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A Family Adventure on California's Southern Coast



A memorable mother-son weekend at Terranea Resort included whale watching, nature hiking, plenty of swimming--and taking in the amazing views.

By [Judy Koutsky](#) August 31, 2017

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I wanted to take my 6-year-old son away for a long weekend and we were up for something new and fun, so when I heard about a hotel out in California with a new adventure concierge program. Called [Terranea Resort](#), A Destination Hotel, and situated in Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, I thought this could be a good fit. I was worried, however, that the longish flight might be a bit much for a little kid with a short attention span. We've been to Florida, the Caribbean, and Chicago, but the 6-hour flight to California from New York would be longer than any of those. But I figured it was worth trying, so I loaded up the iPad with games and movies and hoped for the best.

Terranea Resort



Set atop a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean and Catalina Island, TerraneaResort is 30 minutes from Los Angeles International Airport, yet seems a world away from the bustling city. As a travel writer, I've stayed at hotels with amazing views, but Terranea was in a league of its own—I literally took photos from just about everywhere on the property because the views were that amazing. With cliffs jutting out into the Pacific Ocean, I felt like I was getting postcard views from every angle. Matthew did great on the flight (plenty of back-to-back movies), and with a short transfer to the hotel, the journey here was easy and seamless.

Adventure Activities



Once we got situated, there were plenty of activities to take advantage of: art classes, kayaking, tidal walks, and more. We choose a whale cruise, a two-hour nature walk, and falconry.

The whale cruise was probably Matthew's favorite. We got up close to three blue whales and hundreds of dolphins. The nature guide aboard our boat was especially good at showing Matthew photos of various whales and talking about their size and habits.

Another morning we participated in the falconry program with the resort's resident falconer, Joe. We met his falcons, hawks, and owls, and learned a lot about the birds' habits. Lastly, we took a nature walk with a naturalist who talked about the flora and fauna of the area while walking to the lighthouse and whale museum.

All three activities were a lot of fun and held Matthew's attention. The nature walk was along the cliff's rising above the Pacific Ocean and I couldn't get enough of the scenery—it really was spectacular.



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Pool Time at Terranea Resort

If it were up to Matthew, we'd be at the pool 24/7, so we rented a cabana for the day and it proved to be one of the highlights of the trip for him. The cabana came with an indoor room that had a couch, table, and a refrigerator with water, sodas, and juices—plus a TV. Just outside the tent were two lounge chairs, a large shady umbrella, and plenty of towels. We also ordered dinner here—sandwiches, salads, fruit, and cookies—and spent about 7 hours there. There are four pools on property, and we were at the family pool, which had a basketball hoop, two hot tubs, and again, those amazing views.

Food Choices at the Resort

The resort has no shortage of food options. We had Belgian waffles piled high with fruit (mine) and chocolate chips and whip cream (Matthew's) from Sea Beams. We also bought a s'mores kit from Sea Beams and roasted marshmallows at the pool's fire pit each night (one kit goes a long way).

One of my favorite spots was Nelson's. Located right on the water, it had the best views of the ocean--we saw tons of dolphins from our picnic table. The fish there was fresh and delicious. Mar'sel, the resort's signature restaurant, had an amazing brunch as well as a fancy dinner option. Catalina had the best omelets and avocado toast, while Bashi had amazing sushi (for me) and shaking beef (for Matthew).

Kids Clubs and Spa at Terranea

As much as this was a special mommy-son trip, I never say no to a little spa time, so I put Matthew in the resort's camp for one morning while I treated myself. The massage was really nice, but what I really loved was just sitting outside in the spa lounge overlooking the ocean and listening to the sound of the waves crashing below.

Turns out Matthew had as much fun at the kid's program as I had at the spa. He personalized a canvas backpack with beautiful rich hues and drawings, made a picture frame, went for a walk to find lizards, and made new friends. He so enjoyed the kid's camp that he asked if he could go the next day.

While everything about the weekend seemed relaxed and easygoing, what I especially loved was the laid-back vibe of the place. From the restaurants, to the adventure concierge to the pool staff, everyone was so warm and welcoming.

On our last morning, we spent time at the pool before doing one last walk along the beach. We both decided we loved it at Terranea and could easily spend a week here. A long weekend is do-able from New York, but spending more time here is definitely worth it.

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Judy Koutsky is an award-winning writer and editor and her work has appeared in over 30 publications, including Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Redbook, Parents, Scholastic, and Prevention. She writes often about travel, parenting, health, and lifestyle. Follow her [@JudyKoutsky](#) or visit her website [JudyKoutsky.com](#).

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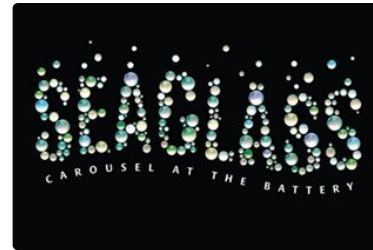
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