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Best LA Beaches

California 'Uncovered' Part 2

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Written by **Christopher Vaughan** on  **05 Jun 2015**



Chris Vaughan recently flew over to LA to firm up his knowledge of the beach scene around the glamorous City of Angels. In the second of our 'California Uncovered' series Chris guides us through the palm-clad boulevards of Santa Monica, Huntington and Newport Beach.



A Tale of 3 Beaches

Like most people, I've read a lot about LA so I was full of anticipation for my first taste of the city. Flying into LAX, you'll pass over miles upon mile of Los Angeles, twinkling prettily at night or shining bright during daytime under the California sun and you'll wonder how people can ever find their way out of the maze of palm-lined streets and avenues.

The city is known for being an exciting juxtaposition of celebrity lifestyle and authentic downtown energy, with the bold Hollywood sign gazing majestically over many vibrant districts below. As expected, there's glamorous shopping on Rodeo Drive and celebrity-spotting in Beverly Hills as well as the delights of Hollywood at Universal Studios or on the Walk of Fame.

But those of you wanting to explore further afield and perhaps catch some rays may be surprised to find that the nearest beach is approximately eight miles away - making the splendour of the West Coast ripe for exploration.

Downtown Santa Monica



Santa Monica is the starting point for all coastal exploits, being the closest beachfront to the city centre. This pretty, bustling oceanfront town positively reverberates with the spirit of the 50's, centred around the fabulous and somewhat kitsch amusement pier where it's traditional to take a ride on the huge Ferris wheel (and maybe a selfie too while you're at it) when you visit these parts.

Of course, the true delight has to be the expanse of golden sand stretching in front of the city – far wider than those usually found in Europe. It's not all about the sun lounger; for the cosmopolitan types there are plenty of upscale shopping malls and streets for you to venture into and a culinary culture to rival the best, complete with regular farmer's market and plenty of trend-setting eateries.

Once you've spent a few days soaking up the delights of this seaside stop, why not consider heading a little further south along the coast? You'll be surprised at how much change an hour's drive can make if you decide to take the scenic Pacific Coast Highway along to **Huntington**. Here the culture is all about surfing, with a surfer's walk of fame and miles of unspoilt beachfront.

Huntington Pier



Gone is the brightly-coloured pier of Santa Monica, instead replaced by a beautifully uncluttered pier that struts into the ocean and ends with a Ruby's diner perched precariously at the tip. You may actually recognize the beachfront if you stop by – it's streamed live to Hollister stores all over the UK so you might have seen these golden sands before. Huntington truly is the American idyll, offering trendy food outlets and a laid-back vibe.

Still not done with the coast? Why not head on to **Newport Beach**. It's a quarter of an hour away but presents yet another scene for visitors to experience. The tone here is decidedly upmarket, with stunning resorts, luxury shopping and gourmet dining to be enjoyed close at hand. Hire a Segway and zoom along the promenade for a fun thrill or head onto the pier to make a trip to the Ruby's diner – set at the end as if in homage to Huntington's pier.

Newport Pier and Beach



For the ultimate in Newport luxury I'd suggest a stay at the **Pelican Hill Resort**. This gigantic hillside resort overlooks the town and the ocean while offering two golf courses, a world-class spa and exquisite dining. A shopping trip to Fashion Island complete the experience – offering outdoor retail therapy in the form of many well-known shops such as Nordstrom and Macy's.

There we have it – three glorious beaches and a cumulative driving distance of just 65 miles in and around Los Angeles – all starting from the popular hub of LAX and the perfect base from which to explore the rest of **California**. Who'd have known it could be so easy?

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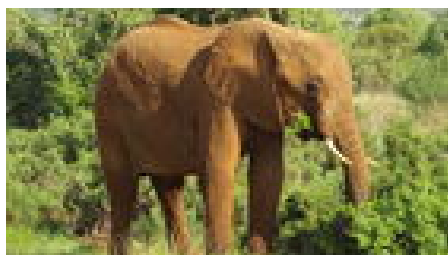
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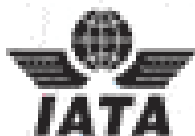
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