

Family fun under the sun of California

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ORANGE COUNTY:

There is much more than Disneyland to amuse young ones

MHAIRRI WOODHALL

From the comfort of my chaise, I watch my feisty five-year old sprint back and forth across the waterpark. After three-days of hoofing it around Disneyland and California Adventure Park, it seems impossible that she could have any energy left.

My husband's snoring in the late afternoon sun. I can barely move. Yet somehow our daughter is completely unfazed by the 12,000-plus steps we clocked earlier today. Perhaps it was the ginormous, sugar-dusted churro she gobbled down in Critter County. Or maybe it's just because she's five. Either way, the sprays and waterslides at the Courtyard Anaheim are helping exhaust her excess energy.

Like most families with young children, we came to Anaheim for Mickey Mouse. However, after a week in Orange County we've found a ton of family-friendly fun outside the parks as well.

Our trip began in laid-back Laguna Beach, where we combed the shoreline daily in search of what my daughter refers to as treasure — think broken seashells and random objects that beachgoers lose or leave behind.

The Inn at Laguna Beach, where we stayed, allowed us to maximize the sand and surf by providing complimentary beach chairs, towels and umbrellas. Other free perks we liked



This was the spectacular ocean view from the hotel room balcony at The Inn at Laguna Beach. — CURT WOODHALL

(all right, loved) were the hotel's morning Starbucks coffee station; the daily oceanview wine tasting, and the nightly milk and cookies served in the lobby.

Our two favourite eateries were practically attached to the hotel.

The first, Las Brisas, is arguably Laguna's most famous brunch locale. The food and service are excellent, and the ocean views unmatched. We devoured the restaurant's signature seafood tower, piled high with oysters, lobster,

king crab and shrimp and then polished off an over-the-top dessert platter — garnering a thumbs-up from our little one.

The other gem we stumbled upon was the tiki-chic Royal Hawaiian. With its lush Polynesian decor, live

music and extensive keiki (kids) menu, this place is a total win with families. Head there for the daily Happy Hour to save on tropical drinks and snacks.

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Anaheim, Laguna offer variety of fun activities

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If you're in Laguna on the third Sunday of the month, pre-register for the Family Art Studio hosted by the Laguna Art Museum, next door to Las Brisas. The free program begins with a parent-led exercise to analyze one of the museum's exhibits. In addition to learning about the artist's style and methodology, children are encouraged to think about how the art makes them feel. Afterwards, you'll create your own interpretation of the masterpiece to take home. It's a fantastic experience that our daughter loved, and I recommend for anyone with kids ages three and up.

We also explored downtown Anaheim's arts and culture offerings at the Muzeo Museum and Cultural Centre. The main gallery welcomes unique exhibitions from around the world, and it was the only west coast venue to host Dressing Downtown — a costume chronicle from the PBS series, *Downton Abbey*.

Visit in December through early January for the annual Christmas display, *Muzeo Express: Holiday Model Trains*. In addition to showcasing trains and miniature scenes, the museum puts on two Polar Express Pajama Parties. At Muzeo's permanent exhibit, the History of Anaheim housed in the historical Carnegie Library, you'll find everything from fossils and 19th century farming artifacts, to cool Disney memorabilia.

After immersing ourselves in local history we wandered over to the Anaheim Packing District for lunch. This foodie wonderland, located in a beautifully restored citrus packing house, features more than 20 grab-and-go style eateries. Our favoured finds were the jambalaya at Georgia's and the Pop Bar's photo perfect handcrafted gelato.

Downtown Anaheim is also a hot spot for craft breweries, which we found to be surprisingly family friendly. Top picks for kids include the patio at Anaheim Brewery, where they can play around in Farmer's Park, and the comic inspired *Unsung Brewing Co.*, for its superhero murals, action figurines, com-



Kids of all ages will love the splash park at the Courtyard Anaheim Theme Park entrance. — PHOTOS: CURT WOODHALL

If you go ...

The Courtyard Anaheim Theme Park Entrance is a good choice for exploring the area. Larger families will love the hotel's spacious rooms with two queen beds and twin bunk beds. Every room also comes with a small fridge, microwave and dining table, which makes it easy for quick pre- and post-park meals.

ics and board games.

Another hit is Dave and Busters at the Outlets at Orange. Our plan was for my husband and kiddo to let lose in the arcade while I racked up our duty free allotment at the outdoor

mall's 120-plus shops. That didn't happen. I hit the token jackpot on my first game and got the itch. Two hours later I'd won a stuffed monkey, two-way radio set and Minions headphones.

My high continued as I power shopped the outlets. It turned out to be my happiest place on earth. Bring the family though, you'll find fun activities for all, including the Vans Skatepark, Lucky Strike Bowling and Thrill It Fun Centre, which features rock climbing, laser tag and a high ropes challenge.

The writer was a guest of Tourism Anaheim. No one from Tourism Anaheim read or approved of this article before publication.



Visit Muzeo for unique arts and culture exhibitions and to learn about Anaheim's rich history.

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It's in the bag: How luggage etiquette makes travel easier

CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT
THE WASHINGTON POST

It's the season of the squeeze. That should require absolutely no explanation, but just in case: Picture thousands of stressed-out holiday travellers in airport terminals, train stations and bus terminals, bundled up in winter clothing, all piling into a claustrophobia-in-

ducing cabin. With luggage.

What better time to brush up on your luggage etiquette.

It starts with what you bring. When it comes to proper luggage etiquette — less is more. The most experienced passengers travel light. Some don't bring any luggage.

"I ship my gear ahead to my destination, especially if I plan to be in one place

for an extended period," says Brian Teeter, the author of the *Healthy Trekking Travel Guides* series. "That way, I can travel light and have my main luggage waiting when I arrive." But most of us travel with at least a backpack, purse or some other kind of carry-on.

Experts say the key to avoiding scraps over luggage is packing light and moving fast.

Downsize to a smaller carry-on or a backpack, and place it in the bin above your seat

"Stow carry-on luggage quickly in the overhead bin so other passengers may pass in the aisle," says Rachel Wagner, an etiquette consultant.

Backpacks are another source of pain, because it's easy to turn and unwittingly hit fellow passengers.