

# Long Beach

BY DON AND ANN JACKSON

Since 1967, the Queen Mary, once the world's grandest and fastest ocean liner, has been a significant symbol for the city of Long Beach. And she remains a beloved landmark as travelers from around the globe continue to flock to California's seventh largest city in order to experience her illustrious history. Believe it or not, if she were operating today, we are told she'd still be the speediest cruise liner on the high seas. Today, Long Beach offers plenty for visitors to do and see, both at sea and on land.



Queen Mary & Scorpion Sub



Aquarium of the Pacific





Long Beach Downtown and Queensway Bay



**What to See and Do:** Choosing one of the Queen Mary tour options is a must-see for first time visitors to Long Beach, and one of the “Insider Tours” led by their knowledgeable and often humorous guides is best. You might wish to go on your own by trying a self-guided tour, but keep in mind that after 6 p.m. there’s no admission to the ship. The Russian Scorpion Submarine, where stealth meets wealth, is moored next door to the Queen, and open for tours as well. It can be a little claustrophobic and a very tight fit as you weave through the sub’s interior, but you’ll marvel as to how 75 crewmembers could live and survive in such minimalist quarters ([queenmary.com](http://queenmary.com)).

Visit the Aquarium of the Pacific, with plenty of marine exhibits and the surprising home to two cute young Artic Foxes ([aquariumofpacific.com](http://aquariumofpacific.com)); take a romantic evening ride on a Venetian gondola through the enchanting canals in the Naples Island area ([gondolagetawayinc.com](http://gondolagetawayinc.com)); or stroll around Shoreline Village, the Pike at Rainbow Harbor, and Shoreline Park—with a resident lighthouse—for inviting activities and vistas ([shorelinevillage.com](http://shorelinevillage.com), [thepikeatlongbeach.com](http://thepikeatlongbeach.com)). Also worth a visit is the highly praised Museum of Latin American Art (MoLAA), the only western United States museum dedicated exclusively to contemporary Latin American artwork ([molaa.org](http://molaa.org)). >>





For the seafarers, take a 45-minute narrated harbor cruise aboard one of Harbor Breeze's tour boats, or try one of their year-round whale and dolphin watching tours—on our recent excursion, we saw nine Blue Whales, a few with young calves, and hundreds of playful dolphins ([longbeachcruises.com](http://longbeachcruises.com)). For fun on your own accord, rent a bike with lots of options like choppers, tandems, and cruisers, or a choice of pedal or solar-operated surreys ([wheelfunrentals.com](http://wheelfunrentals.com)), or consider renting an electric Duffy Boat to tour around the appealing Alamitos Bay area ([bayboatrentals.net](http://bayboatrentals.net)).

And with a name like Long Beach you should expect beautiful beaches for sunning, sand volleyball, swimming, and sandy walks—and you won't be disappointed. One thing we were most impressed with along the beaches was the well-disguised, off-shore oil rigs that are close to shore with palm trees, waterfalls and condo-like buildings over the derricks. Other coastal cities should follow suit.

You may want to take a close look at the Long Beach Arena, where the world's largest mural, Planet Ocean by famous artist Wyland, totally covers the exterior ([longbeachcc.com](http://longbeachcc.com)). Although the city has many year-round events, it's probably best known for the annual three-day Toyota Grand Prix, the longest-running major indy-car street race held on our continent. The accompanying celebrity race is a fun time as well. The 38th annual Long Beach Grand Prix is scheduled for April 13-15, 2012 so start making plans to attend ([gplb.com](http://gplb.com)).

**Where to Dine:** Let's start with her Royal Highness by suggesting a gourmet dinner in Queen Mary's critically-acclaimed Sir Winston's restaurant, or her famous Champagne Sunday Brunch in the Grand Salon, which serves over 55 entrees ([queenmary.com](http://queenmary.com)).

L'Opera Ristorante on Pine Avenue, the restaurant-row of downtown, is a stellar redo of a former bank, offering exceptional Italian gastronomy

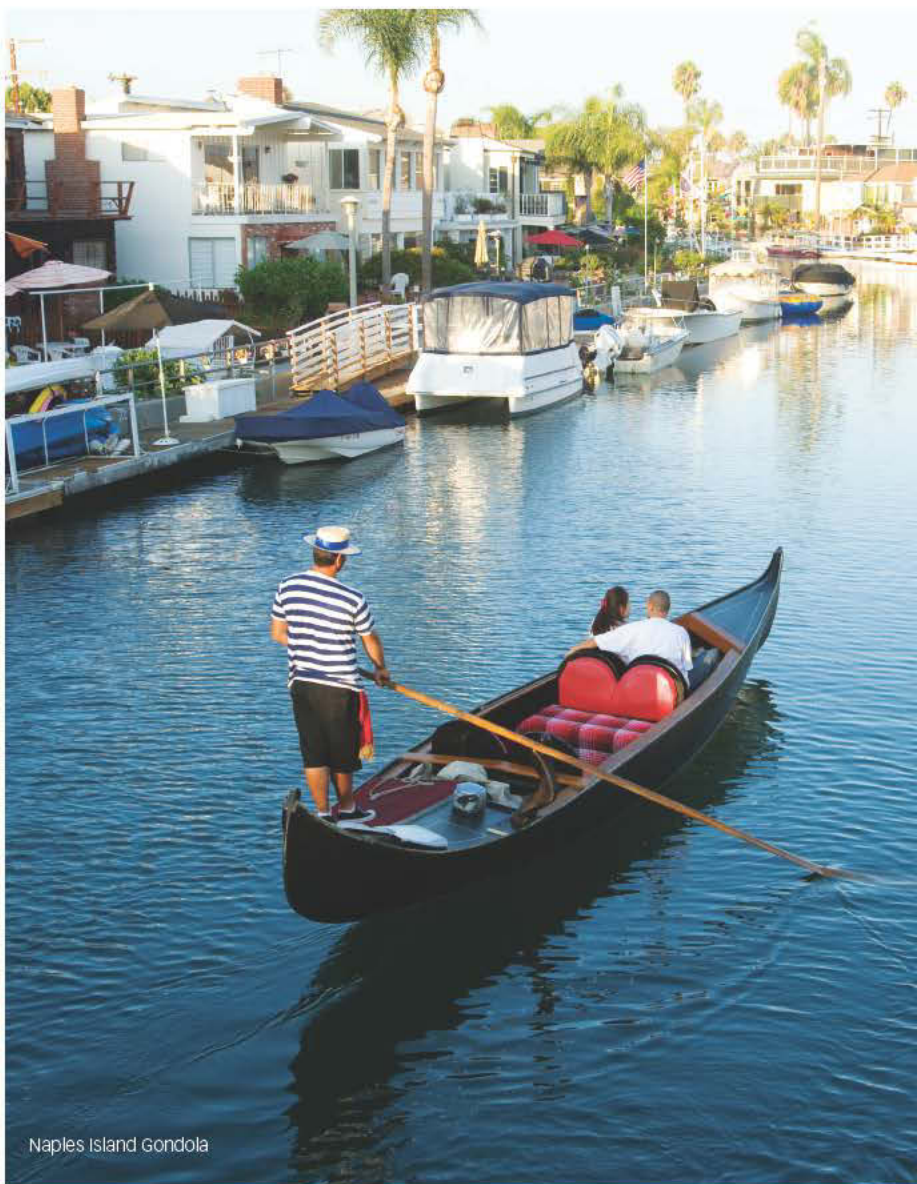


The Madison Restaurant

([lopera.com](http://lopera.com)). The Sky Room, on the top floor of Ocean Avenue's historic Breakers building, provides dazzling city/harbor views and award-winning cuisine. Above the Sky Room, take the spiral staircase to the intimate Up Lounge with 360 degree views, a perfect rendezvous for that special date ([theskyroom.com](http://theskyroom.com)). The Madison offers one of the most stunning interiors of any California restaurant, and the striking resurrected historic bank ambience is matched by their classic cuisine and elegant service ([themadisonrestaurant.com](http://themadisonrestaurant.com)).

For more casual dining, Alegria is one of our most pleasant dining surprises with superb Latin offerings and homemade "aged" Sangria ([alegriacocinalatina.com](http://alegriacocinalatina.com)). Gladstone's and Parker's Lighthouse are both longtime waterside fixtures offering noteworthy fresh seafood ([gladstoneslongbeach.com](http://gladstoneslongbeach.com), [www.parkerslighthouse.com](http://www.parkerslighthouse.com)). Omelette Inn is a locals hangout for scrumptious breakfasts ([omeletteinn.com](http://omeletteinn.com)).

**Nightlife:** There are many options for nighttime entertainment in Long Beach, but we have some favorites. The Laugh Factory houses the Stand-up Comic's Hall of Fame in the lobby, and is one of the country's newest and largest comedy clubs ([laughfactory.com](http://laughfactory.com)). The All-American Melodrama Theater and Music Hall located in Shoreline Village offers owner-written productions that keep you *boo-ing* the villains, cheering



Naples Island Gondola





Museum of Latin American Art

the heroes, and most importantly howling with laughter ([allamericanmelodrama.com](http://allamericanmelodrama.com)). Long Beach's Dinner Detective Mystery Dinner Show is a one-of-a-kind cruise on an old paddle wheeler where laughter reigns supreme and everyone's a suspect, including your table mates ([dinnerdetective.com](http://dinnerdetective.com)). Sgt. Pepper's Dueling Piano Cafe is the place to go if you want the rowdiest time in town where no rules "rule." Singing, clapping, and drink-a-long banter helps folks celebrate anything and everything ([pepperspianos.com](http://pepperspianos.com)).

**Where to stay:** Room prices in Long Beach are often less than other Southern California beach cities, so it's an ideal family destination. Lodging on the Queen Mary is always an option, and staying in one of the recently renovated original staterooms will provide an enchanting bygone-era experience. The Queen can be a quintessential return to an art-deco yesteryear as you imagine crossing the Atlantic with a plethora of

famous celebrities. Although many of the staterooms are small and the soundproofing between some rooms is fair at best, we still recommend dropping anchor here for anyone into historic seafaring nostalgia ([queenmary.com](http://queenmary.com)). For those wanting to be downtown near the city's high-energy harbor area, the Long Beach Westin is our top choice. Westin rarely disappoints, and this property provides exceptional service, a rooftop pool area, and roomy, well-appointed accommodations ([westinlongbeachhotel.com](http://westinlongbeachhotel.com)). For anyone seeking a waterfront resort overlooking the harbor and city, the Hotel Maya (a Hilton-Doubletree property) is the only option meeting that criteria and a recommended pick ([hotelmayalongbeach.com](http://hotelmayalongbeach.com)).

**For more info on all things Long Beach:** [visitlongbeach.com](http://visitlongbeach.com)



Long Beach Arena-Mural by Wyland