



EVERYBODY'S GONE SURFIN' . . .



TEXT AND PHOTOS: MOONWALKER

The reality of Orange County is a far cry from the glitzy TV series *The OC*. For starters, no local ever adds the "The", it's simply "OC". And as for the glitz, sure, the likes of Laguna, Corona Del Mar and Newport have gaggles of mega-rich ensconced in multi-million dollar properties, but they're very much the minority. The bulk of the county brims with regular hard-working folk of all races . . . a large portion of whom love their regular dose of saltwater. And they've plenty of spots to choose from. Besides famous breaks like Huntington Beach, Dana Point, Salt Creek, Doheny, Trestles and San Onofre, there's a host of consistent, lesser-known line-ups along OC's 42-mile stretch of coastline.





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The county takes its name from the endless orange groves that once dominated the area before development kicked in - firstly when oil was discovered early last century and again after WWII thanks to cheap housing packages and immigration. What was once open ranch country and orchards is now largely blanketed by concrete. Sadly, several classic waves were casualties and now feature only in "do you remember when" surf stories. Killer Dana at Dana Point was destroyed courtesy of the construction of a large harbour, while Doheny was radically altered thanks to a jetty.

Now, the famed one-and-a-half-mile stretch of bush, A-frame peaks and point waves that make up Trestles on the southern end of OC's suburban sprawl is under threat from a proposed toll road. Surfers and activists have mobilised to save it and hopefully they'll win. Home to the only WCT contest on the American mainland, Trestles was



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name-dropped in the Beach Boy's '63 hit "Surfin USA" and oozes Californian surf history. As does the entire OC for that matter, from Huntington Beach (aka Surf City) in the north, which hosted the first U.S Surf Championship in '59, through to San Onofre on the southern extremity with its laid-back tradition-rich surf culture dating back to the '30s.

But rather than attempt a trawl through the foam-dust piles of OC surf history, the intention here is to give a snapshot of the county today. It still an incredibly vibrant surf scene, underpinned by a wide swell-window (open to the north, west and south) that sees many of the less famous, less molested breaks often fire up with world-class waves. OC's warm, arid climate is also a blessing for surfers in that strong offshore winds (named the Santa Ana's after an inland town) prevail through to late summer, transforming every break into a "wave park of wonderment" as one excitable surfer described it to me.





Here's what some local longboarders had to say about surfing and the OC life.

**Mitch Abshire:**

"Watch the younger kids coming out of Orange County and you'll see all different styles of surfing. They take a little bit from each generation they've seen or read about, add a bit of spice to it and then infuse the old and new styles. It's pretty cool . . . and they're ripping it up on everything. It's all about appreciation and innovation"

**Brian "Loafer" Anderson:**

"OC, hell, I'm born and raised here. Take it from me the whole place is a big scene - it's the centre of the surfing universe, everyone surfs and there's a lot of surf all year 'round, the season never stops. We get our best waves in the winter but in summer we'll get swell from the hurricanes that hit Mexico. For the most part the interaction between the generations of surfers is really good. The respect factor is there from the younger crew and the older guys support the young up-and-comers. From my experience you get what you give, so if you're good to them and respectful then what goes around comes around. Away from the surf there's something happening 24/7. It's pretty much all I've ever known . . . and I love it!"

**Justin Hugron:**

"I like living in OC because there's a bunch of different waves, points, reefbreaks, beachbreaks and Baja's ownly a couple of hours away down south. Classic pointbreaks like Rincon are only a couple of hours away heading north. LA is an hour away, then if you want to go snowboarding in the winter there are a couple of mountains an hour and a half away; we're central to everything. And despite OC getting really crowded there are still spots people don't really know about or couldn't be bothered going off the main highway to get to."



caption



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captions





Of course, being California, if you want a break from surfing there are plenty of options: Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm (another mega park full of rides, slides, sugar-filled snacks, barfing kids and . . . really, are you that bored?), The International Surfing Museum, Surfing Walk of Fame, Richard Nixon's birthplace (hold me back), the OC Zoo (a captive collection of animals, not celebrities) and

endless art museums, shows and concerts.

Actually, a quick peruse of the local weekly paper proves you can find just about anything in OC. Classifieds promote everything from community firework festivals (free), classical dance exhibitions (seats \$10), breast augmentations (\$4,995 for THE silicon ones – back to school special), through to a classy establishment called California Girls featuring Little Tina, a 3' 10"

X-rated video star (cost; priceless). Anything goes, and you can spend as much money as you want . . . or you could just go surfing.

On any given day you can pretty much always find some kind of rideable wave, whether you want to mix it with the stickered-up pros at Huntington Beach, cruise gentle peelers with the legends at San Onofre, or head to the slightly emptier State Parks, you're sure of an experience to remember.





captions

**OC BY NUMBERS:**

**1.1 billion** – \$ sales made by the top mall (South Coast Plaza) last year.

**1.5 million** – registered voters.

**3.3 million** – residents.

**33** – days at least one or more beaches were closed in the county due to sewage spills last year.

**34** – cities.

**42** – miles of coastline.

**50** – days of surfing events per year at Huntington Beach (minimum).

**798** – square miles.

**3607** – persons per square mile.

**21,275** – people employed by Walt Disney Co.



**TRAVEL INFO:**

**Fly** – Into LAX in Los Angeles, Orange County is about an hour south.

**Hire Car** – A must, public transport is next to useless.

**To Stay** – More places at every price range than you can shake your stick at.

**Best Time Of Year** – Summer provides great waves and weather but crowded breaks.

**Equipment** – All boards everywhere – you won't need a big wave gun here.

**Suits** – A 3/2 fullsuit should be fine – maybe a springsuit on hot days.

**Food** – Mexican is all you ever need. I guess there are other types of food though I've not put down a burrito long enough to look for anything else. Beans, meat, rice – real man food. Tofu is (thankfully) an unknown in Mexican restaurants. \*

