nileGUIDE
ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP

Eclectic Orange

Santa Ana, Orange County, Disneyland, Newport Beach, Irvine, 2 Days

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: Orange County is know for many things; Disneyland, Knott's the beach. After this trip you will know it for its vibrant culture, its deep respect for both classic and contemporary art. This is a place that celebrates the passion that life has and it is intoxicating, you just feel full of life here. Along the way dine at some traditional restaurants as well as some ethnic ones to complete the experience. The food will be amazing, Greek, European, German, American, what else can you want.

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Newport Beach, Disneyland

DAY NOTE: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and sometimes the best tasting too, Pacific Whey Cafe thinks it is. Enjoy any of their decadent pastries or breakfast burritos for a great start to the day. Gallery 224 and its mix of contemporary aft from a multitude awaits you. There is always something new at this gallery so be sure to keep a sharp eye. When art appreciating begins to make you hungry head to Sundried Tomato Cafe for a fresh healthy lunch. Their whole menu is exciting and has taken the boring out of traditional meals. The Sawdust Art Festival is a Laguna Beach tradition, and a really fun one at that. Here you will find jewelry, ceramics, paintings, any and everything you can think of. It is a really cool place. If you can tear yourself from the Sawdust there is another Festival of Arts waiting for you, this festival showcases over 140 renowned artists. There are also performances later in the night as well. For dinner the Aegean Cafe serves amazing Greek foods as well as great wines. From appetizers to dessert this place is awesome. The lively Greek atmosphere is reinvigorating as well, perfect for the start of a night. If you are still up for some more fun The Phoenix Club is waiting for you, this is a cool German inspired place to enjoy a few beers or other beverages. When you are ready to call it a night head back to the Crystal Cove beach Cottages for a well deserved rest.

Pacific Whey Cafe
See What's Cooking!!

Phoenix Club (The)
Germany theme restaurant and bar

Day 2 - Irvine, Orange County, Santa Ana

DAY NOTE: Wake up early, enjoy the sunrise on your waterfront cottage, honestly it will be worth it. For breakfast Britta's Cafe has just what you need, fresh seasonal dishes make this place a treat. The Indie Fest USA is a really interesting concept, independent films need music so why not have place where that interaction can occur, and all for the fans, why not? Lunch is served at Cafe Mozart, a beautiful flower filled setting with authentic European dishes. After lunch the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art is a cool place to get some local history presented in a captivating way. The building itself is part of the history, which makes it all that much better. After your history lesson the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art is a really nice showcase of established as well upcoming artists. For dinner you do not need to travel too far, Tangata is located in the Bowers Museum. Here you can order a variety of items such as tapas, or sandwiches, or Tangata Garlic Fries. No matter what you will be happy. Post dinner festivities are at Ambrosia where you can sip on cognac and smoke a cigar if that is what you so choose. Or you can enjoy their wine cellar, or any other of their spirits.

Britta's Cafe
Brunch & More

Cafe Mozart
Award-winning European cuisine

Tangata
Artsy food

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Day 1 - Newport Beach, Disneyland

QUICK NOTE

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contact:
tel: +1 949 644 0303
http://www.pacificwhey.com/index.html

location:
2622 San Miguel Drive
Newport Beach CA 92660

hours:
Daily 7a-8p

1 Pacific Whey Cafe

DESCRIPTION: Pacific Whey is renowned for home style comfort food that's made from scratch. The variety includes seductive pastries, fillet mignon and breakfast burritos. The cafe caters to vegans with special vegetarian options to standard favorites. This is one cafe that can easily satiate the toughest food critic with a single taste. The pastries look heavenly and taste that way too. This cafe is a must go for any one visiting the Orange County. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of Pacific Whey Cafe

contact:
tel: +1 714 563 4166
http://thephoenixclub.com/

location:
1340 South Sanderson Avenue
Anaheim CA 92806

2 Phoenix Club (The)

DESCRIPTION: Inspired by German heritage and traditions this German American cultural center has a European charm to it. At the Phoenix Club visitors can choose to dine at the lavish Loreley Restaurant or choose to relax at the Bierstube Pub. Served at the place is tasty German delicacies like Steak Salat mit Champignon and Geschnetzeltes Schweinelendchen. Dessert is also available here and so are several kinds of beer. Regular events are also held at the club from time to time. So many options for relaxation and entertainment make this place popular among the locals. © wcities.com

citysearch

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Day 2 - Irvine, Orange County, Santa Ana

QUICK NOTE

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1 Britta's Cafe

contact:
tel: +1 949 509 1211
fax: +1 949 509 0111
http://www.brittascafe.com

location:
4237 Campus Drive
Irvine CA 92612

hours:
M-F 7:30a-10p, Sa-Su 7:30a-10:30p

DESCRIPTION: Britta's Cafe is quite famous for its breakfast and brunch combos. It looks charming and enticing with its outdoor seating and rather pleasant location. The menu changes seasonally and offers a great variety, also there is a good choice of wines available here. Granted the food here is a bit pricey but good enough. Try the chocolate cake with ice cream its simply delicious! © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of (insert name of point of interest)

2 Cafe Mozart

contact:
tel: +1 949 496 0212
http://www.cafemozart.net

location:
31952 Camino Capistrano
San Juan Capistrano CA 92675

hours:
Tu-Sa 11:30a-9p

DESCRIPTION: This charming restaurant, owned by Sigmund and Elizabeth Hau for more than 20 years, has won acclaim from critics, such as Elmer Dills and Doris Crandall. The setting is very romantic. Diners eat inside or in the gorgeous, flower-filled courtyard. The clientele includes many return visitors who can't resist the food or the charm. Tourists love the atmosphere and the beautiful setting. Some items you will find on the menu include Bratwurst, hamburgers, prawns, Sauerbraten, Chicken Schnitzel, Pepper Steak, Vegetarian Pasta, Fettucine Primavera, Beef Wellington, New Zealand Rack of Lamb and more. It is a good mix of Central European and European dishes, with prices ranging from $5 to $22. There is a full bar and a good wine list which features German wines and beers, ranging from $7 to $35 per bottle. © wcities.com

Cafe Mozart

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contact:
tel: 7145500906
www.patinagroup.com/tangata

location:
2002 N. main St.
Santa Ana CA 92706

hours:
Tu to Su from 11:00 AM to 03:00 PM

3 Tangata

DESCRIPTION: Located in the beautiful Bowers Art Museum, Tangata provides a fantastic ambience, Spanish style patio and courtyard, bright flowers and a swanky sky-lit inner room with high ceilings. Once you are peacefully nestled in your seat, order from a number of delectable Californian dishes. In true Californian style, tapas and sandwiches are on the menu. These sandwiches have a punch, like the Roasted Butternut Squash and Manchego Cheese with White Truffle Oil. If you want something a bit more substantial, try the Oven slow–roasted Half Chicken instead - it comes with Basque jus and Tangata garlic fries. The restaurant also organizes banquets for special events and what better place to have a private party or a wedding reception surrounded by beauty and art. You can bring your own alcohol but corkage applies. © wcities.com

Tangata

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Orange County Snapshot

Local Info

The picture today of Orange County is much different than its image from when the Beach Boys were big. The world famous beaches, bleached blonde locals, originalMagic Kingdom, and entrenched conservatism still remain, but the years have brought gradual, beneficial change. The Democrats achieved unprecedented success in Orange County during the 2008 presidential election, while the social and cultural demographics are also much changed from Nixon's day with, for example, a strong Vietnamese presence now established in the City of Westminster.

While the Beach Boys(none of whom could actually surf) continue to be played every third song on a local radio station, K-Earth, a younger generation of locals are more likely to think of No Doubt as the representative OC-born band of recent years: inventive, exciting, and with a definite global appeal.

OC geography

This substantial 948 square mile rectangle of California, with the Pacific Ocean along the west and the San Bernardino Forest in the east, contains 34 towns within its borders with the capabilities to cater to almost any taste. With shopping, restaurants, and plenty of outdoor activities, the main draw remains the unending coastline.

Stretching the full length of the county, from the OC's southernmost city ofSan Clemente(aka: the Spanish Village by the Sea) and the westernmost tip ofSeal Beach(home to a National Wildlife Preserve), the beach is the focal point for much of life in the OC. Millionaire homesteads inNewport andLaguna Beach cap the semi-arid hills of the OC, battling for the best ocean views. Choice surf spots such asHuntington Beach, Salt Creek, and San Onofre are never without their attendant pods of wetsuit-wearing surfers, often in the water from as early as 6am to avoid the crowds and lay claim to the best waves.

Surfin' USA

Surfing being what it is in Orange County(Huntington Beach, proudly known as"Surf City USA" lays claim to the origins of the practice in the US), it's also possible to come across surfing competitions throughout the year at any of these prime surf spots. Two competitions particularly worth catching are theHuntington Beach-located US Open(mid-July), like a local festival with live music and a skateboarding arena included, and the Hurley Pro Trestles(mid-Sept), held at Lower Trestles nearSan Clemente.

Historical pockets

If you're looking for more history than the ongoing surfing traditions(althoughHuntington does have an International Surfing Museum), there are some historical pockets of interest around the OC. MissionSan Juan Capistrano is always a popular choice, famous for its classic Spanish Colonial architecture and the Return of the Swallows celebration which marks the annual migration of the swallows from Argentina to the OC. Nearby Dana Point also holds it's own historical"hidden secret"- a replica of the brig Pilgrim(the boat upon which Richard Henry Dana rode in on to eventually write"Two Years Before the Mast", and whoDana Point is named after).

If you are a presidential history buff, be sure to stop by the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, situated on the land where Nixon family lived until 1922. You can't miss the building- it has an actual Army One helicopter outside(and yes, you are able to step aboard).

History can also be uncovered in unexpected places, such as along the hiking trails(or dirt bike tracks, depending on your perspective) that wind throughout the beautiful canyons that you can find just a few miles inland from the coast. The Dripping Cave(found in Aliso and Wood Canyons Park), a prime example of the wind-carved sandstone caves that litter the region, was the hideout for stagecoach bandits, reminding you of wilder times in this now most settled of regions.

Top stops

Nowhere is more settled than the most popular areas of the region:Laguna Beach andNewport Beach(the latter incorporating Balboa Island and the Balboa Peninsula). These two towns, on the surface, are distillates of old school Orange County, with millionaire residents and, in the case of Newport's Balboa Island, gleaming powerboats docked at the end of private piers. But look closer, and you see what the super-rich are buying here is the cozy, local feel that sets these towns apart from their in-county cousins.Laguna, home to a stretch of stunning beaches backed by sea-cliffs(1,000 Steps Beach is a perennial local favorite), is also Orange County's local artist epicenter, with a small gallery almost every second shop(for a closer look, attend the annual Sawdust Festival when local artists open their studios to the public or their weekly Art Walk during the summer). Walking around Newport's Balboa Island feels like stepping backwards into a more innocent time- at the Fun Zone there's a big wheel, a 50's style diner on the pier, and stands at which to buy the local specialty of frozen bananas.

If that all sounds a little too nostalgic, South Coast Plaza, the great commercial heart of Orange County, awaits just off the I-5 for all those keen to indulge in some serious mall-time. For the wandering gourmand, increasing ethnic diversity coupled with OC resident Michelin-starred chefs ensurea galaxy of choice(for all budgets) when it comes to deciding where to eat. Oenophiles, unsure whether to go straight to Napa, can find local wineries in Orange County(Laguna Canyon for one), and are also within easy striking distance of the many vineyards found in the Temecula Valley.

The thing about Orange County is that it's full of surprises. Yes, there's Disneyland(now expanded to include the rides of sister-park, California Adventure,

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and the music of the House of Blues), coastline to die for, and the laid-back surfer vibe. But there are also intense chilli cook-offs, bizarre traditions like the Laguna Niguel annual mooning of the Amtrak train service, and America's richest two-day rodeo. Remember that when deciding your itinerary, leave a couple of days free to explore and find out what you can uncover. © NileGuide

History

Although perhaps now more closely associated with sprawling oceanfront mansions and designer flip-flops, the coastal region between Los Angeles and San Diego has a past rooted in conflict over land, the Catholic Church, and agriculture.

The Mission Era

Originally inhabited by the Tongva and Juaneño/Luiseño people, a group of Spanish explorers and missionaries bound for the legendary Monterey Bay reached the region in the mid-1700s. Father Junipero Serra, founder of the Alta California Mission chain, was among the party and established the Mission San Juan Capistrano in 1776 making it the first permanent European settlement in California. The Mission was built and maintained by the native people who were converted to Christianity by the Spanish monks. Once converted, most of these native Californians were permitted to own land, undoubtedly the impetus for many of the transformations. During this time the cattle industry thrived in area with the development of a port at Dana Point, and a busy trade of tallow, hide, and other goods developed between New England and the West Coast. Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821 and the California missions fell into a state of disrepair. Subsequent drought and disease wiped out the cattle and killed crops, and the mission economy was further damaged by increased secularization implemented by the Mexican government. Unrest continued, and Mexico eventually lost control of the territory with Mexican-American war of 1846-1848 and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

California Becomes a State

With statehood in 1850 issues over land arose, as citizens were required to show documentation of landownership in order to retain their holdings. Because much of the land had been freely parceled out and distributed by the Spanish and Mexican governments, many people lost their land. Taking advantage of this, entrepreneurs such as James Irvine bought up huge amounts of land and planted more drought resistant crops such as walnuts, avocados, and the citrus for which the county was later named. Settlements sprung up, aided by the expansion of the railroads. An electric trolley system was put in place carrying passengers to and from Los Angeles making the region more accessible and resulting in the founding of Huntington and Seal Beach as resort communities.

Orange Becomes County

The discovery of silver in the Santa Ana mountains in 1887 caused another population surge, and as the 20th century approached the area was bursting at the seams. Tired of the long trek to Los Angeles to do official business and concerned that their needs were not being adequately addressed, residents began to push for self-government. In 1889 their wish was granted, and paying homage to its agricultural roots the county was named"Orange." While the trolley lines promoted growth and tourism during the early 1900s, it was the introduction of the automobile and freeway system that made an impact on the latter half of the century. Completion of US 101 and I-5 made this coastal haven even more accessible, and Orange County became a popular getaway for early Hollywood. The end of WWII saw another population increase when the military bases that had dominated the area closed and service men and women settled in the area and raised families. In 1955 Disneyland opened in Anaheim, followed by Knotts Berry Farm in 1968 setting the standard for the newest form of American entertainment, the theme park.

Modern History and Development

Today Orange County is the second most populous county in California, fifth in the nation. Known for its wealthy population and political conservatism, the region has entered pop culture's spotlight in recent years with hit TV shows like The O.C. and reality series such as MTV's Laguna Beach. A mecca for successful people of every profession, the area is at the center of the"Tech Coast," a term coined to describe Southern California's economic transformation from aerospace and defense to a international, multi-tech industries. The South Coast is home to of mega companies and some of the top research universities. Home to some of the country's most exclusive and expensive communities, Orange County has set the standard for master planned luxury development. With its sunny climate, sandy beaches, wealth of recreational activities, and world class dining and shopping its no wonder those with big bank accounts choose to live here. ©

Hotel Insights

Orange County, encompassing a number of cities and towns, offers a diverse selection of accommodations to choose from. From beach bungalows and oceanfront resorts to Disneyland's digs, there is an appropriate place for every occasion and person within the towns that make up Orange County.

San Juan Capistrano& San Clemente

For those looking to stay in the picturesque and historical areas of San Juan Capistrano and San Clemente, there are plenty of options for any budget. The Capistrano Seaside Inn offers a romantic getaway with ocean views and lush gardens at a moderate price. If you're visiting San Juan Capistrano in March, the Best Western Capistrano Inn provides a great location for watching the swallows return to the Mission. In San Clemente, the Casa Tropicana Inn& Spa is a comfortable bed and breakfast with themed rooms. Designed to look like a California, the Country Plaza Inn By San Clemente Beach

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boasts a variety of amenities including fresh fruit every morning and complimentary newspapers.

Laguna Beach& Dana Point

As one drives north or south along Highway 101, California's green highway signs announce the upcoming exits for"Beach Cities," referring to the beautiful, hip, coastal towns of Dana Point, Laguna Beach, and beyond. If you're looking for renowned golf courses, pristine beaches, high-end boutiques, or world-class surf spots, these unforgettable and unique cities are a must-see! Leading the list of Beach Cities' accommodation options is the Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel. Named"the best hotel in North America" by the readers ofTravel& Leisure. If the pricey rates of the Ritz aren't exactly your"cup'o tea" check out The Surf& Sand. Here, guests are treated to their very own balcony with ocean views and a unique restaurant, Splashes, which features only the finest in Mediterranean cuisine. Other luxury accommodations include the St. Regis Monarch Beach which offers many interesting packages, and Montage Resort& Spa, which boasts amenities that define luxury.

Anaheim

Obviously, the main attraction for decades in the area has been Disneyland and its accommodations are no less famous. The Disneyland Hotel and the neighboring Disneyland Paradise Pier Hotel have been mainstays for visitors to the park where kids of all ages can dine with Mickey, Pluto, and all their friends, or simply experience the luxury of the"happiest place on earth". If you're looking for something a little homier, Dolphin's Cove Resort features a wide range of condominiums that are fully-equipped with kitchens, patios, and even a mini-golf course. For more wallet-friendly options off the park grounds, the Fairfield Inn Anaheim Disneyland Resort is located right across the street and the Castle Inn Suites lets you stay in your own castle in between visits to Cinderella's.

Costa Mesa& Irvine

The immediate areas surrounding John Wayne Airport, the cities of Irvine and Costa Mesa offer many accommodation options for business travelers or those who just want to explore the area. The Atrium Hotel and Hilton Irvine/Orange County Airport are both convenient distances to the airport as well as nearby shopping and restaurants. Also near some of the area's major shopping and popular local spots are Westin South Coast Plaza, which is connected to one of Orange County's trendy fashion centers, South Coast Plaza, and Holiday Inn Express Costa Mesa/ Newport Beach provides easy access to some of the best beaches in the county.

Huntington Beach& Newport Beach

Being only a stones throw away from the most luxurious harbor in the region, Balboa Bay Club, has been alive and well since 1948 treating visitors(and many times the Hollywood elite), to four-diamond luxury amenities spread out over 15 incredible beachfront acres. Whether it's the prime waterfront dining or the short distance to Fashion Island, visitors will quickly realize why it has been dubbed"The Host of the Coast." Perhaps you're looking for a more affordable luxury experience. If so, you might want to explore the Newport Beach Marriott Hotel& Spa offering guests a rejuvenating spa experience in a comfortable and relaxing location. So whether you're looking to get away from it all, or simply trying to get close to everything, Orange County has options for every style of traveler.
©

Restaurants Insights

While Orange County is known for its famous beaches, mega shopping centers, and"Magic Kingdom," it's also chock full of spectacular dining spots. Their restaurants offer diverse culinary sites from places around the world including Mediterranean, Greek, French, Japanese, Hawaiian, and good old American style cuisines.

Laguna Beach/Dana Point

When in the Laguna Beach area, you'll be able to eat at luxurious locations where the dishes match the spectacular views from their ocean side seating. Have a taste of Belgium at Brussels Bistro where you'll find a traditional atmosphere that serves Belgium beer. Next up for the tour of international cuisines is the Aegean Cafe whose Greek dishes are only part of the experience. Waiters will serenade you with traditional Greek songs and balance things on their noses to create an upbeat, high-energy environment for your dining pleasure. If you're in the mood for a true Hawaiian and Polynesian experience, stop in at the Royal Hawaiian. Try the Mahi Mahi or Teriyaki Halibut at Claes Seafood. For a more historical dining experience, be sure to drop by The Cottage, a home built in 1917 that has been converted into a restaurant. Made famous for their breakfast menu, you can have brunch in a comfortable, back-in-the-day setting. Want to dine on the beach without dealing with sand and seagulls? Resting merely five feet above sea level, Five Feet feels as if you're on the beach without having to be at the beach. Las Brisas is known for its authentic Mexican food right alongside the beach as well.

Newport Beach/Costa Mesa/Huntington Beach

Newport Beach offers a variety of restaurant choices that will whet your appetite. After a day of parading on Balboa Island's boardwalk, stop in The Spaghetti Bender where their marinara sauce tastes as if its homemade. The Clubhouse is a perfect place to get the country club experience without the pricey membership dues. They serve American style cuisine such as chicken potpie and mashed potatoes. Hana No Ki serves everything but sushi. They pride themselves in serving often overlooked Japanese dishes like Grilled FishSaikyoyaki andShime Saba. For genuine Southern-fried comfort, check out Memphis Soul Cafe. Their menu consists of Soul Meatloaf, Cajun Gumbo, Shrimp Creole, Soul Burgers, and much more. Located on a floating riverboat, Anthony's Riverboat Restaurant serves

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Fresh Northern Halibut, Lobster Tail, Roast Prime Rib of Beef, and New York Steak. Not to worry if you're vegetarian. The Avanti Cafe serves a vegetarian menu where dishes are made from locally grown vegetables. Located on the Newport Pier, The Rockin' Baja Lobster provides a fun, upbeat atmosphere. Their"Baja Buckets" are the thing to try. You can stuff them with whatever seafood or meat you choose.

Anaheim/Orange

After a trip to the"happiest place on Earth," try these equally incredible places to dine. Located in the Disneyland Hotel, Granville's lamb chops, fish plates, and ribs are everything but Mickey Mouse. Within the Disneyland Paradise Pier Hotel, drop in for some sushi and tempura at Yamabuki. Continue following your dreams while in Downtown Disney at Catal Restaurant& Uva Bar. They serve Mediterranean style food such as"Paella a la Valencia" and"Duck Leg Confit."

Anaheim White House marks the spot for lovers of not only Italian food, but Italian celebrities as well. Their plates, named after Italian personalities, have names such as"Versace Whitefish" and"Dolce& Gabbana Sand Dabs." Although you will have to make a reservation at least a month in advance for The Hobbit, it's well worth it once inside because you get to take a tour of the chef's kitchen which is located in a 1930s Spanish home. One place, three zones: Restaurant, Taqueria for those on the go, and the Cantina. At Tortilla Jo's, you have it all, literally.
©

Nightlife Insights

Orange County's entertainment scene is crammed with endless possibilities for locals and visitors alike. Whether you like fine art or hard rock, the OC is the place for you. Its beautiful seaside surroundings and nearly perfect weather creates ample opportunities for your"things to do" list.

Art& Museums

The true beauty of Orange County is matched by equally exceptionally creative representations that celebrate California culture and contemporary art. Located at the popular Fashion Island Newport Beach, the Orange County Museum of Art features collections that concentrate on California art and late 20th century pieces. California impressionism can be seen at The Irvine Museum where they're dedicated to spreading awareness about the current condition California's natural environment. If you're interested in the works of local artists, check out the Art Institute of Southern California-Ettinger& Reynolds Galleries, that features works by students, and the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art whose emphasis is on freedom to express oneself through contemporary art. At the Irvine Fine Arts Center, you can see an array of innovative artistic expressions including ceramic, multimedia, photography, and much more.

For the seafaring enthusiasts, you will be happy to know that Orange County's proximity to beaches makes it a perfect place to see art about maritime history. The Vallejo Gallery is dedicated to portrayals of the American and British ships of the past. Also, at the Newport Harbor Nautical Museum, you can see a historical boat that is docked at the harbor and learn about the history of Newport harbor while getting some fun-in-the-sun time too. While the art of Orange County is relatively California-based, the Laguna Art Museum features works that have a global reach as well. Here, you can find classic and modern art by both local and internationally distinguished artists. The Bowers Museum of Cultural Art has artifacts from Southeast Asian, Mexican, and Native American cultures.

Music

The music scene in Orange County offers about as much as you can imagine. An assortment of venues brings music to the ears of Orange County residents and visitors. Places such as Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre and Honda Center offers just about everything from Lollapalooza to classical concerts to the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim. Jazz fans will appreciate the Steamers Cafe where jazz musicians from around the world grace the stage. For a night of the OC's local artists, stop by The Hub where you can sip on a latte while checking out some music performers. The Coach House is a favorite spot for those that enjoy seeing their favorite musicians in the most intimate of settings.

Theater& Film

Theater& film is a significant part of Orange County's entertainment field. For Broadway fans, be sure to visit the Orange County Performing Arts Center and the Segerstrom Center for the Arts which feature shows including"Cats" and"Miss Saigon." The South Coast Repertory and Costa Mesa Civic Playhouse features many classic and contemporary plays. The Brea Curtis Theatre puts on many comedies, dramas, and also has The Kids Culture Club which is ideal for family outings where you can see ballets and jugglers. Want to see modern plays such as"Grease"? Stop by the La Habra Depot Theatre. For a fun excursion with friends, check out Medieval Times. In addition, the Newport Beach Film Festival brings to film buffs a chance to not only watch films, but also an opportunity to meet with the screenwriters, directors, and cinematographers as well. **Research Institutes& Exhibits**

While Orange County's claim to fame is its all-the-rage beaches and shopping centers, the Orange County Natural History Museum offsets this representation by being a research facility dedicated to environmental preservation. TheOcean Institute of Dana Point also serves as an educational facility for students and tourists alike.

Nightclubs

Although there's a lot to do during the day, the OC is one happening place at night. The young, hip crowd of Costa Mesa likes to go to The Shark Club where they play pool and check out the 2000 gallon shark tank. For a wild time, after a day in Laguna Beach catching your rays, drop in at the Sandpiper Lounge for their"4 second poured" drinks and live music. For an even wilder night out, check out Club Rubber, located at the Galaxy Concert Theatre. Here, you can run amok among

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the most eccentric crowd of the OC and participate in one of the club's monthly themes such as"Catholic School Girl" and"60s Psychedelics." At Club M, sushi lovers can get their fill of"Spicy Tuna Rolls" and sake bombs before dancing the night away at the restaurant's club. The same goes for the China Beach Canteen. For those that like to try new things, this place breaks the mold by blending Chinese food and reggae music under one roof.

Outdoor Activities

Beautiful Orange County is also booming with outdoor activities. A day trip hot spot is the Newport Landing Boardwalk and Newport Pier, where friends, families, tourists, and locals enjoy shopping, eating, and taking in the splendor of the harbor. Take advantage of the harbor by doing some day fishing at Newport Landing Sportfishing. Balboa Island's relaxing atmosphere makes it a perfect place to spend the day on an island.

If you're an avid golfer, the OC's golf courses are certainly up to par. Come play all 18 holes at Westridge Golf Club or, if you're up for a challenge, play on the hills of the Anaheim Hills Golf Course. The Strawberry Farms Golf Club and Aliso Viejo Ice Chalet are also great places to practice your swing.

Last but certainly not least, Disneyland, is one of the OC's must-see spots. Dubbed the"Magic Kingdom," Disneyland brings visitors from far and wide to see attractions like Pirates of the Caribbean and the Matterhorn.
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Things to Do Insights

Touring Orange County and nearby Los Angeles requires a car. Luckily, while in the OC, you don't need to travel far to come across the world famous beaches or the lesser well known but locally just as loved expanses of wilderness and ecological preserves. In and around those, here are a few further tips to local areas:

Huntington BeachIt's Surf City USA, so walk the pier and check out the surfing, or, better still, get in the water yourself. If you'd rather not get your wetsuit dirty, so to speak, but still like the vibe, then head over to the International Surfing Museum to get an historical perspective. Surfed out? Then head over to the extensive collections exhibited at theOrange County Museum of Art.

Laguna BeachDon't be put off by its name,1,000 Steps Beach really doesn't have that many steps and is the gem of the local beaches. Time your visit for theSawdust Festival to really tap into the artistic vibe of this town, or check out the extraordinaryPageant of the Masters(not nearly as ridiculous as it sounds(well, nearly)). If you're looking for a better vantage point for those holiday snaps, try nearbyAliso and Wood Canyons Park for spectacular views up the coast.

San ClementeNestled at the southernmost tip of the county, San Clemente (also known as "The Spanish Village by the Sea") makes a great stop before heading on to San Diego or Mexico, but is also a lively, scenic destination in its own right(Richard Nixon used to love it). Stroll Avenida del Mar dipping into the many boutiques and cafes that line the street, before reaching the beachfront, home to arguably the most beautiful of the OC's extensive collection of piers.

Dana PointA quiet town positioned in between Laguna Beach and San Juan Capistrano, Dana Point is centered around its tranquilharbor. There're some good beaches here, and a sense of timelessness prevails as you walk the breakwater between the fishermen and standing surfers. Above the harbor, stunning views south are readily available.

Balboa/NewportA self-contained Avalon for the extremely well off,Balboa Island maintains a local charm that surprises(even more so after seeing the floating fibreglass castles of Balboa homeowners docked on their private piers). Walk down the island's Marina Avenue before hopping on the ferry to the peninsula. Spend some time at the nostalgicBalboa Fun Zone, book a boat tour around the harbor, and stop by for excellent live music an dinner at theStudio Café.

AnaheimHome of the theme parks. On this hallowed ground you'll find the hyperactive trinity ofDisneyland,Disney's California Adventure andKnott's Berry Farm. Keep the doors locked upon approach, you don't want the overexcited kids making an early break for it across the I5.

San Juan Capistrano Most famous for its historical elements, namely the remaining examples of adobe architecture evident in the Old Town and theMission San Juan Capistrano. The mission, over two hundred years old and perhaps the best preserved example of its kind, is part of a chain of missions built along the California coast by the Spanish. A good time to visit is during the annual Return of the Swallows Festival, an event held to welcome the famous migrating swallows returning from Argentina to nest in the eaves of the mission.
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Travel Tips

By Air

John Wayne Airport(SNA): The only commercial service airport in Orange County. It is located 35 miles south of Los Angeles, between the cities of Costa Mesa, Irvine, Newport Beach and Santa Ana. (+1 949 252 5200/http://www.ocair.com/default.asp)

John Wayne Airport is home to the following major airlines:

Alaska Airlines(+1 800 252 7522/http://www.alaskaair.com) American Airlines(+1 800 433 7300/http://www.aa.com) Continental(+1 800 525 0280/http://www.continental.com) Delta(+1 800 221 1212/http://www.delta.com) Southwest(+1 800 435 9792/http://www.iflyswa.com) United(+1 800 241 6522/http://www.ual.com) US Airways(+1 800 428 4322/http://www.usairways.com)

Airport Map& Information:http://www.airguideonline.com/airports/airport_sna.htm

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Airport Services:http://www.airguideonline.com/airports/airport_sna2.htm

Airport Transportation:http://www.airguideonline.com/airports/airport_sna3.htm

Long Beach Airport(LGB) is an alternative airport when flying to Orange County, situated midway between Los Angeles and Orange County. Long Beach Airport provides very efficient ground transportation, and the lowest-cost parking in the region.(+1 562 570 2619/http://www.longbeach.gov/airport/default.asp)

Airport Parking Service

John Wayne Airport offers a variety of parking options: Four terminal parking structures at the rate of$1 per hour or $17 per day, an off-site(Main Street) parking lot for$1 per hour or$12 per day and valet parking for$23 per day are available. The Main Street Parking Lot offers a complimentary shuttle service to the Terminal every 15 minutes. All parking options are available for short and long-term parking.(+1 949 252 5200)

Park'N Fly(+1 800 763 6895/http://www.pnfnetwork.com)

Rental Car Companies Include

Alamo(+1 800 327 9633/http://www.alamo.com) Avis(+1 800 831 2847/http://www.avis.com) Budget(+1 800 527 0700/http://www.budget.com) Enterprise(+1 800 325 8007/http://www.enterprise.com) Hertz(+1 800 654 3131/http://www.hertz.com) National(+1 800 227 7368/http://www.nationalcar.com) Thrifty(+1 800 367 2277/http://www.thrifty.com)

Taxis

John Wayne Airport Yellow Cab Service(+1 800 535 2211/+1 714 535 0156/http://www.cayellow.com)Shuttles

Shuttles are located on the Arrival(Lower) Level in the Ground Transportation Center. Coordinators are available to assist you with your ground transportation needs.

ABC Shuttle(+1 714 719 4197/http://www.abcshuttleatjohnwayne.com) Advance Shuttle(+1 800 567 7500/http://www.advanceshuttle.com) Express Shuttle(+1 800 427 7483/http://xpressshuttle.com) Disneyland® Resort Express(+1 800 828 6699/http://anaheimsightseeing.com)

Buses

Orange County Transportation Authority(+1 714 636 7433/http://www.octa.net)

Serving Orange County, regular fare is$1.25; free for children under 6. Greyhound(+1 800 231 2222/http://www.greyhound.com)

By Train

Train stations are located throughout Orange County, with Metrolink servicing stations between Los Angeles and San Diego as well as east to San Bernardino County. Amtrak also passes through these stations but has limited stops on weekends. See websites for more details:

Amtrak(+1 800 USA RAIL/http://www.amtrak.com) Metrolink(+1 800 371 LINK/http://www.metrolinktrains.com)

By Boat

Catalina Express: Equipped with airplane-style seats, panoramic viewing windows and refreshments on board, Catalina Express offers year round service and up to 30 departures daily from ports in Long Beach, San Pedro and Dana Point. Views of the Pacific coast don't get any better than this, and you may even catch a glimpse of dolphins swimming alongside the boat in this memorable boating trip for the whole family.

By Car

Orange County is connected by a maze of California State and Interstate freeways.

The major Interstate freeways are: I-5, I-405, and I-605.

The major California State freeways running east-west are: CA/SR-91 and the CA/SR-22.

Running north-south: CA/SR-57, SR/CA-55, CA/SR-133, CA/SR-73, CA/SR-261, CA/SR-133, CA/SR-241, and CA/SR-241.

If traveling overseas, take the safety precaution of registering your trip athttps://travelregistration.state.gov and for helpful, practical advice about traveling technicalities and safety standards check outhttp://travel.state.gov/.
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Disneyland Snapshot

Local Info

Located in Anaheim about 35 miles from the Los Angeles International Airport,"the happiest place on earth" can also be one of the most crowded. Mostly because it has something for everyone, since it's not only a theme park, but also a resort and shopping mecca. The area in and around the theme park also features Downtown Disney, and the Anaheim GardenWalk, where restaurants, malls, boutiques and bars can be found in abundance.

As crowded as Disneyland can be, accommodation is usually not a problem, since there are three large hotels on the resort property and hundreds more in the surrounding city.

Disneyland Theme Parks

There is now a bewildering array of themes and water parks at Disneyland Park, which started out small back in 1955. Each of the attractions comes with its own motif--from Animal Kingdom to Hollywood Studios to Blizzard Beach--and each is classified based on the target age, from toddlers to senior citizens.

All around Disneyland, visitors can mingle with their most-loved Disney characters, who make regular casual appearances and also perform in parades and other entertainment attractions. If you want to take home your very own miniature version, there are many shops offering collectibles and souvenirs.

If you're not the sort who enjoys rides, you can take in a performance by a live band or by the Disney characters. Visits during Halloween and Christmas are extra-special because there are many activities held at the park to mark these holidays.

Disneyland California Adventure

To get an even bigger dose of Disney characters, check out California Adventure, which is across Disneyland Park and"celebrates the stories and characters of Disney films with thrilling attractions and entertainment." It features rides for little kids, big kids and adults. The site also offers the Mission Tortilla Factory and the Wine Country Trattoria for sit-down dining. After dark, the recently installed World of Color delights audiences with a water-jet show that blends color, fire, light and Disney characters.

Popular Rides and Attractions

There are rides at Disneyland that regularly feature long lines, but they're worth the wait. Splash Mountain is about half a mile long and culminates in a final plunge of five stories. Indiana Jones Adventure does a great job of bringing the film to life with an adrenaline pumping dash in a Hummer on a quest to claim the Jewel of Power. Pirates of the Caribbean is an indoor boat ride that allows your imagination to roam as you float through realistic pirate scenes and settings. (If you'd rather not wait in line, be sure to pick up a Fastpass, so you can save your place in line while you grab a drink or check out other attractions.)

Amid all the noise and the fun, guests can still enjoy a little peace and quiet on the Disney Railroad, a charming old narrow-gauge railroad that first chugged to life in 1955. It circles the park and is an easy way to get from one place to another or just spend a little relaxing downtime.
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