

DANA POINT: A PROFILE

DANA POINT, CA - - Just south of Laguna Beach on the California coast lies a lovely stretch of shoreline where year-round temperatures hover around 70 degrees and a soft sea breeze wafts in daily from the glistening Pacific. In the middle of this gentle setting lies a historic headland known as Dana Point, named for author/seaman Richard Henry Dana who, after sailing into the area, described the cliffed cove as “the only romantic spot in California.”

Atop the majestic cliffs above the shoreline are 42 acres of brilliant, emerald green lawn and park. Here are miles of jogging and bicycling trails for the fitness buff, cool paths for strolling and enjoying the spectacular view, and ample room for families, with room left over for the kite flyer wanting to put the soft ocean breezes to good use.

Steps away is the 62-acre Doheny State Beach and Park, one of Southern California's most valued coastal recreational preserves. Doheny offers lush, grassy picnic areas, cool wooded campgrounds, a variety of playing fields for the sports minded and the white sandy beaches of picture postcards.

But, the jewel of Dana Point is the 2500-slip yacht harbor, which is nestled in a natural cove below towering white cliffs. Protected by a 1½-mile jetty, the picturesque harbor offers two separate marinas equipped for those who want to experience the thrill of the sea, regardless of their seafaring abilities. Whether it be the excitement of ocean sailing, the contest of deep sea fishing, or the man versus nature sport of windsurfing, Dana Point harbor fulfills man's love of the sea.

Landlubbers will also find countless activities to fill their sunny days in Dana Point. In addition to delightful strolls through the cool timbers of Lantern Bay Park and the numerous attractions of Doheny State Beach and Park, visitors can enjoy a casual walk along the ocean to a beachfront, half-mile picnic park known as the “Island.” The park's Interpretive Center features salt water aquariums and an indoor tidepool exhibit that enlightens visitors on the ocean's bounty.

The feel of the 1800s lives on at Mariners Village, where visitors browse through a profusion of unique shops. Unexpected treasures are waiting to be found for every taste, style and generation; from Belgian chocolates and leather handbags to “ship to chic” clothes and original artwork. Yet shopping is only part of the attraction. Enjoy a casual stroll in the stimulating salt air and sunshine, while taking in the sights, sounds and smells that abound. Sip specialty coffees harborside and enjoy people watching at its finest.

Through a colorfully trellised walkway is Dana Wharf, another charming themed shopping and dining area. Visitors relax on a beach and relish a view, watch the gracefully swooping seagulls, roller skate along the harbor pathways, canvas the shops for that special gift, or charter a fishing boat and try their hand at harnessing what the ocean has to offer.

The Ocean Institute, located at the far west end of the Harbor, is a non-profit educational facility that serves the needs of the educational community and promotes ocean awareness and preservation through its programs. The Institute lies at the edge of the open ocean, the Dana Point Marine Life Refuge and the historic headlands. A newly expanded 33,000 square-foot Ocean Education Center consists of six buildings in a campus-like setting reminiscent of an oceanographic outpost station.

While the new Ocean Education Center is designed primarily for students, there are many points of interest for the casual visitor throughout the campus providing a fun, unique and memorable learning experience. Portions of the center are open to the public on weekends from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and the Institute's *Research Vessel Sea Explorer* and historic tallship, *Spirit of Dana Point* offer regularly scheduled weekend cruises. The brig *Pilgrim* is open for tours most Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Special events are integral to the enchantment of Dana Point. The Festival of Whales, Dana Point's most famous annual event (established in 1972), is a celebration of the annual migration of the magnificent California Gray Whale. The Festival is held in early March, but whale watching excursions begin the end of December, and are offered through the end of April. Other annual community events include a July 4th fireworks spectacular, Tallships Festival and December's festive Christmas Boat Parade.

Dana Point boasts an abundance of outstanding restaurants. The Charthouse Restaurant hugs the towering cliffs above Dana Point Harbor and provides a spectacular view along with its renowned steaks and seafood specialties. Cannon's, also atop the cliffs of the point offers outside dining and a fabulous array of delectable entrees. Italian specialties can be found at Ferrantelli's and Luciana's. Peking Dragon tempts all Chinese food lovers, and Gen Kai pleases the palates of the most discriminating sushi connoisseurs.

Whether visitors seek the quiet charm of a seaside village or the exhilaration of a recreational mecca, Dana Point has something for everyone.

Dana Point is located midway between Los Angeles and San Diego on a coastal bluff just off the San Diego (I-5) freeway. Visitors can fly into John Wayne/Orange County Airport, Los Angeles International Airport or San Diego Airport. For visitors that want to enjoy leisurely travel on the train, the San Juan Capistrano Amtrak Depot is located just minutes from Dana Point.

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