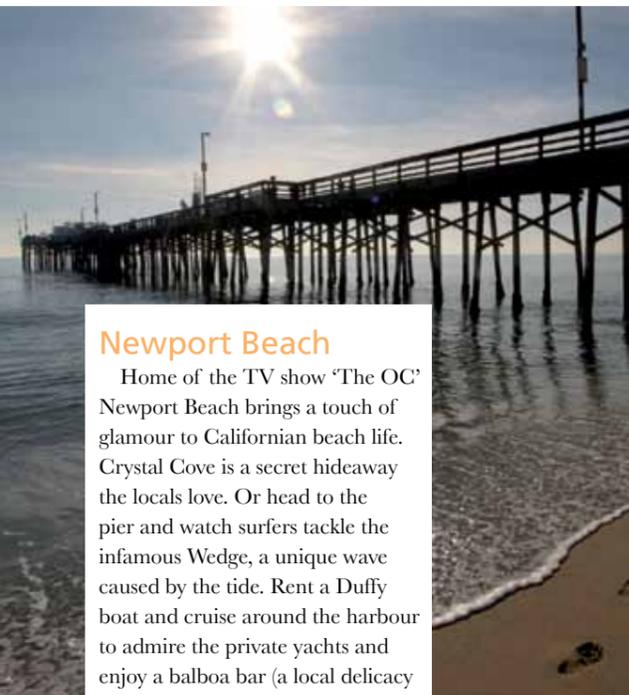


California a beach for all seasons

With over 800 miles of coastline, there's a beach for everyone in California. Here's our round-up of some of the Golden State's best beach towns

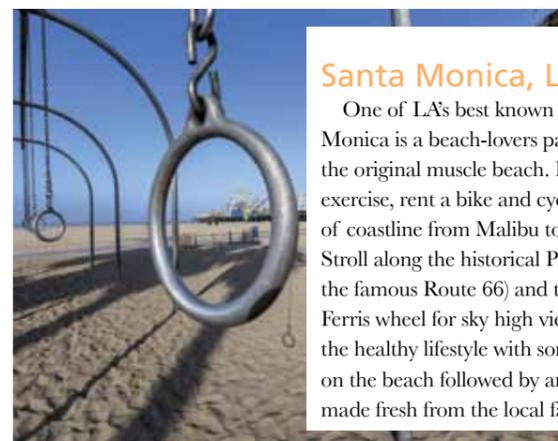


Newport Beach

Home of the TV show 'The OC' Newport Beach brings a touch of glamour to Californian beach life. Crystal Cove is a secret hideaway the locals love. Or head to the pier and watch surfers tackle the infamous Wedge, a unique wave caused by the tide. Rent a Duffy boat and cruise around the harbour to admire the private yachts and enjoy a balboa bar (a local delicacy of frozen banana dipped in chocolate) on Balboa Island, as the sun sets.

Catalina Island

Visitors to this tiny island off the coast of LA could be mistaken for thinking they're in the Mediterranean, not the West Coast. With crystal clear turquoise waters and golden sandy beaches, this car-free island is a beauty of the Californian Coast. Make the 20 mile journey by boat to take advantage of this hidden gem and soak up the unique atmosphere.

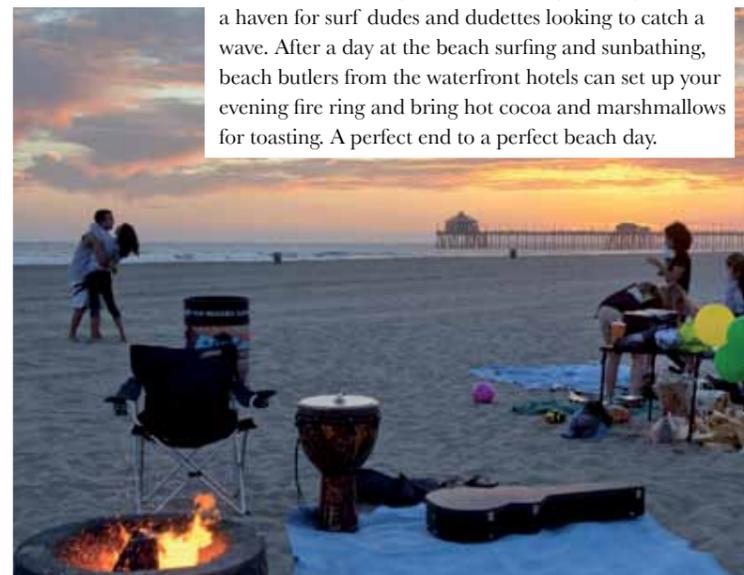


Santa Monica, LA

One of LA's best known beach cities, Santa Monica is a beach-lovers paradise and home to the original muscle beach. If you fancy some exercise, rent a bike and cycle along the 22 miles of coastline from Malibu to Marina del Rey. Stroll along the historical Pier (also the end of the famous Route 66) and take a ride on the Ferris wheel for sky high views over LA. Adopt the healthy lifestyle with some morning yoga on the beach followed by an organic smoothie made fresh from the local farmers market.

Huntington Beach

Dubbed 'Surf City USA', this family-friendly beach is a haven for surf dudes and dudettes looking to catch a wave. After a day at the beach surfing and sunbathing, beach butlers from the waterfront hotels can set up your evening fire ring and bring hot cocoa and marshmallows for toasting. A perfect end to a perfect beach day.



Coronado Island, San Diego

Just about as far south as you can get in California is elegant Coronado Island, reached by a fabulous bridge across from classy San Diego. Often voted one of the best family beaches in the US, with long stretches of golden sand, and endless sunshine, it's not hard to see why. Check out the famous Hotel Del Coronado set on the shoreline, where many a US President has stayed, and Marilyn Monroe filmed 'Some Like it Hot.' This beach is hot, hot, hot.

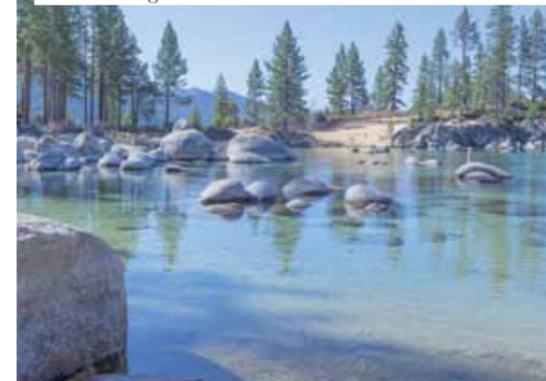


Big Sur

The legendary Pacific Coast Highway which runs along the dramatic west coast from Southern California past San Francisco is a popular driving route, and with stunning views across the pacific and dramatic scenery to admire for the whole journey it's not hard to see why. Make sure you stop off at the Julie Pheiffer State Park, home to the only beach on the west coast with its own waterfall. Although you can't access the beach itself, it makes for a pretty picture and moment to capture forever.

Lake Tahoe

Emerald Bay Beach is set on the West Coast of Lake Tahoe, which in itself has 72 miles of beautiful beaches. Lake Tahoe is a fabulous family-friendly destination in the summer, amongst a gorgeous alpine backdrop of snow-capped mountains. There are numerous activities available on the lake in the summertime, including kayaking, parasailing and water-skiing. Or you can relax on the sandy shores with a BBQ after a bike ride through the surrounding forest.



Santa Cruz

A perfect family beach destination just 45 minutes south of San Francisco, Santa Cruz is also a surf-lovers haven with surf legend Jack O'Neill calling it home. Perfect for lots of water-based activities, you can try stand-up paddle boarding in the bay, kayaking as well as catch a wave. Back on dry land, explore the historic boardwalk which turns 100 this year. Ride on the Big Dipper and take a spin on the carousel on the boardwalk, just moments from Cowells beach.



Glass beach, Fort Bragg

Another famed beach providing a photo opportunity rather than a day's sunbathing is glass beach, in Northern California's Fort Bragg, Mendocino. The beach is made entirely of discarded glass and pottery, built up from years of waste that residents used to dump on the site. Erosion and tides have rounded the glass to smooth pebbles so this beach is now made up of multi-coloured sea-glass, which glitters and glistens in the Californian sun.



Santa Barbara

Known as the 'American Riviera,' Santa Barbara is yet another of Southern California's charming beach towns. Steeped in Spanish colonial history, a visit to the Mission, one of the oldest in California is a must. Count the palm trees lining the shoreline, and stop for lobster at Brophy Brothers, washed down with a locally produced wine from the nearby Santa Ynez vineyards. Take a boat tour to spot whales and dolphins as they swim along the coast and wave to the seals lounging on the buoys dotted around the harbour.



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