

Dude Ranch at Kay El Bar

We just got in tonight from Kay El Bar and even though I was exhausted, dusty and I'm pretty sure smelly, I couldn't wait to make this video from our trip. It's set to the tune of Plain White T's 1,2,3,4, which matches perfectly the mellow, happy-go-lucky feel of the ranch. Even the cowboys got into the act on this one...

Photos are on their way. Hope you all had a wonderful Easter!

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Ten Tips for Staying at the Crystal Cove Cottages

10 TIPS WHEN STAYING AT CRYSTAL COVE COTTAGES



Our family has been trying to snag a coveted cottage at Crystal Cove for over two years. Booking one of these historic homes turns out to be a mix of planning, persistence and dumb luck. Over the Christmas break we were able to stay at Cottage #19A with friends staying in two other cottages. Now that we have our first vacation there in the books I feel obligated to share some tips on how to get a cottage and then how to make the best of your stay.

1.) **Booking the cottage** Because the cottages are state owned you need to book yours through Reserve America six months in

advanced. If you miss that window try to keep your eye out for cancellations (72 hrs in advance) by checking the website or better yet, set a request on the Reserve America's website that will notify you when a cottage becomes available during the preset times you select. Also, when the forecast says rain, you're more than likely to find 1-2 cancellations. Keep in mind in California, the rain never lasts more than a few hours.

2.) **Ruby's Shake Shack offers packed lunches "To Go."** The Shake Shack is perched right above the cottages and offers a specular view if you want to eat there, but we took our lunch "To Go." The nice people at Ruby's pack up our lunches into individual lunch bags for easy dining on the beach.



3.) **Bring games.** There is no Wi-Fi at the cottages and no TVs in the rooms. It's the perfect place to unplug and play some

old-fashioned board games or beach games like corn hole or smash ball. Don't forget your football!



4.) **Rent a bonfire from the Beachcomber.** The only way to have a fire on the beach at Crystal Cove is to rent one from the Beachcomber. They will set it up – even the chairs for up to 12 people– and get it roaring for your group. For more info on the go to their website ->> [here](#).



5.) **The coffee situation in the morning.** If you're like my husband and me, you need to know in advance the coffee situation on any trip. There is a small coffee maker in the room but you can go to the check-in counter in the morning and get a carafe filled with coffee – free of charge – to take to your room or if you're lucky enough to have a patio, enjoy your java there. You can also grab a coffee from Ruby's or the Tiki Bar at Beachcomber. Lots of options so you're good.



6.) **Bring extra blankets.** There are extra blankets in the rooms but it gets chilly at night at the beach. Each of us brought our own throw blanket to take outside and cuddle in and then use on top of the bed. We ALL used them.



7.) **Heaven for sea glass collectors.** Crystal Cove offers some of the most beautiful sea glass in SoCal. You ARE allowed to

collect: sea glass, driftwood (up to 50lbs.) but keep in mind you ARE NOT allowed to collect shells, sand, rocks, any living creatures, or anything out of the tide pools.



8.) **Hit Trader Joe's before checking in.** The Crystal Cove Trader Joe's is just minutes from the Crystal Cove Cottages.

Some of the cottages have kitchens – a few have stoves – but all have refrigerators. Grab pre-made salads, supplies for sandwiches and healthy snacks at TJ's. But keep in mind whatever you bring you'll have to carry to your cottage (or load on a cart).

9.) **Pack simply.** I can't stress this enough. You should not only embrace the laid-back vibe at the cottages but for practical reasons: simplicity is the key to packing for a stay at the cottages. Wear jeans more than once. Wear your hair in a ponytail. Don't bring a massive amounts of makeup. Pack small meals and snacks. Also, don't have a lot of loose items. Pack everything into bags or suitcases. You'll either need to transfer them onto the cart that takes you to your cabin or walk your things down from the parking lot. Either way, you want it all to be concise and secured.

10.) **Become an advocate for The Crystal Cove Alliance.** Their mission is to renovate and preserve for future generations the Historic District's unique cultural, natural and historic resources and to make these values available for the enjoyment and education of all. There is a wealth of information on their website ->> [here](#). This is a must-read before your trip!







Hometown Stay at the Hyatt Huntington Beach



You've probably heard the famous quote about traveling attributed to St. Augustine: "The world is a book, and those who do not travel only read one page." I then suppose that my kids and I traveling 17 miles from Orange to my hometown of Huntington Beach to stay at the Hyatt Regency would be like reading a book's "About the author" page.

I live for years behind the Hyatt – long before it was there – so I'm well versed in area around the resort. I remember watching it go up, hoping for a spot that locals could enjoy with our families. I believe they have achieved it!

My daughter, age 13 and son, age 11, and I stayed two nights and spent three activity-filled days at the resort. The casual

Spanish architecture with a piazza-like courtyard has kid-friendly restaurants, shops, a market that serves fresh sandwiches, salads and Starbuck's coffee and, in the middle, a fire pit lit at night for s'mores time.

Our suite was a good size for our family, complete with large soaking tub and a king-size bed for us to cuddle up in and watch a movie after a day at the beach or pool.

So let's talk about that. The kid pool area is called Slyder's Waterpark. It has three slides and a long pool down the middle with lots of spots to set up for a day of soaking up the sun. We scored a cabana and spent an entire day at the pool playing cards, eating lunch and enjoying our time together.

The next day we spent down on the beach. It was a short walk over the bridge to collect our complimentary beach chairs, towels and umbrella. We first hit Surf City Grocers and they packed up a nice picnic lunch in a cooler for us (with wheels!).



The unique advantage of staying in town for vacation is that you can rendezvous with local friends and family while you're "away." We all met down at the beach, and when our friends packed up to go home, we packed up and headed back to our room – but not before hitting the Jacuzzi – and showered up before having a nice dinner at Pete's Sunset Grill while watching the sunset.

A few things for the kids that make the Hyatt a great family spot:

- * Hyatt HB does offer a kids club. So if you want to spend some time in the resort's world-class spa, Pacific Waters, or head to the well-equipped on-site gym (choices, choices), the kids won't mind.

- * You can purchase s'more kits at Surf City Grocers and use them at one of the many fire pits around the property.
- * Enjoy Cosmic Sliding; Saturday nights at Sylder's Water Playground features a laser light show.
- * Rent bikes at Toes to the Nose in the courtyard piazza and take a ride down the path next to the beach.
- * Enjoy Dive in Movies at Sylder's Water Playground, Friday night at 7 p.m.
- * On Tuesday nights in the summer, Main Street hosts Surf City Nights. It's fun to check out the Farmers Market, and be sure to take advantage of dinner specials in the local restaurants then. They offer a kids zone, too!

If you're planning a stay-cation this summer, The Hyatt Regency should be on your short list of options. It sits on miles and miles of family-friendly beaches, and guests with kids get the feeling they are welcome there – which makes a parent's stay all the more enjoyable.



Put a bow on it! Hosting a baby shower for Monica

One fun part about being editor of OC Family magazine is I'm offered the opportunity to work with some of the most inspirational, talented women in Orange County.

On such person is our Art Director, Monica Garrett. I was

lucky enough to host her baby shower at my home AND work with designer Lindye Galloway on the design of the shower. The results were a wonderful feature story in the April issue of OC Family magazine.



Some of my favorite photos didn't make it into the story, but thought I'd give a peek here on my blog. All the photos were taken by the uber talented Ryan Haack.



My daughter posing with our rabbit, Peter
We handmade the tassels for the large round balloons. I bought a six-pack of the balloons at Party City and then we cut the tassels and tied them to the strings. They turned out perfect!



Tasseled extra large balloons
For the recipe for this Puppy Chow, [click here](#).



Strawberry Lemon Puppy Chow made with
Essential Oil



The backdrop was handmade by Lyndie and was
the perfect touch.



The cake was provided by Sweet and Saucy
You can order one of these or any other customized cake at
their website, Sweet and Saucy Shop,

Aloha from Disney's Aulani Resort in Hawaii

When I got the invite to come and cover the opening of the new section of the Aulani Resort in Hawaii, I knew I couldn't come without my kids. I had covered the opening of Aulani (see the coverage [here](#)) and PROMISED my kids I wouldn't come again without them.

I kept my promise.



The kids are here with me along with my big brother, Rob. We are having a blast and taking in every Hawaiian moment before we have to head back home tomorrow.



I'm sorta sad to hear J.D. Salinger died today



"I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life. It's awful. If I'm on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I'm going, I'm liable to say I'm going to the opera. It's terrible."

Holden Caulfield

Twenty five years after reading this from the pages of my brother's "The Catcher in the Rye," I still remember it. How do you like that? I had to look up the exact wording and all, but for the most part, it's stamped on my mind forever. I don't even know why exactly, maybe it is that voice, the way it was irreverent, bitchy, sad and rambling all at the same time—the way J.D Salinger told a story resonated with me like no other author.

"The Catcher in the Rye" was the first book I ever fell in love with; that I carried around with me everywhere; that I underlined phrases and remarks in order to memorized them so I could use them later on my friends as my own; that inspired me write stories down and relentlessly staple them to my "real" homework and turn them in to hapless English teacher.

J.D Salinger died today at the age of 91-freakin' years old. Not bad. Leave it to The Onion to write this in his honor "Bunch of Phonies Mourn J.D. Salinger." Seems appropriate.

(Image from The Changing Hands Bookstore.)

RIP John Hughes. We won't forget about you.



When I heard the news (on Twitter) that legendary writer and director John Hughes had died I immediately went on YouTube to watch clips and montages from the enormous amount of movies he is responsible for making.

I laughed as I watched them and I began to realize the impact his creative genius has had on my life from a young age – Breakfast Club, Sixteen Candles, Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, Pretty in Pink- and on through adulthood – Planes, Trains and Automobiles, Mr. Mom, She’s Having a Baby. Hughes’ list of classic movies is as long as your brother’s mullet in high school, and each is, if this is even possible, even more entertaining.

Starting with the perilous and often nauseating genre of teen movies, he was able to show us everything that was right about being a teenager. Everything that was fun, painful, weird, but ultimately good. Ultimately hopeful. His movies made us feel it was OK to be who we were because we saw a little bit of ourselves and our friends in his characters.

From The Breakfast Club:

Dear Mr. Vernon, we accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday in detention for whatever it was we did wrong, but we think you’re crazy to make us write an essay telling you who we think we are. You see us as you want to see us ... In the simplest terms and the most convenient definitions. But what we found out is that each one of us is a brain, and an athlete, and a basket case, a princess, and a criminal.

Does that answer your question?

Sincerely yours,

The Breakfast Club.

Hughes mastered the nearly impossible task of writing for teenagers without coming across like, “Hey, kids, look at me. I’m ‘Cool’ just like you.” Like in high school when your mom said you should buy a dress because it was “funky.” (OK,

thanks Mom, but “funky?” Nice try.) He never resorted to frat house raunchiness or lewd pranks, but frankly portrayed the undeniable truth that teenagers think and talk about, and sometimes even have, sex.

His movies felt authentic. From the dialogue (“I’m not THAT pristine.” “You mess with the bull you’ll get the horns.”) to the wardrobe (Judd Nelson’s trench coat and gloves; Anthony Hall’s yellow button-down shirt) to the music (Simple Minds, Kate Bush, Psychedelic Furs), it all felt real and spoke to us as teenagers.

In Hughes’ movies that traipsed around the land of grown-ups, he continued to glint sweet little moments of life as he took on adult lives with the same honesty. Optimistic and funny, he had a knack for telling stories about people who were far from perfect, but find their way to happiness – usually in a “What I was looking for was right here in front of me the whole time” epiphany.

One of my favorite scenes ever, is from the movie “Planes, Trains and Automobiles.” The tension, humor, and hostility in it makes it almost uncomfortable to watch. I love John Candy, and his portrayal of Del, the (secretly) widowed shower

curtain ring salesman is heartbreaking and inspiring all at the same time – not an easy feat to write.

(This video is from one of my YouTube Channels. I copied it and uploaded it last year a few times because it is one of my favorites, but Paramount keeps taking it down. Watch it while you can.)

Now, looking back on the spectrum of his work, I feel a surprising loss personally , but I also feel a great gratitude to have been the generation he shined his brilliant, hopeful light on.

We won’t forget about you, John Hughes.

Other things out there written about John Hughes:

“We’ll know when we get there” wrote “Sincerely, John Hughes.”

Dan Taylor wrote this on his blog.

This is a quick montage of his movies: John Hughes “Teenage Wasteland.”

Music critic Ben Wener about his impact on pop.