

Meetings

THE DESTINATION EXPERTS

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L.A.'s Getaways

by Marlene Goldman

Accessibility and tranquility make the South Bay and LAX area convenient escapes

As a unique alternative to the bustling city, the South Bay and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) area boast easy access, in addition to walkable communities and a wide variety of hotels and meeting space. Top that with peaceful beaches, upscale boutiques and a multitude of waterborne activities, and the region makes its pitch as either the perfect all-in-one locale for short meetings or the quintessential beachside venue for a more relaxed group stay.

Beach Cities and South Bay

"Hermosa has a funky beach-town feel," says Marje Bennetts, public relations counsel for the Beach House Hotel Hermosa Beach. "It's not as sophisticated as Manhattan Beach or as popular as Redondo Beach."

Along Hermosa's promenade are boutiques, restaurants and bars. Its pier is open to groups for event buyouts and this year is host to a number of centennial festivals and events.

There are four major golf courses within 20 minutes of town, as well as boating, sailing and fishing options. There is also a volleyball package for groups to arrange private lessons with Olympic gold medalists, such as Eric Fonoimoana.

One of the destination's main meetings properties is the recently renovated **Beach House Hotel**, with 96 suites, three meeting rooms and outdoor event space. Hotel Hermosa, another boutique property, offers a conference room.

In Redondo Beach, the beaches, pier and marina are enhanced by its revitalized downtown

Riviera Village, featuring boutiques, international restaurants and wine-tasting galleries.

"Redondo Beach epitomizes Southern California living," says James Jankowski, marketing director of the Redondo Beach Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau. "It's a complete seaside location where groups can bring employees to experience what Southern California really has to offer."

Groups can host events on the Redondo Beach Pier as well as at the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.

For water-based excursions, sailboats can be hired out of King Harbor or groups can take a ride on the Voyager speedboat, which also runs whale-watching tours. Jankowski also says the destination has numerous water-view dining spots for attendees to enjoy.

Hotels that cater to groups include the Crowne Plaza Redondo Beach and Marina Hotel, with 25,000 square feet of meeting space, and the Portofino Hotel and Yacht Club, which just completed an \$11 million renovation.

Not quite as trendy as its neighboring beachside communities, Torrance is a business hub, sporting one of the largest malls in the world, the Del Amo Fashion Center. Del Amo debuted its two-level outdoor promenade last year as part of a \$300 million renovation and expansion. Nearby is the Trump National Golf Club, encompassing 215 acres of oceanfront land in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Group-friendly hotels include the Torrance Marriott and Hilton Torrance/South Bay.

