

THE ULTIMATE SURFER'S GUIDE TO ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

When visiting Orange County, CA people often feel like they can't do it all. And let's be honest, it's a perfectly fair way to feel considering there is so much to do. While Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm and other tourist attractions are fun to experience, this guide focuses more on local hotspots and hangouts that don't market themselves to tourists. Enjoy!

In the mood for some delicious seafood! Check out [Bear Flag Fish Co](#), which has locations in Newport Beach and Newport Coast. I prefer the Newport Coast location because it is usually less crowded and parking is super easy. Just inland from Newport Beach is [Mendocino Farms](#) who specializes in fresh and healthy salads, sandwiches and more. My favorite is their Chicken Cobb salad. When I worked in Newport Beach, this was where I ate lunch quite often. What about breakfast on the sand? At [The Beachomber Cafe](#) in Crystal Cove (In between Newport Beach and Newport Coast) you can enjoy a delicious breakfast while taking in one of the best views around. They are also open for Lunch and Dinner, and generally don't take reservations so be sure to get there early. If you find yourself inland from the beach, but still in Orange County then [Big O Pizza](#) (Mission Viejo) and [Urban Grill and Wine Bar](#) (Foothill Ranch) are both worth a visit. Keep in mind that Urban Grill has an amazing happy hour which includes Pesto Grilled Cheese Sandwiches! If you have the option, ask for Christina or Mary to be your waitress!

Last but not least is [La Tiendita](#) in the small surf town of San Clemente. While San Clemente beaches can't compare to Laguna Beach (in my opinion), their surfing is incredible and ranges from T-Street to Trestles. The same waves that Kolohe Andino perfected his technique on. After a long surf session, La Tiendita is the place to go. It's a hole in the wall Mexican food place that is hard to describe. From the outside it looks like you might get sick eating their (not a good 1st date spot), but the food is really good. Not to mention very affordable. This is truly a local spot and don't be surprised if you run into a professional surfer or two while enjoying your meal. I love their carnitas tacos and cheese quesadillas!

If you came to a Southern California for the pristine beaches, than Laguna Beach should be your first stop. It's crystal clear water, relaxed atmosphere and numerous beaches makes it unlike anywhere else in Orange County. El Morro is a newly renovated state beach that has great bathrooms and plenty of sand to stretch out in, although it does cost \$15 to park. [Crescent Bay](#) is a popular high school hangout for non-Laguna residents and offers some fun shorebreak barrels to bodysurf with the right swell. If you want to experience Laguna Beach like a true local, then park in the residential neighborhoods above Pacific Coast Highway and walk down to Thalia, Oaks or Brooks St. This is where I spent countless summer days hanging out on the beach, eating [Gina's Pizza](#) and surfing with my friends. After school gets out, the beach fills up as the popular afternoon hangout spot. Feeling adventurous? Head to [Woods Cove](#) and enjoy some snorkeling or scuba diving around the countless reefs in the area. Just be careful because during high tides the beach becomes very small. Last but not least is [Salt Creek in Dana Point](#). A popular surf spot offering high performance waves and peaky barrels, it attracts a wide variety of surfers of all skill levels. During the summer, the beach fills up so you'll want to claim your spot early. And if a big swell is pulsing, then [The Wedge in Newport Beach](#) is the place to be. Just be prepared for gridlock traffic and terrible parking on the one way in, one way out street.

Outside of beach days, there are plenty of great places to hangout with friends or take that special someone on a date. If you want some shopping adventures, head to the [Irvine Spectrum](#) or [Fashion Island](#). Both our outdoor shopping malls which capitalize on our amazing weather. [The OC Mix](#) is a trendy alternative to the traditional shopping mall that mixes boutique stores, coffee shops and unique local restaurants. It's a must visit on my list. Want a different experience? Grab a Ice Cream cone and walk around [IKEA](#); a massive home furniture store that is made up of living modules that show how to use IKEA products to decorate and style your home. Find something you like? Don't worry, it's usually very affordable. Last but not least is [Balboa Island in Newport Beach](#). Grab a coffee and take a stroll along the walking path with views of Newport Harbor. If I had a couple extra million to spend on a beach house, I would buy one on Balboa Island. It's quiet, quaint and has some incredible homes.

So there you have it, a list of must visit places in Orange County, CA whether you live here full time or are just visiting for a week. As summer approaches, add these places to your bucket list, you can thank me later. Enjoy!