



The Best Things to Do in Long Beach, California

Breakfast at Madres Brunch

Get an early start to your day with a delicious breakfast at Madres Brunch. This trendy cafe is located in the heart of downtown Long Beach only a few miles from the cruise terminal. The creative dishes are not only delicious, but we love the over-the-top presentation!

The Manhattan French Toast is a real showstopper with thick slices of brioche French toast drizzled with strawberry cream cheese syrup and topped with vanilla ice cream.

If you're craving something savory, my husband loves the Madres Chilaquiles with fried tortillas drenched in red salsa and piled high with beef birria, beans, a fried egg, and other toppings.

The menu changes often, but a few other favorites include the Journey Pancakes, Churro Waffles, and the Breakfast Burrito.

Explore the Queen Mary

After breakfast, head to the Queen Mary, one of Long Beach's most iconic landmarks.

This retired British ocean liner once served as a luxury cruise ship in the 1930s and was also used to transport soldiers during WWII. It was purchased by the city of Long Beach in 1967 and is now the world's most visited passenger ship.

Today, this infamous ghost ship serves as a floating museum and hotel and is considered one of the top 10 most haunted attractions in the US. You can actually [spend the night](#) in one of the ship's staterooms if you're brave enough to sleep in one of the most haunted hotels in America!

[Book the Queen Mary Hotel](#)

If you're not up for sharing a room with some tortured souls, you can still take a guided tour to learn the fascinating history of this ship.

There are several tour options to choose from. We booked the Haunted Encounters Tour and it was equally interesting and creepy!

The tour will take you to parts of the ship that are off-limits to the public. We even went into the dark bow of the ship where they kept prisoners of war. It is supposedly where the most paranormal activity has been found on the entire ship, and there was definitely a weird vibe down there.

The tour is considered family-friendly and there were several kids on our tour. They really got into the stories and even downloaded ghost detector apps beforehand, which I thought was a great idea.

If you are not interested in a ghost tour, they also offer [other tours](#). The Glory Days Historical Tour is where you can learn about the ship's golden age and its famous passengers. The Steam & Steel tour will take you to see the impressive mechanics that powered the Queen Mary across the Atlantic. The Hollywood Tour will take you to famous spots on the ship that have been featured on the big screen in movies such as *The Parent Trap* and *Pearl Harbor*.

With the purchase of a guided tour ticket, you are also free to explore the ship on a self-guided tour. We loved walking around and seeing different parts of the ship like the captain's private quarters, the bridge, and the engine rooms. The Isolation Ward was a hard pass for me, though!

The ship feels as if it's frozen in time and still maintains the same Art Deco furniture and decor from its heyday.

It was a fun way to spend the morning learning about the history, hearing some stories, and getting a little spooked out!

Take a Gondola Ride at the Naples Island Canal

Did you know that Naples, CA is an official twin city to Venice, Italy? They even have [authentic Italian gondolas](#) and gondoliers who will paddle you around the Naples Island Canal and even sing to you just like they do in [Venice](#)!

You can also [rent kayaks or paddleboards](#) and explore on your own. There are 6 miles of waterway circling Naples Island and branching off to other bays and canals.

Spinnaker Bay is a popular place to kayak to where you can see hundreds of moon jellies. The jellies are seasonal, the best time to see them is in the summer. The Aquarium of the Pacific actually collects moon jellies from this bay for their touch tank!

You can also paddle to several cafes where you can dock your kayak and grab a quick bite to eat.

If you don't have time to explore the canal by water, you can still walk the path around the Rivo Alto Canal and admire the picturesque neighborhood lined with waterfront homes.

During the holidays, they have a fun hydro bike tour where you can paddle along the canal at night to see the homes all decked out with Christmas lights. Something to keep in mind for the future!

Lunch at Marlina

If you want to feel like you're really in Venice, head to Marlina for authentic Margherita pizza!

Their wood-fired pizza was *almost* as delicious as the pizza we had in [Naples, Italy](#). The burger was also tasty with fresh high-quality ingredients. Be sure to save room from the Burnt Basque Cheesecake, it's divine!

In addition to its pizza, Marlina is known for its coastal-inspired menu featuring seafood dishes like lobster rolls, grilled fish tacos, and grilled Spanish octopus.

The food is delicious and the ambiance is great with a cute outdoor patio and tasteful decor.

Relax at the Beach

Long Beach lives up to its name with miles of sandy beaches stretching all along the city's coastline. Spend the afternoon soaking up the sun and relaxing at one of its several beaches.

Belmont Shore Beach is located near Naples Island. You'll find a wide stretch of sand, and the Belmont Veterans Memorial Pier. We always enjoy walking along the pier and watching the fisherman bringing in their catch. The pier also offers a great view of the beach and the city skyline from the water.

You'll also find bike rental shops near Belmont Shore Beach where you can rent bikes and ride along the Long Beach Shoreline Bike Path.

From Belmont Shore Beach, the paved path follows along the coast for about 2 miles and passes by Junipero Beach and City Beach before ending at Alamitos Beach near downtown.

While on the bike path, be sure to stop for ice cream or a pineapple cream soda from the Saltwater Deck. This cute beachfront cafe is right on the sand between Junipero Beach and City Beach.

If you would rather eat lunch near the beach, Bruxie has amazing gourmet waffles. Claire's at the Museum is also a favorite spot. This cute cafe at the Long Beach Museum of Art has amazing food and ocean views.

Visit the Aquarium of the Pacific

If you have extra time, the Aquarium of the Pacific is one of the best aquariums on the West Coast. It is located near the cruise terminal and features over 12,000 animals and educational exhibits.

Some of the highlights include the Shark Lagoon where you can get up close to observe these fascinating creatures.

The Penguin Habitat is always a crowd favorite where you can watch adorable Magellanic penguins waddle and swim.

The Tropical Pacific Gallery features vibrant coral reefs and exotic fish, and the Lorikeet Forest is a walk-through aviary filled with colorful birds.

Dinner at Thai District

Wrap up your day in Long Beach with dinner at Thai District. This highly rated restaurant serves authentic Thai cuisine in a unique setting.

Their Pad Thai is always my go-to, but the Green Curry is also a winner. Just save room for Mango Sticky Rice for dessert!

Final Thoughts

Spending a day in Long Beach before your cruise is the perfect way to kick-start your vacation!

I recommend using Uber to get around the city, unless you drive to Long Beach. If you do drive, parking is pretty easy to come by. There is a large inexpensive lot near the Long Beach Convention Center, it was only \$15 per day when we visited. The lot is within walking distance of restaurants, the Pike Outlets, and the Aquarium of the Pacific.

Long Beach is a fun city and I hope this guide will help you discover the best way to spend a day before or after your cruise!