

Malibu Beach Inn

CARBON BEACH

premium
TRAVELER

THE BEST OF BUSINESS TRAVEL

Try a calming retreat at an art-filled, seaside California resort.



As we transitioned from parking-lot traffic on Los Angeles' 405 Freeway to the truly more free-flowing pace on the Pacific Coast Highway, we began catching alluring glimpses of the Pacific, and I felt the working world begin to recede. That pleasant feeling continued, as we climbed the hills, starting at Santa Monica, through Topanga Canyon, and finally into the bluffs of the funky surfing haven known as Malibu, where my wife, my son—a toddler—and I would spend the next three nights.

We had chosen the Malibu Beach Inn as our headquarters—and were very glad we did. Known for its stunning location on Billionaires' Beach, perched right on the water, the hotel puts a premium on privacy and casual, though extraordinarily professional service, that made relaxation effortless.

Though the weather was not the usual picture-perfect of Southern California—enough so that everyone kept apologizing for it—I knew I was in the right place immediately, as we were greeted by a gorgeous Jasper Johns print behind the reception desk. As a family of art lovers, we found wonderful pieces at practically every turn, all of which were chosen by the hotel's owner, David Geffen, the music and media mogul and collector of American art.

There was much more to fall in love with in Malibu and its environs—which I came to know as the perfect antidote to urban life. Daily walks to the Cross Creek and Malibu Lumber Yard shopping areas best illustrated the casual elegance of the community. This was a mile or so down the Pacific Coast Highway, past legendary Zuma and Surfrider beaches, where surfers of all ages make beautiful, seamless transitions from street clothes to wetsuits, and back again, using their vehicles as dressing rooms. We also appreciated the kindness of parents at the local playground, as well as delicious breakfasts—complete with a few TV-star sightings—at Marmalade, a rambling café that welcomes lingering over coffee.

One afternoon was pleasantly spent in Downtown Santa Monica on the Third Street Promenade,

only a short drive away, where just about every shopping and dining whim could be indulged, in a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Within blocks of the Promenade are the beach, Palisades Park and Santa Monica Pier.

Back at the hotel, we settled in, with my wife and I moving from work to child care and relaxation mode, in turn. The free Wi-Fi in our suite, its comfortable furniture, terrace, heavenly king bed, and the attentive staff helped greatly in this pursuit.

Balancing bouts of hard work on a project deadline, and much-needed R&R, the spa and restaurant stood out. Cure Spa is an ultra-private facility carved out of a guest room on the top floor, with stunning views of the Pacific and soothing air and sounds wafting in during the treatment.

I tried the Hot Stone treatment, in which Swedish massage is mixed with Native American-inspired traditions, and the healing energy of heated smooth rocks are applied to muscle groups—and in so doing, achieved deep relaxation and a sense of calm. I have had massages on and by the beach—but this was better, because it paired the suftside sights and sounds with the comforts of a luxury spa.

Dining shone as well. The Carbon Beach Club restaurant features fresh California cuisine with Asian accents, accompanied by a strong, creative wine list, as well as perfectly-mixed cocktails, which helped set the mood. I loved being able to dine indoors or alfresco—and both options boasted breathtaking ocean views. Breakfast, which we enjoyed while cantilevered over the tide's ebb and flow, was delicious; burgers at lunch were spot-on, and organic steak and tuna tartare were especially excellent at dinner.

I also couldn't help peeking in to the Inn's meeting facilities, where an intimate board-style meeting would be perfectly suited—and enhanced by the impressive art collection, excellent fare from the kitchen, and the discrete, friendly service—not to mention the pure, gorgeous ocean views.

As we packed up and planned our way back down the hill toward LAX, we felt the calm glow of Malibu warming our outlook after just a weekend, and were much better for it. We knew also, though, that we'd be back before long, since the real world of work and life tends to diminish this glow inevitably.

Details

Malibu Beach Inn, 22878 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu, Calif.; tel. 310-456-6444;www.malibubeachinn.com.

http://www.premiumtraveler.com/Healthy_Glow/76/795.aspx