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333 W. SANTA ANA BLVD. • SANTA ANA, CA 92701 • WWW.OCGOV.COM

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Contact: Ruth Wardwell
(714) 834-2053
ruth.wardwell@ocgov.com

Best of the Best – Kudos for OC Parks and Beaches!

The 2014 edition of [OC Weekly's "Best Of"](#) shines a spotlight on what many county residents already know: Some of the best parks and beaches anywhere are right here in Orange County.

Here's what OC Weekly had to say about these treasured County of Orange parks:

[Best Picnic Spot – Ralph B. Clark Regional Park](#)

"Nestled in West Coyote Hills, Ralph B. Clark Regional Park is a prime place to put down a blanket and picnic the day away. With 104 acres to play around in, there's no shortage of things to do. For relaxation, take to a bench and feed the ducks that serenely swim around the central lake. There's an interpretive center for the kiddos, too, and it's a lot cooler than what it sounds like. Inside are Ice Age fossils and other archeological finds. Named after the late OC supervisor, the park offers tennis courts, walking trails and other amenities. The entrance fee covers all that. Laying under the shade of towering trees in quietude, though? Priceless!"



[Best Archery Range – Mile Square Park](#)

"Training to be the next Katniss Everdeen in case of a Hunger Games-like dystopian future? Or maybe just the next medieval renaissance fair? Take your bow and quiver full of arrows to Mile Square Park's archery range! Reopened just last year, OC's largest outdoor facility of its kind allows you to enjoy the shade of a long, metallic canopy as you take aim at one of 24 shooting stations. Focus on the targets, perfect your stance, draw back and release with laser-like precision. Whether wielding a long, compound or recurve bow, this Fountain Valley archery range makes for a great (and free) place for practice to make perfect."



[Best Surf Spot – Salt Creek Point](#)

“Salt Creek Point gets the nod this year because, back in June, a sandwich-board sign was seen on the beach that read, ‘This area is for SURFING ONLY: No Stand-up Paddleboarding. Go North of Lifeguard Tower for Swimming, Wading and Bodyboarding.’ ‘Nuff said. This is a point break with mostly lefts that gets consistent waves in most swell directions. Salt Creek is excellent for watching surfers up close while in total safety. Because of the deep curve of the shore, spectators standing on the point are very close to the lineup. You’ll see lots of photographers there when the surf is big. No big surprise, but there are third- and fourth-generation surfers who’ve paddled out here since toddlerhood. So don’t be a [jerk]: Stay out of waves beyond your capability, respect the lineup and never drop in on anyone. If you’re not into lefts, you can paddle out farther north at Middles or Gravels, but you’ll have to contend with body boarders and the occasional international tourist from the Ritz in over their heads. If you don’t mind a hike, there’s free street parking to be had on Stonehill Drive.”



[Best Ex-Worst Beach – Poche Beach](#)

“Orange County has some of the cleanest beaches in the country – considering officials test our waters more often than many of their California counterparts do. But one beach that was chronically polluted was Poche Beach in San Clemente. It held a regular spot on Heal the Bay’s annual “Beach Bummers” list of California’s dirtiest beaches – until this year. Despite tougher testing standards this past year, Poche was also removed from the National Resources Defense Council list of repeat offenders. Credit is due to a lack of rainfall and city/county efforts to keep the beach and streams feeding Poche clean. You want out-of-the-box (cage?) thinking? Trained falcons were brought in to scare off pooping seabirds.”



“OC Parks and its employees are constantly striving to serve its more than 12 million annual visitors in the best ways possible,” OC Parks Director Stacy Blackwood said. “Part of that is continually working to maintain and improve County regional and wilderness parks and beaches, making them beautiful places to visit and providing unique amenities like the archery range at Mile Square Regional Park and the interpretive center at Clark Regional Park.”

For more information on all of Orange County’s parks, visit www.ocparks.com