



Welcome to Orange County's sun-kissed coastline

BY CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS, MCCLATCHY-TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE JULY 11, 2011 BE THE FIRST TO POST A COMMENT



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San Clemente's Beachcomber Motel features 12 rooms and commanding views of the beach and pier.

Photograph by: Christopher Reynolds, McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Echoes at the cove

Down along the shore between Laguna Beach and Newport, local activists and state officials are rehabilitating a beloved old beach-cottage community called Crystal Cove. "It's just a rustic walk back in time," says cottages manager Lindsay Lane. More than a dozen films have been shot at the site, including "To Have and Have Not," "Herbie Rides Again" and "Beaches."

The good news is that there are 21 vintage beach-facing units that Crystal Cove State Park rents for less than \$200 a night. The bad news is that everybody wants one. Occupancy is about 98 percent, and cottages are typically snapped up six months ahead, within minutes of being made available. (On Feb. 1, August reservations open up, and so on.) More cottages will join the inventory, including two later this year. Meanwhile, forget about reservations and just show up, take the shuttle down from the state park's parking lot, walk the beach, dine on the patio of the Beachcomber Cafe and climb the steps that lead north to the park's modest cultural center.

That last stop is an important one that many visitors miss. It will give you a chance to read about the Japanese American families who arrived in 1927, leased cottages from the Irvine family, farmed hundreds of acres, built a schoolhouse and other buildings, then were shipped off to internment camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. By the time they were released after the end of World War II, Crystal Cove was otherwise occupied, and those families had to start over elsewhere. The cove is a scene of many happy memories, but its human history is not all sweetness and light.