

Welcome to Southern California

Southern California, or SoCal as everyone calls it, is a land of sunsets over Pacific blue, coastal drives with the roof down, and authentic tacos with cold beers and friends. But you can dress up here too.

Pop Culture

Even though you won't find many real-life stars in Hollywood these days, you might spot A-list celebs shopping at LA's cutting-edge boutiques or walking along the beach in Malibu. Take a sneak peek behind the scenes of 'The Industry' on a movie studio tour or join a live TV audience. Round up the whole family for Southern California's theme parks; with cartoon characters and adventure rides, Disneyland and Disney California Adventure are classics. Or go for a walk on the wild side at the San Diego Zoo and Safari Park, where giraffes and zebras roam.

Beaches & Natural Beauty

Southern California may be best known for its artificial beauty (hello, Botox and silicone), but its beaches are really an ace in the hole. Whether you're a punk surfer, aspiring pro volleyball nut or new-agey bohemian, there's an idiosyncratic SoCal beach town just for you. Offshore, the Channel Islands are a jewel-like archipelago encompassing civilized Catalina and a wild national park. Escape to Big Bear Lake's cooler alpine climes or turn up the heat in SoCal's deserts with a getaway to the retro-modern resort of Palm Springs. In Death Valley, Joshua Tree and Anza-Borrego, dusty 4WD roads and hiking trails lead to hidden canyons and native fan-palm oases.

California Cuisine & Wine

Maybe your SoCal sojourn will be an epicurean quest. Finding the best fish tacos and craft beers in San Diego alone could take days. Meanwhile in LA, foodies passionately argue about where the best sushi bar or fusion food truck is. LA is also a melting pot of ethnic cooking, from the kitchens of Little Tokyo and Thai Town to the *taquerías* of East LA. Then cruise up the coast highway past Malibu, stopping at seafood shacks, before following back roads through Santa Barbara's wine country.

Arts & Architecture

LA is the creative capital of Southern California, with edgy art museums, historic movie palaces and post-modern landmarks jutting out of the cityscape. The same creativity that fuels 'The Industry' keeps lifeblood pumping through the city's buzzing theater, music and performing arts scenes. Naturally inspiring landscapes bring out SoCal's artistic side in Laguna Beach, a historic artists' colony in Orange County, and in Palm Springs, an icon of mid-20th-century modern architecture.



Why I Love Southern California

By Sara Benson, Coordinating Author

With 315 days of sunshine every year, SoCal is where I've chosen to make my home. I never get tired of exploring (or more truthfully, eating my way around) LA's modern mosaic of neighborhoods and driving coastal highways to hidden beaches. In winter, balmy San Diego is the place to be. Spring usually finds me escaping into SoCal's deserts to see spectacular wildflower blooms in Death Valley or for Modernism Week in Palm Springs. The vineyards of Santa Barbara are practically in my backyard, tempting me to play truant on any given weekday.

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