

# Loews reflects cool Santa Monica lifestyle

It's all about the outdoors at this hotel perched on the Pacific

ROCHELLE LASH  
SPECIAL TO THE MONTREAL GAZETTE

The Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel hits all highs of sunny Southern California dreaming. It is the hospitality centrepiece of a cool, creative community, perched directly on the breezy shore of the Pacific Ocean, facing brilliant sunsets over sparkling waters. The hotel screens wall-sized, live-action videos of the seaside, sharing images of sailboats and surfers directly into the lobby. And you're only a few minutes from being there yourself.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Santa Monica Pier is next door to the Loews, beckoning both children and adults with its amusement park, old-time arcade and talented street performers. Within a few blocks is a cornucopia of shops: fancy Montana Avenue, lively Third Street Promenade and the new Santa Monica Place, home to such hip boutiques as Kitson and Tory Burch as well as Bloomingdale's, Barney's and Nordstrom. Tongva Park and Ken Genser Square are Santa Monica's spectacular new green spaces with water features and playgrounds for children, picnic areas and extensive gardens. And LAX, the Los Angeles International Airport, is a handy 13 kilometres south. There is serious culture, too. Kent Nagano, the California-born musical director of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, as well as Oscar-winner Dustin Hoffman and opera stars Frederica von Stade and Plácido Domingo, all are on the artistic committee at The Broad Stage, which presents concerts and theatre.

INDOOR-OUTDOOR HOTEL

The Loews is a full-service establishment, with 342 rooms built

around an indoor courtyard, palm trees that soar four storeys high and daylight streaming in through an atrium. Fully loaded, the hotel offers dining at Ocean & Vine, 24-hour room-service, children's features, a gift shop, a kiosk for printing airplane boarding passes, a Hertz car rental and Clefs d'Or concierges.

Ocean Spa & Fitness does restorative treatments like Relax-by-the-Sea and Beachcomber massages, plus hydrating facials to combat the sun's effects. You can maintain your exercise regimen with fitness classes, or primp for a big night out at the hair and nail salon.

But this is SoCal (Southern California) and the Loews's outdoor living is what makes it exceptional. The heated swimming pool faces the Pacific and the Blue Streak lounge has sunset views, firepits, live music on weekends and a happy hour during the week. Most precious is the hotel's oceanfront. Guests can take an elevator right down to the beach, a clean, broad expanse of fine sand.

You won't need that elevator if you stay in one of the hotel's four new Beachcomber accommodations. These private seaside getaways, adjacent to the hotel's beachside entrance, have their own patios, firepits and rain showers that let in the sunlight. You almost can live outdoors — but you'll want to spend the night inside on a stylish platform king bed.

PACIFIC COAST CRUISING

The Loews's most outstanding feature is its important location on Ocean Avenue. The celebrity enclave of Malibu is 20 kilometres to the north and the quirky, hipster town of Venice is two kilometres to the south. There are many ways to get around town, and they're all picturesque and fun.

You can walk along the beach footpath or take the Santa Monica



The Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel is popular for its resort facilities, recreation for children and great location where guests can enjoy the Pacific, the pier, and an oceanfront pathway.

Free Ride, a six-passenger shuttle that you can hail around town or pick up at the Loews. The hotel also partners with Fiat in two projects: chauffeur-driven rides in a darling Fiat 500L with a turbo-charged 160-hp engine; and the Fiat loaner

program, in which guests can borrow a car for three hours. My favourite transportation experience is the South Bay Bicycle Trail that meanders for 35 kilometres along the oceanfront. This path is so user-friendly, it is

a delight, lined with picnic tables, washrooms, playgrounds and life-guard stations near the water. Spokes N Stuff, at the Loews's beach entrance, rents in-line skates, boogie boards and eight different styles of bikes

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