

Southern California weekend

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1. Boat over to Balboa Peninsula

Take your bike (or even your car) on the **Balboa Island Ferry** for the ¼-mile trip across the harbor to the Balboa Peninsula. The trip is less than five minutes and no more than \$2 (\$1 if you're walking on). The ferry, which has been running since 1909, stops at the **Fun Zone** (600 E. Bay Ave.; thebalboafunzone.com), with a handful of carnival rides and arcades full of games like Skee-Ball and air hockey. *Ferry runs every 5 minutes (until 2 a.m. Fri–Sat and midnight Sun); see dock map at balboaislandferry.com*

BY CHANTAL LAMERS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE LAURIDSEN

Day trip Balboa

Why go now: Forget the recession and head to Newport Beach's Balboa for a close-to-home summertime island getaway. **Dress code:** Sunscreen, oversize sunglasses, and OC-style Rainbow Sandals.

Island transport: Beach cruisers, brightly painted golf carts, and ferryboats. **Main drag:** Marine Avenue, full of charismatic cottages housing shops, galleries, and restaurants.

As seen on TV: In the cult—and sadly defunct—Fox series *Arrested Development*, the Bluth Company runs its most lucrative endeavor on Balboa Island: a frozen banana stand. **Shop like a local:** Pick up the makings of a beach-blanket picnic at Hershey's Market (200 Marine Ave.; 949/673-0330), open since 1929. Recently enjoyed—the Endless Summer sub with seared ahi, avocado, capers, ginger, and wasabi. **History lesson:** Balboa is actually a manmade island (originally called Balisle) fashioned from bay-mud deposits scooped from Newport Harbor during a 1906 dredging project.

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Southern California

Day trip

2. Cruise among the stars

Pack a picnic and hop aboard a 45- to 90-minute **Fun Zone Boat** cruise on the Newport Harbor (you can even bring your dog). The captain gives a tour of the waterfront mansions, massive yachts, and glamorous old Hollywood hangs (John Wayne's and Shirley Temple's former digs are among the popular sightings). For the best sunset views, take the 7 p.m. voyage. From \$14; 600 Edgewater Place; funzoneboats.com



3. Treat yourself

Balboa Candy (301 Marine Ave., Ste. A; 949/723-6099) is stocked with throwback treats like Pop Rocks, Abba-Zaba, and Wack-O-Wax lips. And be sure to sample the island's namesake marvel on a stick: The Balboa Bar is a square block of vanilla ice cream dipped in chocolate, then rolled in toppings like peanuts, sprinkles, crushed Oreos, and toasted almonds. At **Sugar N Spice** (310 Marine Ave.; 949/673-8907) and **Dad's Donut Shop & Bakery** (318 Marine Ave.; 949/673-8686), folks line up to cool off with this iconic treat.

4. Dress the part

At **Zschoche**, you can soak up the blasé island mind-set by pulling on a flouncy summer frock, hand-painted silk tunics, and tiered-ruffle petal dresses. Pick up Toms Shoes in nautical blue or red-and-white ticking stripes, beach totes made from recycled sails, vintage Dior eyewear, and luxe Missoni beach towels ideal for tossing on the sand. 219 Marine Ave.; 949/673-2220.



Take it home Mediterranean island flavor in a bottle

At **Olive Oil & Beyond**, shelves are lined with the rarest, freshest organic extra-virgin olive oils that the zealot owners can unearth. Tastings are complimentary, with pairings like peach white balsamic with porcini-infused extra-virgin. Take home gourmet goodies such as mandarin-pumpkin marmalade, rose preserves, and rum-soaked figs in honey. 210 Marine Ave., Ste. A; 949/566-9380.



Getting there

From I-405, exit at Jamboree Rd. and head south. Cross Coast Hwy. and follow Marine Ave. onto Balboa Island.

INFO talesofbalboa.com

3 more close-to-home spots to island hop

FOR NATURE LOVERS

Off the coast of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, the five islands that compose the **Channel Islands National Park**—Anacapa, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, San Miguel, and Santa Barbara—are accessible by boat or plane. With 145 plants and animals known only to these isolated landmasses, the islands have been likened to the Galápagos. The park's remote location makes for some of the most unspoiled tidepools in Southern California. nps.gov/chis

FOR BEACH LOVERS

Connected to San Diego via the wonderfully curved San Diego–Coronado Bridge, **Coronado** still maintains its tranquil island vibe and is known for its beaches. Visit the cafes, antiques shops, and boutiques along Orange Avenue, then stop for cocktails at the chic 120-year-old seaside resort, Hotel del Coronado (1500 Orange Ave.; hoteldel.com).

FOR HIKING AND CAMPING

The population of **Catalina Island's** main city, Avalon, rises from about 3,500 to as high as 10,000 each summer. With 88 percent of the island protected by the Catalina Island Conservancy, you can avoid the crowds by traversing the island's 42,000-acre interior. Get tickets early for the ferries, which depart from several Southland ports. *Ferry is about \$70 round-trip, depending on port; catalinachamber.com*

SHARE YOUR WEEKEND FINDS. Favorite new restaurant? Local hike? Email your suggestions to the weekend guide editor at wgeditor@sunset.com