

## Living in the OC

Beautiful Orange County in Southern California is home to over 3 million people according to the US Census Bureau. There are many reasons people choose to live here, including excellent employment opportunities and schools, gorgeous beaches and scenery, and the many cultural and shopping experiences it provides. The great weather, overall climate and unique cities also add to its charm.

According to OCGOV.com, Orange County consists of 798 square miles with 34 cities, 9 beaches and 3 harbors. It also boasts 11 public and 7 private colleges and universities. OC has many hospitals to choose from as well, including UCI Medical Center, Saint Joseph Hospital, Hoag Memorial Hospital and the Saint Jude Medical Center plus others. John Wayne and Fullerton Municipal are the primary airports serving OC. Its two military installations are Los Alamitos Reserve Center and the Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station. Per capita income according to the California State Department of Finance and HUD (2005) was \$40,380. The median family income is \$75,700 according to Chapman University Center for Economic Research. The median home price in Orange County according to Dataquick Information Systems is approx. \$617,000. Culturally, the US Census Bureau estimates the racial makeup of Orange County to be 78.9% White, 32.5% Latino, 1.9% African Americans, 0.9% Native American, 15.9% Asian and 0.4% Pacific Islander.

According to the Orange County Business Council Book of Lists, the major employers in Orange County are the Walt Disney Company, the County of Orange, UC Irvine, CAL State Fullerton, Boeing Corporation, Saint Joseph Health Systems, AT&T, YUM Brands Inc. and Home Depot.

Tourist attractions are plentiful. There is literally something for everyone. Sights to see include the Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim, the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Disneyland Park and California Adventure in Anaheim, Knotts Berry Farm and Soak City in Buena Park and the Mission San Juan Capistrano.

Southern California beaches are a favorite spot to enjoy family and friends or to simply enjoy some time alone. Favorite spots to visit include Balboa Island, Dana Point, Huntington Beach, San Clemente, Sunset Beach, Corona Del Mar, Laguna Beach, Newport Beach, Seal Beach and Surfside. Activities to enjoy include swimming, scuba diving, surfing, scenic walks or simply laying on the beach. Enjoy roasting marshmallows in one of the fire pits, picnicking or having a BBQ. Take a walk along one of the piers and don't forget to take the time to explore the various wildlife along the beach and in the tide pools.

There are many beautiful places to camp in Orange County as well. Many beaches offer areas to camp and other places to check out include Irvine Lake, Featherly Regional Park, and Caspers Wilderness Park. Activities will vary according to where you camp but can include biking and equestrian trails, hiking, fishing, boating and sporting activities including horseshoes and archery.

Professional sports teams in Orange County have enjoyed many winning seasons as well as championships. Fans can enjoy Major League Baseball's Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim or the National Hockey League's Mighty Ducks of Anaheim. Horse racing fans can enjoy the races at the Los Alamitos Race Track.

Orange County has much to offer those of you who enjoy a day of shopping as well. Shopping venues include South Coast Plaza, Fashion Island, The Marketplace Tustin/Irvine, the Brea Mall and The Shops at Mission Viejo. South Orange County is home to some of the most scenic golf courses in California. Get away for the weekend to the Aliso Creek Inn and Golf Course in Laguna Beach, or simply adventure out for a day of golf at the Tijeras Creek Golf Club in Rancho Santa Margarita or the Oak Creek Golf Club in Irvine. If you need to get away from the bustle of every day life it is as easy as catching a short ferry ride to Catalina Island or catching a flight to Las Vegas or various other destinations from John Wayne Airport in Costa Mesa.

If you are interested in listening to live music or seeing dance or theatre performances, Orange County has several

places from which to choose. Among them is The Orange County Performing Arts Center which presents a broad range of programming each season, including many wonderful singers, dancers, actors and musicians. Live music offerings include The Coach House in San Juan Capistrano highlighting comedy and R&B music as well as performances by local bands and The Galaxy Theatre in Santa Ana which offers music from classic rock to new edge Latin Hip Hop.

There are many museums to visit in Orange County as well. If you like art you might want to visit the Laguna Art Museum in Laguna Beach or the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art in Santa Ana. The Richard Nixon Library in Yorba Linda also makes an interesting stop. Car buffs might enjoy visiting the Marconi Automotive Museum in Tustin or if you are a sailor at heart you may want to visit the Newport Nautical Museum in Newport Beach. If surfing is your sport the International Surfing Museum in Huntington Beach may prove interesting for you. There are many hands on museums for children including the Discovery Science Center in Santa Ana, the Children's Museum of La Habra and the Centennial Heritage Museum in Santa Ana.

Southern Orange County is an alluring place that offers something for everyone. Sports venues and golf for the sports minded, live music, museums, dance and art offerings to satisfy your palate for culture, beautiful beaches for those who fancy the ocean and water sports, camping for those who love communing with the outdoors, shopping galore and amusement parks close by to satisfy kids and adults alike. With it's colleges and universities students can make a home here as well as families and singles. The scenery is beautiful and the weather is mild. With it's many job opportunities and housing options and so much to offer, Orange County is a place many people gladly choose to make their home!