



## **Summer, Sand, Sun: The Islands of Southern California**

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When most people think of Southern California, they immediately conjure up images of Los Angeles or San Diego or, perhaps, for the desert and Coachella lovers among us, Palm Springs. However, for real aficionados of the Southern California lifestyle, the aforementioned metropolitan hubs are merely promising previews of the treasures to be beheld in the southernmost territory of the Golden State. With that thought in mind, I set off on a quick tour of the islands of Southern California which may not be as flashy as their big city counterparts, but are no less stunning in their appeal. Nor are they in any way lacking in the qualities that make SoCal living so uncommonly exceptional.

### **Shelter Island**



Nothing makes me happier than a wonderful surprise, which is exactly how I would describe Shelter Island. Also located on the outskirts of San Diego, Shelter Island is technically not so much an island as it is a part of the Point Loma Peninsula. However, technicalities aside, this wonderfully retro slice of Shangri-la very much evokes the feel of an isle, despite being connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land.

Thanks in large part to its quirky history, the buildings on this man-made Island reference a Polynesian theme (circa 1950) as dictated by city code. Towering, swaying palm trees, marinas studded by an array of yachts and superyachts and a singular ribbon of Tiki Modern inspired hotels, clubs and resorts running along the island's shores, lend a decidedly tropical air to the destination that is reminiscent of a ramshackle relation of Antigua or Mallorca. In fact, but for the skyscrapers of Downtown San Diego seductively beckoning across the Bay, it might be quite easy to forget that Southern California is even nearby once safely ensconced in the embrace of the island with the breeze at your back and a fruity cocktail in hand.

Just as Coronado has its grande dame, so does Shelter Island in the form of the Kona Kai Resort, a part of the Noble House Hotels & Resorts Collection. Located at the very tip of the island, the recently renovated Kona Kai is a boutique property that has, throughout its many incarnations, managed to maintain the Polynesian flair of the original structure while simultaneously adding a healthy dose of modernity. As eclectic in its décor as it is practical in some of its more structural elements (the property's impressive marina is the closest to San Diego Bay and counts among its many amenities over 500 boat slips as well as a private club membership for tenants), Kona Kai is perhaps most distinguished by the fact that it genuinely embraces the notion of escape.



A private sand beach (one of the few in California), a small but formidable spa, and a surprisingly delicious restaurant called Vessel, boasting gorgeous views of the marina along with a mouthwatering menu of “California Comfort Fare” highlighted by an otherworldly Lobster Mac n’ Cheese and an outstandingly flavorful and creative Porcini Crusted Sea Bass, all come together to create the kind of property that can be all things to all people. Whether you opt to walk along the marina, relax on the beach or by the pool, take an exercise class or have a workout at the gym, enjoy cocktails on the terrace of your room or nip into one of the live musical performances at Vessel, you’ll find that Kona Kai is one stop shop for escape.