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Legoland lodging: A peek inside this affordable Carlsbad hotel

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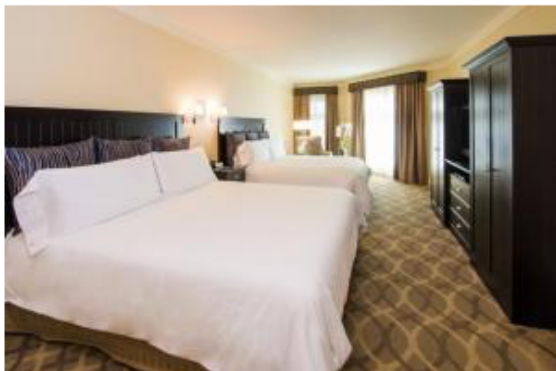


Carlsbad's West Inn & Suites offers modern boutique lodging, and free shuttle service to Legoland, as well as to the beaches nearby. (Photo: West Inn & Suites)

Inn-Escapable: West Inn & Suites

Whether you're heading for Legoland or Southern California beaches, Carlsbad's West Inn & Suites is a beautifully laid-out hotel, with a top-notch staff and rooms that can accommodate business travelers and families alike. It's a luxury hotel masquerading as something far less complicated, which helps keep the atmosphere relaxed and friendly.

The complimentary breakfast buffet is beyond good -- enjoy it in the dining room or, if the fog burns off early, at the tables surrounding the nearby pool and hot tub. A long, clean, beautiful beach is just a few blocks away, and the hotel provides as many beach chairs, coolers, umbrellas and boogie boards as you can carry -- or load into the hotel's shuttle. There's free shuttle service to Legoland as well.



Carlsbad's West Inn & Suites offers modern boutique lodging, and free shuttle service to Legoland, as well as to the beaches nearby. (Photo: West Inn & Suites) (Dustin Ellison)

Rooms: Our second-floor suite featured king-size beds and modern decor, with numerous extras, including two flat-screen televisions, a microwave and refrigerator, coffee maker, and free high-speed Wi-Fi. They offer dog- and cat-friendly rooms as well.

Zzzz's: We slept well on plush pillow-top mattresses, made up with down duvets and blankets, Egyptian cotton linen, and more pillows than we needed (I always bring an

extra one, just in case).

Splashes: The shower was large and comfortable, with an assertive showerhead.

Extras: My 8-year-old old absolutely loved the milk and fresh-made cookies, which appeared in the lobby each evening from 8 to 9 p.m. There's a business center on the second floor, plus two on-site restaurants, including the very good and family-friendly Bistro West, which serves pasta dishes, pizzas, burgers and salads and handles room service orders.

Details: Rooms are \$159 to \$339. 4970 Avenida Encinas, Carlsbad; www.westinnandsuites.com

-- Tony Hicks, Staff