mediterranean ambience, the neighborhood boasts world-class beaches, arts and culture along with trendy shopping and eclectic eateries.

Perched above the rugged cliffs of the Pacific, the majestic **The Lodge at Torrey Pines** presides at the far north end of La Jolla and acts as a dramatic gateway into town for those driving south on Pacific Coast Highway. The Craftsman-inspired, AAA Five Diamond resort has 169 generously-sized guest rooms, most with views of either the ocean or the famed **Torrey Pines Golf Course**, one of the nation’s foremost municipal golf facilities and home to the annual Farmers Insurance Open every January. Taking inspiration from a different era when craftsmanship was of utmost importance, furnishings throughout the property feature Stickley-esque pieces of fine woods, fabrics and leathers.

Adjacent to The Lodge is **Torrey Pines State Reserve**. Rustic footpaths meander throughout the approximately 2,000 acres of golden cliffs and forests of Torrey pine—the most rare of native pine in the country. Guided walking tours are available daily at 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. from The Lodge.

As you look skyward near The Lodge, it’s hard to miss the mesmerizing sights of hang gliders

and paragliders soaring over the cliffs and the Pacific at **Torrey Pines Gliderport**. Take a lesson, ride tandem with an instructor or just watch the experts fly with the seagulls.

For more family-friendly beach experiences, head south to La Jolla Shores. On the way—perched on a bluff—is the popular **Birch Aquarium**. As the public exploration center for the world-renowned Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the aquarium features more than 60 habitats of marine life, five dozen interactive elements and three outdoor tide pools.

Continue your southern trek to the scenic **La Jolla Cove**, part of the La Jolla Underwater Park; it’s walking distance to the village and nearby **Scripps Park**. While no surfers or bodyboarders are allowed, the park features 6,000 acres of ocean floor and tidelands and is a haven for families and snorkelers looking to experience the myriad marine life above and below the water’s surface. La Jolla Cove is also home to **Seven Sea Caves**, which can be accessed via kayak, swimming or snorkeling; for landlubbers, **Sunny Jim Cave** is the only known land-access sea cave on the California coast (from right in the heart of La Jolla Village through the Cave Store).

When you’re done with the day’s exploration, **Prospect Street** and the handful of cross roads in the village serve as the main epicenter



The Lodge at Torrey Pines

for shopping and dining, with small specialty boutiques, antique stores and art galleries. Even with a small-town feel, the diversity of shops is impressive and includes things for every wallet and mood. To experience a local’s favorite, check out Warwick’s bookstore on Girard Avenue.

La Jolla’s dining scene can’t be mentioned without including **George’s at the Cove**. Make a stop here on your way back to The Lodge for views of scenic La Jolla Cove and regional cuisine in three distinct settings: a first floor elegant dining room, a bistro-style bar and the ever-popular rooftop terrace. Another local landmark, **The Marine Room**, is about as close to the Pacific as you can get while enjoying a great meal. This iconic dining destination above the sand of La

BOB YARBOROUGH



Torrey Pines Golf Course

Jolla Shores is known for its sophisticated dishes and award-winning chef, Bernard Guillas. For fresh and savory seafood in a chic environment, try **The Med** restaurant at the landmark “Pink Lady” of La Jolla, the La Valencia Hotel. On your

last day in town, **A.R. Valentien**, the signature restaurant at The Lodge at Torrey Pines, provides the ideal final meal, with seasonal ingredients from local farmers markets, small growers, local ranchers and fishermen. —Steve Zepezauer

La Jolla comes alive with music during August with SummerFest, a nationally recognized chamber music festival. The event kicks off with a free outdoor concert and continues Aug. 5-28 with an inspired slate of performances featuring 85 world-class artists and ensembles. (ljms.org)

ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa

9700 N. Torrey Pines Rd.
855-318-7602
estancialajolla.com

La Jolla Beach & Tennis Club

2000 Spindrift Dr.
888-828-0948
ljbtc.com

La Valencia Hotel

1132 Prospect St.
858-454-0771
lavalencia.com

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Coronado Central Beach and Hotel del Coronado



Sunset Bar at Hotel del Coronado

Along the shore of Coronado, golden flecks sparkle in the sand, the first hint that this is no ordinary beach town. The glittery effect is due to a mineral called mica, but this seaside escape's true treasures are the first-class amenities and small-town charm. A quick drive or train ride from Orange County, visiting Coronado is almost like stepping into another world, away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Located across a bridge from downtown San Diego, the community exudes an island feel. On one side, sweeping ocean views extend from Mexico to Point Loma; meanwhile, the iconic **Hotel del Coronado** stands tall with its red-roofed turrets and grand woodwork, helping transport you to another time.

For the quintessential Coronado experience, The Del is the place to stay, as it has been since the opening in 1888. A National Historical Landmark, it was once a retreat for Hollywood celebrities and dignitaries. In addition to historic appeal, the luxury hotel and adjacent Beach Village at The Del feature 757 updated rooms—many with oceanfront balconies—an award-winning spa, upscale shopping and gourmet dining. Adding some intrigue to the property, the main building is allegedly haunted by the ghost of Kate Morgan, a guest who was found dead on an exterior staircase in 1892. Whether or not apparitions are seen, visitors will surely remember their time at The Del, which offers modern comforts inside and out: Cushioned lounge chairs and plush day beds are available to rent on the beach just steps from the resort.

Consistently named among the nation's top beaches, **Coronado Central Beach**—a 1.5-mile stretch of white sand and azure water—provides

the perfect setting for families to spend the afternoon. Surfing and stand-up paddleboarding lessons are available, but for a more relaxing activity that allows plenty of sightseeing, rent a bike and pedal around town. At **Holland's Bicycles**, on palm tree-lined Orange Avenue, the friendly staff will help you select a two-wheeler, adjust the seat height and offer advice on the best routes.

With an easy-to-follow map in hand, head north under the bridge and along the water's edge for a tranquil ride and stunning views of the city skyline across the bay. Stop at the **Coronado Ferry Landing** for lunch at one of several restaurants, peek in the souvenir shops and check out Stephen Clayton Gallery's enchanting artwork by Dr. Seuss.

For a brief excursion on the water, hop aboard a ferry, where children will enjoy sitting on the upper deck and looking for sea lions lazing on the buoy. After docking at Broadway Pier, spend some time in San Diego (the USS Midway Museum is close by) or return to Coronado to finish your bike ride past **Naval Air Station North Island**, the birthplace of naval aviation.

Only a block away from Holland's, cool off with sweet treats at **MooTime Creamery**, an old-fashioned ice cream parlor where handcrafted flavors are mixed with candy, nuts or fruit and served in a housemade waffle cone or bowl. Later, return to The Del for a refreshing blackberry margarita at **Sunset Bar**, an outdoor lounge with fire pits, then dinner at the resort's signature restaurant, **1500 Ocean**, where seasonal dishes incorporate fresh produce from an on-site garden. Dine inside or on the patio for sunset views while relishing a four-course tasting menu of expertly prepared California coastal cuisine such as tuna sashimi,

To take home a piece of Coronado, visit Art-in-the-Park from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the first and third Sundays of each month in Spreckels Park. More than 50 local artists sell their paintings, photography, ceramics and other pieces in this juried show presented by the Coronado Art Association. (coronadoartassn.com)

ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Beach Village at The Del

1500 Orange Ave.
866-433-3030
beachvillageatthedel.com

Loews Coronado Bay Resort

4000 Coronado Bay Rd.
619-424-4000
loewshotels.com

seared diver scallops, filet mignon and truffled mashed potatoes, paired with a glass of wine from the extensive list. Make sure to save room for dessert: The chocolate torte is a decadent choice that will leave you wanting more, just like the alluring beaches of Coronado. —*Sharon Stello* NBM

CORONADO CENTRAL BEACH AND SUNSET BAR PHOTOS COURTESY OF HOTEL DEL CORONADO; BICYCLING AND FERRY LANDING PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRETT SHOAF ARTISTIC VISUALS