



# Ecotourism and



Do you know what ecotourism is? It is the practice of traveling to and visiting natural habitats (being a “nature tourist”) while minimizing ecological impacts and building awareness of the environment and its importance to the local community. As we, the Big Blue Reporters, prepared to write this newspaper, we were eco-tourists! We toured many different beaches, went to museums and visited commercial and recreational fishing boats, learning both economic and cultural values of the local ocean. We also learned countless ways to help the environment, and wrote this newspaper to share our new knowledge with you! We learned that ecotourism is a great way for both kids and adults to have fun while learning about and gaining an appreciation for the ocean and all it has to offer.

Ecotourism in the SBC includes whale watching and island tours, as well as several mainland-based activities. During the months of January through March, when the California gray whale migrates through the SBC, tourists (and local whale enthusiasts) visit our area in hopes of seeing one of these giants as they pass by. The entire journey – between Alaska and Baja, California – takes the whales about 11,000 miles, round trip! During the summer, both blue whales and humpback whales can be seen in the SBC. You can see whales “spyhopping” – poking their heads out of the water to look around, “breaching” – jumping out of the water, and “blowing” – exhaling water through their blowholes. Dolphins, orcas, and other marine life can also be spotted during whale watching trips.



The Channel Islands are a big tourist attraction, with visitors enjoying many of the recreational activities that locals can enjoy regularly. People like to kayak around Anacapa Island where there are great caves and arches. The crystal clear water around Anacapa allows you to see down into giant kelp forests when kayaking and boating. Anacapa Island is a nesting ground for many different birds, including seagulls, cormorants, hawks and pelicans. Sea lion rookeries (breeding grounds) are found on San Miguel Island, where these animals enjoy a safe environment and where they are rarely bothered. There definitely is a lot for visitors to see and experience at the Channel Islands.

Surfing is a fun and extremely popular ocean sport in the SBC region. People come from all over the world to surf our local waves. Both experienced and beginner surfers can enjoy waiting for breaking waves, riding them in, and then swimming back out and waiting for another wave to come. Surfing doesn’t require much gear, just a wet suit and a surfboard. Wet suits are made of a rubber fabric called neoprene that keeps the surfers warm. Surf boards come in lots of sizes and designs. Surf shops can help you find the right wet suit and board. If you are just starting out, you should take some lessons so that you can safely “catch some waves”!

In addition to surfing, there are other ocean sports that involve a board and waves, such as boogie boarding, skim boarding, kite boarding, wind surfing, and paddle boarding. Wind surfing and kite boarding use a kite and the wind to speed the board and surfer along.



**How can you tell seals and sea lions apart? Sea lions have ear flaps; seals only have ear holes • Sea lions have rotating back fins;**

# *Surf, sand and sunscreen* Recreational Activities



Besides being on a board or a boat, you might also like being in the water! Whether it's swimming or scuba diving, you will have a lot of fun in the ocean. When swimming, be sure to swim where a lifeguard is on duty and use the buddy system. Don't swim out too far, and don't get in the ocean when the surf is too high or the currents are dangerous. Be safe! And, don't forget the sunscreen!

Scuba diving is also an exciting recreational activity. But it is important to get proper training and certification so that you can safely use the oxygen tank to dive and swim down in the ocean. The Channel Islands are a great place to scuba dive. Divers can see different types of wildlife, ranging from the California spiny lobster to the California state fish, the Garibaldi – a beautiful bright orange fish. The Channel Islands are considered one of the top diving sites in the world for many reasons. One reason is the visibility at the islands is often very good. At Anacapa Island you can usually see more than 50 feet because the island is made of volcanic rock so there is little sediment in the water. Another reason is there are beautiful kelp (seaweed) forests with lots of sea life.

## The dolphin maze

Go on a sight-seeing trip for a closer look at a dolphin!



Visiting a harbor offers many opportunities for activity and fun. Many harbors have sail and motor boats for rent. Charter companies offer fishing and whale watching expeditions, harbor tours and more. Wonderful fish markets and restaurants can often be found at most harbors as well.

Walking and biking are good ways to enjoy the ocean from land. Most of the beaches in the SBC have bike trails, and many harbors and beaches have bike rental shops. You might try a 4-wheeler that holds several people, and everyone pedals! This is great fun for the entire family, and good exercise, as well!

There are so many fun things to do when you visit our local beaches and ocean! Whether you like to fish, or if you prefer to explore tide pools... whether you like to be in the water surfing or you like to take a walk along the coastline, our coastline and ocean are truly a treasure. Enjoy and protect them!

*seals have straight back fins • Sea lions have long front fins; seals have short front fins • Sea lions can 'walk' on land; seals can only move by scooting along.*

