

## SoCal's Best Theme Park Hotels

May 31, 2013 6:00 AM

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(credit: LEGOLAND)

With summer just around the corner, now is a great time to start planning some family fun. Southern California abounds with theme parks, offering a variety of thrilling rides and attractions. Staying near these resorts enriches these family-friendly experiences and is a great way to create special memories.

**LEGOLAND Hotel**  
5885 The Crossings Drive  
Carlsbad, CA 92008  
(877) 534-6526  
[california.legoland.com](http://california.legoland.com)

There's no denying that the new [LEGOLAND Hotel](#) was made for kids. Designed with bright colors, interactive LEGO building and play areas and kid-themed rooms, it's just about everything a kid could want, plus more. Within minutes, my 9-year-old son said, "This is the best hotel ever!" At check-in, guests are welcomed by 5,000 LEGO mini-figures that adorn the wall behind the reception desk, a fraction of the more than three million LEGO bricks used throughout the hotel in 3,500 LEGO models.



(credit: Liz Laing)

Since it opened its doors, the nation's first LEGO-themed hotel has been quite a hit and offers three types of rooms: Pirate, Kingdom and Adventure. You can also upgrade to a premium themed room, with additional LEGO models and themed wallpaper for further fantasy realism. All rooms are designed with a separate sleeping area for kids (up to three) with bunk beds and a pull-out trundle bed. The kiddies even get their own TV and a treasure chest that can be unlocked after completing a special treasure hunt in their room.

When the young'uns get hungry, head for [Bricks Family Restaurant](#) inside the hotel, which serves both breakfast and dinner buffets with a large variety of healthy and tasty items. It's nice not having to wait for someone to take your order and then wait even longer while they make your meal. Many a tantrum can be avoided as kids can get fed instantly and have specially designed food stations built just for their height.

Located at the entrance to [LEGOLAND California](#), hotel guests have exclusive early morning access to the theme park.

### Paradise Point Resort & Spa

1404 Vacation Road  
San Diego, CA 92109  
(800) 344-2626  
[www.paradisepoint.com](http://www.paradisepoint.com)

Escape to paradise on your own fantasy island at [Paradise Point Resort & Spa](#), a luxurious resort set on a 44-acre island in Mission Bay, San Diego. Just across the street from [SeaWorld](#), this California-cool resort features comfortable, beach bungalow-style rooms, surrounded by tropical gardens and meandering lagoons.



(credit: Paradise Point Resort & Spa)

Having recently completed a \$20 million renovation, the guest rooms and suites are contemporary and sophisticated with a turquoise and gold color scheme, teak furnishings and custom Javanese batik-style bed throws. Paradise Point is an ideal setting for families and offers many fun activities, such as biking on beach cruisers or surreys, swimming in any of the five pools and making a bonfire on the beach (complete with s'mores!). Head down to the marina for sailing/surfing lessons, kayaks, paddleboards, jet ski and boat rentals.

When you're ready to go to [SeaWorld](#), arrive in style in a water taxi, after a relaxing 15-minute cruise across the bay. All summer long, guests can travel back and forth to the aquatic park and not have to worry about parking or standing in line, as they enter through the back VIP entrance (\$10 adults, \$6 children).

After a long day at SeaWorld, nothing is more welcoming than refueling with a cold drink at the Barefoot Bar & Grill, a fun and casual beachfront restaurant on-site, just steps away from the marina. On the menu, seafood lovers will find oysters Rockefeller, steamed clams and crab cakes with roasted corn, bacon, tomato, chile aioli and arugula. One of the best entrees is the roasted salmon with a salty crust that keeps the fish moist and delicious. Vegetarians will enjoy the strawberry press salad, farmer's market pizza and comfort foods like the grilled cheese and tomato-basil soup or blue cheese mashed potatoes. Order the Cookie Monster ice cream sandwich for dessert and thrill the kids.

The [SeaWorld San Diego Vacation Package](#) includes park tickets, breakfast and more. Save 20 percent off, plus two complimentary SeaWorld meal vouchers.

### Sheraton Universal Hotel

333 Universal Hollywood Drive  
Universal City, California 91608  
(818) 980-1212  
[www.sheratonuniversal.com](http://www.sheratonuniversal.com)

Perched on a hill, the [Sheraton Universal Hotel](#) showcases stunning views of the Hollywood Hills on one side and the San Fernando Valley on the other. During Hollywood's Golden Era, the hotel was known as the "Hotel of the Stars." Today, after a \$30 million renovation, the hotel's lobby has been glamorized to welcome both business travelers and leisure guests alike.



(credit: Starwood Hotels)

Guest rooms and suites have comfortable and stylish furniture, set against a soothing palate of blues, browns and ivories, with contemporary artwork, textured walls and rich fabrics. Consider booking a Club Level room that offers access to a Club Lounge for a complimentary breakfast spread and evening hors d'oeuvres.

Even though the [Sheraton Universal Hotel](#) is located within walking distance of [Universal Studios Hollywood](#) and [CityWalk](#), you'll probably opt for the free shuttle from the hotel that runs daily, every 10 to 15 minutes.

The [Universal Studios Hollywood Package](#) includes two adult tickets to Universal Studios Hollywood, breakfast for two and self-parking. Discount code UNIVPKG. This offer ends Dec. 13, 2013.

### Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa

1600 Disneyland Drive  
Anaheim, CA 92803  
(714) 635-2300  
[disneyland.disney.go.com](http://disneyland.disney.go.com)

Built in American Craftsman style, the [Grand Californian Hotel & Spa](#), is a rustically- elegant hotel that offers luxury accommodations and an array of amenities and services, including early access (through a private entrance) to [Disney California Adventure Park](#).



(credit: Disney)

Premium accommodations are found in all the guest rooms and suites, and further enhanced in the Club Level rooms where guests have access to the exclusive Craftsman's Club lounge, featuring an evening wine and cheese reception, late night desserts, DVD players with complimentary movies and breakfast. Family-friendly rooms with bunk beds are available, as well as sleeping bags and floor pads, slumber party-style.

Three sparkling pools (including a water slide) will keep the kids busy and offer a reprieve after a long day at the park. Other activities include a scavenger hunt for kids and an Art of the Craft Tour, for those interested in the California Arts and Crafts movement, that shows guests how the forest theme is reflected in the lobby artifacts and dining locations.

Dining options at the hotel include the award-winning Napa Rose, which offers a fine dining experience with spectacular views of Disney California Adventure and the less formal Storyteller's Café, with Disney characters on-site.

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Liz Laing is a writer, web designer and photographer who lives in Los Angeles. Her latest projects may be followed on [Liz Laing](#).