

A man and a woman are sitting on a large, light-colored wicker lounge chair. The man is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt and sunglasses, looking towards the woman. The woman is on the right, wearing a blue and white patterned bikini top and sunglasses, smiling at the man. They are outdoors, with a pool and lounge furniture visible in the background.

Moments

MONARCH BEACH RESORT MAGAZINE



VOLUME 2

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IN ORANGE COUNTY

**LOCAL
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DANA POINT'S
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Poolside Luxury



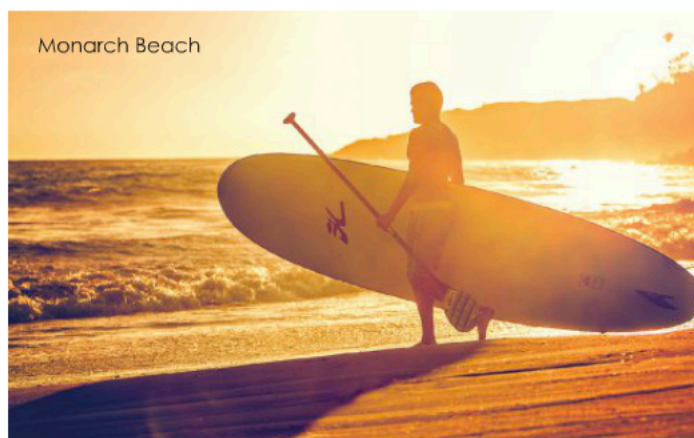
Paddleboarding in Dana Point Harbor

SoCal SUP

South Orange County offers a plethora of great places to go stand-up paddleboarding.

BY KRISTIN CONARD AND MOMENTS STAFF

SCOTT SPORLEDER



Monarch Beach

ERIK NELSEN

Gliding along the top of the water and feeling connected to the air and ocean all around you—stand-up paddleboarding, also known as SUP, is an incredible experience. While the sport became a worldwide trend within the past decade, it has actually been practiced in some form or another for much longer. In fact, if considered in its simplest form as the act of standing on a floating watercraft and using a paddle to help propel yourself forward, the activity has been enjoyed for thousands of years.

But with modern paddleboarding's long and buoyant boards (generally 10 to 12 feet long) and specialized paddles, the current version of the sport is more closely connected with the way practitioners used to do it back in the 1940s to 1960s in Hawaii, when surfers first used paddles to help them access bigger waves. The sport gained even more traction in 2001, when surfer Laird Hamilton ordered the first paddle specific for use while standing on a board. From there, stand-up paddleboarding exploded in popularity around the world.

Orange County has been caught up in the SUP phenomenon—and no wonder why, as the region boasts beautiful harbors, beaches and breaks perfect for paddlers of all experience levels. Below, we've highlighted a few of the best. Before heading out, however, make sure to consult with local lifeguards or paddleboard rental companies to find out what specific spots are safe (and legal) to launch off from, and to determine when conditions are ideal.

MONARCH BEACH

The best place to paddleboard for any Monarch Beach Resort guest is just five minutes away by complimentary tram. Head to Monarch Beach and meet with Erik Nelsen, a Laguna Beach native who runs Ocean Adventures at Monarch Beach Resort, and his crew. The staff at the Monarch Beach Club have one goal, according to Nelsen: "getting people beyond the shoreline." And that's just what they do. These CPR-certified employees love the ocean and are experts when it comes to getting people in and out of the waves safely.

If you go out on a paddleboard tour at Monarch Beach with one of the resort's tour guides, Nelsen says that there is

a good chance you will see dolphins and other forms of marine life. "During certain times of the year, you'll see gray whales and occasionally blue whales," he says. "Depending on how clear and calm it is, you can see fish. It gives a nice view and unique perspective."

Along with stand-up paddleboarding, you can discover or refine your surfing, kayaking, boogie boarding and skimboarding skills with private lessons. Or, for more advanced practitioners, you can also rent out a watercraft to head out and explore the waters of Monarch Beach. Customized lessons and tours can be arranged with drop-in rentals available daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the summer.



Laguna Beach is a popular spot for paddleboarding.

DANA POINT HARBOR

What's particularly nice about stand-up paddleboarding is how easy it is to learn. Of all the board sports, many watersport fans say that stand-up paddleboarding is the one that will find you out on the water the quickest.

Steve Serafino, program director of Westwind Sailing in Dana Point and Lake Mission Viejo, gives encouragement to first-time paddlers who might be unsure about what they're getting into. "Most people that try this sport pick it up rather easy," he says. "If you have ever surfed, skateboarded, water skied, skied, snowboarded, done yoga, walked and texted at the same time—you got this. Be cool, comfortable, calm and breathe. The board floats just fine with you on it." Serafino says to avoid paddling out when it's windy, and remember to wear a lifejacket.

At Dana Point Harbor, there are tons of yachts and boats to marvel at as well as sea lions and harbor seals while you're out there, too. It's also near several restaurants and eateries that you can check out after a couple of hours of paddleboarding.

NEWPORT HARBOR

Protected from the swell and waves of the ocean by Balboa Peninsula, another popular flat water spot is Newport Harbor. The area is user-friendly for paddlers, although keep an eye out for boats, particularly on the weekends. With a few man-made

islands within the harbor and multi-million dollar yachts, there's plenty to see.

When it comes to paddleboarding in the harbors, the general rule is that the larger vessel has the right of way, as it's easier for you to maneuver yourself and a board more quickly compared to a large boat. "We are not pedestrians out on the water," Serafino explains. "We have to follow the rules, too." When in doubt, veer right and try to keep the angle of your board so that it faces straight into the boat's wake, which is the most stable way to take on the small waves.

Serafino notes that when it comes to Newport Harbor, paddlers can launch on any public beaches. For extra precaution, tell the lifeguard on duty where you'll be launching from and ask about the weather conditions.

DOHENY STATE BEACH

If you're more advanced when it comes to paddleboarding, try heading out to Doheny Beach. The beach is just south of Dana Point Harbor, and it generally has mild surf.

Since stand-up paddleboards are considered vessels by the United States Coast Guard (categorized with kayaks as compared to traditional surfboards), there are some restrictions on where you can launch. Serafino explains that prospective paddleboards can head out from the jetty or south of the river mouth—otherwise, catching waves is not

permitted. Serafino emphasizes the need to check the weather forecast before you head out, particularly when aiming for the open ocean. "If there are big waves or big winds, but plenty of sunshine, don't go," he says.

LAGUNA BEACH

"Laguna has some excellent places, swell pending, of course," Nelsen says. "It is awesome on a flat day. I have a lot of friends who just go out in Laguna and they're seeing whales and dolphins all the time."

Laguna Beach as a whole is a great place to paddleboard thanks to its fairly open landing and launching policies. While Laguna Beach Marine Safety Lieutenant Kai Bond notes that the best beaches to launch from are the ones that cater to surfing (such as Brooks Street Beach and Thalia Street Beach), he says that you can launch from most beaches after consulting with a lifeguard to clear out an area for you to launch and to pick out the safest pathway. During the summer, it's especially important to avoid areas with swimmers, but Bond notes you can go as far as you like, with most paddleboarders staying within 200 yards of the shoreline. It's also important to ask a lifeguard where to land, although Laguna Beach allows for landing in various coves and sections of the beach so you can get an entirely new perspective of the water and the shoreline.

For those looking to rent a paddleboard in Laguna Beach, Nelsen also advises novices to seek out companies that will take them out to the water for the first time so they can get accustomed to launching and landing before setting out. 🦋

ROBERT ZALESKI

Interested in spending a day out on the water? Reach out to Ocean Adventure Programs Inc., which handles all water-based activities for Monarch Beach Resort, at 949-505-5500 or see the hotel concierge for assistance.