

Insider Guide: Carlsbad, California

Things to see and do in Carlsbad with the kids By [Mimi Slawoff](#)

Insider Guides



[Carlsbad, California, has many kid-friendly attractions, including LEGOLAND.](#) (Legoland California)

Why go: With nearly seven miles of sandy beaches and LEGOLAND as the city's main kid-friendly attraction, [Carlsbad is a dream family vacation](#). Located in North San Diego County, Carlsbad is near big city attractions but far enough away to offer visitors a quiet beach getaway. Mild temperatures and scenic beaches, lagoons and trails make Carlsbad a

fun place to visit with kids year-round.

(TRIP PLAN: [See how one MiniTime family spent their vacation in Carlsbad.](#))

Sleep

Best family hotels:



[LEGOLAND Hotel](#) (*Legoland California*)

[LEGOLAND Hotel](#) (5885 The Crossings Dr.; 877-534-6526). Themed rooms (pirate, adventure and kingdom) and in-room LEGO models make the hotel an extension of the park. The kid-friendly rooms include a separate children's area, two TVs and a treasure chest. The hotel also features a disco elevator, play area, fitness center, family pool and the Bricks Family Restaurant.

[Omni La Costa Resort & Spa](#) (2100 Costa Del Mar Rd.; 800-854-5000). A world-famous spa resort, La Costa also has family activities and a phenomenal children's program, Kidopia. Activities for kids ages 3 – 12 include crafts, swimming and workshops. For teens there's croquet, surf camp and a game lounge. Adults can get spa treatments and relax by the

Edge Adult Pool. Rendezvous for s'more roasting.

Get Your Bearings

Located 87 miles south of Los Angeles and 35 miles north of downtown San Diego, Carlsbad is an affluent seaside resort city and home to LEGOLAND California. Most beaches have lifeguards, restrooms, picnic areas and parking lots. The charming downtown has mom and pop shops and a variety of restaurants.

Soak Up the Local Scene

Best kid-friendly attraction:



[LEGOLAND California](#) (*Legoland California*)

[LEGOLAND California](#). The park features more than 30,000 LEGO models, 60 rides, shows and attractions, including three rollercoasters. There's also a water park with a family fun slide, Build-A-Raft River and two sandy beaches. The

onsite Sea Life Aquarium impresses all ages with interactive exhibits, habitats and touch tanks. Though geared for ages 2 – 12, the park’s roller coasters, cool intricate LEGO models and pleasing dining options appeal to older kids and adults, too.

Best family beach:

[Carlsbad State Beach](#). Bring sand toys and sunscreen for a day at this popular beach ideal for swimming, kayaking, fishing and beachcombing. Walk, bike or skate along the four-mile, paved Carlsbad Seawall. Public restrooms and showers are located at both ends of the path.

Best ocean adventure:



Board paddling lesson with 2 Stand Up Guys (2 Stand Up Guys)

[2 Stand Up Guys](#) teach families how to balance on and maneuver a standup paddle board in the Carlsbad Lagoon or the ocean (for those more experienced).

Best family park:

Alga Norte Community Park is a 32-acre park equipped with pools, ball fields, a dog park, a skate park, playground

and picnic areas.

(**MORE:** Looking to visit Carlsbad soon? [Find family-friendly hotels to stay in.](#))

Eat

Best family meals:

Bricks Family Restaurant. Located inside the LEGOLAND Hotel, the restaurant serves elaborate breakfast and dinner buffets. Breakfast is included in hotel reservations. The dinner buffet is especially impressive. There's a BBQ station, Mexican food, Asian Wok, pasta and carving station. The kids' dinner buffet includes chicken tenders, mac & cheese, spaghetti and meatballs, chicken and dumplings, pizza, whole grain grilled cheese and steamed vegetables.

Ruby's Diner. What's not to love about a diner that specializes in juicy burgers, fries and custom made shakes and malts? More options include fish, chicken, steak, appetizers, salads and sandwiches. Kids' meals include turkey burgers, sandwiches and chicken and include a drink. Ruby's also has an extensive breakfast menu.



Green Dragon Tavern (Green Dragon Tavern & Museum)

Green Dragon Tavern & Museum. This Revolutionary War-era inspired tavern serves entrees with names, such as Benjamin Franklin (a steak dish), Thomas Jefferson (chicken sandwich) and Paul Revere (burger). The lunch and dinner menus include flatbreads, soups and salads. An onsite museum (free admission) contains colonial American exhibits. Also onsite is a coffeehouse (serving handmade pastries) and a bookstore.

Mimi Slawoff, a [Los Angeles-based journalist](#), contributed this to [MiniTime](#).

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