

Weekend Getaway: Sand, Beach and No Cars in Long Beach, CA.

Story and photos by Dick Dace



Beautiful white sand beaches, palm trees, movie-star beautiful people, and fabulous food can all be found in Long Beach, California.

George's Greek Café is a stand out with calamari, grilled lamb chops and tableside flambé cheese. Alegria Cocina Latina specializes in cured meats, empanadas and coconut shrimp.

Board the free Passport Shuttle bus to the Royal Mail Service (RMS) Queen Mary to take in the icon's opulence and history. The RMS Queen Mary (which is twice the size of the Titanic) was launched in 1936. The first class

fare was about \$1,000 a person (about \$15,500 in today's money, based on the Consumer Price Index.) The first class cabins came with pink-tinted mirrors in hope that if you were seasick, your rose-cheeked reflection would make you feel better. When the war broke out in 1939, the "fastest cruise ship on the sea" was called into service as a troop carrier.

Between 1940 and 1946, it transported more than 800,000 men before becoming a hospital and then transporting war brides to their new homes. On one famous crossing, 16,683 men were on board the ship that was designed for just 3,000 passengers. The

pools were drained and every space was filled with bunk beds. Not only did the men have to share their bunks in eight-hour shifts, they had to eat in six shifts as well. Today, many of these men, now in their late 80's, return with their wives and grandchildren, all with wide-eyed wonder, as they share their memories with today's guides and crew.

Our behind-the-scenes tour of the Aquarium included feeding sharks. Did you know that some sharks lay eggs? Neither did we.

Naples is a beautiful beachside community, built on man-made islands with an array of man-made delights to choose from. Grab some wine and cupcakes from Frosted Cupcakes, and board an authentic Venetian gondola to cruise the canals and waterways of Naples Island.

Resources: Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, LongBeachCVB.org

