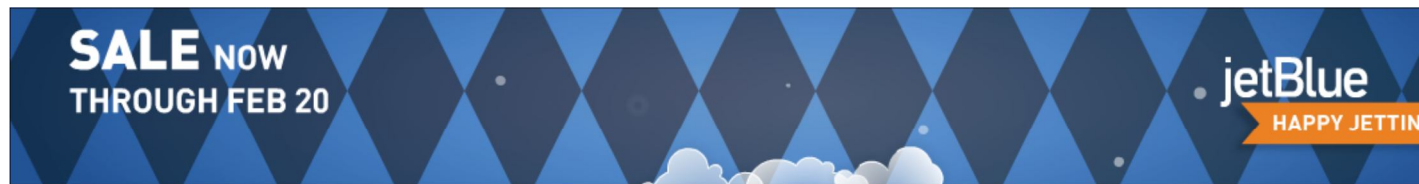


Los Angeles Times



<http://travel.latimes.com/articles/la-trw-ultimatecoasthotel1-2009feb01>

From the Los Angeles Times

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA

Seaside California hotels offering bargain rates

With bookings running low, seaside hotels are offering incredible deals. Here are several inns along California's coast that fit the bill.

By Christopher Reynolds

January 26, 2009

From San Diego to Humboldt County, these are times of difficulty for hoteliers and opportunity for travelers.

Here are the nine waterfront lodgings I used on my toe-to-tip California road trip in early January, followed by four I looked at and liked. Average price I paid: \$141.67, pre-tax.

In all 1,100 miles of California coast, there seem to be fewer than 150 hotels that are truly on the beach. In summer, on a weekend, in a year of economic boom, these hotels might charge twice what I paid. Especially in this economy, rates fluctuate.

I made all my bookings in advance (without disclosing that I was a travel journalist) and found all nine at least half-empty. In other words, I probably could have driven even better bargains as a walk-up guest. For consistency's sake, we chose Feb. 28 for a price quote (researched on Jan. 16).

San Diego

Paradise Point Resort & Spa: 1404 Vacation Road, San Diego; (800) 344-2626 or (858) 274-4630, www.paradisepoint.com. Big-time kid-friendliness and lush landscaping on 44 acres, with four pools, gentle bay-front beaches and watercraft rentals. All 462 low-rise rooms have phones and TVs. Lunch at the Barefoot Bar & Grill and dinner at the Baleensandiego weren't bad either. I paid \$119 for a lanai garden room (the most common), \$22 to park, \$15 for high-speed Internet, \$4 for morning coffee, \$1.50 each for many, many bags of duck food. Rates for Feb. 28 start at \$296.

Hermosa Beach

Beach House Hermosa Beach, 1300 the Strand, Hermosa Beach; (888) 895-4559 or (310) 374-3001, www.beach-house.com. Aimed mostly at couples and business travelers (it's 7 miles from LAX), these 96 units (opened in 1998) stand next to a lively 26-mile biking/walking path, are a block from the Hermosa Beach Pier, and all feature fireplaces, phones, TVs. No pool. I paid \$269 for a non-view room, \$22 to park; Wi-Fi and continental breakfast free. Rates for Feb. 28 start at \$289.

Oxnard

Embassy Suites Mandalay Beach Hotel & Resort, 2101 Mandalay Beach Road, Oxnard; (800) 362-2779 or (805) 984-2500, www.embassymandalay.com. This 248-room resort fronts a wide, wind-swept beach, with one pool and two hot tubs. TVs and phones in all rooms. I paid \$184.30 for a suite with two bathrooms, two TVs and a kitchenette, \$15 to park, \$9.95 for Internet, free breakfast. Rates for Feb. 28 start at \$169.

Morro Bay

Inn at Morro Bay, 60 State Park Road, Morro Bay; (800) 321-9566 or (805) 772-5651, www.innatmorrobay.com. This 98-room hotel, with pool and view restaurant, sits at the city-adjacent corner of Morro Bay State Park. Though it's on the water, you'll need to drive or walk several blocks to reach a marina or beach. All rooms have TVs and phones. I paid \$59, plus \$10.68 for Internet. Rates for Feb. 28 start at \$99, or \$169 for partial ocean view.

Ragged Point

Ragged Point Inn, 19019 Highway 1, Ragged Point; (805) 927-4502, www.raggedpointinn.com. This bluff-top complex includes a 32-room hotel, dramatic views, grass for romping kids, a restaurant (good steak dinner and breakfast), a snack bar, a gas station, a gift shop and a very rugged trail to the rocky beach about 400 feet below. Rooms have TVs but no phones. I paid \$99, Internet \$9.95, parking free. Rates for Feb. 28 start at \$139.

Half Moon Bay

Cypress Inn on Miramar Beach, 407 Mirada Road, Half Moon Bay; (800) 832-3224 or (650) 726-6002, www.innsbythe. This two-building, 18-room property stands in a mostly residential neighborhood, next to a waterfront biking-walking path. Rooms have fireplaces, but there is no pool. My room had a phone but no TV. Breakfast, parking and Internet free. I paid \$169, and got upgraded to an empty view room. Rates for Feb. 28 start at \$179 (two-night minimum).

Jenner

Timber Cove Inn, 21780 North Coast Highway 1, Jenner; (800) 987-8319 or (707) 847-3231, www.timbercoveinn.com. Sea Ranch Lodge and houses have long been the design star on this stretch of Sonoma coast, but this is a gem in the rough. The hotel is a fascinating modernist wood-stone-glass building on a spectacular and isolated rocky point. (It opened with 19 rooms in 1963; Ansel Adams apparently shot the brochure pictures.) Since September, a new owner has been making about \$2 million in long-awaited improvements. Most of the 40 rooms open now feature fireplaces, flat-screen TVs and balconies or patios. One room (508) is built around a clump of boulders. Another (507) opens to a sea-view terrace that looks like a Zen retreat. You may or may not like the 72-foot modern-art totem out back or the raccoons that think they own the place, but they'll help you remember it. I'm hoping that off-season training will improve the spotty restaurant service. I paid \$161 (with AAA discount) and got upgraded to a \$279 ocean-view room because occupancy was low. Rates for Feb. 28 start at \$229.

Westport

Howard Creek Ranch Inn, 40501 North Highway 1, Westport; (707) 964-6725, www.howardcreekranch.com. Thirteen rooms and cottages on 60 rugged acres and a long, lonely state beach 3 miles north of Westport. Don't expect phones or TVs. Pool in progress, completion date unknown. I paid \$90 and got upgraded to a \$125 room. Free Internet and parking. Rates for Feb. 28: \$55 to \$198.

Trinidad

The **Lost Whale Inn**, 3452 Patrick's Point Drive, Trinidad; (707) 677-3425, www.lostwhaleinn.com. No room phones, no TVs. Built as an inn in 1989, this kid-friendly 9-acre bluff-top spot includes big living and dining areas, a big backyard, its own trail down to the rocky shore and the occasional sea lion serenade. Hot tub, no pool. I paid \$140 for a garden-view room, but as the only guest was upgraded upstairs to a sea-view room that would have cost \$200. Free parking, breakfast and Internet. Feb. 27 prices: \$180 to \$230. (On Feb. 28, a winemaker dinner boosts the starting price to \$249.)

And maybe on the next trip . . .

Morro Bay

Gray's Inn & Gallery, 561 Embarcadero, Morro Bay; (805) 772-3911, www.graysinnandgallery.com. Three "motel apartments" perched on the town's main tourist drag, each with kitchen and deck above the marina. Rates \$110 to \$187.

Big Sur

Lucia Lodge, 62400 Highway 1, Big Sur; (866) 424-4787 or (831) 667-2391, www.lucialodge.com. This is a rustic throwback (it dates to the 1930s) with an incomparable location and well-regarded restaurant. Four cabins and six rooms, about 300 feet above the sea, no TV, no telephones. Units 7 to 10, closest to the bluff top, are the most

amazing. Rates \$150 to \$275.

Mendocino

Alegria, 44781 (a.k.a. 1021) Main St., Mendocino; (800) 780-7905 or (707) 937-5150, www.oceanfrontmagic.com. This is a much-amended 1861 house and cottages, 10 rooms and suites in all, some with TVs. It's the only lodging in town with its own trail to the beach, about 200 steps. Hot tub, no pool. Rates \$159 to \$299.

Crescent City

Hampton Inn & Suites Crescent City, 100 A St., Crescent City; (800) HAMPTON (426-7866) or (707) 465-5400, www.hamptoninn.com. Yes, it's a chain. But these 53 rooms, built in 2003, sit right at land's end with lighthouse views, on a beach strewn with driftwood. Indoor pool, free breakfasts and Internet. Rates \$89 to \$329.

And by the way: To see one travel agent's effort to list all the beachfront hotels in California, try www.beachesbeaches.com/californiabeachhotels.html.

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