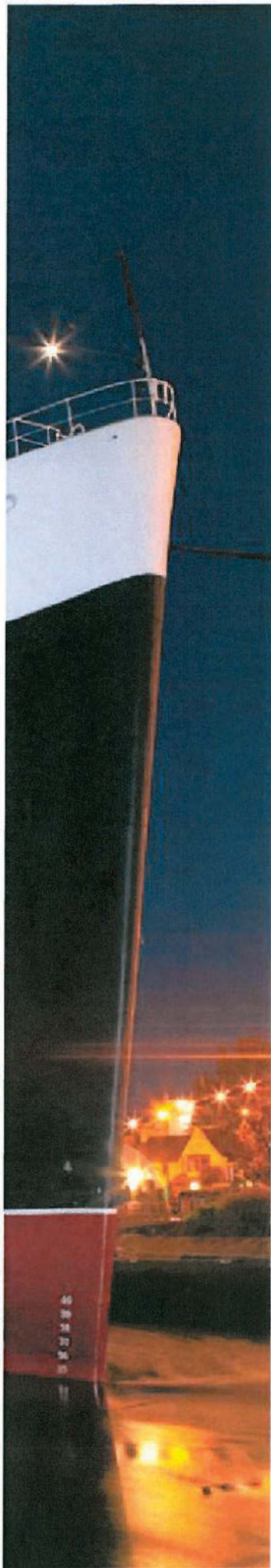


A photograph of the Queen Mary ship at night, illuminated by city lights and a string of lights along its deck. The ship's name "QUEEN MARY" is visible on the side. In the background, several large fireworks are exploding in the dark sky. The ship is docked, and its reflection is visible in the water in the foreground.

All Hail the Queen Mary

and Long Beach, California

BY SUSAN LANIER-GRAHAM



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE QUEEN MARY

Seventy-five years ago, the luxurious RMS Queen Mary embarked on her maiden voyage across the Atlantic. The greatest ocean liner ever built at that time, the Queen Mary was three times the size of the Titanic, carried 2,000 passengers and a crew of 1,200. She served diplomats, dignitaries, ambassadors, royalty, film stars, and moguls. After more than 30 years of dedicated service as a floating luxury palace, and as a war-time ship carrying up to 16,000 soldiers on a single voyage, Queen Mary came to rest in Long Beach, Calif. You can plan a unique get-away to the coastal town of Long Beach and tour the Queen Mary for the day — or even book a stay on board and transport yourself back to that golden era of grandeur.

Long Beach is in the heart of Southern California, just 20 miles south of the bustle of Los Angeles, on a 5-and-a-half-mile stretch of beach. The city is unique with its cosmopolitan offerings, but small seaside resort feel. While it's close to all the big attractions in Southern California — Hollywood, Disneyland, Universal Studios — it has much to offer on its own, making it an ideal vacation spot.

EXPLORING THE RMS QUEEN MARY

When the Queen Mary was in service as a luxury liner for Cunard, she could service 800 first-class passengers — and serve all of them dinner at once in the largest room ever built within a ship. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor were frequent passengers. Fred Astaire, Bob Hope, Gable and Garbo, Gloria Swanson, Marlene Dietrich, Laurel and Hardy — all were familiar names on the passenger manifests.

The ship would routinely carry 15,000 bottles of wine, 77,000 pounds of fresh meat, 20,000 bottles of beer and more than 30,000 pounds of fresh vegetables on each four-day journey across the Atlantic. Cunard spared no expense building the Queen Mary. They filled her with fine, rare woods, murals, art, sculptures, and some of the finest examples of art deco design. Suites and staterooms were large, even by today's standards.

In 1967, the Queen Mary made her last voyage, this time all the way across the Atlantic to the southern coast of South America, around

Cape Horn, and up the South American coast to the port of Long Beach. Permanently docked in Long Beach, the Queen Mary is a floating hotel and monument to a by-gone era of luxury sea travel.

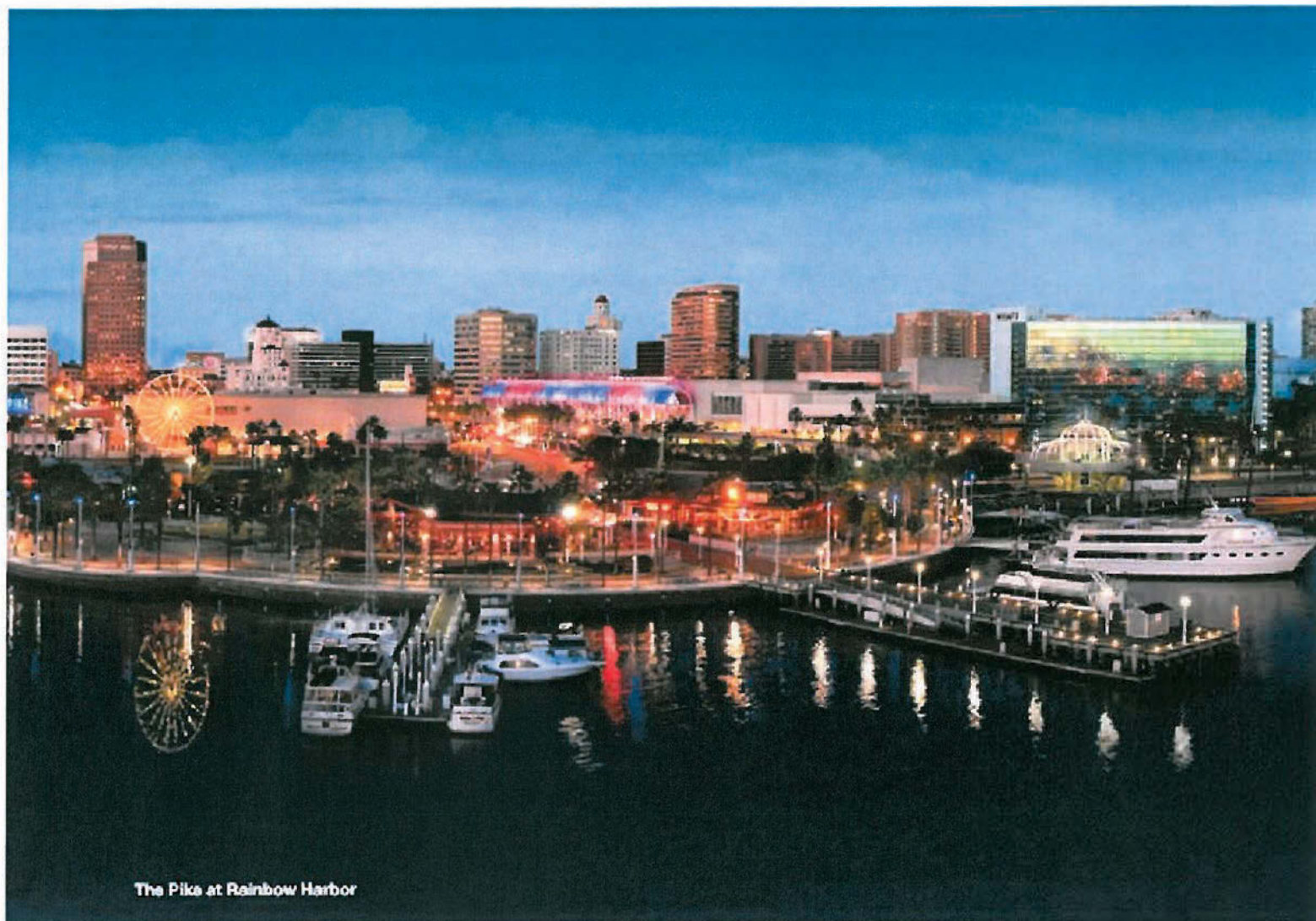
The Queen Mary Hotel features more than 300 staterooms and suites in what used to be the first-class cabins. Each stateroom is unique, offering 1930s décor with wood paneling and art deco fixtures, but also includes 21st century amenities, such as high-speed Internet, flat panel TVs, and down bedding. You will enjoy a night that takes you back to a by-gone era. As you listen to the sounds of a ship launched 75 years ago, you can't help but feel the history — even if you don't encounter your own ghosts.

The Queen Mary is much more than a hotel. Guests and the public alike can stroll along the Promenade deck, browse in one of the many shops, enjoy a guided or self-guided tour, have a drink in the Observation Bar, or dine on board. One of the more popular tours is the Ghosts and Legends Show, which brings the



A spacious suite aboard the Queen Mary

The Queen Mary Hotel features more than 300 staterooms and suites in what used to be the first-class cabins.



The Pike at Rainbow Harbor

Queen Mary's haunted history to life. The self-guided audio tour is the perfect way to explore the ship at your own pace.

In addition to dining on board at one of the Queen Mary's premier restaurants, one of the big attractions is the weekly Champagne Sunday Brunch served in the ship's Grand Salon. May 27 marks the 75th anniversary of The Queen Mary's maiden voyage. For more information about scheduled events, visit queenmary.com or call toll free 877-342-0738.

SHORELINE VILLAGE AND THE PIKE AT RAINBOW HARBOR

Long Beach is a walkable city with a winding walking/bike path along Rainbow Harbor from the Aquarium toward downtown. As you head out of the aquarium, you reach The Pike at Rainbow Harbor. This entertainment center features ships, restaurants, a theater, a bookstore, and the new AVIA hotel. A more modern alternative to the Queen Mary for your stay in Long Beach, AVIA hotel is in the heart of The Pike and only a block from the convention center. This luxury boutique hotel offers comfortable rooms, a great location, an incredible Rooftop Pool Terrace, and The Kitchen, the restaurant at the AVIA. The

AVIA is located at 285 Bay Street. Visit aviahotels.com or call 562-436-1047, for more information.

Continuing on along the harbor, you'll find Shoreline Village. Designed with the look and feel of a seaside fishing village, it offers a boardwalk of shops and restaurants. A must-do while in Long Beach is lunch or dinner at Parker's Lighthouse in Shoreline Village. At the tip of Shoreline Village, Parker's Lighthouse is a local favorite offering great fresh seafood. In good weather — and with an average 345 days of sunshine in Long Beach each year, there's a lot of good weather to be found — there's no better place for lunch than the patio, overlooking the ocean.

BELMONT SHORE AND NAPLES

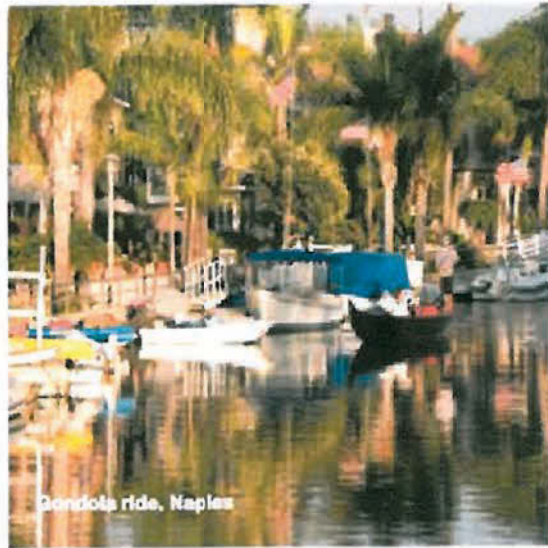
Long Beach consists of small communities, each with a unique personality. Two must-see spots are Belmont Shore and Naples. Just a few minutes from downtown Long Beach, Belmont Shore and Naples are known for sandy beaches, picturesque canals and Second Street with shopping, dining and entertainment.

The lagoons in Alamitos Bay in the Shore offer opportunities for sunbathing or swimming. There also are areas for windsurfing, Jet Skiing, and water skiing. Second Street has a small-town feel, but with boutiques and

PHOTO COURTESY OF LONG BEACH CVB



Belmont Shore



Gondola ride, Naples

upscale shops, dining venues, cafes and clubs.

Naples, designed around a canal system like its Italian namesake, is a romantic neighborhood filled with charm. Gondola Getaway offers authentic gondola rides through the canals. They're one-hour for two people and can be customized. Dinner cruises also are available. Gliding along the canals is popular for marriage proposals. **Gondola Getaway operates 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. For more information, visit gondolagetawayinc.com or call 562-433-9695.**

PINE AVENUE

Finish off the perfect Long Beach day on Pine Avenue, home to some of the city's best dining and entertainment. The dining district has a bit of a European flair with plenty of patio dining. George's Greek Café is a long-time favorite with great patio dining on Pine Avenue. King's Fish House serves more than 30 varieties of fish daily in a pub setting. L'Opera Ristorante offers classic and modern Italian cuisine in a beautiful remodeled building. The Madison is in a renovated old bank building and offers unpretentious but elegant food. In the early 1900s, Pine Avenue was the center of business and entertainment in Long Beach. Today, you'll find a revitalized area filled with the small-town charm that makes the city so popular.

TAKE A SIDE TRIP TO CATALINA ISLAND

Catalina Island is 22 miles off the California coast, and the entire island is only 21 miles long. The best way to get from Long Beach to Catalina Island is aboard the Catalina Express. It takes about an hour for the high-speed catamaran to whisk you from Long Beach to Avalon, the only incorporated city on the island. The boats leave from the downtown Long Beach terminal several times each day.

Once on Catalina, there are many great activities,

both in and out of the water. There's a new Zip Line Eco Tour that lets you explore the landscape from above. You can tour the interior, uninhabited portions of the island or enjoy glass-bottom boat tours, kayaking, snorkeling, ocean rafting, scuba diving, dolphin encounters and fishing. The island is filled with great restaurants, an array of accommodations from tiny inns to hotels to luxury home rentals. You'll find spas, massages on the beach, golf, walking tours, and golf cart rentals that let you explore the island. Check out everything that's happening on Catalina Island at catalinachamber.com.

SUSAN LANIER-GRAHAM is a freelance writer based in Arizona and online at wanderwithwonder.com.



If you go

BEST TIME TO GO:

With an average of 345 days of sunshine each year, it's hard to find a bad time to visit Long Beach. To take full advantage of the outdoor lifestyle, you will probably want to avoid December through February, although January through March is a great time for whale watching, if you're prepared to give up a little sun and don a jacket.

BE SURE TO:

- Book a room on board the Queen Mary. The 75th Anniversary celebration throughout 2011 will feature a variety of special events. Even if you don't stay on board, make sure you pay for one of the ship's tours and plan to eat at least one meal on board.
- Eat at Forbidden City for some classic Chinese food. The restaurant itself is a work of art, but the cuisine is unlike Chinese food you'll taste anywhere else in the United States.
- Take some time to visit "Retro Row," exploring the shops that have sprung up in this revitalized area of the city.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE:

Add a couple of days to the beginning or end of your visit to hop on the Catalina Express for a stay on Catalina Island. For more information, check out catalinachamber.com and catalinaexpress.com.