



The beautiful flowers and trees on the hills surrounding Laguna Beach have inspired generations of artists. PHOTO COURTESY OF ANAHEIMOC.ORG

A beach getaway



Frutas del Mar is one of the most popular dishes at Las Brisas.

Enjoy art, waves and adventure in Laguna Beach

**Kathleen Curry
and Geoff Griffin**

Laguna Beach

Orange County's beach towns all have their own unique vibe. Laguna Beach differs from other OC beach spots thanks to its gorgeous cliff views that rise up off the water. Over the years, those beautiful views have been an inspiration to artists who have come to the area. As a result, Laguna is a place where the waves lap up onto a vibrant arts scene.

Surfing meets painting

Laguna is loaded with art galleries and has multiple arts festivals throughout the year. The most notable, the Pageant of the Masters (www.foapom.com, 650 Laguna Canyon Road, 800-487-3378), is taking place now through Aug. 31. The idea of the pageant is to take famous paintings and recreate them in live 3-D by posing actors dressed up as the subjects in front of sets modeled after the originals. The theme for this year is The Big Picture and features paintings that served as inspiration to some of Hollywood's greatest directors.

Fans of the show "Arrested Development" may remember an episode in which the Bluth family failed miserably at the pageant in their attempt to pull off Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam."

The Festival of the Arts runs in conjunction with the pageant at the same location during the same time frame



Surfing is always a popular activity at Laguna Beach. PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAGUNA BEACH CVB

and features 140 award-winning local artists on display. There are also a number of demonstrations, lectures, tours and activities for kids.

The Sawdust Festival (www.sawdustfestival.org, 935 Laguna Canyon Road, 949-494-3030) takes place just across the street along Laguna Canyon Road, and runs through Sept. 1. Sawdust features the arts and

crafts of more than 200 Laguna artists along with classes and other activities.

Above the sand

Whether you make it to Laguna during the festivals or not, the beach is there year-round, and there are a number of accommodations that offer rooms that overlook the ocean.

The Surf and Sand Resort

(www.surfandsandresort.com, 1555 S. Coast Highway, 949-497-4477) sits just yards from the crashing waves, which you can hear and see from the balcony of the rooms sitting right above the water. The resort's motto is, "Our best asset is our loudest asset," and they even provide earplugs should you find the waves too loud when trying to sleep. However, many people find the sound of the ocean soothing, so much so that they buy recordings of the sounds of waves to help lull them to sleep. At Surf and Sand, the soundtrack is right outside your window.

The resort also has direct access to the beach, where they'll set you up with a beach chair and drink or you can simply lounge around the pool area, which also directly overlooks the beach. Another option is to stop by the on-site Aquaterra Spa, where the packages start at Toe in the Water, move to Waist Deep, continue to Full Plunge and top out at Beach Pro.

Another place to take in a great beach view from a comfortable setting is in one of the five beach-front bungalows at Pacific Edge Hotel (www.pacificedgehotel.com, 647 S. Coast Highway, 949-281-5709). Think of them as cabanas on steroids, as they are designed by Laguna companies such as Billa-bong and Hobie. The bungalows with direct deck-to-beach access also come complete with an attendant at your service, air conditioning, bottle and food service, flat screen televisions and, perhaps best of all, a 10 percent discount on rooms

See BEACH, Page C5



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Around the world in 180 days

I often tell my children that when it is time for me to retire, I want to board a cruise ship and sail around the world. Cruise lines offer extended itineraries that are usually 110 days in length and include gourmet food, superior service and excellent entertainment, not to mention incredible ports of call.

Just a few weeks ago, Oceania Cruises took the experience to an entirely new level with the reveal of their Around the World in 180 Days itinerary. Oceania is an award-winning, upper-premium cruise line and this new itinerary is creating quite a buzz in the cruise world.

On Jan. 10, 2015, the 684-passenger Oceania Insignia will sail round trip from Miami and visit five continents, 44 countries and 89 ports of call. This sailing will cross the equator four times, sail through 24 time zones, traverse three oceans and 10 seas, call on 45 islands and offer guests the opportunity to visit 47 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

"As the leading specialist in destination cruises, we wanted to create a unique port-intensive voyage that reflects the dreams of the true explorer, rather than speed across the seas racing to the next convenient port as is the norm in a typical 100- to 110-day world cruise," said Kunal S. Kamlani, the line's president. "By eliminating the 100-day time constraint, we freed ourselves to conceive a remarkable dream voyage designed to visit the world's most fascinating destinations."

This once-in-a-lifetime journey begins with visiting ports in the Caribbean, then goes on to South America and east to Africa before heading to India, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific and Hawaii before returning via the Panama Canal to Miami on July 8, 2015. It features 11 overnight

See TRAVEL, Page C5

TRAVEL TRIVIA

Test your travel knowledge with a weekly travel quiz from Gary Sorensen, regional manager for Morris Murdock Travel.

1. Do you need a passport to fly to Canada?
2. To which airport would you fly to take a cruise out of Port Canaveral?
3. Where are the famous Butchart Gardens located?
4. Banderas Bay near Puerto Vallarta is famous for which winter visitors?
5. Which cruise line started sailing from Rotterdam to New York in 1872?
6. To see wild animals at Kruger National Park, which country would you go to?
7. To vacation in Bora Bora, to where would you fly?
8. On which islands would you find giant tortoises?

Answers on Page C5