

Inside Shutters On The Beach in Santa Monica



Bridget Arsenault, CONTRIBUTOR

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Courtesy of Shutters

A view of Shutters on the Beach and its sister property Hotel Casa del Mar

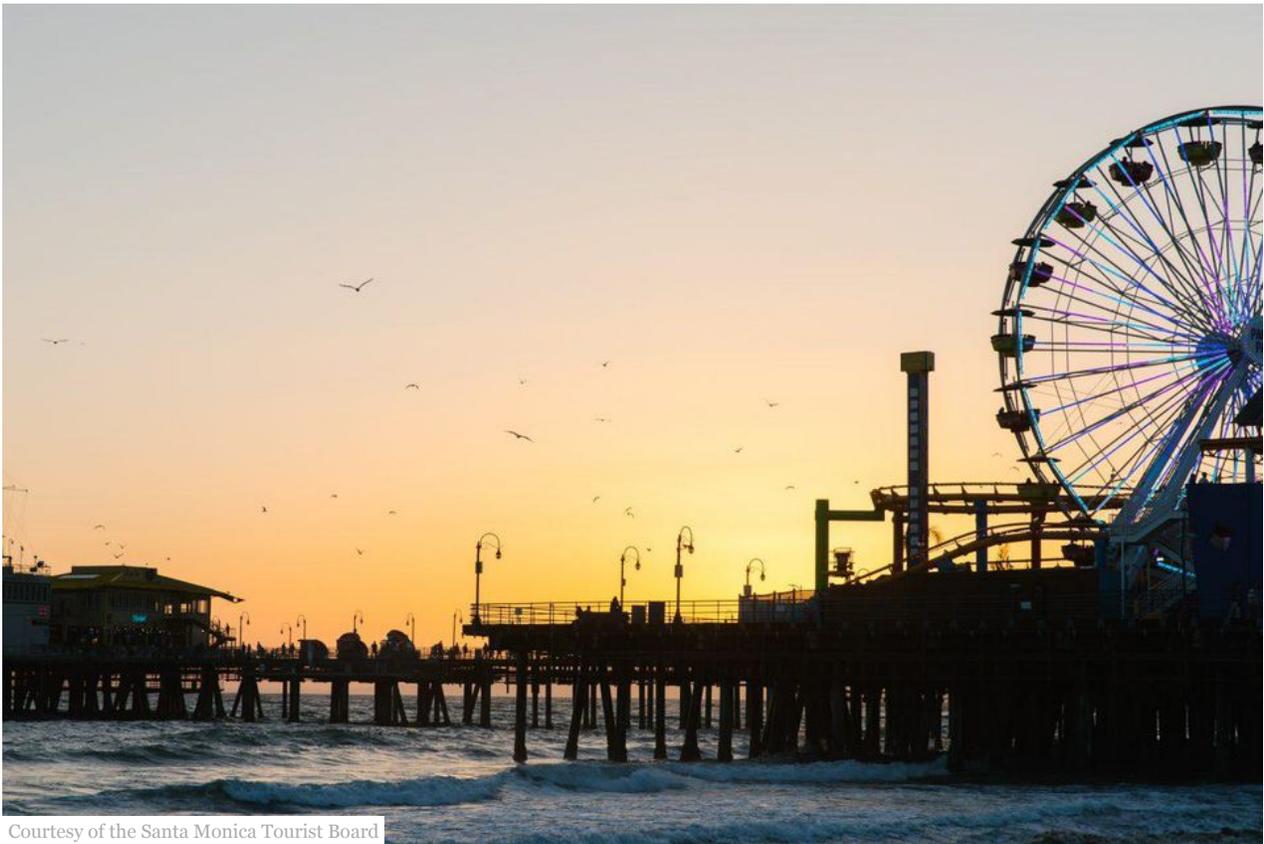
I always go to Los Angeles with an agenda. Despite the sun, lithe bodies and tumbling waves, I never think of LA as a holiday destination but somewhere bustling with business, deals and ambition. But to take a side step from the thrum of opportunity, I always stay in Santa Monica, for its slice of Californian laissez-faire. With its iconic pier and circling ferris wheel, tendency to eschew chains for boutiques and independent shops and litany of surf shops and crab shacks, there's a calm to Santa Monica.



Courtesy of the Santa Monica Tourist Board

Santa Monica in its natural state of sunshine

Sitting comfortably on the Santa Monica sand you'll find [Shutters On The Beach](#). A favourite for all the right reasons. First opened in 1993 but refreshed in 2005 by Michael S Smith - the iconic designer who also led the redesign of Obama's White House. With its creamy clapboard exterior, Shutters has an east coast feel and if it wasn't for the thrumming soundtrack of the Pacific, you'd be forgiven for feeling as if you'd just stepped into Connecticut or Nantucket. Modern art plays an important role, as all the top names from Hockney to Lichtenstein to Motherwell hang from the walls. And on each bedside table of the 186 rooms you'll find undiscovered talent, in the form of a paperback from a new hot-shot writer, yours to take home at the end of the trip. The decor throughout is beach chic, hardwood floors that extend to the bathrooms and a creamy palette of white, ivories and calming blues. And, in true Hollywood fashion, why not enjoy a classic film from your bubble bath, courtesy of the 15-inch LCD TV in every bathroom.



Courtesy of the Santa Monica Tourist Board

Santa Monica at sunset

Health and fitness is prioritised here. From freshly squeezed juices and smoothies to beachside yoga, surf lessons, bicycle rentals and Pilates in the well-appointed gym, it's all here and readily accessible. And for those who would rather complete their stay without laying eyes on a treadmill or rowing machine, Santa Monica is no more than a 10-minute drive to a number of postcard-worthy hikes, such as the Temescal Canyon, a tree-lined trail with coastal views that ends at a waterfall. A rugged hike has more social capital than after-work cocktails in LA. Upon returning to the hotel, there's a serene spa offering treatments with Kerstin Florian, Scientific Organics and Lalicious products.



Courtesy of Shutters

The gym at Shutters on the Beach

Service is one of America's greatest assets and here it feels authentic. When we ate at the elegant Italian-influenced restaurant 1 Pico, our waiter suggested dishes based entirely on their merit, as opposed to their price tag. Upstairs the lobby lounge is an all-day hub and on Wednesday evenings hosts live jazz. For the hotel's most casual fare, there's the indoor-outdoor Coast Beach Cafe and Bar, with its heated floors for breezy ocean mornings and laid-back menu. Americans know how to do breakfast and the menu ranges from healthy whipped egg whites to diabolically delicious lemon and ricotta pancakes.

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1 Pico at Shutters on the Beach