Del Mar - A Feast for the Senses

By: Deborah Liv Johnson

Del Mar beach

There really is nothing like standing at the water's edge, digging your toes into the sand and staring into an abyss of endless blue sky, salty waves and sun. A day at the beach is probably the simplest way to send yourself on vacation, and all you have to do is stand there, breathing.

Del Mar is home to one of San Diego County's finest beaches. Nestled along the coast, this seaside resort is both quaint and sophisticated. Once you find 15th Street, at the north end of town, head west and park. The grassy knoll at the end of 15th is a wonderful place for an early morning picnic where you'll be perched above the train tracks with a spectacular view of the ocean. Once the coffee has kicked in, head down to the beach. Depending on the tides, you can walk a little or a lot, kicking at waves and watching sun diamonds reflect off the water.

Del Mar Plaza

For lunch, there are several options. If you're in a casual mood, pick up a sandwich at the Harvest Ranch Market located in the Del Mar Plaza (great shopping) and head upstairs to the top of the plaza. There's no charge for the million-dollar view. Pacifica Breeze Cafe is also less formal and opens at 7 a.m. for breakfast with lunch stretching to 3 p.m. Its slightly more formal parent restaurant, Pacifica Del Mar, is acclaimed for its fresh seafood and opens for lunch and dinner. Both restaurants are located in the plaza.

After lunch, head to the Del Mar racetrack for a day at the races. Built in 1937, the Del Mar Racetrack is true to its slogan, "Where the turf meets the surf." It's hard to imagine a more beautiful spot for horse racing, and if you're on a tight budget, grandstand seats are only four dollars each. Find a good place to watch the horses and you can bask in the sun and ocean breeze all afternoon. Racing season runs from July 19 through September 6.

Points of Interest: Del Mar Racetrack • 2260 Jimmy Durante Boulevard • 858-755-1141 • www.delmarracing.com. Del Mar Plaza • 1555 Camino Del Mar • www.delmarplaza.com.

Accommodations: L'Auberge Del Mar Resort and Spa • 1540 Camino Del Mar • 858-259-1515 • www.laubergedelmar.com. Hilton San Diego/Del Mar • 15575 Jimmy Durante Boulevard • 858-792-5200 • www.hilton.com.

Restaurants: Pacifica Del Mar & Pacifica Breeze Cafe • 1555 Camino Del Mar • 858-792-0476 • www.pacificadelmar.com. Harvest Ranch Market • 1555 Camino Del Mar • 858-847-0555.

How to get there From the Coachella Valley take I -10 West and merge onto CA-60 West toward Riverside. Merge onto I-215 South toward San Diego. I-215 becomes I-15 South. Merge onto Ted Williams Parkway/CA-56 West via Exit 19. Drive 7.9 miles and take the Carmel Country Road exit. Turn Right onto Carmel Country Road. Turn Left onto Del Mar Heights Road. Turn Right onto Camino Del Mar/CR-S21. Driving time is approximately two hours and fifteen minutes.

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