

48 Hours in Long Beach, California

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Alamy

Dubbed "the LBC" by locals, Long Beach flies well below the L.A. and Hollywood paparazzi radar, and that's just the way this blue-collar coastal city likes it. Songs by natives Snoop Dogg and ska/punk band Sublime have earned the town a rough-and-tumble rep. But its mélange of ethnicities, sub-cultures and eclectic neighborhoods make it a fun, interesting destination in the shadow of its glamorous neighbors to the north.

The Art Deco ocean liner [Queen Mary](#) cuts a striking, Titanic-esque profile on the outer edge of [Long Beach Harbor](#). Nearby, longshoremen working the busy Port of Long Beach unload freighters carrying Toyotas, Samsungs, iPads and made-in-China everything. Cyclists and rollerbladers cruise paths running alongside miles of sunny Southern California shoreline.

The fairly compact downtown core is where you'll want to stay. Having your own wheels is ideal, but you can get by with public transportation options like the Passport bus.

Day 1: Afternoon & Evening

Step aboard the 1936 British ocean liner [Queen Mary](#), spending her retirement as a floating tourist attraction/hotel in Long Beach Harbor. Strolling the decks beneath towering smokestacks, you'll notice the old girl has maintenance issues, but try not to let them detract from her Art Deco splendor. In the ship's Observation Bar, sip a signature Manhattan and pretend you're a once-upon-a-time passenger like Fred Astaire or Elizabeth Taylor steaming across the North Atlantic.

For dinner, you *could* stick close to your downtown hotel and go with an eatery at touristy Shoreline Village; [Parkers' Lighthouse](#) is a nice choice. But try the eats and drinks along 2nd Street (a.k.a., Belmont Shore), some 15 walkable blocks of shops, restaurants and bars. For Italian, pop by local fave [Papalucci's](#). At gastropub [Simmzy's](#), wash down a gourmet sandwich (consider the chicken and bacon hoagie) or a thick burger with a frosty pint of microbrew.

Cap off the night with a romantic Venetian-style gondola ride in nearby Naples, a ritzy neighborhood situated along a network of waterways. A 50-minute cruise will set you back \$85 per couple - a small price to pay for big sweetheart points.



APTTwo young sisters explore at the Aquarium of the Pacific**Day 2: Morning**

Get an early start. For breakfast, rub elbows with hungover Long Beach hipsters at greasy spoon [Potholder Café](#), where you can fuel up on Mexican *machaca* with eggs and cream cheese-filled French toast.

The [Aquarium of the Pacific](#) sees about 1.5 million annual visitors, and on weekends it can seem like they're all here at once. To beat the crowds, arrive around opening time. The reef sharks, sea otters, touch tanks, penguin habitat and walk-through aviary are far more enjoyable without baby strollers rolling over your foot.



[Flickr](#) Artist Josh Ritter performs to a crowd at Fingerprints **Day 2: Afternoon & Evening**

One of SoCal's best independent record stores, [Fingerprints](#) anchors downtown's East Village Arts District. Shop the huge, eclectic selection of new and used CDs, DVDs and vinyl - everything from Sinatra to Swedish death metal - then head next door to Berlin Bistro coffeehouse for a small bite at a sidewalk patio table.

Next, do some bohemian-style shopping at the funky boutiques lining 4th Street's Retro Row, between Cherry and Junipero avenues. Check out the vintage threads at [Inretrospect](#) and Immoni; the Hawaiiana at [Sneaky Tiki](#); and the clothes, toys and accessories for hip toddlers (think *Día de los Muertos* cereal bowls) at [Lil Devils Boutique](#).

Eat dinner downtown. Proffering tender brisket, pulled pork and awesome Buffalo wings, [Beachwood Brewing & BBQ](#) never fails to hit the spot, and the tasty craft beers are brewed on site; the blissfully bitter IPA is best. In the mood for something more upscale? Elegant steakhouse [555 East](#) prides itself on primo cuts, pro service and a superb wine list. When the stratospheric check arrives, maintain your cool.

After dessert, slip on your boogie shoes and slide on over to the Long Beach outpost of Santa Monica's landmark [Harvelle's blues club](#), a boozy den of live blues, soul and funk.



APA woman explores an exhibit at the Museum of Latin American Art **Day 3: Morning & Early Afternoon**

Dig into brunch, sip a glass of bubbly and take in the panoramic ocean views from [Claire's](#), the outdoor bluff-top restaurant on the grounds of the [Long Beach Museum of Art](#).

Before your LBC departure, don't miss the [Museum of Latin American Art](#), inside a colorful, modernist building on Alamitos Avenue. Along with works by renowned painters like Rufino Tamayo and José Clemente Orozco, you'll ogle sculpture, photography and contemporary installations by more than 350 Latin American artists.