

# Get Happy in La Jolla



The Hake Kitchen & Bar

**“W**hoever planned heaven may have tried it out first in La Jolla,” said *Coastal Living* Magazine in May when they appropriately declared our community to be “One of America’s Happiest Seaside Towns.”

And who can argue with that? We’ve known all along that La Jolla’s beauty is obvious, but our corner of San Diego is much more than just another pretty place.

## Old La Jolla

Thanks to Ellen Browning Scripps and other early residents, our community is blessed with historical landmarks that

enhance our natural setting. The Bishop’s School, the Woman’s Club, St. James Church, The Grande Colonial La Jolla, Mary Star of the Sea, and La Valencia Hotel all reflect La Jolla’s deep roots in the past. Did you know that Miss Ellen graced the cover of *Time* in 1926? And was acknowledged by the magazine to be “the most beloved woman in Southern California?” Pick up a booklet at the La Jolla Historical Society office and get happy on a self-guided walking tour.

“The Grande Colonial is steps from the shore (and seal sightings!) with rooms and suites in soothing shades,” said *Coastal Living* — to which I’d like to

add “and looking wonderful considering she’s 100 years old.” Get happy at the hotel’s Nine-Ten restaurant where retro-drinks — including The Bees Knees and The Moscow Mule — are a fun way to celebrate the Grande Colonial’s centennial anniversary.

## New La Jolla

Not content to rest on their laurels, La Jolla businesses continue to re-invent themselves. La Valencia Hotel is currently expanding Café La Rue into the space formerly occupied by the Whaling Bar. When the chic new bistro opens in late September, a handsome wine vault will display La V’s \$250,000 collection. Other plans include converting the Sky Room into two one-bedroom suites (with drop-dead gorgeous views) and adding a pergola over the patio on the front of the hotel.

Eddie V’s shot to stardom on Prospect Street shortly after opening on the former Chart House site. Diners enjoy the sophisticated surroundings, wide selection of fish and shellfish, aged steaks, and — of course — the ocean view. My personal recommendation? Arrive at Eddie V’s in daylight, enjoy the sunset, and be there when the lights come on along the coast.

Doug Manchester’s Amaya — named for his granddaughter just like the sister restaurant of its namesake at The Grand Del Mar — adds Southern cuisine to the La Jolla dining repertoire. The menu includes “daily rustic Southern specials,” in addition to a varied menu of fish and meat dishes. The Day Boat Scallop and Beef Short Rib is a popular appetizer and the Lightly Smoked King Salmon is a great main. The restaurant’s lounge is a popular place for watching sports on big screen TVs and listening to live music. >>



« Across the street from Amaya, The Hake Kitchen & Bar (open since June) offers “unusual” seafood dishes. The most popular of these are the shrimp tacos, grilled octopus, and jalapeno hamachi. Desserts also get good reviews — namely the creative sorbets.

I’m especially excited about Iberico Spanish Bistro upstairs at 909 Prospect in the space formerly occupied by Vigilucci’s. In the course of several trips to Spain, I became fond of the country’s cuisine and it’s not easy to find in San Diego. Iberico’s “soft opening” was July 7 and already La Jollans are talking

about their paella, sopa de ajo, and tortilla Española. In a nod to the typical late dinner hour in Spain, Iberico is open until 11pm daily.

San Diego’s remarkable craft beer scene is acknowledged by several La Jolla restaurants. Amaya offers eight local craft beers, and The Lodge at Torrey Pines hosts regular craft beer dinners in The Grill. My favorite of a recent five-course feast with pairings: dessert, of course, where a S’more Sundae was paired with Speedway Stout. In A.R. Valentien at The Lodge, Weekly Artisan Table evenings — served family-style to a limited number of guests — provide a good opportunity for tasting and interacting with A.R. Valentien’s chefs.

Still to come: La Jolla Brewing Company (formerly La Jolla Brewhouse) will open on Fay Avenue next to Rubio’s in late summer. In addition to producing eight of their own beers, they will have 24 taps and offer an extensive sampling of San Diego’s best craft brew. On Pearl Street, popular El Pescador Fish Market will move into more spacious quarters on the opposite side of the street before the end of the year.

## Secret La Jolla

I continue to discover hidden happiness in La Jolla, in spite of the fact that I’ve lived here most of my life.

The architectural tours at Salk Institute are a good example. Louis Kahn’s famous building brings visitors from all over the world, but — while I’ve long admired the design — I only recently learned of the daily free-of-charge tours. I also now know that the café at Salk Institute overlooks the ocean and is open to the public. Referring to Salk and SIO, *Coastal Living* said La Jolla is “a combination of brains and beauty hard to match anywhere” — and who can argue with that?

Because I write a blog about La Jolla >>



Salk Institute



Amaya



« (La Jolla Travel Information), friends often ask me how to entertain out-of-town guests. Top on my list is the Torrey Pines Gliderport, adjacent to Salk Institute, where you can see hang gliders and paragliders jump off the sandstone cliff above Black's Beach and soar over the ocean. Riding the thermals, they glide in front of La Jolla Farms homes to the south and Torrey Pines Golf Course to the north. It's good to arrive at lunchtime and enjoy deli sandwiches from The Cliffhanger Café while watching the show. In winter you might also be able to spot dolphins and whales from this vantage point.

In the same general vicinity, the Stuart Collection at UCSD is another great activity. This self-guided walking tour of UCSD's wonderful collection of outdoor sculpture provides a bit of exercise, a chance to see the campus, and a good look at some thought-provoking and very creative art. You can pick up a map at the information booth at the entrance to campus or download the iPhone app from the Web site.

More ways to get happy? I keep an eye on the schedule of author events at Warwick's, our beloved indie bookstore on Girard Avenue. Nothing makes me happier than hearing from the people who write my favorite books. Not long ago, I was lucky to get a seat when Anna Quindlen spoke to a packed house about her *New York Times* bestseller *Lots of Candles Plenty of Cake*.

It's also a good idea to watch the schedule of events and classes at the La Jolla Community Center (formerly the Riford Center). I've driven past this place on La Jolla Boulevard probably thousands of times, but only recently discovered the entertaining cooking classes taught by Swiss chef Urs Baumann and the positively dreamy Relaxation Yoga class taught by former *Union-Tribune* dance and theater critic Anne Marie Welsh.

Get happy browsing — and shopping — at La Jolla's many boutiques. Lucy offers fashion-forward performance apparel for the gym, doing yoga, or taking in the outdoors. Girard Avenue also houses national retailers Ralph Lauren and Y-3, along with the Cos Bar, a cosmetics boutique featuring luxury skincare products for both men and women. A personal favorite is the La Jolla Art Association Gallery on Paseo del Ocaso in the Shores. This not-for-profit organization showcases the work of local artists and allows us to purchase quality art at fair prices.

Surely, whoever planned heaven would have wanted it that way. ELIZABETH HANSEN

