



Santa Monica is well-known for being disability-friendly

By *Mike Cohen*

SANTA MONICA

After spending a week in San Francisco and five days in Beverly Hills, we decided to conclude our trip with a relaxing five day stay in Santa Monica (<http://www.santamonica.com>).

Santa Monica sits perched on the Pacific Ocean at the crossroads of Pacific Coast Highway and California Interstate Highway 10, a mere eight non-freeway miles from Los Angeles International Airport and within close proximity to all of LA's most famous landmarks and attractions. It is a great spot to walk on the beach, take in all of the rides and fun at the pier and do some shopping at the 3rd Street Promenade.

DOUBLETREE EXPERIENCE

Just a short walk from the pier you will find the DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Hotel Santa Monica (www.SantaMonicaSuites.DoubleTree.com). When you check into this all-suite hotel, a warm DoubleTree chocolate chip cookie awaits you. You are only three blocks away from the beach.

The two-room suites provide room for work or for the whole family. A private bedroom and separate seating area with a sofa bed means that everyone can have their own space. You can watch a movie on one of the two 55 inch flat-screen TVs, or surf the web while you make a snack. A

wet bar with microwave, refrigerator and coffeemaker gives you some of the freedom of being at home.

We especially appreciated their outdoor pool, the Fourth Street Grille and the unique free shuttle service to points of interest provided by Santa Monica Free Ride and the hotel. This souped-up four seat golf cart runs seven days a week, from Noon to 8:45 pm. All you need to do is send a text and allow 10 to 15 minutes for pickup. It was great to leave the car at the hotel, which offers a super valet parking service, and save money on any taxi or Uber expenses.

The hotel has elevators leading to every floor, easy wheelchair access to the pool and health clubs and handicapped lifts for the pool and whirlpool.

THE LOEWS

Meanwhile, after experiencing a Loews resort in St. Petersburg, Florida last winter, we were excited to check out the Loews Santa Monica (<https://www.loewshotels.com/santa-monica>).

This hotel has 347 luxurious guestrooms including 21 suites (all including white noise machines). There is 17,000 square feet of indoor function space, with ocean views, an Eco-friendly full-service spa offering organic treatments and the Ocean & Vine restaurant, which serves locally caught seafood and fresh farmers' mar-



The Loews Santa Monica poolside.

ket produce. There is also the Bar Belle Lounge, a tribute to Santa Monica's famed "Muscle Beach" female body builder Abbye Stockton. There is Wi-Fi in all guestrooms and public spaces.

Located at 1700 Ocean Avenue, you can consider the sound of waves to be the soundtrack of your stay. Here, you can stroll along miles of perfectly maintained beaches and take in front-row views of the Pacific Ocean. We spent the day at the two-tier pool deck overlooking the sea, the perfect place to soak up the sun as you recline on a comfortable chaise. While you unwind, enjoy extras such as Evian Mist, chilled fruit and tropical smoothies thanks to some signature poolside pampering. In the summer, the attentive poolside concierge delivers all that and more. A soak in the Jacuzzi represented a nice treat. The pool itself is so beautifully heated that I just did not want to get out.

After a workout at the very spacious fitness center, you can relax in the Eucalyptus steam room or spoil yourself with an Aroma Massage or Pure Fiji Guava Anti-Aging Nourishing Wrap at the Ocean Spa. Very soon, the hotel will begin offering outdoor workouts on a grass setting at the beach. If work is calling, they have a full-service Executive Business Center. If you prefer to return emails poolside, there is Wi-Fi.

We enjoyed a delicious lunch and some

smoothie's poolside via the Blue Streak Restaurant, where you can enjoy sandwiches and snacks served with a side of stunning Pacific views every day from 11 am to 10 pm.

The hotel offers 12 ADA rooms, one of which is a suite. Some rooms are hearing accessible and some have a roll-in shower feature. As demonstrated by the tour area Director of Public Relations Jaclyn Slifer gave me, there is a ramp at the pool deck to get to the lower Ocean Terrace area with fire pits, and the elevators take guests right to beach access, where another ramp leads straight to the beach.

DINING OUT

For an upscale, but not stuffy dinner with the ocean just outside, Water Grill's (www.watergrill.com) Santa Monica location at 1401 Ocean Avenue offers a seafood dining experience for the adventurous at heart. The menu has an entire page just for the raw bar, featuring oysters from all up and down the east and west coast. For the seafood lover, there are a number of different whole fish entrees, such as European sea bass or New Zealand pink bream. For over 25 years, the Water Grill has pleased the palates of seafood lovers in Southern California. Water Grill delivers a remarkable experience through its devotion and inspiration for seafood. Hailed as "the best



seafood in Southern California” by the internationally recognized Zagat Guide, it consistently offers dazzling fish preparations of superior quality and freshness.

On the night we visited the place was packed, with people happily waiting for a table. Everyone I asked told me that this is the best dining establishment in all of Santa Monica. I could tell this place was going to be good as early as the bread plate arriving at the table. Yes, the bread was that good.

We started off with a drink, the appropriately named Ocean Avenue, containing vodka, fresh strawberry & lemon juice, with tarragon essence and served over ice. Our charming server Alicia then provided some background on the menu. We shared an order of Baja Stone Crab to start and I had my personal favorite, a bowl of New England clam chowder. For the main course the Wild Black Cod Miso (sablefish), served seared with eggplant, blistered shishito pepper and red miso sauce, called out to two members of our party. This is a favorite fish of family members and not something you see on many menus. I had my eye on the Wild New Zealand Sword Fish, with marinated zucchini and caper brown butter. In addition, I ordered some Yukon gold mashed

ACCESSIBILITY

Santa Monica is well-known for being disability-friendly. They have beach access paths that go to the water’s edge, electric beach wheelchairs that can be borrowed for the day, assisted listening in a number of public buildings, and walk signals that talk to the blind. Santa Monica has in fact launched a campaign to make the entire city more pedestrian friendly for persons of all abilities. This not only helps people with mobility devices, but also people with strollers and personal shopping carts.

Property owners are responsible for keeping the sidewalk in front of their homes and businesses clear of plants, debris, trash cans and automobiles. At least a four-foot contiguous sidewalk width must be kept clear for pedestrian passage at all times. Some wheelchairs have wide wheel bases. Overgrown plants can scratch arms as persons walking or wheeling by. Individuals with walkers and mothers with strollers also

need to be able to walk along sidewalks without having to go around obstacles into the street. Excessive leaves become slippery and a hazard when they are wet.



The oceanfront view at the Water Grill Restaurant.

All public facilities, meetings, events and programs in Santa Monica are accessible to persons with disabilities. Santa Monica Pier is not just a fishing pier but the hub of lively Southern California beach life with an amusement park, restaurants, bars and street entertainers. The secret is to park on the pier-level lot, not below. Then it’s an easy journey down to the end of the pier, where you can see the amazing sweep of the coastline at its absolute best.

Santa Monica’s Third Street Promenade is another one of LA’s heavenly all-year open-air strolling areas. Because it is a pedestrian mall (closed to cars except at cross streets) there are broad walkways, plenty of ramped curbs and easy-to-cross streets.

Venice Boardwalk, one of those you-have-to-see-it-to-believe-it spots, is one of the most accessible places in the city. The perfectly flat walkway draws thousands of visitors on weekends to enjoy the carnival atmosphere — the wildest street performers, cheap eats, cool breezes and the sun setting over the Pacific

Metro and the Big Blue Bus have reduced fares for riders with disabilities. Access Services operates curb to curb transportation in Los Angeles County. WISE and

communities of Beverly Hills, Hollywood, Marina del Rey and Santa Monica.

I got the family settled in, returned my Sixt Rent a Car vehicle only a few blocks away and came back to 5400 West Century Blvd. What a good decision this was. We had a deluxe corner king non-smoking suite, with a separate living room, a nice balcony and a large washroom. Both rooms were outfitted with white noise machines, something I sleep with every night of the year. Being next to an airport, this is a very bright move by the hotel. We had a small fridge, a hide-a-bed and a large sofa, a desk for me to write this very story on my computer and Wi-Fi connections for up to four devices. This was an absolutely fabulous setup which really helped us conclude our trip on a very positive note. The room also gave us access to the 12th floor Westin Executive Club Lounge. Westin Executive Club Room guests and SPG® Platinum members enjoy exclusive access. It includes complimentary wireless high speed internet access, computer workstations, access to business news, and Starbucks® coffee 24 hours a day. Breakfast is served Monday through Friday mornings, and hors d’oeuvres are served Monday through Thursday evenings. The hotel does provide a shuttle to and from the airport every 20 minutes.

There is a nice outdoor pool and whirlpool, 24/7 workout facilities, a top-notch business center, accommodations for dogs up to 40 pounds, superb meeting facilities and several options of where to dine. The 1930’s-style Daily Grill Restaurant & Bar is inspired by the great city grills of yesteryear; it’s a great spot in which to toast the end of a successful day. Daily Grill features an all-American menu for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as well as an expansive appetizer and cocktail menu, available from 4 to 7pm daily. We had a nice dinner there.

I would definitely recommend this place for more than a one night stay. They even have a shuttle to Manhattan Beach. Their airport shuttle is completely handicapped accessible, with a lift for a wheelchair. The hotel is completely handicapped accessible.

For more information call (310) 216-5858.

Healthy Aging operates a Dial-A-Ride curb to curb service (limited door through door now available) in Santa Monica.

Info: <https://www.smgov.net/Portals/AccessibleSM/content.aspx?id=16031>

WESTIN LAX

Rather than rush to checkout of our Santa Monica hotel to get to the airport for our return flight home, we decided to stay at the Westin Los Angeles Airport (<http://www.westinlosangelesairport.com>) for the final night. This is a beautiful property which many travellers use as a base for an entire trip.

Located just four blocks from LAX, The Westin Los Angeles Airport is ideally situated for your convenience. Whether traveling for business or pleasure, this sophisticated hotel puts you within easy reach of everything you need for a successful trip. Major companies such as Boeing, Raytheon and Mattel are just a short drive away, as are the quintessential Southern California