

Crystal Cove Beach Cottages

Where “Glamping” Meets Historic Beach

One of the most beautiful stops on Pacific Coast Highway is South Orange County’s Crystal Cove. This earthly paradise is part of Crystal Cove State Park, known for its natural seashore, 3.5 miles of pristine beach and Historic District—a playground for painters and campers and home to the rustic, vintage Crystal Cove Beach Cottages.

A Coastal Tie to the Past

Originally built as a seaside colony in the 1930s and 1940s, the forty-six Crystal Cove cottages gather near the mouth of Los Trancos Creek. Twenty-one have been renovated and are available for overnight stays. Some sit on the beach, others dot the bluffs above the sea. All offer incredible ocean views and an invitation to relive life during a simpler time. They’re listed on the National Register of Historic Places and preserved by the Crystal Cove Alliance.

Given the idyllic feel, it’s little wonder the location draws families from near and far. Or that it’s been used to film many Hollywood movies, like *Treasure Island* (in 1934), *To Have and Have Not*, Disney’s *Herbie Rides Again*, and—how fitting is this?—*Beaches* in 1988.

“Beaches” and Famous Cottage #13

Speaking of *Beaches*, Cottage #13 (the one furthest south) is where the film was made. Originally home to couples who began camping nearby in the 1920s, the cottage was badly damaged during a storm in the 1930s and later rebuilt. Today, Cottage #13 houses the Beaches Film & Media Center.

Gorgeous Views and Simple Charm

There are two kinds of historic cottages to rent: individual cottages and dorm-style private room cottages. What makes both incredibly cool—if not hard to reserve—is that they’ve been painstakingly restored to the 1935 – 1955 era. While you have modern electricity, plumbing and safety features, you also have colors, furnishings and homey touches of a bygone time. The vintage vibe and preservation of original details feels magical, because it lets you experience yesterday’s natural and architectural beauty.

Just know this isn’t hotel living! There’s no room service, television, phones or Wi-Fi. So be prepared to chill . . . and truly unplug from life with your partner and kids. Hey, whether you’re in a simple, historic cottage or tent somewhere, isn’t that what “glamping” is all about?

Dining on the Beach at Beachcomber Café

For the wow factor in ocean-view dining—can you say “spectacular sunset dinner?”—the awesome Beachcomber Café is just a short walk from the cottages. Located on the sand in Crystal Cove State Park and open to the public, Beachcomber Café serves up delicious traditional fare for breakfast, lunch and dinner. People rave about the beignets (rightly so!) and great walk-up bar known for yummy appetizers and refreshing cocktails. This local fave is a definite dining hotspot, especially on weekends. If you and your family are waiting for a table, explore the incredible tide pools nearby or stroll on the beach. You might get lucky and see a pod of dolphins or whale swim by!

Set the Date

There’s going to the beach and then there’s spending time in coastal paradise, old school and vintage SoCal style. If surf and sand are calling you to be dazzled by beach times of a bygone era, answer with a stay in the Crystal Cove Beach Cottages.

Or, just come enjoy the area with your kids.

Cottage reservations are available year-round, but often fill six months in advance. Book yours at CrystalCoveBeachCottages.org.

To get to the Crystal Cove Beach Cottages in Newport Coast, take Pacific Coast Highway and turn towards the beach when you hit the Crystal Cove/Los Trancos intersection. FYI, there’s no cottage guest parking in the Historic District.

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