

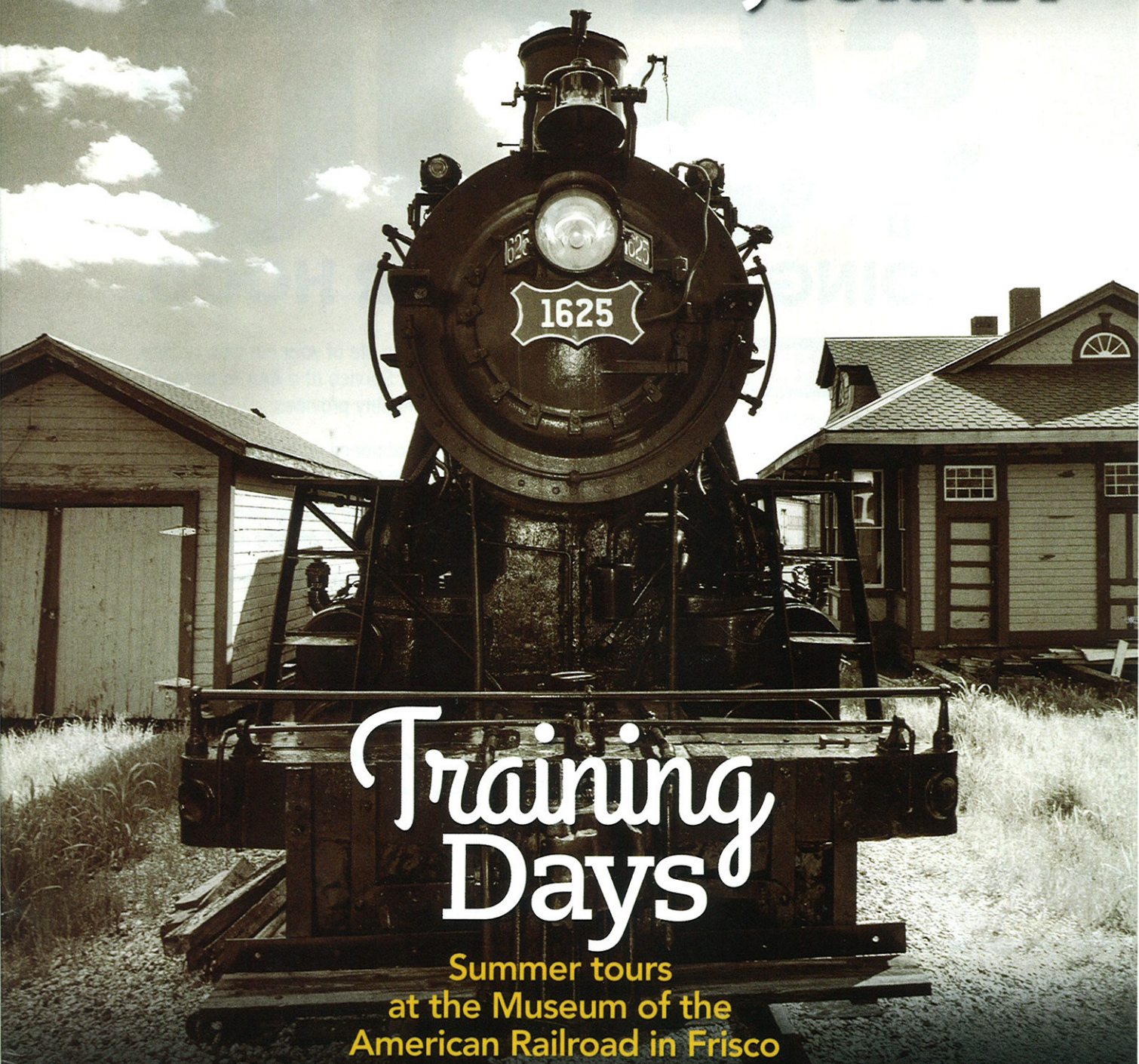


JULY/AUGUST 2015

Texas

THE MAGAZINE FOR AAA MEMBERS

JOURNEY



Training Days

Summer tours
at the Museum of the
American Railroad in Frisco

PLUS: A FRENCH HOLIDAY | CALIFORNIA BEACH TOWNS
GOINGPLACES: WHERE TO PLAY IN ASPEN



Marina del Rey, California

FEATURES

30 Sun Days

Kick off your sandals and enjoy our guide to four quintessential California beach towns.
BY ELISABETH ABRAHAMSON, CONNIE K. HO, AND KENDRA STREY

38 Track Stars

Frisco's Museum of the American Railroad invites visitors aboard its world-class train collection
BY PAUL ZIEKE

44 Into the Village

A Francophile fulfills his wish of staying overnight in a village near the French Riviera
BY DON GEORGE

DEPARTMENTS

4 NewDirections

Summer safety for teen drivers

6 ForMembers

AAA Travel Agent Tips, theme park discounts, teen-driver classes, and more

14 SmartCoverage

Five tips for safely navigating parking lots

17 GoingPlaces

Amigurumi in Austin, restaurants in former filling stations, and summer fun in high-country Colorado

28 DayTrip

From maritime museums to coney dogs, Rockport-Fulton has plenty of seaside charm

50 CurrentEvents

Happenings around the state

56 LocalColor

Dolphin-tour leader Scarlet Colley has a special way of talking with her finned friends

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ON THE COVER A 1918 steam locomotive at the Museum of the American Railroad in Frisco. PHOTOGRAPH BY RANDY MALLORY

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Full-size pickups (and fuel economy for thought)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY MARINA DEL REY HOTEL; COURTESY TOTADENHURST PHOTOGRAPHY; STEVEN SALERNO (2)



SUMMER FUN
in the
Golden State

Sun Days

Grab a towel and hit the sand in these
Southern California beach towns

From Joni Mitchell's "California" to the Beach Boys' "California Girls," myriad musical artists have paid homage to the Golden State. And what's not to love? They croon about the sunshine, sing about the scenery, and wax romantic about sunsets. Soak up all three in California's quintessential beach towns—in the state's southern reaches, they line the coast like jewels on a bracelet. Some are bohemian, others tony, so you're sure to find one suited to you. Let this guide to four of our favorites kick start your California dreamin'.



Huntington Beach ...Orange County's surfing



Seaside San Diego ...Pacific Beach



Laguna Beach ... artfully engaging



FROM TOP: COURTESY HUNTINGTON BEACH CVB;
ALAMY/JOSEPH S GIACALONE; COURTESY VISIT
LAGUNA BEACH; COURTESY MARINA DEL REY CVB

Marina del Rey ...L.A.'s surprising hamlet



Marina del Rey

BY KENDRA STREY

Marina del Rey is one of the Los Angeles area's lesser-known gems. Many visitors bolt from Los Angeles International Airport headed straight for popular Santa Monica or luxe hotels near L.A.'s premier shopping districts. But don't overlook this hamlet lying a mere 20 minutes beyond baggage claim. The marina is small, but a variety of dining options and attractions offers an upscale yet relaxed getaway that's pleasantly removed from the haughtier scene in L.A. proper. Marina del Rey is celebrating its 50th birthday this year, so check the website for special happenings. (310) 305-9545; visitmarinadelrey.com.

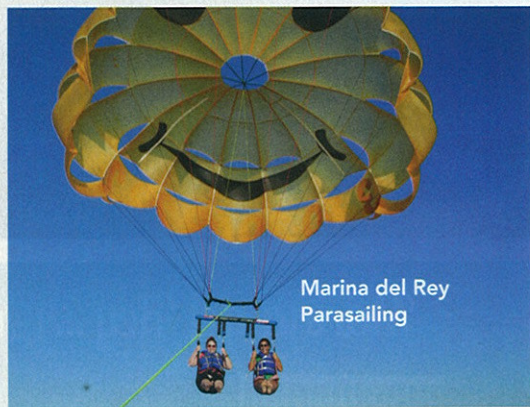
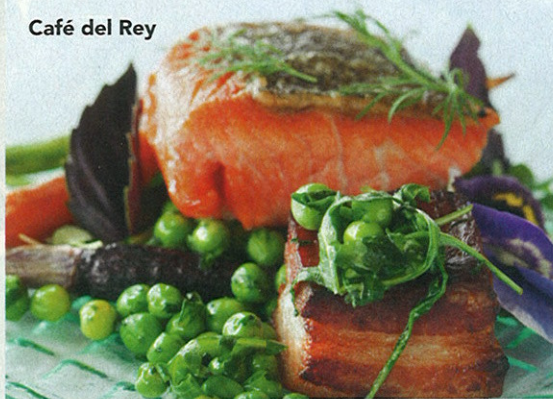


Marina del Rey Hotel

Spaaah...

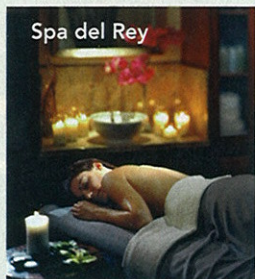
In line with the hotel's luxurious vibe, **Spa del Rey** at the Ritz-Carlton soothes and pampers with precision. Your treatment includes access to the hotel pool, a primo marina-facing spot where you can continue your relaxation. (310) 574-4356; spa-delrey.com.

Café del Rey



Marina del Rey Parasailing

Spa del Rey



Eat

The window wall overlooking the marina makes it hard to keep your attention on your date at **Café del Rey**. Seasonal menus rely on fresh produce and other ingredients to awaken mostly seafood mains, but options also include fowl and beef dishes. At lunch, try the Cinque Terre, the chef's selection of small plates inspired by coastal towns in the Mediterranean. (310) 823-6395; cafedelreymarina.com. Brunch at the Ritz-Carlton's **Cast and Plow** is a worthwhile splurge. An all-out option includes the buffet plus a main dish off the menu, but à la carte may appeal to those with smaller appetites. (310) 574-4333; castandplow.com. **Hornblower Cruises** runs regular brunch and dinner cruises around the marina. Embark at Fisherman's Village. (310) 301-6000; hornblower.com.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY MARINA DEL REY HOTEL; MARINA DEL REY CVB; KENDRA STREY; COURTESY CAFÉ DEL REY; COURTESY RITZ-CARLTON

Stay

Fresh off a complete renovation, the historic

Marina del Rey Hotel

welcomes travelers with chic yet approachable decor and well-appointed guest rooms. The hotel was the first, in 1964, to ever set up on the marina, and its reopening was long-awaited by both locals and repeat guests. Service in the on-site Salt restaurant is still coming up to speed, but the food (American/California cuisine) and ambience (casual yet sultry) can't be beat.

Summer rates start at \$285. (310) 301-1000; pacificahotels.com/marinadelreyhotel.

Hilton Garden Inn has unusual features such as high ceilings with exposed beams—a nice touch that feels more like a home than a hotel. Summer rates start at \$319. (310) 301-2000; tinyurl.com/hiltonmdr.

Do

Savor views of the Venice and Santa Monica piers and the Malibu coast with a ride from **Marina del Rey Parasailing**. Board at Fisherman's Village in the marina. Rates start at \$80 (inquire about early bird deals). (310) 306-2222; marinadelreyparasailing.com. **Marina del Rey Sportfishing** offers full- and half-day trips for beginners and pros. Private charters are available, or you can join a daily Open Party trip for as little as \$39 (adult price). Gear rental and a one-day California fishing license are available onboard. Cash only. (310) 822-3625; mdrsf.com. **Phins Water Sports Club** rents kayaks, slide-seat rowboats, stand-up paddleboards, and more. (310) 822-7600; phinsclub.com.

FROM TOP: CONNIE K. HO; COURTESY EVANS HOTELS; COURTESY THE BAKED BEAR

Pacific Beach

BY CONNIE K. HO

Sprawling San Diego is a lot to take in on a first visit—or even a fourth.

Over the past couple of decades, redevelopment projects countywide have transformed various neighborhoods from gritty to glam. So, if it's been a while since your last trip, expect a drastically different experience. With so many new things to explore inland, your time at the shore may be short. Consider the Pacific Beach/Mission Beach area for a home base, so you'll have quick access to water sports, casual dining, and many of San Diego's major attractions. (619) 232-3101; sandiego.org.

Do

Ride the Giant Dipper rollercoaster at **Belmont Park**, a small but classic amusement park on Mission Boulevard. Admission is free, and attractions are offered on a pay-as-you-play basis. If you're wary of learning to surf in the open ocean, try the two wave simulators at the WaveHouse—its advanced-level FlowBarrel creates a 10-foot endless barrel wave. belmontpark.com. **Mission Bay** is a calm spot to try stand-up paddleboarding or kayaking, and rentals are available from **Resort Watersports** shops at the Bahia and Catamaran resorts. (858) 488-2582; resortwatersports.com. **Bahia Belle**, a Victorian-style sternwheeler, runs hour-long bay cruises seasonally. The ride is free for guests of either hotel, or \$10 per person for the public. (858) 488-0551; bahiahotel.com.

Stay

With a color palette of white, blue, and green, **Tower23** hotel draws its aesthetic inspiration from its beachy surrounds. Kick back on the ocean-view elevated outdoor lounge. Summer rates start at \$389. (858) 270-2323; t23hotel.com. The **Bahia Resort Hotel** and its sister property **Catamaran**

Resort Hotel and Spa are both located on Mission Bay. Summer rates start at \$199 and \$209, respectively. (858) 488-0551, bahiahotel.com; (858) 488-1081, catamaranresort.com.



Eat

Start off your day at local favorite **Kono's Café**. Deck seating offers prime views of surfers hitting the early morning waves. (858) 483-1669; konoscafe.com. The **Baked Bear**, an ice cream-sandwich shop operated by San Diego natives, serves unique combinations such as snickerdoodle cookies that hug strawberry-cheesecake ice cream and Funfetti cookies with mint-chip ice cream. (858) 886-7433; thebakedbear.com. With a name like **World Famous**, you set expectations high. This popular spot serves up traditional California coastal cuisine for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; top menu items include the catch of the day and lobster tacos (or lobster benedict at brunch!). (858) 272-3100; worldfamouspb.com.



A cookie-based ice cream sandwich from the Baked Bear