

LEISURE / TRAVEL / INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

# Five fascinating spring and summer getaways right in your own SoCal back yard

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Here is it your moment of Zen: five fun-filled spots for your spring or summer fling that you can get to by car, train (Amtrak) or even plane (flights to Palm Springs):

1. Hit **Wildflower season** in **Death Valley**, carpets of the state flower – the California Poppy – across the Antelope Valley and Iris blooms throughout the Eastern Sierra. The state’s gardens will also be at their stunning best. Take in Pasadena’s famed camellias in Huntington Gardens, orchard blooms along the Fresno Blossom Trail, and rhododendrons at Mendocino County’s Coast Botanical Garden. California’s theme parks will not disappoint this year either. New attractions include Universal Studio Hollywood’s “The Wizarding World of Harry Potter” opening April 7, 2016.



*Richard Pietschmann*

2. **Carlsbad** casual luxury by the sea that affords you the luxury of free time, uncrowded beaches, **fine dining** without the wait and fine lodgings. From a simple village around a mineral spring in 1882, **Carlsbad** has grown into an unmatched destination for wellness with **24 different spas**, including the holistic treatments at the Sheraton Carlsbad Resort & Spa’s **Ocean Pearl Spa** and the **Chopra Center for Wellbeing**, which combines the healing arts of the East with the best in Western medicine. For the ultimate wellness experience, take advantage of the year-round perfect weather and head to the **Agua Hediona Lagoon** for miles of scenic hiking trails, stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking; or cycle along Historic Highway 101. An epicenter for golf, Carlsbad is home to golf giants such as **Callaway**, Cobra-Puma and

TaylorMade, where enthusiasts can be measured for a set of custom clubs. Find world-class fairways including [Aviara Golf at Park Hyatt Resort](#), [The Crossings Golf Course](#), and [Omni La Costa Golf Course](#).

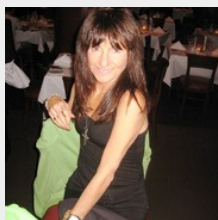
3. [Palm Springs](#) the desert playground for the international jet-set and locals, if you don't know is comprised of nine cities, located two hours east of Los Angeles. Through May, JetBlue services East Coasters with [five new seasonal flights](#) between New York City's JFK Airport and Palm Springs International Airport. Buzzworthy properties opening their doors during March include the [V Palm Springs Hotel](#), a 140-room resort near the feet of the San Jacinto Mountains and the 32-room [ARRIVE](#) contemporary hotel created by Silicon Valley icon Ezra Callahan. Between April 1 - 3, the [Indian Wells Arts Festival](#) returns with more than 200 juried artists from around the world showcase their contemporary and traditional fine art. [The Palm Desert Food & Wine Festival](#), April 8 - 10, celebrates the brightest and most inspired chefs from across the country for culinary and wine tastings in the famed El Paseo shopping district. Also, [Greater Palm Springs Restaurant Week](#) returns June 3 - 12, providing an exclusive taste of the region's top restaurants.

4. [Huntington Beach](#) a surfer's, volleyball player and beach bunny paradise, this iconic SoCal area vibrates with energy and outdoor activities. From the [Huntington Beach Pier](#) to the [Vans "Off The Wall" Skatepark](#), athletes and spectators alike experience that adrenaline rush with such action sports as BMX, skateboarding and surfing. [Skatedogs](#) offers private skateboarding lessons for all ages and skill levels or hit the waves with expert surf instructors from [Toes on The Nose](#). In search of inspiration (or ready for some competition)? Then watch the [Van Doren Invitational](#) skate and BMX contest July 31 – August 1, 2016 or the Vans [US Open of Surfing](#); the world's largest surf competition and lifestyle festival Jul 24 – 31, 2016. Alongside the free spirit of [Huntington Beach's](#) coastal lifestyle is a playful imagination highlighted through new cultural and tourism developments. [Pacific City](#) debuted in November 2015 with 11 acres of shops and eateries, open air lounges and an outdoor movie screen; all paired with stunning oceanfront views. Next door, the highly-anticipated luxury boutique [Paséa Hotel & Spa](#) opens its doors on June 1, 2016.

5. [Long Beach](#) home of the Queen Mary as well as ship terminals, this town has come a long way baby with a new urban appeal. Bordered by the Pacific Ocean with 5.5 miles of sandy beach front and miles of inland waterways to explore, there's lots to do right in town or you can hop on the [Catalina Express](#) for day trips to Santa Catalina Island, embark on a whale watching cruise or journey the world's largest ocean at the [Aquarium of the Pacific](#). Auto racing events abound during spring. The FIA Formula E Championship, the world's first fully-electric car racing series, takes place with the [Long Beach ePrix](#) on April 2. Also take in seven racing events as a part of the [42nd Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach](#), April 15 - 17. Building on

the success of its [Long Beach](#) debut in 2015, [POW! WOW! Long Beach](#) returns July 10 - 17 with a week-long celebration of culture, music, and art, changing the face of the city with large-scale mural installations. Take advantage of year-round sunshine at the [Asics World Series of Beach Volleyball](#), August 23 - 28, a celebration of “all things beach” with the world’s greatest beach volleyball players. Be sure to leave room in your suitcase. Located in downtown Long Beach, [The Pike Outlets](#) recently completed a \$64 million redevelopment adding an additional 45,000 square feet of retail space and the introduction of an H&M, Nike Factory Store and Forever 21.

Watch the video for even more spots to hit in SoCal.



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