

Orange County



Who best symbolizes Orange County? Is it Rick Warren, pastor of the 20,000-member Saddleback Church, who hosted a faith-minded Q&A with the presidential candidates in 2008? Or maybe it's fashion maven Lauren Conrad, former star of MTV's *Laguna Beach*, now sprung from her coastal perch and spreading her sunny beach-chic across the land. Or maybe it's Mickey Mouse, Anaheim's favorite commercial kingpin, set to launch a \$1.1 billion revamp of Disneyland's sidekick, Disney's California Adventure.

Or maybe it's none of the above. Three million people live in the OC, where 34 independent cities jostle for attention within the county's 789 sq miles. This huge swath of real estate stretches south from Los Angeles to San Diego, and there's more to the populace than evangelical Christians, flighty fashionistas and one cartoon mouse. Consider the burgeoning communities of Little Saigon and Santa Ana, where Vietnamese and Latino immigrants seek the American dream. There's friendly Seal Beach, where mom-and-pop store owners welcome visitors to their strollable, small-town Main St. And we can't forget the surfers, who've banded with ecowarriors recently to save the beaches – as well as the choicest surf spots.

What does this mean for you? Make the most of Mickey's hospitality, the 42 miles of shimmering coast and the world-class shopping malls, but take time to get off the beaten path to see what makes Orange County residents thrive. And while the cynical among you might still conclude that most OC locals are slaves to money, style and marketing – there are lots of Beamers and big box mansions – the more charitable might say that they're all just winners in the hands of a happy God.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Top Disney Day** Waving at Mickey during the Disneyland Parade of Dreams (p581) then relaxing on a comfy couch in the stunning lobby of the Grand Californian (p583)
- **Surf and Sand** Building a beach bonfire at Huntington State Beach (p588), just south of the Huntington Beach Pier.
- **Classic Diner** Slurping a frothy date shake at Ruby's Crystal Cove Shake Shack (p592), near a gorgeous stretch of the Pacific Coast Hwy.
- **Feel the Earth Move** Holding tight during a 6.9 earthquake inside the Shake Shack at the Discovery Science Center (p586) in Santa Ana.
- **Natural Beauty** Watching the sun dip below the horizon from Heisler Park in Laguna Beach (p594).



Getting There & Around

AIR

If you're heading to Disneyland or the Orange County beaches, avoid always-busy Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) by flying in to the easy-to-navigate **John Wayne Airport** (SNA; ☎ 949-252-5200; 18601 Airport Way; www.ocair.com) in Santa Ana. The airport is 8 miles inland from Newport Beach, via Hwy 55, near the junction of I-405 (San Diego Fwy). Airlines serving Orange County include Alaska, American, Continental, Delta, Frontier, Northwest, Southwest, United and US Airways.

Long Beach Airport (LGB; ☎ 562-570-2600; 4100 Donald Douglas Dr; www.longbeach.gov/airport), to the north just across the county line, is a handy alternative.

From John Wayne Airport, Orange County bus 76 runs west to South Coast Plaza and Huntington Beach, and southeast to Fashion Island in Newport Beach. To get to Orange County from Long Beach Airport, take Long Beach bus 111 to the Long Beach Transit Center. Catch Orange County bus 60 to 7th and Channel and transfer to Orange County bus 1, which travels along the Orange County coast.

For information on shuttle services, see p584.

BUS

The **Orange County Transportation Authority** (OCTA; ☎ 714-636-7433; www.octa.net; ☎ info line 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun) runs county-wide bus service. Buses generally run from about 5am to 10pm weekdays, with hours usually shorter on weekends. The fare is \$1.25 per ride or \$3 for a day pass. Both types of tickets are sold onboard, and you'll need exact change. Look for OCTA bus system maps and schedules

at train stations and online. To get schedule information by phone, call during the hours noted above; there is no after-hours automated phone service.

Although it would not be time efficient to explore all of Orange County by bus, hopping OCTA bus 1 – which runs along the coast between Long Beach and San Clemente – is a cheap and easy way to visit the county's oceanfront communities. Bus 1 runs about every half hour on weekdays (4:30am to 10pm) and every hour on weekends (5:30am to 7:20pm).

CAR

The easiest way to get around is by car, but avoid driving on the freeways during the morning and afternoon rush hours (7am to 10am and 3pm to 7pm).

TRAIN

Fullerton, Anaheim, Orange, Santa Ana, Irvine, Laguna Niguel, San Juan Capistrano and San Clemente are all served by Amtrak's *Pacific Surfliner* (p738).

A one-way trip from Los Angeles to Anaheim (\$15) takes about 40 minutes, and the trip to San Juan Capistrano (\$15) from LA is one hour and 20 minutes. From San Diego, it takes 1 hour and 20 minutes to get to San Juan Capistrano (\$15), and two hours to get to Anaheim (\$20). The *Pacific Surfliner* currently runs about every hour between 6am and 5pm weekdays and between 7am and 5pm on weekends.

DISNEYLAND & ANAHEIM

pop 342,410

Mickey is one lucky mouse. Created by animator Walt Disney in 1928, he caught a ride on a multimedia juggernaut (film, TV, publishing, music, merchandising and theme parks) that's made him an international superstar. Plus, he lives in the Happiest Place on Earth, a slice of 'imagineered' hyperreality where the streets are always clean, the employees – called cast members – are always upbeat, and there's a parade every day of the year. It would be easy to hate the guy but since opening the doors to his Disneyland home in 1955, he's been a thoughtful host to millions of guests.

But there are grounds for discontent. Every ride seems to end in a gift store, prices

FAST FACTS

Population of Huntington Beach 202,250

Average temperature low/high in Huntington Beach Jan 40/67°F, Jul 54/77°F

Disneyland to Huntington Beach 16 miles, 30 minutes

Hollywood to Disneyland 34 miles, one to two hours

LAX to Disneyland 35 miles, one to 1½ hours

Seal Beach to Laguna Beach 30 miles, one hour