

You deserve a break-in Claremont CA

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September – the kids are back in school and life is returning to normal – whatever that is! What a perfect time to plan a quick ‘get-away’! Lucky for us, Southern California has a host of options, including the delightful city of **Claremont** CA.

Conveniently located 30 miles east of Los Angeles and just north of Ontario Airport, Claremont is justifiably famous for its many institutes of higher learning (there are seven colleges in all), this oasis of calm is an easy 1 – 1 ½ hour drive from the Inland Empire, San Diego, Orange County. It’s also a paradise for foodies, shoppers and anyone who wants to kick back and find some peace and quiet.

What to do

For a small college town, Claremont offers a vast array of attractions.

The Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens is a highlight. Set aside an hour – or more – to discover the largest collection of native California flora in the state. If you’re short on time, take the lower trail through the Palm Oasis, Wildflower Meadow and marvel at the Majestic Oak. A short walk up to the next level will lead you to the Cultivar and Container Gardens and the California Courtyard, next to the all important Gift Shop. If you visit in the summer months, be sure to include the wonderful Butterfly Pavilion and marvel at these gorgeous creatures, up close and personal. The gardens hold a wide range of events related to gardening, the environment and music – click here for a link to their calendar – and their Garden & Grow Native Nursery is the



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perfect place to pick up a 'green' souvenir of your visit.

If history is your 'thing' then venture over to the [Raymond M. Alf Museum of Paleontology](#), up your culture quotient at the [Pomona College Museum of Art](#) or travel the world via the [Petterson Museum of Intercultural Art](#).

Music lovers will be in their element as soon as cross the threshold of the [Folk Music Center](#). Owner Helen Harper, mother to well known musician Ben Harper, is more than happy to answer questions about their astounding collection of musical instruments from around the world, many of which are for sale.

Take advantage of the town's free parking, take a leisurely walk and soak in the ambiance. The architecture in Claremont is typically SoCal, with many residential and business structures dating back to the early 1900's when the town was a main hub for the fruit packing industry. You'll find a vast array of architectural styles from Arts & Crafts bungalow and Spanish Colonial to a touch of Art Deco and 1950's Modern.

What would a 'vacation' be without a little shopping? N. Shopping local is easy in Claremont whether you're looking for boutique fashions, artisan chocolate, vintage vinyl at Rhino Records or something special for your home. Foodies will have to pick and choose from the huge selection of offerings, including [Vom Fass](#) – a 'hands-on experience' kind of shop, specializing in unique oils, fruit vinegars, liquers and whiskeys. The concept is 'try before you buy' and their fun and educational classes are always sold out.

If you fancy a little fromage, saunter over to the [Cheese Cave](#), where owner/Cheesemonger Marnie Clarke and her friendly team will be happy to suggest new cheeses for your picnic or cheesboard. From hard to find French and Italian favorites to small, American producers, these folks know their products. You'll also love their superb collection of gourmet groceries from around the world, with an emphasis on European specialty items.

If you'd like some [wine](#) to go with your new cheese discoveries, travel over to the west side of town to Packing House Wines. The building dates back to 1919 and it was the second to last fully operating citrus packing house in the area. Refurbished in the 1970's it's now home to a super selection of galleries, shops, offices and restaurants.

[Packing House Wines](#) has a great philosophy when it comes to wine: no pontificating, just an enthusiastic, passionate and knowledgeable staff that can help you find your perfect wine. Owner Sal Medina (former liquor buyer and politician!) selects all the inventory personally based on quality, price and availability. He tastes thousands of wines each year but is happy to make the sacrifice for his loyal customers! Three and half years ago, the shop began offering

small plates to go with your glass and now Chef Noah creates an imaginative menu with practically everything made in house and locally sourced. A great place to spend an evening!

Where to eat

Food lovers rejoice! With over 60 restaurants, many of which are unique and locally owned, Claremont has a little something to satisfy every craving.

Start your day at **Some Crust Bakery**, a local institution. You'll find two shops; one where you can purchase an incredible array of breads, cookies, cakes and other delectable treats while next door is the café side. Here you can grab a fresh cup of coffee and order one of their incredible homemade Egg Slider breakfast sandwiches or a super rich Pain au Chocolate. The building itself goes back to 1898 and has been home to a hardware store, shoe repair and a tea room. Stop by, say hello to 2nd generation owner Scott Feemster and enjoy a little something from "Claremont's Bakery".

Feel like a trip to New York? **42nd Street Bagel** is an authentic, New York style bagel joint, offering a selection of 27 boiled and baked varieties and 10 different flavors of cream cheese. Like many of the establishments in Claremont, this restaurant has been in business for a while -23 years- and it's easy to understand why: fluffy, delicious bagels and a bottomless cup of coffee.

When lunchtime rolls around, check out the **Last Drop Café**. Owner Michael Manning serves up amazing sandwiches, cookies and cupcakes including many gluten free options. He even supplies some of the local college coffee shops with his vegan cookies! If you appreciate a well-crafted coffee, then this is definitely the place to go. Last Drop Café has been certified 'Artiste del Gusto' by the famous Italian espresso company Illy – an honor few California venues can boast.

Who doesn't love pie? That's the concept of **I Like Pie Bake Shop**. Their hand crafted, individual sweet and savory selection is phenomenal! Dine in or take home, these little treats travel well, so be sure to stock up while you're here.

As you stroll the tranquil, tree lined streets of Claremont, you'll be spoilt for choice when it comes to **dining options**. From easy salad spots to white table cloths and everything in between.

To end your evening on a fun note, there's no better place than **Piano Piano**! Stop in for a nightcap and be prepared to be entertained. Sometimes raucus and racy, this high energy battle of the piano players is never dull.

Where to Stay

With all there is to experience in Claremont, why not stay a night, or two? You'll find a variety of lodging options including the very Californian **DoubleTree by Hilton Claremont**. Located on old Route 66, the rooms are quiet, comfortable and feature dreamy "SweetDreams" beds, 32inch flat screen TVs, refrigerators (to store all the wine, cheese and foods you've purchased) and free high speed internet. The lush landscaped grounds and refreshing pool are also great features of this beautifully restored hotel.

Downtown, in the Packing House district, you'll find the uber modern **Hotel Casa 425**. All 28 rooms are spacious and offer a luxurious, restful stay. Most offer soaker tubs, king size beds and comfortable lounging areas plus complimentary continental breakfast. They also offer fun extras such as bike rentals – a great way to get around town.

For more overnight options, visit Discover Claremont www.discoverclaremont.com

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