

Santa Monica is California dreamy!

Experience the best of southern California culture in this sunny, sophisticated beach town!

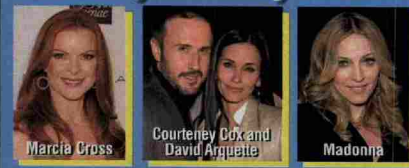
Glance outside and chances are you'll see just the kind of chilly, gray day you expect at this time of year. But it doesn't look that way out every window in North America. If you're lucky enough to be taking in the Santa Monica scene, it's all blue sky, sunshine and sparkling ocean vistas!

This southern California city, perched at the edge of the Pacific Ocean, occupies just 8.3 square miles, but every inch is packed with vacation possibilities. The wide beaches that attracted the first vacationers a century ago continue to define this SoCal beach town. But Santa Monica today entices as much with its hip shopping, culinary and art scenes as it does with its gorgeous coastline and amusement-packed pier. Plus, in the city that embodies the fitness-centered lifestyle, there's always a parade of beautiful people biking or jogging by. If you're the athletic type, join the throng; if not, keep your eyes open—you may spy some A-listers in the crowd. Hoping to spot lots of celebs? Stake your place outside the Kodak Theater on February 24, where the 80th Annual Academy Awards is scheduled to draw Hollywood's biggest stars. The theater is an easy bus ride from Santa Monica!

Did you know?

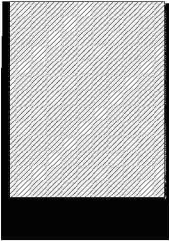
The first hot dog on a stick was sold in Santa Monica!

Celebs you may see there

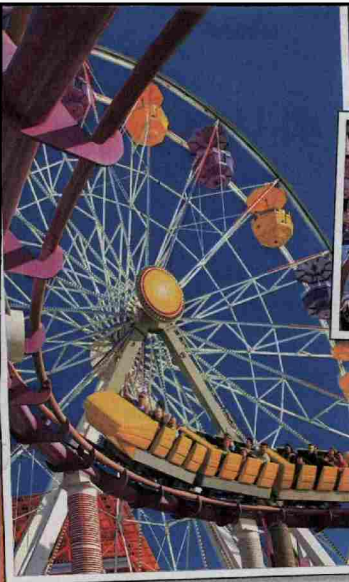


Marcia Cross shopped for her twins at Jenny Bec's Montana Avenue shop. **Madonna** indulged in spa treatments at Shutters Hotel on the Beach; and **Courteney Cox** and **David Arquette** recently dined at Le Merigot Beach Hotel.

Photos: David Musnich/Corbis; Robert Landau/Santamonica.com; Dave G. Houser/Houserstock.com; Mark Gibson/markgibsonphoto.com; Masterfile; Norman Wharton/Alamy; Sarah Hadley/Alamy; Paphoto/Alamy; Wendy Connett/Alamy; Bill Heinsohn/Alamy; Jon Kopaloff/Getty Images; Jeff Kravitz/Getty Images; Jon Furniss/Getty Images; courtesy of The Lobster.



Santa Monica's 7 must-sees



1 SANTA MONICA PIER
 Pencil in time for a playdate at the city's most-recognized landmark! Open all year, the pier's the place to ride a historic wooden carousel, catch ocean views from atop the world's only solar-powered Ferris wheel or tour the aquarium and touch a sea star!

4 SOUTH BAY BIKE PATH
 Embrace the SoCal fitness rage with a (rental) bike ride along part or all of this 22 mile-long paved path. Go it alone or take the Legends Tour, a leisurely guided bike ride that takes you past Santa Monica and Venice Beach points of interest.



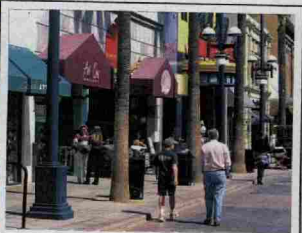
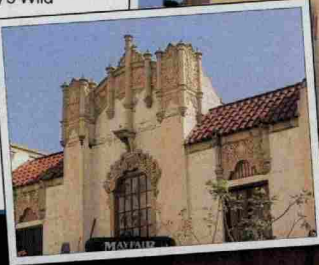
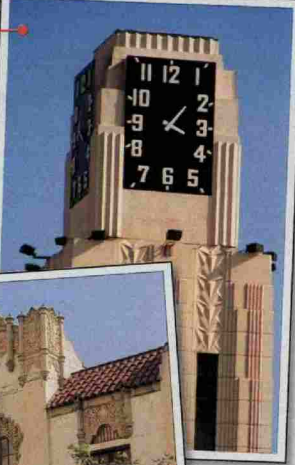
5 THE RESTAURANT SCENE
 The 2007 Zagat Survey named it the best area for great eating in Southern California, so Santa Monica's culinary scene is top-notch. Plus, with 400+ eateries, the array of choices is huge!

2 PALISADES PARK
 Set at the top of Santa Monica's sandstone cliffs, this park's beautiful vistas make it popular with visitors and locals alike.
Tip: Before you explore, stop at the Visitor Kiosk in the park and pick up info about park and city attractions.



6 SANTA MONICA STATE BEACH
 One of California's broadest beaches, this stretch is known for its soft golden sands. Enjoy all kinds of activities along its 3.5-mile length: Stretch out for a snooze, go for a jog, join a volleyball game or get in a workout at famous Muscle Beach!

3 DOWNTOWN WALKING TOUR
 This Saturday a.m. walking tour takes you through 130 years of Santa Monica history in just two hours! You'll pass buildings in styles that range from Streamline Moderne to Gothic Revival and hear about the city's Wild West past. For more historical insights, visit the California Heritage Museum.



7 THIRD STREET PROMENADE
 This pedestrians-only stretch of Third Street is lined with boutiques and national retailers. For upscale shopping, make it Montana Avenue; for fun and funky, head for Main Street.

THE SCOOP
What to pack: athletic footwear, sun hat, chic workout gear.
What to buy: stylish workout wear, designer goods for your home.
Median family income: \$61,423.
Median price of a family home: \$1,000,000+.
For more info: call the Santa Monica Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-544-5319, or go to www.santamonica.com.

NEXT WEEK: It's a great time to visit the Florida Keys!

