



L.A.'S SANDBOX

Bike paths, piers, cool eateries, a comedy club and miles of sand and water. It's all there in the South Bay cities of Hermosa, Redondo, Manhattan Beach and more.

By Christopher Reynolds >>> We'll call the movie "Three Beaches and an Airport." It'll star Hugh Grant as a buttoned-up business traveler who is separated from his job, money and luggage at LAX, then befriended by a team of wise-cracking Olympic volleyballers who introduce him to the sun-baked, wave-splashed piers and brew pubs of L.A.'s South Bay. In no time, he soars to entrepreneurial success, leading beach-cruiser bike tours along the Strand, living in an ocean-view condo and driving a shiny convertible. The only problem is he can almost never find parking. And when he does, it's a quarter for every 12 minutes.

Pedal the Strand

The Strand bike path covers the South Bay coast, stretching south to Palos Verdes and north to Playa del Rey, and, if you're ready to pedal around Marina del Rey, you can bicycle all the way north to Pacific Palisades. That's a 22-mile trip, with scarcely a break in the waterfront scenery, lively humanity and architectural triumphs and follies. Start by renting a bike from Hermosa Cyclery, 20 13th St., Hermosa Beach, where one-speed beach cruisers start at \$7 an hour and high-end road and mountain bikes go for as much as \$60 a day. Before you start burning calories, take some breakfast or lunch aboard at Good Stuff (1286 the Strand), which has a pleasant patio just a few steps away from the bike shop. Down south near the Redondo pier complex, you'll pass close by Polly's on the Pier (233 N. Harbor Drive), a breakfast-lunch joint. As

you're rolling through Manhattan Beach, enjoy the greenery between the pedestrian and cycle paths. And notice how, as you go north, the houses get bigger and bolder. Once you've returned your wheels to the Cyclery, you can walk about 10 blocks up Pier Avenue to the Rockefeller (418-422 Pier Ave.), a recently opened spot for craft beer, artisan burgers, open-air dining and sports on TV.

High-style Hermosa

Hermosa Beach is just 1.3 square miles. But it has plenty of action, beginning with the surfers in the water, the anglers on the pier and the world-class volleyball players thumping and sprawling by the nets on the sand. To explore all this from an upscale perch, begin by booking the **Beach House** at Hermosa Beach (1300 the Strand), where summer rates start at \$299. Stroll up a few blocks to Java Man (157 Pier Ave.), a

popular neighborhood coffee spot in a converted bungalow on a handsome bend of Pier Avenue. Then go body surf or bike or stroll a little more, and break for lunch and browsing at Gum Tree (238 Pier Ave.). This is another converted bungalow, its interior split between a gift and home shop and a cafe. House-made granola? Check. Four-dollar organic peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the kids? Check.

If you go

WHERE TO STAY

The Beach House at Hermosa

Beach, 1300 the Strand, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254;

(310) 374-3001,

<http://www.beach-house.com>.

Ninety-six rooms, each with fireplace and balcony or patio. Rooms for two \$229-\$349 in winter, \$299-\$489 in summer.