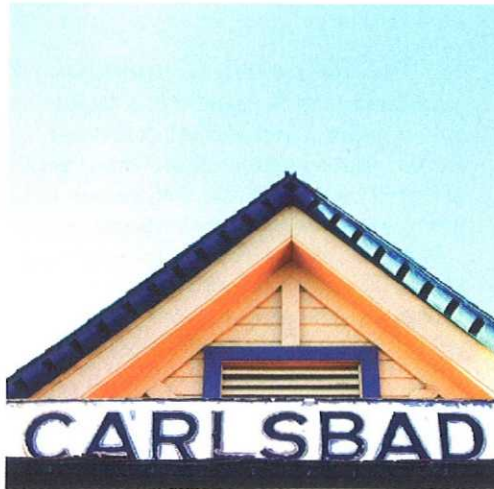


WHERE MAGAZINE

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EXPLORING North Coast



Left to right: the San Diego Botanic Garden in Encinitas; the Carlsbad train depot; a surfer heads down the long staircase to reach the surf break at Swami's.

Del Mar, Solana Beach, Encinitas, Carlsbad ... These cities exemplify the good life.

DEL MAR

Del Mar's celebrity status began more than 70 years ago, when the oceanside paradise became home of the **Del Mar Racetrack** (2260 *Jimmy Durante Blvd.*). Actors Bing Crosby and Pat O'Brien helped establish the track—and its track record for hosting the Hollywood elite at the **Thoroughbred Club**. Ava Gardner, W.C. Fields, Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz, Jimmy Durante and Mickey Rooney were among the regulars in the late 1930s, '40s and '50s. Today, the racing season runs from mid-July to early September, but exciting events are held at the **Del Mar Fairgrounds** year-round.

Jimmy Durante Boulevard—named for the famous entertainer who lived in Del Mar—paves the way from the track to the heart of the village. The intersection of Camino del Mar and 15th Street forms Del Mar's bustling center. The three-story **Del Mar Plaza** (see p. 56) has scenic fountains and sweeping ocean views, plus upscale shops like **White House Black Market**; **Loghman Jewelers**, with Italian jewelry and watches; and locally designed hats from **Del Mar Hat Company**, which'll come in handy at next year's horse races.

There's more retail along Del Mar's main street, Camino del Mar, and the area can easily be covered on foot. The shopping district is lined with gift stores like **Sundancer** (1418 *Camino del Mar*), plus several casual cafés and eateries.

More great shopping is a short drive away. Just east of the Fairgrounds, off I-5 on Via de la Valle, is **Flower Hill Promenade** (2720 *Via de la Valle*), where shops include the specialty gift store **Siena Julia** and **The Book Works**, plus novelty dessert shop **Nothing Bundt Cakes**.

At the end of the day, walk to **Seagrove Park** (*Coast Blvd. at 15th St.*) to enjoy a brilliant sunset. From the hush of the surf you can almost hear the echo of Bing Crosby, singing the jingle he wrote in honor of the track: *Where the turf meets the surf, down at old Del Mar...*

SOLANA BEACH

Solana Beach is home to some of the most chic stores in San Diego County. The **Cedros Design District** begins at South Cedros Avenue and Lomas Santa Fe Drive, easily accessible by **The Coaster**, the train that runs from downtown San Diego to Oceanside.

More than 50 shops spanning a quarter-mile feature fashion, home furnishings and antiques. Most of the boutiques on South Cedros are housed in renovated Quonset huts (iron warehouses shaped like a half-cylinder), giving this neighborhood an artistic feel.

Begin a sidewalk stroll across the street from the train station at **Tobi Blatt** (152 N. Cedros Ave.), with trendy threads for women from labels like True Religion. Cross Lomas Santa Fe to explore South Cedros: We love **Tucci** (130 S. Cedros Ave.) for women's apparel and designer denim, and **HIS** (111 S. Cedros Ave. #200), a store geared towards the style-conscious guy. The sweet smells springing from **Mistral** (146 S. Cedros Ave.), a small bungalow with soaps and lotions imported from France, are intoxicating.

Farther down the street you'll find hip home décor and art books at **Solo** (309 S. Cedros Ave.) and worthwhile galleries including **Aaron Chang Ocean Art Gallery**, with stunning photos from the legendary surf photographer, and **Susan Street Fine Art**, a must for lovers of contemporary art (both at 415 S. Cedros Ave.).

Break for a coffee at the hidden **Lockwood Table Café** (346-B S. Cedros Ave.), a casual spot using fresh, locally sourced ingredients, or head back toward the train station for a bite at **Claire's** (246 N. Cedros Ave.), the kind of eco-conscious place that provides preferred parking for electric and hybrid cars.

Nestled among the retail shops is one of the county's top live music venues: **The Belly Up Tavern** (see p. 58), a Solana Beach landmark for more than 35 years.

ENCINITAS

Encinitas has a small-town feel and boasts some of the best surf spots in California.

Step back in time by strolling downtown. The historic **La Paloma Theatre** (471 S. Coast Hwy. 101), which still hosts films and concerts, has anchored the district since the 1920s. Boutiques and restaurants also line the strip: **gar'den•ology** (587 S. Coast Hwy. 101) is a must-stop for green thumbs, while **Book Tales** (603 S. Coast Hwy. 101) caters to literary

types with its stacks of vintage hardcovers.

In the distance to the south, you'll see a unique silhouette among the palm trees. The **Self-Realization Fellowship Retreat and Hermitage** (215 K St.), with its lotus blossom-shaped towers, dates back to 1937. A portion of the grounds is open free to the public. A walk through the lush, cliffside gardens, complete with views of surfers at nearby **Swami's Beach** (1298 S. Coast Hwy. 101), is a relaxing way to spend the afternoon.

Down the road, **The Lumberyard's** 27 shops include stylish clothier **Mog & Rue**, modern home-and-garden store **Grounded** and bath-and-body haven **Dreamy**. There's also an array of wine bars, eateries and cafés, many with outdoor seating (937 S. Coast Hwy. 101).

North Coast Highway 101 runs through sleepy **Leucadia**, where it's easy to speed right by gems like **Lou's Records** (434 N. Coast Hwy. 101), with its huge selection of LPs and CDs, and **Ducky Waddles Emporium** (414 N. Coast Hwy. 101) with its excellent collection of books on all things arty or bawdy.

A great cluster of shops is found at **The Gold Coast** (466 N. Coast Hwy. 101), whose tenants include the cute, hippie-ish boutique **it's a luv thing** and **deepFling**, with silver jewelry from Scandinavian designers. A short drive inland leads to **San Diego Botanic Garden**, a 35-acre treasure showcasing more than 3,000 rare and exotic plants (see p. 54).

CARLSBAD

Downtown Carlsbad is a picturesque seaside village with tree-lined roads, restaurants and boutique shopping. Along Carlsbad Village Drive, the main drag, you'll find two local landmarks: **Ocean House** (300 Carlsbad Village Drive), a restaurant and nighttime hot

spot that boasts beautiful Victorian architecture, and nearby **Frazier's Well** (2802 Carlsbad Blvd.), where sea captain John Frazier discovered mineral water in 1882.

Next to Ocean House is **Carlsbad Village Faire**, a shopping center home to several casual eateries, shops and the **Carlsbad-Oceanside Art League Gallery**, with paintings by local artists. Across the street, **Spin Records** (370 Grand Ave.) sells CDs and vinyl.

Nearby State Street is home to several antique stores and a few upscale shops, such as **Fairen Del** (2940 State St.), which has fine leather goods, and chic clothing boutique **M Collection** (2971 State St.).

A short drive east of the freeway leads to some of the best outlet shopping in the county. Just off Interstate 5 at Palomar Airport Road are the **Carlsbad Premium Outlets** (see p. 56), which feature a variety of eateries and brand-name stores, including BCBG, Kenneth Cole and Michael Kors.

East of the freeway, more attractions are clustered together: Continuing on Palomar Airport Road from the outlet stores will lead you to **Legoland** (see p. 54), 128 acres of kid-friendly entertainment that includes a new Sea Life Aquarium. Nearby, the **Museum of Making Music** (see p. 55) is filled with musical memorabilia. **La Costa Resort and Spa** (2100 Costa del Mar Road) is home to the **Chopra Center for Well Being**, with spa therapies and wellness programs created by holistic specialist Deepak Chopra. Two miles south of La Costa is **The Forum** (see p. 56), an outdoor, Spanish-style mall whose shops include **Tilly's** surf shop, **Anthropologie** and organic skincare shop **NuboNau**. ☺

For a map of these neighborhoods, see page 63. For information about restaurants in this area, see page 49.