

California dreaming

Santa Monica is the ideal destination thanks to the 340 days of sunshine

Sea, sand and sunshine: what more can you ask for on holiday? Usually dark clouds try their best to spoil any sunbathing plans we may have, but not so in Santa Monica. The classic Californian seaside town has everything you see in the movies: palm trees lining the streets beside golden beaches and beautiful people going about their business.

Santa Monica's eight square miles are packed with a variety of sights and attractions from golden beaches to the stylish hangouts of the rich and famous.

The beaches are one of the main attractions, and watching the sunset over the Pacific drinking cocktails is something you don't forget in a hurry. It's also a favourite with honeymooners and young travellers who want to see the world in style. Because of its location it's the perfect base for visiting California's attractions including theme parks such as Disney World and Hollywood and its clean streets and relative security means it's a refreshing change from busy Los Angeles.

If shopping is more your thing there are four main shopping areas including the exclusive boutiques and stores on the Third Street Promenade which are celeb magnets and are the ideal place to pick up some designer items at a fraction of the euro price.

WHAT TO DO?

If you enjoy the great outdoors then Santa Monica has more than enough to offer: from boating and surfing to walking and cycling. You can't go to Santa Monica without visiting the original Muscle Beach where people would come to watch free gymnastic and acrobatic exhibitions. One of the



Santa Monica has plenty to keep everyone entertained, young and old. For more information visit:

SANTA MONICA PIER:
www.santamonicipier.org

VISITOR INFORMATION:
www.santamonica.com

THE AMBROSE HOTEL:
www.ambrosehotel.com

THE BEST WESTERN GATEWAY:
www.bestwesterncalifornia.com

best ways to see the coastal area around Santa Monica is on bike. There are shops hiring out bikes situated around the famous pier and on the beaches. We spent two hours cycling in the sun from the pier to the end of the beach, and the designated cycle paths make it an enjoyable experience for everyone, from the person who hasn't got on a bike since childhood to the experienced cyclist. There's nothing quite like feeling a warm breeze in your hair as you cycle past beaches of people playing volleyball and enjoying the surf.

The Santa Monica Pier, which has just celebrated its centenary, is one attraction you can't miss. Kids will love the rides in Pacific Park, while the historic 1922 carousel will appeal to everyone's inner-child. The interactive aquarium is great for families, while dare-devils will love the Trapeze School New York on the pier which offers daily flying trapeze

and silks classes. There's plenty on offer in the surrounding area – you can step back in time and see the weird and wonderful hanging out in Venice Beach, or see the fabulous homes of the famous on the Malibu coast.

WHERE TO EAT?

When you get hungry there are restaurants which cater to every taste from American cuisine to Mexican and Caribbean food. For breakfast you should try La Grande Orange where you can get fresh healthy food such as its egg white omelettes or a breakfast burrito for a reasonable price.

For fish, lobster and steak try The Lobster – one of the most popular restaurants where you get a great view of the pier. For Japanese-inspired cuisine with Californian twist try Koi restaurant, a favourite with the locals and a hang out for Hollywood A-listers.

WHERE TO STAY?

If you're planning a family holiday then you can't go wrong with Santa Monica. The Best Western Gateway hotel on Santa Monica Boulevard is ideal for those with children, with decent sized, clean, comfortable bedrooms and free parking – it's an ideal location for visiting California's attractions including theme parks such as Disney World and the bright lights of Hollywood. The iHop restaurant downstairs is a family



The 100 year old Santa Monica Pier is one attraction all the family will fall in love with

favourite and the free Wifi is a great addition. If you want something a bit more upmarket try the The Ambrose Hotel, a mid-sized boutique hotel with a fitness centre, free Wifi and free parking. The suites have plenty of room and the professional yet friendly staff make it an experience to remember.

The Ambrose is modern yet comfortable and they pay close attention to being environmentally friendly, something worth bearing in mind when you've taken a long-haul flight from Ireland. **WW**

WHAT'S ON IN SANTA MONICA

NEW OUTDOOR MALL

Famous retailers Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, Hugo Boss, Burberry and Kitson will have a new home at the brand new Santa Monica Place Mall which opens 6 August and will be the fifth shopping centre in the city.

GLOW 2010

A Dusk 'til Dawn Arts and Culture Festival in Santa Monica on 25 September, 2010 will be the second biannual Glow event in Santa Monica, where over 200,000 people will gather on the beaches of Santa Monica and the Santa Monica Pier to experience and engage with enchanting and public art displays from dusk until dawn. For more information visit www.glowsantamonica.org