

Directory

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ACCOMMODATIONS

Southern California has all types of places to unpack your suitcase, from hostels, campgrounds and B&Bs to chain motels, hotels and luxury resorts. Reservations are a good idea for weekend travel year-round and all the time during peak season, that is, June to September everywhere except the desert and the ski areas where November to February are the busiest periods. Demand and prices also spike around major holidays (p414) and big local festivals (mentioned throughout this book; see also p413) when some properties may impose two- or three-day minimum stays.

This book lists accommodations as budget (less than \$130), midrange (\$130 to \$280) and top end (more than \$280) in ascending order starting with the cheapest property. Unless noted, rates do not include taxes. We have marked our top picks within the lists, but just because a place isn't a top pick doesn't mean it's not good. Each property we

recommend has been inspected and meets a certain baseline quality standard within its category.

Prices listed in this book do not – and in fact cannot – take into account seasonal variations or promotional discounts. Always check the property's website for specials and compare it to what's offered by the big players such as www.orbitz.com, www.expedia.com, www.travelocity.com and www.hotel.com. For comparison, also feed your travel dates through www.onetime.com, which searches multiple websites.

Generally, midweek rates are lower except in city hotels geared to the suit brigade, which often also lure leisure travelers with weekend deals. Membership in AARP or AAA lops 10% off standard rates at participating properties.

Our budget recommendations comprise campgrounds, hostels and motels, but since midrange properties generally offer better value for money, most of our listings fall into this category. Expect clean, comfortable and decent-sized double rooms with at least a modicum of style, a private bathroom and such standard amenities as cable TV, direct-dial telephone, a coffeemaker, perhaps a microwave and a small refrigerator. Pools and shared Jacuzzi tubs are quite common as well.

Top-end lodgings offer top-notch amenities and perhaps a scenic location, edgy decor or historical ambience. Pools, fitness rooms, business centers and other upscale facilities are pretty standard, but unless you're going to use them, it's rarely worth spending the extra money.

Smoking rooms are becoming increasingly rare in health-conscious California. Where they exist, they are often in less desirable locations or are the last to be renovated. Be careful: some properties levy a hefty 'clean-up fee' if you light up in your nonsmoking room. Bed-and-breakfasts especially are often entirely smokefree, meaning you're not allowed to smoke anywhere on the property, not even outside.

By law, all hotels must have at least one room compliant with the American Disabili-

PRACTICALITIES

- The dominant newspaper, the *Los Angeles Times*, is read throughout Southern California. The *San Diego Union Tribune* is read primarily in San Diego County.
- The NTSC system (not compatible with PAL or SECAM) is used for videos.
- Electrical supply is 110V AC, 50/60Hz. Some electrical appliances have adjustable current-selector switches.
- The US uses the imperial system, but you'll sometimes see roadside mileage signs written in both kilometers and miles. To convert between metric and imperial, see the chart on the inside front cover.

ties Act. Air-conditioning is a standard amenity except in some beachfront properties.

Properties offering free or fee-based broadband internet access for guests not traveling with their own equipment are designated with the internet icon (📶). Listings also mention whether wireless internet access (wi-fi) is offered.

B&Bs

Bed-and-breakfast lodgings are usually high-end accommodations in converted private homes, typically lovely old Victorians or other heritage buildings. Owners take great pride in decorating the guest rooms and common areas and have a personal interest in ensuring that you enjoy your stay. People in need of lots of privacy may find B&Bs a bit too intimate. Rates typically include a lavish, home-cooked breakfast. Amenities vary widely, but rooms with TV and telephone are the exception; the cheapest units share bathroom facilities. Most B&Bs require advance reservations, though some will accommodate the occasional drop-in guest. Smoking is generally prohibited and minimum stays are common in peak season and on weekends.

Standards are highest at places certified by the California Association of Bed & Breakfast Inns (www.cabbi.com).

Camping

Camping in Southern California can be a lot more than just a cheap way to spend the night. The nicest sites have you waking up to

ocean views, splendid rock formations or a canopy of pines. Most campgrounds are open year-round, and popular ones get jammed in summer, so make reservations as early as possible.

Basic campsites with fire pits, picnic benches and access to drinking water and pit toilets are most common in national forests and on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. Campgrounds in state and national parks tend to have flush toilets, sometimes hot showers and RV (recreational vehicle) hookups. Private campgrounds are usually located close to cities and cater more to the RV crowd.

Most campgrounds accept reservations for all or some of their sites through one or both of the following agencies.

National Recreation Reservation Service (NRSS;

📞 877-444-6777, outside the US 518-885-3639; www.recreation.gov; per reservation \$9) Reservations in

national parks (up to 180 days in advance); national forests and BLM land (up to 240 days in advance).

Reserve America (📞 800-444-7275, outside the US

916-638-5883; www.reserveamerica.com; per reservation

\$7.50) Reservations for camping in California state parks and some private sites; you can book up to seven months in advance.

Hostels

Southern California has five hostels affiliated with **Hostelling International USA** (HI-USA; 📞 301-495-1249, 800-909-4776; www.hiusa.org). Two are in each of San Diego and LA, and there's one in Fullerton, near Disneyland; see those chapters for details. Dorms in HI hostels are gender-segregated and alcohol and smoking are prohibited.

Indie hostels are most common in Hollywood, Venice and San Diego. They're generally more convivial with regular guest parties and other events. Some include a light breakfast in their rates, arrange local tours or pick

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.