

Fall into an affordable beach-side vacation spot

Kathy Strong • Special to Desert Post Weekly • November 4, 2010

Fall means changing leaves in lots of places of the country, but in Southern California hotels it means falling prices in our beach communities. It is a perfect time to get away before the holidays take center stage and get some lower rates at the same time. Book soon — just like fall leaves, these specials won't last.

Stay longer in Redondo Beach

For those of us who grew up near the ocean, fall and winter seasons mean glistening sandy beaches instead of snow and the sound of crashing waves mingled with the aroma of blazing beach fires. The historic 1892 coastal town of Redondo Beach, with its romantic seafront esplanade, famous Horseshoe Pier, early surfing legacy and charming shops and cafes, may capture this southern California beach beat best. It is a year-round visitor destination, but during the fall through the winter months, the skies are crystal clear, the crowds are mellow and the travel deals are great.

Make the Portofino Hotel & Yacht Club your overnight beach home, right on the ocean at King Harbor. The resort's recent renovation embodies a nautical ocean theme throughout, nature-enhanced by floor-to-ceiling views of tangerine sunsets fronted by passing sailboats. The deluxe guest rooms offer the same Pacific views from private balconies that face the beach or the harbor. Plan to dine at the resort's all-new, warm and inviting BALEENLosangeles restaurant that specializes in creative seafood cuisine served with ocean vistas, candlelight and glowing fireplaces.

The fall savings promotion at the Portofino translates to greater savings the longer you stay — from 10 percent off for one night to 20 percent off two nights to a third night free. Enjoy a sunset toast from the privacy of your balcony while you watch the resident sea lions frolic.

Off-season paradise

Picture Monte Carlo on a clear, starry night with lights from the casino dancing on the sea. And little bistros sprinkled amid boutiques along tiled

walking arcades. No traffic, no need for dinner reservations and the predominate sound is the gentle crashing of waves on the rocky beach. Forget the plane ticket to France. Just take a 45-minute Catalina Express ride from downtown Long Beach or Dana Point and you are on Catalina Island — in the off season.

When Labor Day says good-bye to Catalina tourists, the town lowers its prices but not its romantic offerings. The walks along Via Casino by starlight are still mesmerizing and "June gloom" is replaced by clear skies and brisk days for hiking, biking or touring. The Mediterranean-style Hotel Villa Portofino is nestled directly across from the water in the heart of the walking village of Avalon. The 34 attractive rooms and suites twist and climb around an open courtyard, while the top-floor sundeck offers a perfect sunset toasting locale with ocean views.

The hotel's off-season package includes roundtrip transportation aboard the Catalina Express; roundtrip taxi transfers; and Sunday through Thursday overnight accommodations with continental breakfast. Rates begin at \$92 per person, double occupancy, per night.

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The Portofino Hotel & Yacht Club, 260 Portofino Way, Redondo Beach; (800) 468-4292/(310) 379-8481, www.hotelportofino.com

Hotel Villa Portofino, 111 Crescent Avenue, Avalon; (888) 510-0555/(310) 510-0555; www.hotelvillaportofino.com

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