

# Meetings®

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THE DESTINATION EXPERTS

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california

2009

Solid  
Gold

the elegant Montage Beverly Hills, includes rooftop space for 40.

In West Hollywood, the former Bel Age has been transformed into the stylish, all-suite London West Hollywood, complete with a signature Gordon Ramsay restaurant, a rooftop deck and a spacious ballroom. Additionally, Hyatt's 257-room Andaz West Hollywood opened in January, and the city also recently unveiled the meetings-capable Voda Spa concept.

L.A.'s beach cities are "surfing" a wave of hotel developments. Newly minted for \$30 million, Santa Monica's 71-room Shangri-La reopened this spring, while in Marina Del Rey, the Marriott and The Ritz-Carlton, Marina del Rey have completed top-to-bottom renovations, group space included.

Eclectic Long Beach, California's fifth-largest city, is more switched on than ever. Along with the rejuvenated Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, the city has just announced a series of hotel relaunches and debuts, including the 35-room Varden, a remake of the historic Dolly Varden; the \$20 million recast of the Coast into the Latin-themed Hotel Maya; and the new 138-room Avia Long Beach. The city's glittering downtown is now 9,000 LED lights brighter, and its signature attraction, the *Queen Mary*, is continuing the \$6 million makeover of its guest rooms and meeting space. On the Palos Verdes Peninsula, the new 582-room Terranea Resort has over 63,000 square feet of waterfront space.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles International Airport is undergoing a \$723.5 million expansion.

In Orange County, Huntington Beach's Spanish-influenced Hyatt Regency Resort and Spa comes with 517 rooms and more than 100,000 square feet of meeting space, while Newport Beach recently welcomed the luxurious 204-room Resort at Pelican Hill, and the \$75 million renovation of the Newport Beach Marriott Hotel & Spa is reportedly the brand's largest makeover ever. Laguna Beach's 130-room Pacific Edge Hotel is getting a vintage beach-themed makeover, and farther inland, the 174-room Renaissance ClubSport Aliso Viejo has six meeting rooms.

Joining the Anaheim Convention

Center on Anaheim's expansive new Center Walk are the newly transformed Anaheim Marriott and Hilton Anaheim, together boasting 2,603 rooms and nearly 1.5 million square feet of space. With its landmark arena currently being modernized, the convention center is slated for an expansion. Once Disney's Grand California Hotel & Spa expansion is completed this fall, the hotel will feature 945 guest rooms.

Delegates arriving at John Wayne International Airport can get straight to business at the recently upgraded Hilton Irvine/Orange County Airport. Other hotels in affordable, well-linked Irvine include the Doubletree Hotel Irvine Spectrum and Crowne Plaza Irvine.

Ontario Airport arrivals have the newly remodeled Hilton Ontario Airport, while the 484-room Doubletree recently completed a \$22 million renovation, and the city's convention-ready Citizens Business Bank Arena opened last October.

Completed in March, the Pasadena Convention Center's \$150 million expansion includes 55,000 square feet of new exhibit space and a 25,000-square-foot ballroom. The city's landmark 380-room Langham, Huntington Hotel & Spa is a local treasure.

San Diego has forever possessed the natural appeal of, say, St. Tropez or Miami. Now with dozens of meetings and convention hotels and counting, it's ready for its global close-up.

The San Diego Convention Center just announced plans for an expansion, while sleek new hotel options include the 184-room Se San Diego, the 1,109-room Hilton San Diego Bayfront and the 210-room Hotel Indigo, while the opulent, century-old US Grant, a Starwood Luxury Collection Hotel, is back after an extended renovation.

The iconic Hotel Del Coronado comes fully equipped for meetings and leisure, while another area treasure, the circa-1935 La Jolla Beach & Tennis Club, is custom-built for secluded incentives and retreats, along with its sister property, La Jolla Shores Hotel.

La Jolla is also home to the recently renovated Embassy Suites San Diego-La Jolla.

In San Diego North, the latest lux-

ury resorts to debut are The Grand Del Mar and the Sheraton Carlsbad Resort & Spa. Additionally, Rancho Bernardo Inn unveiled a major renovation last year; L'Auberge Del Mar Resort & Spa recently opened a new spa; and Pala Casino Resort recently completed a \$100 million expansion.

In East San Diego County, the newest option is the upscale Borrego Ranch Resort & Spa in Borrego Springs, complete with an array of outdoor adventure pursuits.



**Retro Revival:** The Riviera Resort & Spa in Palm Springs has a groovy new look that preserves its vintage flair.

Palm Springs and its surrounding desert communities provide the setting for a world-class collection of 240 hotels and resorts. More than \$2 billion in ongoing hospitality projects are scheduled to come on-line in the region by 2011.

Recent arrivals include the new incarnation of the Riviera Resort & Spa following a \$70 million transformation of the landmark property; the funky Ace Hotel & Swim Club; Embassy Suites La Quinta Hotel & Spa; and the Holiday Inn Palm Springs City Center.

Properties scheduled to open over the next couple of years include the Fairmont Avanterra in Palm Desert; Hard Rock Hotel Palm Springs; the Mondrian Hotel in Palm Springs; The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage; and Sheraton Resort Hotel and Conference Center in Cathedral City.

Among the many properties that have recently completed renovations are Hyatt Regency Suites Palm Springs and Westin Mission Hills Resort & Villas in Rancho Mirage, a Moroccan-styled desert palace set on 360 acres surrounded by water and lush gardens. ✨

### Coasting Along

That Southern California's DNA is gilded by its fabled surf and sunshine culture is indisputable. Cloudy, though, is the question of the state's best surfing locale. This July, *Surfer* magazine anointed Santa Cruz the nation's premier surf town, prompting a stiff lip curl from Huntington Beach, known as "Surf City USA." Swell as the surf attributes truly are in each city, surfers from San Diego to San Francisco have any number of top picks, with Encinitas (third), San Clemente (7th) and Malibu (10th) also making *Surfer* magazine's list.

Especially for groups in San Diego, coastal Orange County and Los Angeles, beach culture is readily accessible via SoCal's piers and boardwalks. Celebrating its centennial this year, the storied Santa Monica Pier's circa-1916 carousel is a choice event venue. Like its peers at Redondo, Pismo and other beaches, Santa Monica's Pier swims in amusements and dining options.

At Newport Beach—named one of the nation's cleanest this year by the National Resources Defense Council—groups can take to the sea in Newport's signature Duffy Boats or aboard actor John Wayne's *Wild Goose* yacht, operated by Hornblower Cruises and Events.

In chic Marina del Rey, groups can charter all manner of sea-faring events.

"It's all about water here," says Beverly Moore, executive director of the Marina Del Rey CVB.

From Long Beach's electric, eclectic bayfront to Pebble Beach's idyllic 17-Mile Drive, water is California's lifeblood.

Dubbed "the greatest meeting of land and sea in the world," Carmel's Point Lobos State Reserve welcomes field-trippers, hikers and scuba divers, plus events at Carmel River State Beach.

At Point Reyes National Seashore north of San Francisco, visitors can marvel at 5,000-pound elephant seals and other marine life from Chimney Rock.

### Parking Spots

California's coastal redwood parks—some 40 in all, stretching from Humboldt County to Big Sur—are state signatures. Logging has claimed most of these Ice Age ancients, but groups can still meet these marvels at places like Humboldt's Redwood National Park,

where some old-growth titans reportedly tower higher than Lady Liberty.

Mighty, too, are the behemoths of Sequoia National Park—established in 1890 as America's second (behind Yellowstone) national park and home to colossal Mt. Whitney—and nearby Kings Canyon National Park, with both wildernesses also featuring granite domes, waterfalls and extensive caving opportunities.

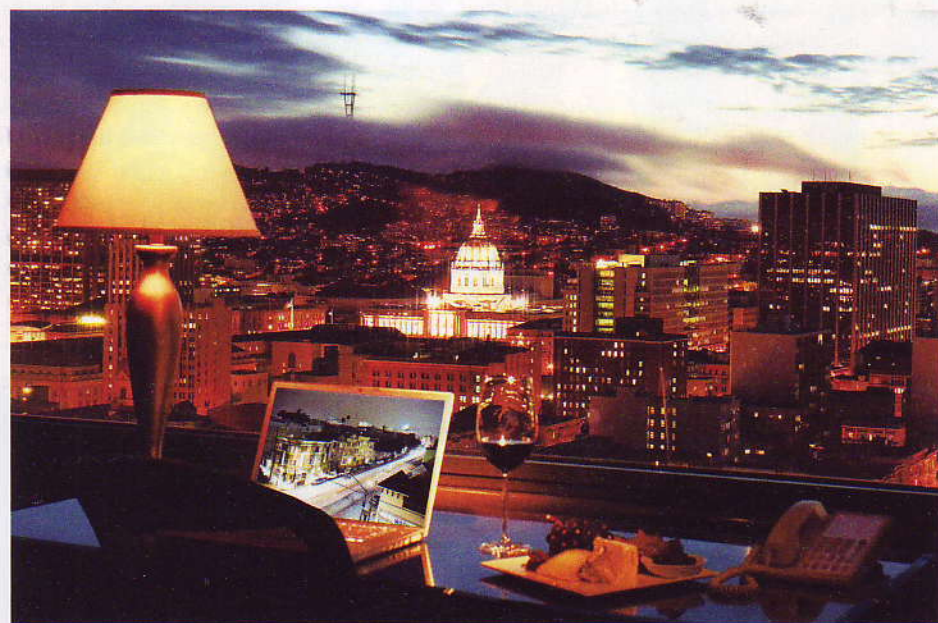
Awe-inspiring at every turn, Yosemite National Park is a natural masterpiece beyond compare.

"Our backyard in Yosemite Valley includes El Capitan, the towering cliffs of

Glacier Point and Yosemite Falls, America's highest waterfall," says Kenny Karsh, public relations manager for the park's concessions operator, Delaware North.

Meetings are best reserved for the shoulder and off-season months, he adds, with activities including Merced River rafting, hiking and skiing at Badger Pass.

In Santa Rosa, where the CVB recently adopted "Place of Plenty" as its slogan, a popular retreat is the 400-acre Safari West. Populated by over 600 exotic animals, this "Sonoma Serengeti" comes with 31 tent cabins (in-tent massages available) and two meeting spaces.



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