



Head South for the FOURTH

photo by Jeff Schardt

Looking for a weekend getaway to celebrate the Fourth of July? From the cliffs at La Jolla to the water slides at La Costa, San Diego beckons for you.

BY LIZ LAING

CARLSBAD: La Costa Resort and Spa

It's hard not to feel blissful the minute you step onto La Costa's 400 beautifully landscaped acres, with white-washed buildings and stunning Spanish-colonial architecture. This award-winning spa resort set the standard for excellence forty years ago and continues to fulfill its reputation today.

Quintessentially known as California's "Playground to the Stars," La Costa is also a "Playground for All Ages," offering an array of activities — from dive-in movies, to sports clinics and surf camp. The kids will beg to go down "just one more slide!" at Splash Landing, as you plan your next spa treatment or round of golf.

Note the "Kids Stay and Play Free" promotion — children 12 and under receive free meals, a complimentary half-day at Kidtopia (supervised activity center), and stay free in your room. (The free stay is for all children under 18.) Older children and teens have a place to call their own at Vibz, an ultra-cool gaming center replete with pool tables, air hockey, Guitar Hero and X-Box gaming area.

Dining options include the BlueFire Grill and the more family-oriented Legends Bistro. As a family, we opted for Legends. Skip the risotto and \$17 martinis there. You can't go wrong with the moist, tender sea bass and German chocolate cake.

Celebrations for the 4th

Of course you'll want Fireworks for the 4th and at La Costa you'll have them — without traffic and parking hassles. La Costa presents a Fireworks Spectacular show on the golf course so you can enjoy the show from the pool area (Splash Landing). Or, if your room has a golf course view you can enjoy the show right from your own patio.

For more information:

La Costa Resort and Spa, 2100 Costa Del Mar Road, Carlsbad, CA 92009 800.854.5000
www.LaCosta.com
www.DineBlueFire.com
www.LaCosta.com/legends-bistro.aspx





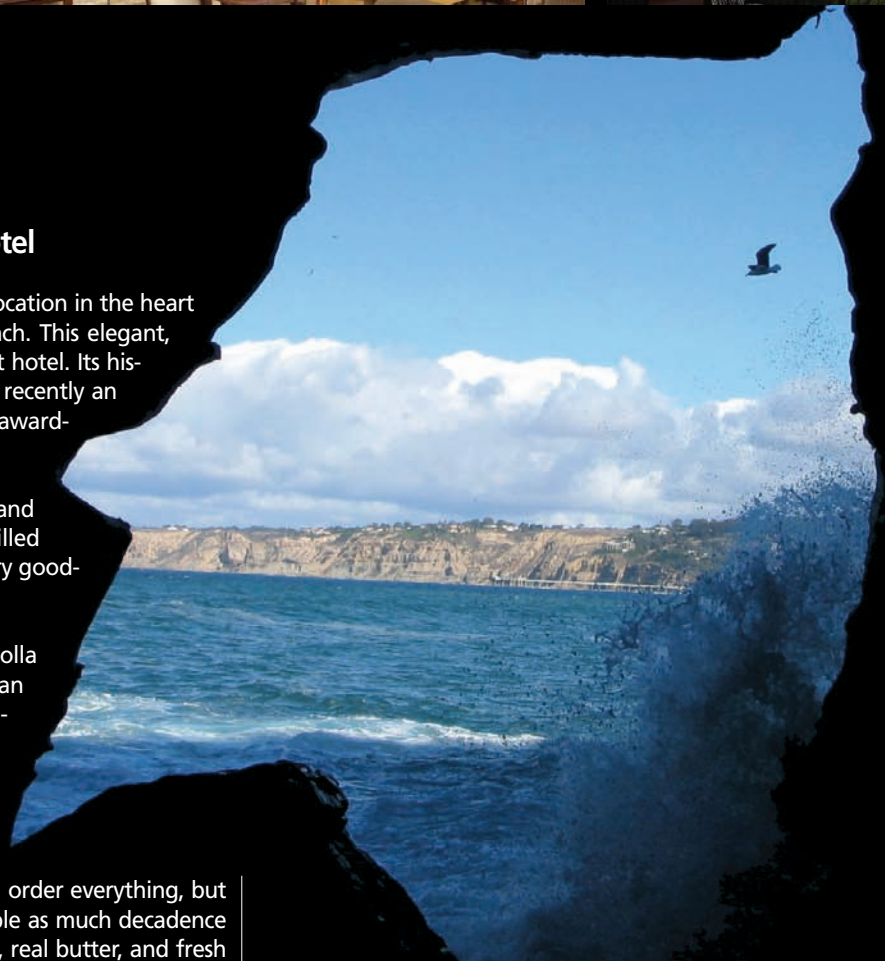
LA JOLLA: The Grande Colonial Hotel

The Grande Colonial sits in the perfect location in the heart of La Jolla, just one block from the beach. This elegant, historic hotel is the seaside town's oldest hotel. Its history includes a few renovations — most recently an \$8 million restoration completed in 2008, awarding it the 2009 AAA Four Diamond Award.

The two-bedroom club suite with kitchen and fireplace is ideal for families. My kids were thrilled to find the fridge stocked with complimentary goodies and ice cream bars! Wi-Fi is free as well.

One of the best things about staying in La Jolla (besides spectacular ocean views) is that you can walk everywhere. Dozens of shops and restaurants are nestled along Prospect Street and neighboring streets. We happily discovered a delicious Thai restaurant, Spice and Rice Thai Kitchen, just a few blocks away on Girard. We also found an amazing French bakery, Michele Coulon Dessertier, where I wanted to order everything, but finally settled on a few mini-desserts to sample as much decadence as possible. Only the finest Belgian chocolate, real butter, and fresh local organic produce are used. For breakfast it's just a short stroll to The Cottage, known for having the best breakfasts in town. We got breakfast to go, walked to a bench overlooking the cliffs and enjoyed a fantastic ocean view along with our omelets.

A walk along the cliffs of La Jolla is a must, providing opportunity to marvel at Mother Nature's finest. Follow the walkway to the right and admire the Elephant Seals that have taken over Children's Beach. Further down the pathway is another adventure my kids loved — going deep into Sunny Jim's cave. Its only land entrance is found inside The Cave Store. You'll walk down a rickety 1920s 145-step stairway. My 5-year old became a little bit frightened inside the damp-walled, semi-dark tunnel but was excited reaching the light at the end of the tunnel and peering out to the ocean. There, you'll clearly see the silhouette of Sunny Jim, a 1920s cereal box character. This cave has been trilling people since it was dug out in 1902, when visitors climbed into the cave, and back out, by rope!



Celebrations for the 4th

As night falls on the Fourth, walk just a block or two down the hill to Scripps Park and enjoy a free concert from 7-9 p.m. followed by the Lights Over the Cove fireworks.

For more information:

Grande Colonial Hotel La Jolla, 910 Prospect Street
La Jolla, CA 92037 866.414.2768
www.gclj-px.trvlclick.com
www.SpiceAndRiceThaiKitchen.com
www.Dessertier.com
www.CottageLaJolla.com
www.CaveStore.com