

LEUCADIA / ENCINITAS, CA

SoCal's Last Sleepy Surf Haven

MY HOOD

OWNING A HOME IN a Southern California beach town had always been a dream of mine. The reality? Nearly everything south of Point Conception has been subdivided and converted to accommodate the superwealthy, the ocean reduced to a backdrop for their evening chardonnay.

Ironically, most of us who actually spend time in the ocean have always settled for the life of a renter, willing to forgo a real estate portfolio for before- and after-work surf sessions. So when my wife and I moved from San Diego 25 miles up the coast to Encinitas six years ago, we figured we'd have to rent and assumed we'd always be renters in a town

known for its over-the-top multimillion-dollar beachfront property. Then we found Leucadia on the north end of town.

It just may be the last bastion of houses deemed by rich folk almost too funky to be worth fixing up.

There are few, if any, sidewalks in town, and I have a septic tank out back. Dogs run free, people keep chickens as pets, and there's a local flock of wild parrots. We feel a thousand miles away from the Botoxed folks up the hill in Encinitas Ranch.

The surfers here don't just drive around with boards strapped to the roofs of their cars; they surf. In fact, this is a blue-collar surf town: My neighbors shape boards for a living, and it's mostly firemen and carpenters bobbing around in the lineup at



\$646,840 \$ **106% HIGHER** ☀️ **263 DAYS**

Swami's, a right-hand point break, beneath the golden dome of local icon Swami Yogananda's self-realization fellowship.

But our favorite discovery so far has been the chicken soup at La Especial Norte right on the Coast Highway. It really can, as it says on the menu, bring you

back to life when you feel dead. During a particularly nasty flu bout, the matronly owner told us to come down with our biggest pot so that she could fill it up for us.

Sure, the houses in Leucadia might be a little pricey, but the surf will always be free. —BRAD MELEKIAN

FIVE MORE NEIGHBORHOODS

SEATTLE, WA

Despite a decade of buzz, **BALLARD** still feels unspoiled. The same dive bars host the same music; the tasty ex-brothel pizza joint still has tables open. And it's still got plenty of adventure: 16,000 square feet of climbing at Stone Gardens, and Olympic or Mount Baker national forest, each less than 70 miles away.

RENO, NV

Two hundred and fifty days of sunshine per year, skiing up the road, runnable whitewater in town, and an influx of creative types make Reno the new Boulder. One of its oldest neighborhoods, the **OLD SOUTHWEST**, is its best, with quiet, leafy sidewalks near an up-and-coming part of downtown (at California and Sierra).

PORTLAND, OR

MOUNT TABOR is a low-key neighborhood with acres of trails at the foot of a 600-foot volcanic peak. Right next door is Hawthorne, a funky district with trendy shops, good eats, and lively nightlife. Our advice: Call Mount Tabor home and consider Hawthorne the fun uncle.

ANCHORAGE, AK

Locals know they've got a good thing with a strong economy, a vibrant downtown, and wilderness so close they can literally catch a salmon dinner after work. Just west, historic **BOOTLEGGERS COVE** is a walk away from the action but has the 11-mile Coastal Trail in its backyard.

OGDEN, UT

Once abandoned for gated communities on the city's fringes, **DOWNTOWN OGDEN** is in the midst of a comeback. Buy a bargain Victorian near galleries and restaurants, and still take advantage of nearby bouldering and whitewater. A commuter rail whisks you to Salt Lake City (for your day job) in an hour; Snow-basin is half that by car.

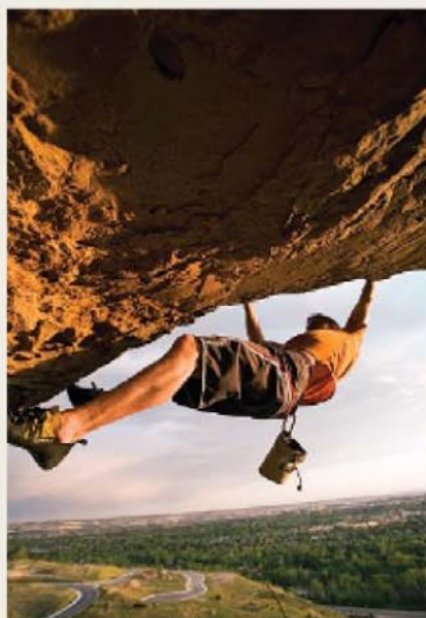
NORTH END / BOISE, ID

New West Done Right

12-HOUR TEST DRIVE

Boise may sprawl a bit, but the Boise you want has a pretty small footprint, full of bungalow charm, desert canyon ruggedness, renovated warehouses, quirky misfits, and exiled liberals from the countryside. **8 AM:** Wake up with a run on the Ridge to Rivers Trail System, and get lost on the 130 miles of paths that connect to the North End street grid in half a dozen places. The neighborhood is sandwiched right between trail-packed foothills and the Boise River. **11 AM:** Rent a cruiser and hit Goldy's for a huge breakfast before joining the locals at the Capital City Public Market on N. 8th Street. **3 PM:** For lunch hit Bar Gernika, where you might find yourself sitting next to the mayor — Boise's still a town where it's not uncommon to wait for the light next to the governor. **7 PM:** Return to North End for dinner at Bungalow and then a walk in Hyde Park. —RICK OVERTON

\$237,950 \$ **2% HIGHER** ☀️ **210 DAYS**



THIS PAGE FROM TOP: WOODS WHEATCROFT/FAIRBORN; MAPS THROUGHOUT PACKAGE; ALAN KIRKCH

★★ 2009 BEST PLACES TO LIVE ★★

THE 30 COOLEST NEIGHBORHOODS IN AMERICA

Men's Journal

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A Survival
Story You'll
Never Forget
**A Plane
Crash,
An
11-Year-
Old
Alone
In the
Wild**

**Rafael
Nadal
Fears
No One***

Inside the Mind
of the World's
Fiercest Competitor

**(except his mama)*

**The Last,
Craziest
Adventure**
One Man vs.
the Amazon

BEST SUMMER GEAR
FROM SUNGLASSES TO FLIP-FLOPS,
DUNE BUGGIES TO DIVE WATCHES
& THE PERFECT SWIM TRUNKS
PLUS WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR NEXT
MOTORCYCLE ADVENTURE