

Laguna Beach's

BEST

All the food, drink, places
and events you want to know
in Laguna Beach ... from a
resident's perspective

2013
EDITION

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LagunaBeachBest.com



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FOREWORD

In 1995, I was engaged to a guy who wasn't very nice. I believe that every person comes into your life for a reason, though, and his reason had to do with introducing me to Laguna Beach. He brought me to the Surf & Sand Resort on New Year's Eve 1995, and on New Year's Day, I wrote a "resolution" that I would eventually move to Laguna Beach. Even in that short, overnight visit, I knew I'd come home.

I moved here in September 2000, and have been avidly exploring this town ever since. In 2008, I decided to start writing a blog about what to do and where to go in Laguna Beach. At that time, someone asked me what in the world I would write about. Wouldn't I just run out of material? I chuckled then and I still chuckle now – Laguna Beach is the most creatively active, magical town I've known. Every day in Laguna Beach is a new story and a new discovery. We locals love to talk about what is and what is to be and, apparently, at **LagunaBeachBest.com** now, many thousands of other people are interested in the same!

This book is a culmination of all my hundreds of blog entries.

I don't call myself a food writer or official "reviewer" – I'm just a regular person looking to enjoy a great experience. I think I've been lucky enough to get to know a lot about the greatness of this town that most visitors (and even some locals) don't get a chance to experience, and I want you to love this town as I do.

I've never asked the restaurants or events to comp or give me "freebies." In fact, I've made a point of remaining as anonymous as possible because it's important that I experience exactly what you would experience. Further, over these initial blogging years, I haven't asked for ad dollars from any of the entities I've written about because I don't want you – my reader – to feel that I might have been swayed in some way.

Lastly, I don't review franchises or large chains. Although I have nothing against these entities, I think the local restaurateurs and merchants here put all their talent, money and sweat equity on the line to take care of you, and they deserve to have larger audiences because of that commitment.

OK, so all that being said ... **What if your own entity – or the entity you love and adore – isn't in this book?** Because this is based on my ongoing blog, you are reading a portion of an ever-evolving "Laguna Beach's Best." If a favorable review isn't here now, there's a chance it will be in the next year's revised edition.

But, clearly, in the end, this IS "the Best of Laguna Beach." If food is inconsistent, it doesn't get in the book. If the experience is a flat line, and my local friends feel the same, it doesn't get in the book. If the service is rude, arrogant or lacking, it doesn't get in the book. Fellow tourists might have given it 4 stars at Yelp ... but if the Laguna Beach locals don't go there, I'm going to steer you to places and events we love, instead.

The way I see it, we all work hard for our money, and we all want to have a great experience, especially in a new town we've chosen to visit or reside. We deserve to be treated like gold, period. (Not entitled. Just well treated.) Happily, most of Laguna Beach knows how to do just that with a style and grace I've rarely experienced elsewhere.

Now it's your turn.

Welcome to my beautiful town.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the book that lets you experience life as a resident in the most unique city on California's coastline, Laguna Beach.

Laguna Beach grew up in the 1920s and '30s as an exclusive art colony and getaway retreat for Hollywood celebrities and quiet millionaires alike. Today, Laguna Beach might be more sophisticated with her offering of world-class art galleries, art festivals, museums and world-class dining, but her real charm lies in her ability to be both eclectic and eccentric.

There are no "suburbs" in Laguna Beach. Not one house looks like its neighbor, and, in fact, sleek mansions happily abide next to hobbit-y huts on every street. There are no Big Box stores ... we residents have to clear our day's schedule and pack a lunch for those designated drives. The few franchises or chains arrived only by fortuitous sales or grandfathering from decades ago. Laguna is owned and operated by independent spirits.

There are really no divisive class or "group" divisions in Laguna Beach. Retired millionaires will wander down to the coffee shop in sweats and slippers and hobnob for hours with struggling artists who pedal up on beach cruisers (And some of these "starving artists" ARE the millionaires). In Laguna Beach, there's a relaxed energy as we routinely organize and participate in neighborhood volleyball tournaments and chatty Beach Night gatherings. We come to recognize and acknowledge each other in a small town kind of way, even at the height of our bustling tourist season. Further, Laguna's restaurants, bars, retail shops and event planners make a point of creating solid, lasting friendships with their residents.

In short, we 23,000 love living here on the edge of a continent. We believe it's the BEST edge, of course. I know you will come to feel the same as you explore our town as a resident would.

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Dining at its Best!

Best Casual & Lunches Dining

APPETIZERS

CAPRISE FLATBREAD - 6.99
 BRISCHETTA - 3.99
 TINA'S MEATBALL SANDWICH
 ROLL ROLLED BREAD - 3.99
 RICE & CHICKEN WINGS - 4.99 FULL 8.99
 PARMESAN HERB FRIES - 4.99
 CHICKEN PARMESAN STRIP - 6.99
 GARLIC BREAD - 1.99 FULL 3.99
 CHEESY GARLIC BREAD - 1.99 FULL 3.99

SALAD ANTIPASTO

HOUSE SALAD - 5.99 FULL 9.99
 PASTA SALAD - 5.99 FULL 9.99
 RASTA SALAD - 5.99 FULL 9.99
 FIELD GREEN SALAD - 6.49 FULL 10.99
 CAESAR SALAD - 6.49 FULL 10.99
 CAPRESE - 6.99 FULL 11.49

ADD TO ANY SALAD - Individual 1.99 - Family & Antipasto 2.99
 Arancini • Mozzarella • Feta Cheese • Sliced Italian Chicken

ALL ANTIPASTO - 10.99
 Served with House Salad (Dressing Available for Choice) - Representative of Restaurant Menu

TRADITIONAL ANTIPASTO - 10.99
 with Mozzarella Cheese, Antipasto Salad Sauce

ROASTED VEGGIE ANTIPASTO - 10.99
 with Mozzarella Cheese and Roasted Vegetable Toppings

SICILIAN CHICKEN OR TURKEY ANTIPASTO - 10.99
 with Mozzarella Cheese and Sliced Bread 'n' Italian Sauce

ZUPPA

MINISTRONE - 3.49 FULL 5.49
 CHICKEN MINISTRONE - 3.99 FULL 5.99
 ANNA'S ROASTED TOMATO - 3.49 FULL 5.49

FAVORITE PIZZAS

Medium	Small	Large
8.99	12.99	18.99
1. House Special	1.2. House Special	1.3. House Special
4. THE GODFATHER	5. BIANCA	6. BBQ CHICKEN
7. RASA	8. G	





Best
Coffee Houses &
Breakfasts

Best
*Bars &
Happy Hours*





Best
*Snacks &
Desserts*



Best

Shopping



Editor's Note: If you walked down any street in Laguna Beach, you know we have A LOT of shopping opportunities. In this Shopping section, I've only chosen a few can't-miss places and items – the best of the best, so to speak, to which residents and tourists flock. And a special note – I've chosen to focus on clothing store reviews in my blog only at www.LagunaBeachBest.com

LAGUNA COLONY

384 Forest Ave., #2, Laguna Beach, 92651
(949) 497-8919

Hours: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. daily

**Best
Home Décor
(and cool
Jewelry too)**

Where do Laguna Beach locals go for home décor?

While tourists crowd the first block of retail stores on Forest Avenue in Laguna Beach, locals slip right past them, heading just one block further on Forest to their favorite décor and gift store in town, The Colony.

Nestled next to the town's post office since 1994, The Laguna Colony Company is housed in the building that used to be the original lumber yard shop – Laguna Lumber – and is one of the oldest buildings in town. In fact, Laguna Colony's shop's floors are original, dating back to 1913.

Owned by the talented Paul Mosley, Laguna Colony is a treasure trove of one-of-a-kind collections and the hottest trends in jewelry and home fragrances. Paul is a friendly, warm, one-of-a-kind personality and his stores reflect the same - you won't find these pieces anywhere else in Laguna Beach. It's why locals, celebrities and returning travelers from all over the world stop in regularly to see what Paul is featuring this time around. He keeps it fresh, eclectic and very reasonably priced.



While the shop is cozy, you'll want to make a few circles. There are so many great items tucked here and there that you just can't see it all in a single pass. (And if

you agree that Laguna Colony rocks during the year, you have to see its transformation during the holiday season. You'll want to buy it all and take it home. See page 255.)

As just a sampling, The Laguna Colony features:

- Vietri and Mariposa dish and serving ware;
- Aquiesse and Voluspa candles and home fragrances;
- Jellycat stuffed animals in the children's section;
- The latest rage in jewelry – Kim Herbert's line of Charlotte Singleton Silver;
- The Energy Muse Jewelry line, made famous by hundreds of celebrity devotees such as Heidi Klum, Seal, Hillary Duff, David Beckham, Usher, Ryan Seacrest ... even Patti LaBelle and L.A. Lakers Coach Phil Jackson.
- The finest lines of stationery and gift cards.

Your home will thank you, your jewelry box will thank you, and your pet sitters back home will be so pleased that you opted for a sophisticated gift instead of that run-of-the-mill tourist t-shirt.



BUBBLES OF LAGUNA

Best Bath Shop
Bubbles of Laguna
445 S. Coast Highway, Laguna Beach, 92651
(949) 494-1417



Hours: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m., summers, 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

*N*estled as a rare storefront in the historical Hotel Laguna in downtown Laguna Beach, Bubbles has been going strong for more than 13 years now.

Its owner, Cathy Wilkinson, offers hundreds of bath items, from every wash, scrub and bead imaginable to nubby shower sponges and “Soapy Soles.” The store features its own line of Bubbles shower gels, bath bars and lotions, all personally scented by Cathy. She even carries Anti-Monkey Butt Powder for people who just can’t stop chaffing. It’s a cornucopia of gifting for yourself (for starters of course) and any child or adult in your world, and when you’ve left our lovely town, you have her complete e-commerce store to rely upon.



LAGUNA BEACH BOOKS

1200 South Coast Highway, Laguna Beach, 92651
(949) 494-4779

**Best
Bookstore**

Hours: 10: a.m. – 8:00 p.m. daily

What's a beach without a book? Thanks to Owner Jane Hanauer of Laguna Beach Books in the Old Pottery Place, you have it made in the shade. Here's your haven for popular titles and an additional raft of great books you might never have considered.

This independent bookstore lives up to its name with some of the most eclectic titles in every category you can imagine. Further, the store stocks several racks of the kind of greeting cards you'd like to receive, and you will find a rare collection of art- and photo-centric coffee table books that honor the art-based spirit of our Laguna Beach.



If you're looking for a particular title or author, don't expect to come across a Help Desk with a blank-faced teen. Quite the contrary. Every staff member at Laguna Beach Books (known as "LBB" to locals) not only knows the store's contents inside out and backwards but READS it all, too. These people are some of the most interesting conversationalists you'll find in the entire town of Laguna, and they're extremely helpful in steering you to a memorable read.

The city's recent award recipient as the Laguna Beach Store of the Year, you'll know why the moment you step in this little indy that could.

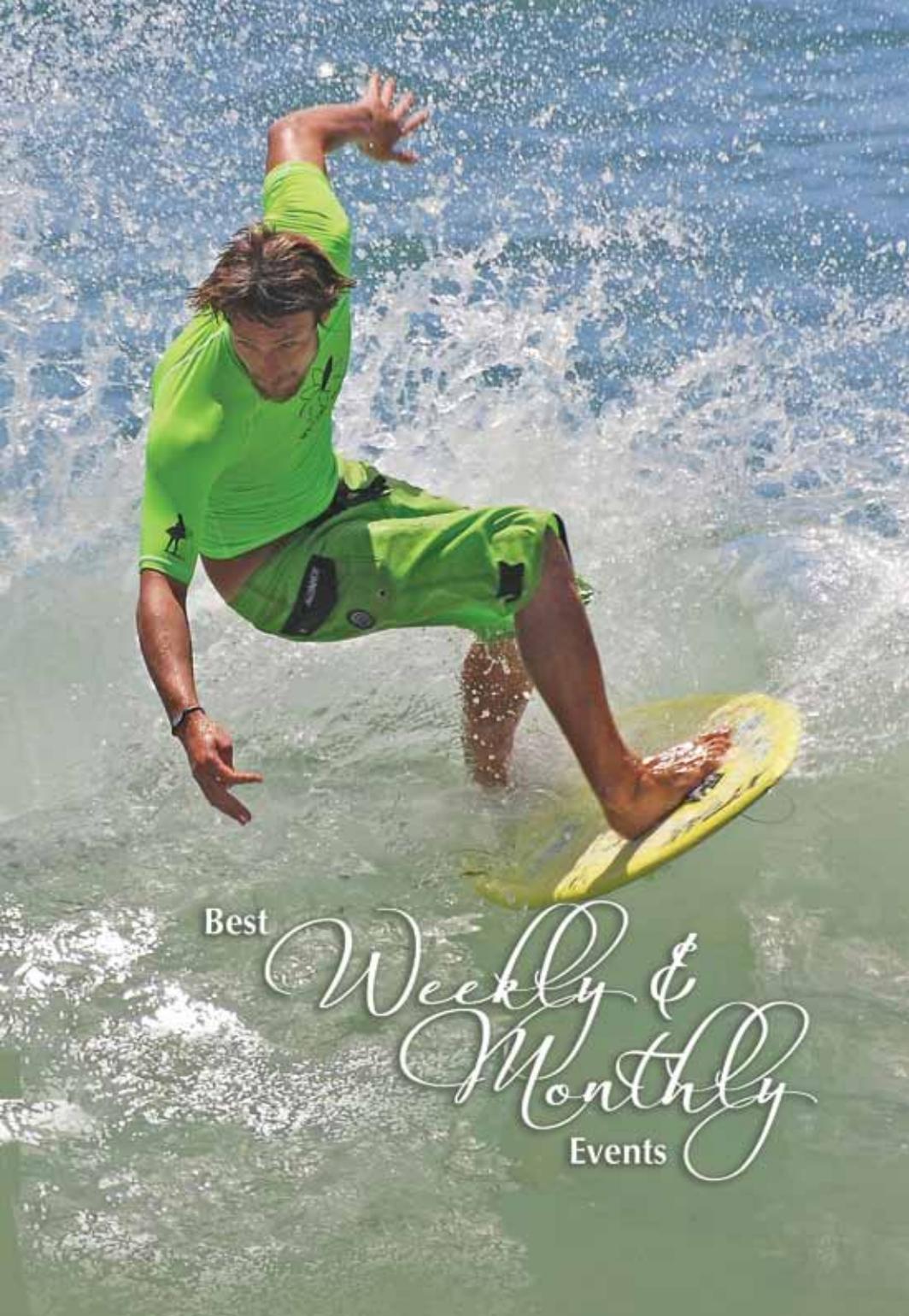


Insider Tips:

Staff recommendations: The sticky note tags you see throughout the store on all the shelves? These are handwritten recommendations from the staffers on hundreds of books. As I said, these people actually read these books.

Live author events and book signings occur almost weekly. Be sure to sign up at LagunaBeachBooks.com to receive updates on their incoming featured authors. These are regular calendar features that are consistently filled with truly interesting authors.

L.A.-based libraries, foundations and 5-star hotel event managers have come to rely on Laguna Beach Books to provide a specific author's book at their larger speaking events and forums. The LBB folks tote all the credit card machinery, cash banks, books, and knowledgeable staff members along. I've seen them in action – very sophisticated and polished. Check with Owner Jane Hanauer or Manager Lisa Childers for more details.



Best

*Weekly &
Monthly*

Events

FREE

Shuttles & Parking



Best

Places
Locals Go



Best
Holiday
Events



Laguna Beach's Best: The Essential Guide to Laguna Beach

"This is a wonderful guide to Laguna Beach with information on where to go, when to go and how to get there." **Jane Hanauer** – Owner, Laguna Beach Books

Since its art colony beginnings in the 1930s, Laguna Beach has lured celebrity, royalty and international travelers to its spectacular coastline. Whether you prefer the serenity in its breathtaking views or its energetic, creative vibe, Laguna Beach's Best will show you the way.

Compiled from Diane Armitage's internationally renowned blog – LagunaBeachBest.com – this 4-color, 272-page guide offers, for the first time, a resident's take on hundreds of options in:

- Fine and casual dining
- Coffeeshouses and breakfast nooks
- Water sports and recreation
- Happy hours and clubs
- Shopping finds
- Popular scheduled events throughout the year
- Activities locals participate in as they live their daily lives here.

"Diane Armitage is one of the most brilliant writers on the planet; she's worked with me as my writer for years. Laguna Beach will come alive for you in a wholly unique way because of Diane's ability to weave color, depth and wit into every piece she writes. You're in for a massive treat." **Mark Victor Hansen** – Co-Founder, *Chicken Soup for the Soul* New York Times Bestselling Author

Subscribe for free to LagunaBeachBest.com for ongoing updates, walking tours, unpublished restaurant and shopping specials, new menus and calendar events.



A portion of all book proceeds go to the Pacific Marine Mammal Center, Laguna Beach.

Photo credit: Wendy Saewert



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www.LagunaBeachBest.com

