

## THE WESTSIDE SIZZLES

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### L.A. County's Westside and beach cities tout glam, sun and sand

by Maxine Cass

When groups take a look at Southern California for meetings, there are many considerations; not surprisingly, the chief one is often location, location, location. "Don't just look at L.A. or LAX," says Michael Krouse, senior vice president of sales at LA INC., The Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau. "You can have [high-end] or cost-effective meeting experiences with different price points even on L.A.'s Westside." Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, the beach cities and the Los Angeles International Airport-area hotels that comprise the metropolis' Westside never had the AIG-effect challenge of cancellations to deal with, notes Krouse. "Meetings could and can come regardless of the economic situation."

Beverly Hills, with its tony neighbors Brentwood and Bel Air, along with the Century City and Culver City "movie industry production hub," Krouse says, gives the Westside a "special cachet." Malibu is generally considered the northern outpost of the county's coastal options. There's also an impressive list of properties near the 405 freeway and L.A.'s principle airport that offer the nimbleness to put together events on the fly. And the Westside puts visitors within five to 20 miles of many of the famous beaches in the region. A 22-mile paved bike path, known as the Strand, winds south along the Pacific Ocean from Will Rogers State Beach just north of Santa Monica to Torrance County Beach in Los Angeles' South Bay. In between are the beachside communities of Santa Monica, Venice and Marina del Rey, followed by Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, the



Redondo Beach Harbor Sunset

Palos Verdes Peninsula and Torrance.

The tiny, 1.4-square-mile enclave of Hermosa Beach offers beach volleyball, surfing, boogie boarding and fishing along its sands. At night, restaurants and entertainment venues are hopping. Kelly Solomon, corporate events coordinator for El Segundo-based Griffin Capital Securities, says her real estate investment clients fly in for a meeting and one-night stay at the 96-room **Beach House Hotel Hermosa Beach**. Her speeches to attendees often open with the fact that "dolphins breach out of the water every day."

Solomon recommends that her financial advisor clients get to the beach during a stay. Union Cattle Co., a nightclub, restaurant and brewhouse near the pier, accommodates groups. The Comedy and Magic Club, where Jay Leno often performs, has group dinner and show packages, and the 225-seat main showroom and 90-seat lounge can be configured for multimedia educational or sales meeting presentations.