



3 California Hot Spots

By Nadine Bubeck



I left my heart in Los Gatos. And San Diego. And by the beaches of the Bay Area. Oh, and my heart is also in Scottsdale.

I've lived a handful of places—a handful of amazingly beautiful and wonderful places. Even though my heart, home, and family is now in Scottsdale, there are pieces of me everywhere I've lived, and

everywhere I've ever loved.

There's nothing like taking your children to the places you've lived. It's like recreating moments of the past, while making new memories. And so for this post, I've decided to introduce you to three of my favorite hot spots in California.

Before kids, I used to do a number of hotel round ups for Arizona Foothills Magazine. Now that I'm a mom, my hotel round ups are family-focused; however, I prefer properties mom and dad will enjoy too.

I grew up in Los Gatos, California—a gem-like town in the heart of Silicon Valley nestled against the lush Santa Cruz Mountains. The town is quaint, peaceful, and charming. Adorably lined with boutiques, coffee shops, restaurants, and salons. The center of the town features a plaza full of grass and a fountain for kids to enjoy. It's totally picturesque.

Living in Los Gatos, we never locked our doors. It was safe. The schools were good. The people—and community—cared and looked out for one another. So when I brought my young boys to visit my Bay Area “home,” I was pleased to find not much has changed.

My sons and I stayed at the **Toll House Hotel**, located center stage in downtown. Upon arrival, we were given the delicious chocolate chip cookies I remember as a child, but the Toll House I once knew has come a long way.



Even though I spent many years living in “LG,” I never actually stayed at the Toll House. (However, visiting family always opted for the hotel.) So finally after many years, it was my turn to experience the Toll House.

Upon entering the gated property, you’re greeted with overly helpful concierge—and trust me, a mom traveling solo with two under two really appreciated the help. The lobby is warmly modern and renovated to perfection. If you want to dine in, the hotel’s VERGE Restaurant offers visitors a dine-in or room service option featuring farm-to-table fresh cuisine. (Yes, the kids and I ordered room service and yes it was delicious.)

A lobby floor opens up to a beautiful outside courtyard lined with comfy seating and decorative fountains. This is where my two year old ran around.



Our room was fantastic. They offered all the amenities a traveling mom would need: a pack-n-play, refrigerator, etc. Plus, the room was surprisingly kid friendly—there was not much my kids could destroy (LOL). We even had a fantastic balcony, big enough for a table and chairs to fresh air. The décor was A-list, and as a germophobic mother, everything was clean leaving me worry-free.

As a local and visitor, [the Toll House](#) is the premiere place to stay in Los Gatos...even my 5-month old felt at home. (See pic of Zachary smack in the middle of the bed.)

If you’re visiting LG, make sure to check out the Sunday Farmer’s Market (across the street from the Toll House), the famed Coffee Roasting Company, and Tangles Hair Salon (where I worked many moons ago in high school). These, in addition to the fabulous bars (CB Hannegan’s), restaurants (Steamers), and parks (Vasona).

While you’re in Nor Cal, you’ll want to visit the beach, right? Santa Cruz is awesome, and a mere 30 minutes from Los Gatos, but if you continue down Highway 1, you’ll make your way to Monterey, a quiet and adorable city by the sea.

Yes, Carmel and Big Sur are AMAZING, but I find Monterey particularly family friendly. You have the aquarium—which is totally cool, Cannery Row—a strip of touristy shops and restaurants—and the Pier, full of dozens of clam chowder options. Walking distance to the Pier is the [Portola Hotel & Spa](#), my top pick for accommodations in Monterey.

Centrally located, the AAA Four Diamond property is flawless, offering visitors a prime spot to sleep, stay, and relax.

The suite we enjoyed featured a fitting nautical theme, equipped with the highest-quality amenities, including hypoallergenic pillow toppers, duvets and pillows, 310 thread-count white linens, 42” flat-

screen televisions, and eco-friendly bath amenities. Plus, there's a free shuttle (actually a super cute trolley car) that takes you from the hotel to Cannery Row, so you can escape driving from place to place. As a kid, I remember renting the "family bikes" and riding up and down the Monterey bike path...a highly recommended activity unique to the area.



Finally, San Diego—the place I called home for two years of my life, and the place that will forever have a piece of my heart. I love San Diego. The community, the people, the beaches, the restaurants, the laid back sense of living...San Diego encompasses everything picturesque about Southern California.

Now an Arizonan, my family and I visit SD quite often. It's our regular escape and favorite destination. We try to stay in different areas every time to diversify every visit. Before kids, my husband and I often stayed at the [Hard Rock Hotel](#), located in the heart of the Gaslamp District: a fab hot spot for kidless couples. However, we now have babies on board, and so we decided to check out the [Hyatt Mission Bay](#).

Begin rave: it's awesome. It's perfect for families and ideal for kids.

It was the first time we attempted road tripping with both kids...a toddler and an infant; call us crazy...I know. However, it was a total success thanks to our amazing accommodations.

The property has a perfect location, overlooking Mission Bay. It's a tad removed from the hustle and bustle of Mission Beach, giving visitors an escape from the craziness of Belmont Park and beachside traffic. With that being said, the Mission Beach/Pacific Beach area is very accessible to the hotel...a nice walk or quick car ride.



The Hyatt Mission Bay is beautiful. The property is newly renovated and the rooms are nice in size. We were provided fantastic amenities, including a pack-n-play and refrigerator.

Our room was equipped with a beautiful balcony overlooking the pool and bay. Speaking of the pool...hands down the best SD has to offer: there are THREE on-site waterslides that splash into tropical lagoon-styled pools. My favorite part: the waterslides are for big kids AND little ones...my toddler (a cautious non-swimmer), loved going the slide (of course accompanied by an adult). It's a great property the whole family can enjoy in America's Finest City.

Xo~Nadine