

The Surfrider Hotel
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MALIBU

dreamin'



The Surfrider Hotel captures the essence of Malibu. COURTESY THE SURFRIDER

VETERAN BAND TOUR MANAGER RICK MARINO DRIVES US TO MALIBU FOR A BEACH GETAWAY.

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Pacific Coast Highway, sunshine and beaches equals a great summertime road trip. Am I right or am I right? When people ask where I live, I say Southern California. Just the other day while working in Paris, the manager of a theater asked why I love it. The answer is always the same: In two hours, I can be in the desert, on top of a mountain skiing, in Mexico, or at the beach. And for me, Malibu is a classic part of the California summer.

Malibu is more than a beach town. On this road trip, I wanted to explore its mountains and canyons, state parks, restaurants, ranches and roadhouses. Knowing how bad the wildfires were in the area last year, I am eager to visit and share, so others can support the community!

Referred to as L.A.'s northern beaches, Malibu and surrounding areas are located just north of Santa Monica all the way to Ventura County line. I start my trip with lunch at Neptune's Net. The Net is a classic West Coast seafood shack – part market, part bar. It has been serving fresh steamed crab and lobster, deep fried seafood platters (yes, scallops, clams, calamari) and bowls of clam chowder since the '50s. It is perched above County Line Beach, one of SoCal's most famous surf breaks, and it's the perfect spot for lunch or a cold beer on the patio to watch the sunset.

There are three state beaches to check out as you make your way south: El Pescador, La Piedra and El Matador. Each are day-use only. There are small

parking lots that have self-pay machines before a little bit of a walk to get down to each beach. They are nice little coves, some with rocks and tide pools, and driftwood. All are pretty cool for a beach day, but I reckon on the weekends or hot days its best to come early to get a good spot.

My next stop is in the Santa Monica Mountains. Kanan Dume Road is one of the easiest roads to get to and from Malibu from the San Fernando Valley, and it is also the road to Calamigos Guest Ranch.

According to the ranch's website, Calamigos is a Chumash Indian word that means "Come As My Brother, Come as My Friend." The ranch is 250 acres and has been owned by the same family since 1937. One friend mentioned she went there for summer camp back in the '70s and '80s. Now, part of the ranch is a luxury resort with a beautiful full-service spa, restaurant and bar, and pool nestled among the mountains and old California oak trees.

It is unbelievable this place survived the fire. There are estate rooms, bungalows and private cottages with patios and balconies that are very well detailed. Plus, deep soaking tubs, rain showers, fireplaces and mattresses of their own design. Yes, Calamigos can get sandy, but you get what you pay for.

Also included is entrance to the private beach club, which was partially burned but set to reopen for the summer. I'm told they have a private shuttle to take you to and from the resort to the private beach.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Malibu isn't just a beach town, though nature is abundant within its confines. There are also cafes, hotels, museums and more.

On the other side of the resort is Malibu Café, open for lunch and dinner and brunch on the weekends. It's set out in the open with a bar area on grass near a large lake. I hear new paddle boats are on the way!

In the morning, I take a drive along Mulholland Highway, which crosses the mountains, and come upon a crossroads called Cornell, where I find the Old Place. It is such a cool building, with westwood siding and antlers. Sadly, it wasn't open. It's only open on weekends for breakfast and lunch, and for dinner Thursday through Sunday. After asking around, it's the place for wood-fired steaks and seafood as well as cast iron skillet breakfasts. There are some other little stores and good eats tucked away in Topanga Canyon, as well as several great hikes around the area.

Heading back to the beach, I grab lunch on the famous Malibu pier. I have been driving by my whole life assuming it's a tourist trap. Oh boy was I wrong. There are a couple organic restaurants, an old-fashioned wooden-camper-turned-clothing-store, and a killer gift shop. You can get coffee mugs, surfboards, even motorcycle helmets.

Across the from the pier is a great little hotel called the Surfrider. The owners have captured the essence of Malibu. Each room has a hammock across the balcony. There is also a rooftop bar and restaurant for guests. It's not too big and a perfect spot to experience Malibu on foot and be a beach bum! Well, maybe a little fancier than a beach bum?

One thing that really stood out to me on this road trip is how upscale Malibu is becoming – Beverly Hills making its way to the coast. There is a Nobu sushi and the Nobu Ryokan hotel on the beach. Mastro's Ocean Club is a classic steakhouse, even Mr. Chow has set up shop in this little beach town.

But back to basics: There is plenty of beach to be enjoyed by all, Zuma Beach is a classic with plenty of parking. Point Dume has been the backdrop for countless beach scenes in the movies since the moving pictures began, and has a couple really great hiking trails to the top of the point.

For more reasonably priced dining, try Sunset restaurant for cocktails and great food. I had the rib-eye and view is second to none! Also, Malibu Country Chicken is really good in the cheap eats category.

Further down the way is Paradise Cove Café and beach. Here, the entire cove is the attraction. After paying to park for the day, head to the beach, a pier and a restaurant right on the sand. The bar is built over a live lobster tank and serves giant fruit-filled cocktails. They provide rentals for water play for kids and families. It's not to everyone's taste, but I can see it is a fun place to grab a bite, especially if you have kids.

Not feeling the beach? No problem. The Getty Villa is a museum of J. Paul Getty's collection of art from ancient Greece

and Rome. It's a great way to spend a few hours enjoying the exhibits, architecture and gardens. If you go online and pre-book your tickets at their website, admission is free!

Back in Malibu is the historic Adamson House and Malibu lagoon museum. Make sure to take the tour of the beautiful beachside home built in 1929 in the Mediterranean revival style. Located on the Malibu lagoon and at First Point surf break, the gardens, tile and view are epic. It was one of my favorite finds on this trip.

Malibu, it turns out, is way more than meets the eye. I can't think of a more quintessential California experience. As this community slowly gets back on its feet, it will be fun to go back and see what else I have been missing. After all, it's just a road trip away! 🌴

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