

**Ritz-Carlton
Laguna Niguel, California**

The renowned resort, Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel, sits on the bluffs above Salt Creek Beach in Southern California. It offers not only luxury service and accommodations, but also ocean-inspired amenities and stunning views of the Pacific Ocean and the Southern Channel Islands, including Catalina.



In 2019-2020, The Acorn Group developed a series of interpretive panels positioned along the hotel’s walkway to the beach. They weave a story about this famed coastline—its historic landmarks, mariners past and present, and destinations that beckon locals and visitors alike.

The Acorn Group worked closely with the marketing staff of the Ritz-Carlton to identify messages that help the reader appreciate this site’s long-standing ocean-connected human history. We crafted a series of messages that reflect the following theme:

The Dana Point coastline has long attracted people. Mariners, merchants, surfers, and visitors past and present are all drawn to this special place, though for different reasons.

The panels feature an organic edge that emulates the ocean’s waves. Two of the panels serve an additional purpose. One sporting an oversized surfboard and the other the tail of a gray whale, these particular panels serve as selfie stations. The overlays work as photo backdrops and the panel copy includes a Ritz-Carlton hashtag for posting photos on Instagram.

Ocean Ambassadors

Many different marine mammals swim in these waters.

You are looking at the Catalina, or San Pedro, Channel, a deep sea channel between the mainland and the Southern Channel Islands. Ships and pleasure craft ply these waters. So do marine mammals. Sea lions and harbor seals often haul out on rocks and bays. Dolphins are fast swimmers and skilled surfers that occasionally venture close to the surf line. Whales cruise in deeper water.

Sometimes orcas make an appearance in the channel, jet black with white bellies. These large dolphins are either transients that travel alone or in a small group or members of the "A pod," a group that originates from the sea of Cortez in Baja north to the Gulf of the Farallones. Orcas breathe through one blow hole.

Dana Point boasts the highest concentration of endangered blue whales in the world. Between 1,000 and 2,000 of these massive (75-80') whales are sighted here between May and November.

Gray whales have one of the longest migrations of any mammal, traveling 9,000 - 13,000 miles each year between Alaska and Baja. Look for them in the channel between November and April.

Humpback whales are also frequent by their long flippers, tall pointy wings. They also migrate, with one population feeding in coastal waters from Washington to California. Look for them here between April and October.

These three whales breathe through two blow holes. Watch for breaching, ball slapping, spy hopping, and tail wagging behaviors.

The Perfect Wave

Sun-kissed and wave drenched, Dana Point has a rich recreational history.

Once a place of anchorage for tall ships, Dana Point assumed a recreation role by the late 19th century. By then, early plein air painters were capturing Dana Point's cliffs and seascapes on canvas. By the 1920s, vacationers and anglers were flocking to Dana Cove. By the 1930s, surfers discovered "Killer Dana," the cove's epic surf break. Today, Dana Point remains a destination, world renowned for its hospitality and ocean-inspired experiences.

Salt Creek is a hot spot for ocean sports. Surfers seek the world class waves while paddlers and anglers enjoy other activities. Even dolphins come here to play, catching and riding the waves.

Dana Point is also a hub of innovation. In the 1950s, Hobie Alter and Gordon Trukey "broke or got stung" at Dana Point, manufacturing lightweight foam surf boards. They revolutionized the sport of surfing. With his twin hulled Hobie Cat, Hobie also transformed the sport of sailing.