

Newport Beach for a laid-back weekend

Jennie Nunn, Special to The Chronicle
Friday, October 1, 2010

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Visit Newport Beach Inc. Paddle-boarders glide across Newport Harbor, above, where the calm surface makes it an ideal spot for the sport. Beginners can take lessons at several places nearby.

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Biblical references aside, there's something about the water in Newport Beach that makes people want to, well, stand on it.

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The sunny, idyllic waterfront city in Orange County (about 40 miles south of Los Angeles) is *the* place, apparently, for anyone considering the increasingly popular sport of stand-up paddle-boarding, as well as novice boarders looking

to hone their balancing skills. The sport is a good fit here: Runners with washboard abs and golden tans, surfers that look as if they live at the beach, and young people wearing board shorts and flip-flops steering cruiser bikes set the scene for this

ultra-fit city that's often considered an ostentatious corner of the OC. But for me, it's the low-key vibe, down-to-earth locals, the calm, glassy water and amazing views that make it worth the visit.

As for being a playground for paddlers: "It's like a mini-vacation," said Noelle Kozak, founder of SupCore paddle boarding at the Newport Aquatic Center. "When you're out on the board, you're not thinking about what's going on in your life. It's like a lifelong gym, and it's addicting."

Why now? The overcast, cloud-covered mornings of June and July are long gone. Indian summer is here making it ideal for surfing and paddling.

Spend your day: For stand-up paddle-boarding, take a class. We went with SupCore, where the instructors teach everything from straight paddling technique to yoga, Pilates and light resistance training atop the board. Worried about falling in the water? Don't be. Only 5 percent of first-timers actually take the plunge.

If you prefer to stay out of the sun (and off the water), head to family-owned boutique Amaree's for clothing and accessories straight from the runway, or take a stroll around the [Fashion Island](#) mall.

If you have a green thumb, or wish you did, check out potted succulents, patio furniture, and rare finds such as Moroccan urns and recycled beach glass necklaces at Molly Wood Garden Design.

Checking in: The recently remodeled Island Hotel, smack dab next to Fashion Island, features 295 guest rooms equipped with the essentials: plasma TVs, Bose sound systems and gorgeous ocean views. Make time for a deep-tissue massage at the spa or lounge poolside by a massive outdoor stone fireplace. Other ritzy area hotels include Pelican Hill Resort and the Balboa Bay Club & Resort.

Dining: If you're paddle-boarding, drift up to the Beachcomber Cafe for lunch. Or better yet, grab it to go and rent an umbrella and chair for an impromptu picnic on the Crystal Cove beach.

On weekends, locals flock to Rose Bakery Cafe for house-made old-fashioned doughnuts with vanilla glaze, or the country burrito stuffed with three eggs, cheddar cheese and potato and topped with salsa. But the place is tiny, so be prepared to wait in line.

For tostadas and to-die-for homemade guacamole with goat cheese, toasted pepita seeds and a splash of tequila, opt for a waterfront seat on the patio at Sol Cocina.

Don't bother: Making a trip to touristy Balboa Fun Zone. Instead, hit the beach, take a bike ride around [Balboa Island](#) or watch locals surf at Blackies by the Newport Pier.

Don't miss: On Sundays, head to the Newport Aquatic Center for a guided paddling adventure in a 48-foot outrigger canoe. But show up hungry - you'll eat on board.

Word to the wise: Bring a beach towel, swimsuit and sunscreen. Don't forget to bring a jacket for cooler evenings.

If You Go

GETTING THERE

Newport Beach is on [Pacific](#) Coast Highway, 430 miles south of San Francisco. The closest major airport is Orange County's [John Wayne Airport](#).

WHERE TO STAY

Island Hotel, 690 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach. (949) 759-0808. [www.islandhotel.com](#). Rooms are \$199 per night on Friday and Saturday, including continental breakfast for two in the Palm Terrace restaurant and parking.

Pelican Hill Resort, 22701 Pelican Hill Road South, Newport Coast. (949) 467-6800. [www.pelicanhill.com](#). Rooms starting at \$495.

WHERE TO EAT

Beachcomber Cafe, 15 Crystal Cove, Newport Coast. (949) 376-6900. Open daily until 9:30 pm. Beach rentals until 6 p.m.

Rose Bakery Cafe, 3536 E. Coast Highway, Suite C, Corona Del Mar. (949) 675-3151. Open for breakfast and lunch from 5 a.m. daily.

Sol Cocina, 251 E. Pacific Coast Highway, [solcocina.com](#). (949) 675-9800. Open from 4 p.m. daily. Dinner for two with drinks, around \$60.

WHAT TO DO

SupCore, (949) 338-4995.

Newport Aquatic Center, 1 Whitecliffs Drive, [newportaquaticcenter.com](#). (949) 646-7725.

Gourmet Paddling Adventures. Newport Aquatic Center. Sunday evenings, 5-9 p.m., \$38 per person. (949) 872-4322.

Freelance writer Jennie Nunn lives in San Francisco. E-mail comments to [travel@sfchronicle.com](#).

This article appeared on page M - 6 of the San Francisco Chronicle

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