



Hermosa Beach, California

by Jenn Plum

Overview

Just far enough away from high-profile Hollywood is the South Bay community of Hermosa, Manhattan and Redondo beaches. Those travelers anxious to enjoy California's sunny weather and gorgeous beaches away from the high-maintenance and crowded city center can pack their beach bags and head to this residential enclave known for its white sands and active pier scenes.

Hermosa Beach is the center of the universe for some die-hard beach volleyball players, including amateurs and professionals, and there always seems to be intense serving and spiking action on the 1.5-mile stretch of sand. The community takes pride in its abundance of outdoor beach activities, which include surfing, swimming, paddleball and, of course, sunbathing. The bustle of activity is reminiscent of songs by the Beach Boys or reruns of Baywatch. The Strand is the place to see and be seen both during the day and come nightfall.

By day, this paved boardwalk that borders the beach is a thoroughfare for bikers, bladers, joggers and strollers. At night, the Strand is a great people-watching spot as crowds fill the restaurants and bars. Kids going through videogame withdrawal will find relief at the Hermosa Penny Arcade located on the pier as well.

It is easy to celebrate a low-key beach week without ever leaving Hermosa Beach and the neighboring beaches - Manhattan, Redondo and Long. However, many will find the lure of nearby Los Angeles, glamorous Beverly Hills and starlit Hollywood hard to resist, which is fine as they are all a short drive from Hermosa. It is possible to spend the day touring the nearby neighborhoods and still get back to the beach to ride a few more waves before the sun goes down. Then, head to a bar on the Strand in the appropriate attire, i.e., shorts and flip-flops, to celebrate happy hour with the lifeguards getting off duty.

Ratings

Child-Friendliness rating: 4 of 5. A wide range of children's and family activities keep kids busy at the beach, the Strand and the nearby neighborhoods.

Swimming rating: 4 of 5. The water is clean and generally calm, and temperatures are cooler than the Caribbean and hover around 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

Sand rating: 5 of 5. The wide strip of sand is great for

strolling, lounging and, of course, volleyball.

Atmosphere rating: 4 of 5. A great beach escape close enough to downtown Los Angeles for a night in the city.

Non-Beach Activities rating: 5 of 5: Something for everyone is available within a short driving distance, and there are plenty of indoor activities for the occasional rainy day.

Accommodations

Most Luxurious

Beach House Hotel at Hermosa Beach

Where: 1300 The Strand

Phone: 1-888-895-4559; 1-310-374-3001

Web site: www.beach-house.com

Rates: \$224 to \$359 a night

The luxe amenities, attentive staff and noise-insulated walls trick you into thinking you're the only guest at the Beach House Hotel. Even with 96 rooms, this beachside getaway maintains a homey atmosphere thanks to the dotting staff. The rooms are large and comfortable, and come nightfall, you'll hope that the temperature takes a dip, offering the perfect excuse for snuggling in front of a fire in the wood-burning fireplace—just one of the special touches that make each room dreamy.

Food & Drink / Attractions

Best Italian

The Bottle Inn Ristorante

Where: 26 22nd Street, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

Phone: +1 (310) 376-9595

Hours: Lunch: Monday-Friday 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; Dinner: 7 nights a week from 6:00 p.m.

The Bottle Inn has everything you would expect from a fine Italian restaurant: an extensive and noteworthy wine list, ambience, history, a delicious house dressing and a menu brimming with pasta, basil and cheese. This unpretentious treasure has been serving Italian treats for 28 years and its experience shows in the consistently good food, helpful staff, four-star wine list and heaps of accolades over the years. Pretend you're in a Mediterranean village and dine al fresco on the patio - a great location to watch the dolphins swimming off the shoreline of the Pacific.

Best Irish Bar

Hennessey's Tavern

Where: 8 Pier Avenue, Hermosa Beach, CA 90524

Phone: +1 (310) 372-5759

Web site: www.hennesseystavern.com

While it may not be the most authentic Irish pub, the fun factor and great view of the beach make Hennessey's a great watering hole. With locations around the state, the Hermosa Beach outpost is a favorite with locals and tourists heading off the beach for a happy hour or recovering from the night before at breakfast. The menu is more American than Irish, but does contain fish and chips, Irish "nachos" (heaps of sliced potatoes served nacho-style) and a nouveau Irish-Mexican-American fusion breakfast.

Best Family Dining

Good Stuff

Where: 1286 The Strand, Hermosa Beach, CA 90266

Phone: +1 (310) 374-2334

Web site: <http://www.eatgoodstuff.com>

Good Stuff is not only a favorite breakfast joint in town, it is also a favorite lunch spot and dinner destination. The vast menu features staples with a creative twist like mahi mahi and eggs, teriyaki hamburgers and Dijon turkey meatloaf - all pleasing to the palette and the wallet, as most items on the menu are under \$10. Offering three meals a day, at the three beaches of the South Bay area, it is no wonder that this place is always packed. Good food, good service and good location ... Good Stuff really does have the goods.

Best Entertainment

Comedy & Magic Club

Where: 1018 Hermosa Avenue, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

Phone: +1 (310) 372-1193

Web site: <http://www.comedyandmagicclub.info>

Showtimes: Tuesday through Thursday, 8:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 7:30 and 10:00 p.m.; Sunday, 7:00 p.m.

Rates: \$12-\$15 on weekdays; more on weekends and for special shows; two-drink minimum

Off the beaten path and away from the glitz of Hollywood, this small comedy club might seem unremarkable until you look at the schedule, which boasts some of the biggest names in comedy. Many well-known comedians appear here - announced and unannounced - to test out new material and prepare for upcoming shows. Robin Williams surprised audiences with an unannounced visit that lasted for a week while other favorite funny guys who have made appearances include Jerry Seinfeld, Paul Reiser and Jim Carrey. King of late-night television and the host of The Tonight Show, Jay Leno has been performing a weekly show every Sunday night for 18 years, at a bargain \$25.

Best Day Trip

Catalina Island

Web site: <http://www.visitcatalina.org>

Boats depart from Newport Beach, Long Beach, San Pedro and Dana Point; for jet-setters who don't want to waste any time traveling, helicopter trips are also a possibility. The myriad of outdoor activities or the quaint social center of the island at Avalon offer the best of both worlds. Snorkeling, SCUBA, horseback riding, kayaking and hiking are all great outdoor options that can be capped off with some window shopping, gallery hopping and a gourmet meal in Avalon. Bring a camera as photo opportunities present themselves at almost every turn; shutterbugs should be on the lookout for grazing buffalo.