

LOS ANGELES

BY CLAIRE YOUNG / JULY 18, 2019

## Laguna Beach Is Cool Again, and Possibly the Best Beach Weekend in SoCal

Your digs? A recently renovated motor lodge straight out of Mad Men.



There aren't many photos more distinctly Californian than the clifftop homes in Laguna

GREG ORTEGA / UNSPLASH

*Stipulated: the perfect travel time for a three-day weekend getaway is four hours. More, and you waste your vacation. Less, and you're still near home. Hence our series, The 4-Hour Rule, dedicated to revealing the best destinations that are far away, yet still close to home.*

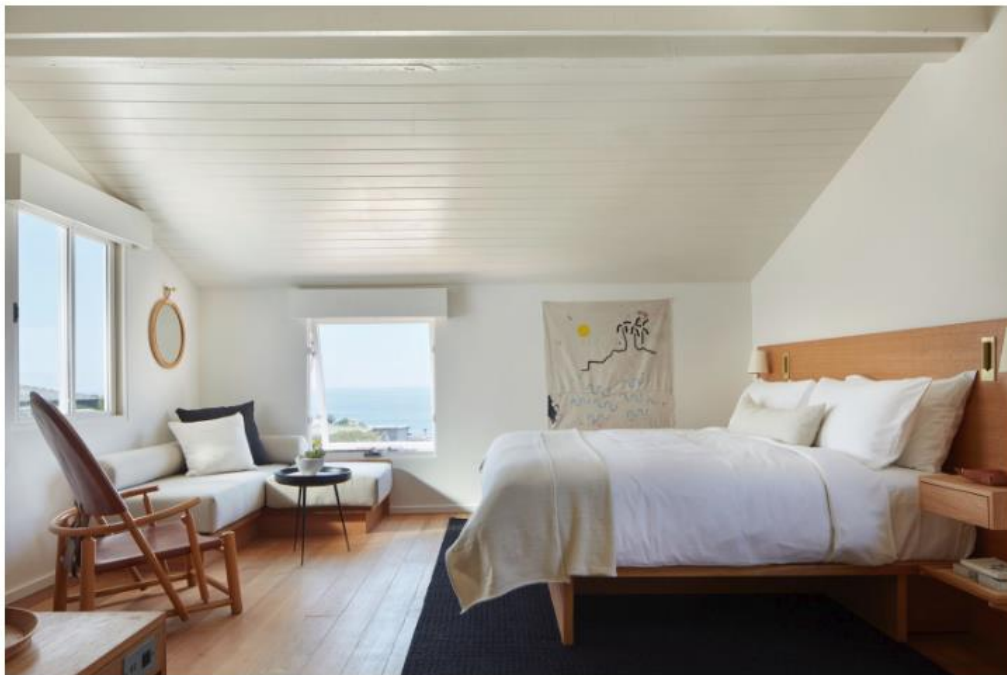
It goes by the name Laguna Beach. That Orange County burb smack between LA and San Diego. It might conjure up thoughts of your one coworker that leaves the office really early for the commute, or maybe it's the shimmering backdrop of a TV show [you once very guiltily binged](#).

Regardless, if you aren't thinking of it as the laid-back locale of your next indulgent weekend getaway, you're doing it wrong.

The home of LC, Kristen and Stee-Fen is an artist's refuge, a surfer's paradise and a burnt-out Angeleno's respite. There's amazing food, breathtaking views, a lively art and music scene and beaches, beaches, beaches.

An added bonus for the road-weary: Laguna operates a free, open-air trolley service running daily from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Once you're there, ditch the car and use the real-time app to hit the streets with zero responsibilities. Can you feel your heart rate lowering as you read this?

Keep it simple and follow our guide to doing Laguna Beach right. Just head down the 405 and follow the instructions below. The locations, the people and the drama ... are real. (That's the last *Laguna Beach* reference, promise.)



A room at the Hotel Joaquin (Roger Davies)

## **STAY: Hotel Joaquin**

Not convinced that LB is more than a day trip? Hotel Joaquin makes the case for spending the night. The 22-room “petite resort” appears ripped from Instagram. Revamped from a former life as a dilapidated motel and located right off the PCH, each room is decorated with a style that can be described as eternal summer meets the south of France meets mid-century modern. It’s literally in *Vogue*, which described it as the hotel “you’ll never want to leave.”

The onsite Mediterranean restaurant, [Saline](#), is for guests only and might be reason enough to book a room. If you make it outside, at the private beach guests can access complimentary surfboards, diving gear, bicycles and more.

Fair warning, this is a place to unplug. Suites are television-free and outfitted instead with vinyl record players. Staff can pull from 550 albums to offer curated music collections designed to “complement each guest’s intention for their stay.” Mark us down for psychedelic romantic beach chill.

*985 North Coast Highway, Laguna Beach, CA 92651*

<https://www.insidehook.com/article/los-angeles/laguna-beach-four-hour-rule>