



Marina del Rey: Southern California's Comeback Kid Seaside community gets a facelift at 50

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Stellar Views from the Ritz-Carlton, Marina del Rey

Most Americans approach turning 50 with trepidation — or dread. Not so for Marina del Rey, the laid-back seaside community in Southern California that celebrates the milestone this year.

Nestled between Santa Monica and Los Angeles International Airport, Marina del Rey — known simply as "the Marina" to locals — is experiencing a rebirth.

A number of hotels, restaurants and shopping centers have undergone major upgrades over the past few years, resulting in a trendy and upscale environment that's attracting an influx of visitors (and, yes, traffic).

But it's worth enduring, as the area now has so much to offer so many. In addition to housing nearly 5,000 boats — from sailboats and houseboats to jaw-dropping private yachts — the Marina is home to hip hotels and restaurants that offer a variety of cuisines.



Happy Hour at Marina del Rey hotspot SALT

Among the latter are Tender Greens — one of LA's best and most affordable farm-fresh restaurants; Chef Jason Neroni's highly regarded, seafood-focused Catch & Release; and an outpost of Ruth's Chris Steak House (coincidentally also celebrating its 50th anniversary).

The past year has also seen the opening of Killer Café, one of only a few Westside eateries open 24 hours, and seaside hotspot SALT.

Why the sudden frenzy of openings and renovations? The answer depends on whom you ask.

Many locals believe it's because of the number of tech startups that have established offices between Santa Monica and Playa del Rey (known as Silicon Beach).

More likely, it's due to the fact that the Marina's 800 acres (400 underwater) sit on county-owned land developed and managed by leaseholders. The leases are renewed sporadically, prompting lessees to keep the property in good condition, ideally operating successful businesses.

It must be working, given that Marina del Rey is currently the largest revenue generator in Los Angeles County.



Marina del Rey Hotel

A good chunk of that revenue is likely coming from hotels scattered around the harbor. Many mid-level properties like The Marriott, Hilton Garden Inn and MDR Hotel have been revitalized or rebuilt entirely.

The Marina del Rey Hotel (the first hotel in the Marina, built in 1964) reopened earlier this year after a \$25 million modernization.

And The Ritz-Carlton — the only five-star hotel in the area — is also undergoing upgrades, moving from a more formal environment to a casual but upscale California style.

Although the local vibe has certainly been elevated in the midst of all this change, the Marina still attracts a typical SoCal crowd. Laid-back surfers and beach bums still carry their gear to and from the pier at the western end of Washington Boulevard, and fitness fanatics still flock to the harbor to sail, kayak and row.

The latest fitness craze to hit the Marina: paddleboard yoga, where participants hold yoga poses while balancing on a paddleboard or surfboard and floating on the Pacific. Although most of these yogis are 20- or 30-somethings, you might even see a few folks teetering around 50.

And they look great, not unlike Marina del Rey itself.