

MAY 2016



KiaOra

Hot ticket

Living the dream
in Santa Monica





This page, clockwise from left: Tongva Park; public art; Santa Monica Beach; Pacific Park ferris wheel; FIG restaurant. Opposite page: Santa Monica Beach.



SHINE ON

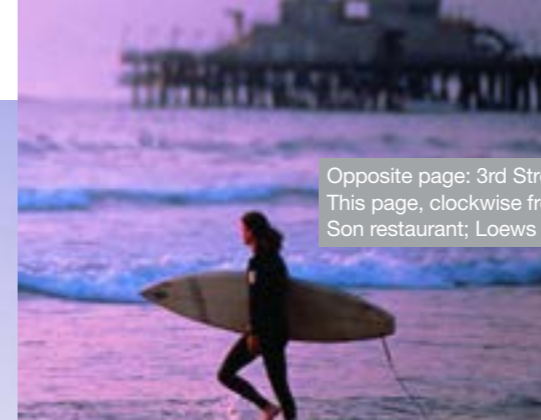


Santa Monica has a golden history and a future that is no less bright.

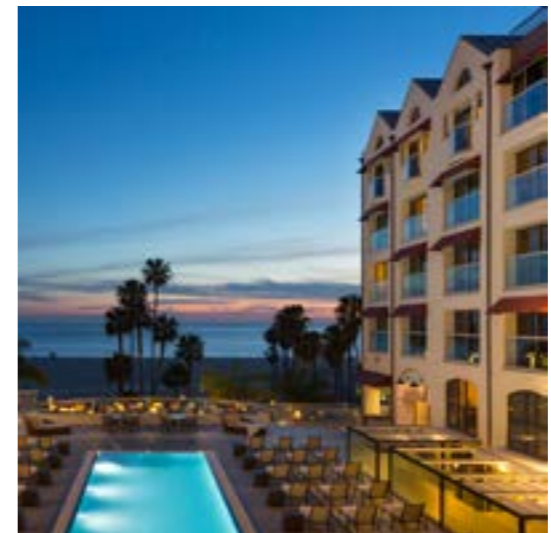
Possibly California's most enchanting community, Santa Monica dishes up culinary superiority, public art, glistening beaches, new speakeasies and of-the-moment boutiques primed to keep LAites dressed to be seen. With the expansion of the new Metro Expo Line, which is scheduled to open this month, inspiring a reinvigorated central esplanade and new businesses to spring up around the station, Santa Monica's moment to shine is now.

Before Santa Monica was the playground for affluent Angelenos, the miles of ocean-front property belonged to ranchers. In the late 1800s the Californian Gold Rush began, luring entrepreneurs to the shores of the Pacific. By 1886, investors had constructed mansions on the cliffs overlooking the sea. Businesspeople flocked to Santa





Opposite page: 3rd Street Promenade in the evening. This page, clockwise from left: A surfer heads out; Ox & Son restaurant; Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel.



Monica, hoping to turn the community into LA's port, constructing the pier to accept imports. When the port deal went south, investors morphed it into a pleasure pier, later to house an amusement park that would catapult Santa Monica to international fame.

In the years since Santa Monica first realised its appeal, she's become quite the looker. Flashy hotels cater to celebrities, rooftop bars lure eastside hipsters to the beach, live music pulses from the pier in summer and easy-to-navigate shopping streets allow travellers the chance to explore the varied personalities of her neighbourhoods. Yet ask most visitors why they chose this little seaside community, and they'll likely wax poetic about those epic beaches. Give yourself the chance to get to know Santa Monica as she evolves beyond the *ingénue* of her youth and into the destination du jour she's primed to become.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Most travellers spend their time exploring the three blocks stretching from the Santa Monica Pier to 3rd Street Promenade, a pedestrian street bustling with restaurants, shops and live musicians. Here you'll find the Wednesday and Saturday farmers' markets – starring the ingredients sure to show up on your dinner plates at one of the city's many farm-to-table restaurants. At 4th Street and Colorado is the new light rail Metro Expo Line, a project that's been in the works for 10 years and is due to open this month; this finally connects the beach to downtown, making it easier for travellers to lunch at the beach, then hit up downtown

LA's new Broad Museum (thebroad.org).

However, there's much more to Santa Monica than this epicentre. The crowds thin as you travel north and south from the pier, offering long stretches of quiet beach – best explored by renting one of the bright green bicycles from Breeze, the city's new bike-share programme (santamoncabikeshare.com). To the north of the pier is the Annenberg Community Beach House (beachhouse.smgov.net), with its lively public pool situated steps from the sand.

On the northern border separating Santa Monica from posh Pacific Palisades are the Santa Monica Mountains, where a wealth of hiking trails snake high into sage fields overlooking the ocean. Coralissa Delaforce, a local Pilates instructor, says the Rustic Canyon trail is her fave for the quick ascent with killer views.

To the south of the pier, just past the original Muscle Beach, you'll spot novice surfers catching waves out all the way to Venice Beach. Just a couple of blocks inland, Main Street, a funky mix of boutiques, laid-back surf shops and bars, caters to the creatives, who populate the cafes by day.

Mid City houses the artists and innovators. A hub for of-the-moment eateries, galleries, tech and entertainment companies and low-key ma-and-pa shops, Mid City forces you out of your jandals and into more fashionable attire. The nearby shopping hub of Montana Avenue might offer celebrity sightings, the chance to clean up that manicure or sip beer at one of Santa Monica's coolest brew-houses, Father's Office

(fathersoffice.com). Further inland, stumble across quiet cafes and yoga studios in the Ocean Park community.

WHAT TO DO

The beach beckons, day and night. Whether you take a morning jog along the 35km Strand, stand-up paddleboard beyond the pier, or plant yourself on a towel to read, spend at least part of each day enjoying the endless sandy shores. After dark, ride Pacific Park's West Coaster (pacpark.com) and play the wealth of arcade and carnival games along the Santa Monica Pier.

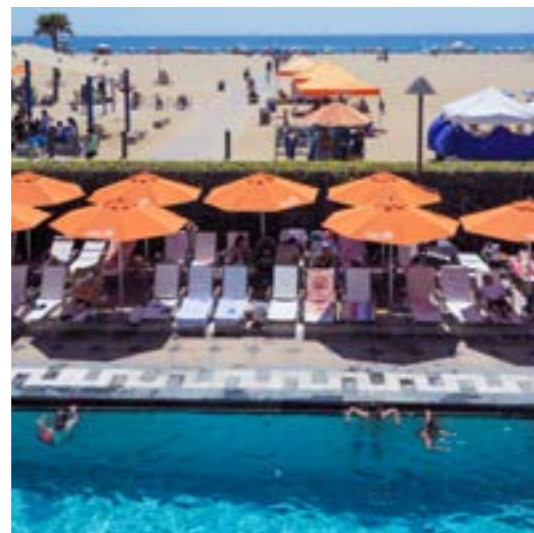
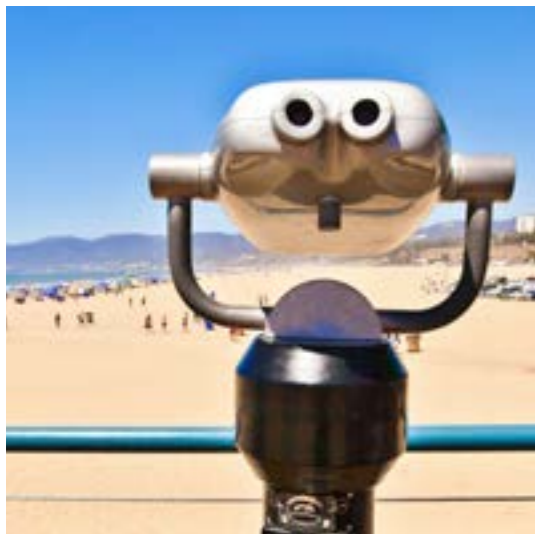
Santa Monica's art scene has exploded over the past decade. Start your art tour with a morning stroll through the hills of the three-hectare Tongva Park (tongvapark.smgov.net) – check out the interactive public art on display. Then take the Metro Expo Line to Bergamot Station (bergamotstation.com) arts complex to check out the collection of galleries exhibiting photography, sculpture and painting.

Shoppers treasure Santa Monica's boutiques. To score deals on typical American shops like Lucky

Brand or Gap, head to 3rd Street Promenade. Or follow the wanderings of Style Wax Poetic's style blogger Kristen Conahan, who raves about Sole Society, saying, "They have the chicest handbags, shoes and travel bags and they also have vegan leather options." (santamoniacplace.com).

For classic LA style, pop into Ron Robinson (ronrobinson.com), where the namesake's flagship location features carefully selected lifestyle and design items throughout its beautifully designed retail space. Along Main Street, Lost & Found (lostandfoundshop.com) hawks home accents and chic clothing.

After dark, cocktail hounds rave about a duo of new speakeasies for libations. Guest Room (estate1519.com) provides a dark ambiance to slurp gin-based concoctions, while Basement Tavern (basementtavern.com) slings absinthe in a red-lit room on the bottom floor of an historic Victorian building. If you prefer a beachier vibe, The Bungalow (thebungalowsm.com) serves margaritas, snacks and beer on picnic tables, while you listen to reggae and stare at the beautiful people.

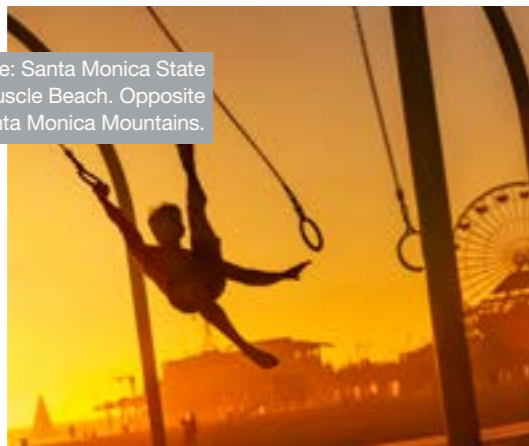


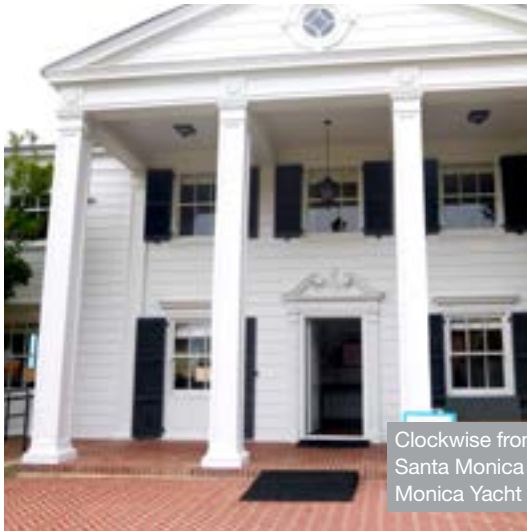
WHAT'S ON **Roga on the Pier** returns to the Santa Monica Pier on Saturday mornings this spring and summer. Roga brings together two of Santa Monica's most beloved activities – running and yoga – for a free workout each Saturday morning. A three- to eight-kilometre run along Santa Monica State Beach, followed by a yoga class at the end of the Pier, is a perfect way to get in shape and find your zen while taking in sweeping ocean and mountain views. santamoniacpier.org/roga

One of the most popular summertime activities in Santa Monica, the annual **Twilight Concert Series**, is back for its 32nd year in 2016. This free beachfront concert series features musical performances on Thursday evenings on the Santa Monica Pier. The concerts draw families, couples and friends who gather on the pier and on the beach below to picnic and enjoy live music next to the ocean. santamoniacpier.org/twilightconcerts

Santa Monica restaurants come together each January to promote healthy eating during the city's annual **Eat Well Week**. In conjunction with California Restaurant Month, the annual program simplifies dining out while maintaining healthy eating habits at the beginning of the new year with specially crafted, farmers' market-inspired menu items. santamonica.com/eatwell

This page, clockwise from above: Santa Monica State Beach; Annenberg public pool; Muscle Beach. Opposite page: Vibrant colours in the Santa Monica Mountains.





Photographs Getty Images, Alamy, Santa Monica Travel & Tourism, Joakim Lloyd Raboff, N. Wheeler, Pawel Gaul, Tomo Muscionico.

Clockwise from left: Annenberg Public Beach House; Santa Monica Pier at sunset; the entrance to Santa Monica Yacht Harbor.

WHERE TO STAY

A handful of ocean-front properties dot Santa Monica's shoreline. The newly renovated Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel (loewshotels.com) sits at the edge of the gleaming Pacific, offering wide views of the pier and the original Muscle Beach. Rooms are punctuated with fun textiles hinting at the hotel's playful vibe. The new pool deck, stunning fire-pit suites, the trio of restaurants and the beach snack shack add to the merriment.

Another upscale retreat, the Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows (fairmont.com) just renovated its 32 bungalows. Interiors feature a beach-chic vibe with nautical hues and earthy wall hangings. Standard rooms let the nearby ocean and gardens be the stars, and Exhale, the on-site spa and yoga studio, works wonders on jet lag. Signature restaurant FIG highlights seasonal produce and sustainably sourced meat. Locals line up for the lively bar, The Bungalow. and guests favour the pool area, evocative of that sunny Santa Monica sensibility.

WHERE TO EAT

Food-lovers flock to Santa Monica. Most restaurants feature farmers' market produce on their menus, but none so religiously as the wildly popular brunch spot Huckleberry Cafe (huckleberrycafe.com), where beef brisket and eggs rub elbows with sweet breakfast porridge. Another favourite is the new Ox & Son (oxandson.com), where *uni* (sea urchin) and eggs, chicken-fried duck confit, and sticky braised pork atop coconut black rice delight discerning palates. For something more traditional, Blue Plate Oysterette's

(blueplateoysterette.com) raw bar, burger and the whole roasted branzino capture the hearts of travellers.

Music executive Ron Broitman likes to take clients for sophisticated dinners at Rustic Canyon (rusticcanyonwinebar.com) – new chef Jeremy Fox placed this seasonal kitchen on the foodie map with his pork shoulder topped with green tomato. When he's hitting the beach with his kids, Broitman orders ahead and grabs meaty Italian subs at the venerable Bay Cities Italian Deli & Bakery (baycitiesitaliandeli.com).

LA fitness guru Rocky Best never misses a chance to let off steam at the Huntley Hotel's Penthouse (thehuntleyhotel.com/penthouse), what she calls the perfect place for "special occasions, drinks and a fancy dinner". She says she dreams of the ocean views, the olive-oil poached sable fish and the decadent house-smoked white trout. 

STORY MICHELE BIGLEY

contact santamonica.com



+ SANTA MONICA

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SANTA MONICA

By Michele Bigley

Shutters on the Beach

Favoured by honeymooners and celebrities, Shutters on the Beach is one of LA's most sought-after hotels. Steps from Santa Monica's golden sand, just a short walk from the pier's Pacific Park, this sophisticated property appeals to travellers eager to sip Champagne by the lobby's fireplaces, watch the sunset from the Living Room Bar or the large balcony fronting the sea, and marvel over original art by masters David Hockney and Richard Diebenkorn.

A duo of seaside restaurants lures locals to mingle with hotel guests: the casual Coast Beach Cafe and Bar is popular with the brunch crowd who enjoy acai smoothies and omelettes on outdoor tables along the beach walking path and the more upscale 1 Pico serves a gorgeous Kurobuta pork chop paired with farro, maitake mushrooms, sage and hazelnut brown butter.

Though travellers will want to explore Santa Monica's nearby boutiques, many will be too smitten with the hotel's cabana-lined swimming pool and the divine spa/health club to depart the property for long. Room decor is decidedly beach chic, with white-painted wood walls, and worldly touches like Chinese porcelain lamps, Persian rugs, Indian-inspired throws and deep soaking tubs, many of which offer views of the ocean. Splurge on the posh suites, which include access to the resort's house car, a Tesla Model S, best enjoyed on an afternoon drive along the famous Pacific Coast Highway. shuttersonthebeach.com





SANTA MONICA

By Michele Bigley

Loews Santa Monica

Perched above the gleaming Pacific Ocean, mere steps from the cheery Santa Monica Pier Amusement Park, and the fitness haven of Muscle Beach, Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel combines beach chic with sophistication. A holiday vibe infuses the bustling lobby, with palm trees reaching towards its towering ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows facing the sea, a wall-sized screen flashing of-the-moment shots of beach activity and staff eager to chat about celebrity sightings and nearby speakeasies. The newly spruced-up pool and hot tub is flanked by lounge chairs, a fire-pit and cabanas. Occupying a prime slice of the lobby, Ocean & Vine serves three meals daily and vacation-worthy cocktails – sample the fun twist on a mojito, paired with a peach salad

and chanterelle spaghetti, before heading out to enjoy nearby 3rd Street Promenade's nightlife.

Recently renovated guest quarters feel large, with massive windows and a small balcony. A touch-screen lighting feature on the bathroom mirror ups the ante on the hotels' state-of-the-art technology. But it's waking up in that plush bed, peeling back the curtains to greet the day with epic ocean views that makes guests want to cozy up and stay a while. Additional hotel perks include the beach barn cafe and activity centre on the sands below, a gym and spa, a concierge who works magic by getting reservations to hot-ticket restaurants within walking distance and the hotel's proximity to attractions, allowing you to abandon the car and delight in Santa Monica's lively charm. loewshotels.com

Photographs Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel

