



## Metromix Los Angeles Home

### The water-baby beach escape

#### Get sand in your toes and the folks off your back

*By Jiyeon Yoo, Metromix*

If the folks back home only knew: In the years since moving out West, you've barely dipped a pinkie toe in the Pacific Ocean. No matter. With rising gas prices and the nuttiness of air travel, this summer affords a perfect opportunity to live out all the Gidget-loves-Moondoggie beach party fantasies everyone else seems to expect of you.

From Zuma to Belmont Shore, there's over 75 miles of Los Angeles coastline at your disposal. While a beachy good time could be had dodging the riffraff of Venice or even getting chased off Geffen's backyard in Malibu, Manhattan Beach boasts immaculately maintained sands and lies just outside the city proper—far enough for your lungs to enjoy a discernible change in air quality without going into urban withdrawal.

Getting there would normally be a straight shot down the 405 Freeway—if you're traveling at the off hours between 2 a.m. and never. Vista Del Mar, accessible from the 90 and the 105, is an alternate route that, as the name would suggest, runs along the shore. While the drive may not shave a significant amount of time or fuelage, the sweeping views and uninterrupted stretches of road kick in like nature's Xanax—a happily unmedicated way to start your vacay.

Vista Del Mar flows right into Highland Avenue, the main thoroughfare of the M.B. Once you pass Rosecrans Boulevard, welcome to El Porto—well, technically North Manhattan Beach thanks to a bureaucratic name change last year, but the fussy moniker hasn't stuck. A little worn around the edges, the area is the quintessential beach town, with rows of weathered awnings and narrow multilevel residences amid popular watering holes.

You can bunk down at the [Sea View Inn](#), a compound of five buildings straddling Highland Avenue. Want to feel like you're living by the beach? Along with conventional hotel-sized rooms, there are apartment and penthouse suites available at reasonable rates. The setting is charming, in that breezy, beach-bumming-it sort of way. But if your vacation means blowing some serious cash, continue one mere mile further, until you hit Manhattan Beach Boulevard.

Downtown M.B. has undergone a good-looking face-lift over recent years—you know, the kind that smooths away wrinkles while keeping the integrity of one's original visage. High-end boutiques cheerfully coincide with bikini shops; a shiny new [Cefiore](#) (no Pinkberry here) opened just a few doors down from the [local ice creamery](#). The 88-year-old pier majestically anchors one side of the boulevard, affording one of the Southland's best spots to enjoy the sunset. The charming six-sided building at the pier's end isn't just for looks: You can tickle starfish bellies and pester stingrays for free at the Roundhouse Aquarium.

Tucked neatly in the new Metlox Center, [Shade Hotel](#) is a glamorous boutique hotel that would give anything in Beverly Hills a run for its money. No expense has been spared in the lavishly appointed

rooms: sumptuous Tempur-Pedic beds, a huge jacuzzi-like tub, chromatherapy lighting, even a “pillow library” from which to select your perfect pillowy match. It’s every temptation to sleep and soak away your holiday—not that you should.

Both Sea View Inn and Shade Hotel offer guests complimentary use of beach cruisers, the better to traverse the Strand. Day-trippers can find rentals downtown at **Fun Bunnys**, including tandem bikes and rollerblades. The one-stop shop also rents surfboards and boogie boards. Just be sure to keep to beach rules: Surfers to the south of the pier, everyone else boogies to the north.

More adventurous water babies will find larger swells at El Porto. The popular spot for rippers gets busy at prime surfing hours, but you won’t get the fierce localism that you’d find at Surfrider or P.V. Just know your place, barney, and the goons won’t come after ya. **El Porto Surfboards** will outfit you proper for the day. And if you’re willing to get serious, **Pure Surfing Experience** offers surf camps and lessons in North and South M.B., as well as locations in El Segundo and Dockweiler Beach.

But if sun-surf-and-sand is ultimately a spectator sport for you—hey, you’re on vacay—the summer of ’08 is packed with events to bring out all the bodacious bods and bodettes. From a two-day **Surf Festival** and the **National Lifeguard Competition** to the granddaddy of all volleyball tourneys, the **Manhattan Beach Open**, it’s time to dial your SPF to red-hot.

*Jiyeon Yoo is Restaurants editor for Metromix Los Angeles...and **she knows where to get a beachside table.***

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