

Harbor Seals at the Children's Pool in La Jolla

— Carol Leigh

WHEN TO GO

Good all year. Mornings during a high tide would be best — fewer people around to disturb the seals and the waterline forces them higher up onto the beach.

WHAT TO BRING

200mm-400mm telephoto lens
Polarizing filter
Water, hat, sunscreen

PHOTO POSSIBILITIES

Animal photographs, both portraits and environmental shots



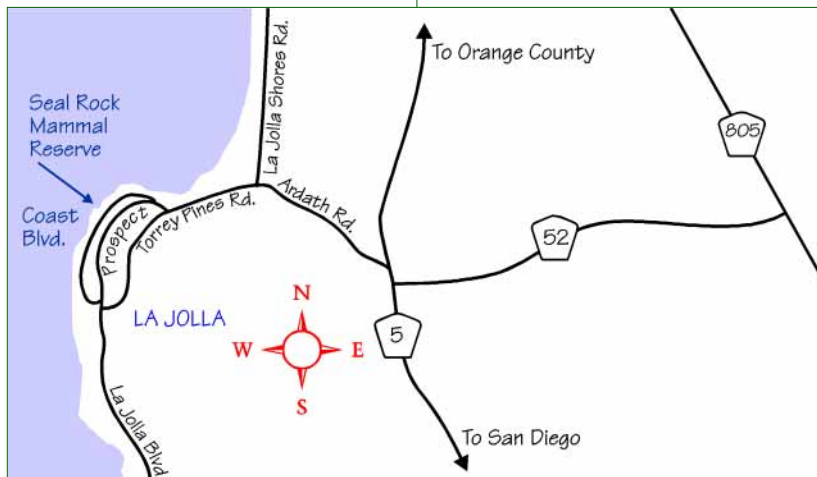
You can walk out onto the sea wall and photograph down at the seals, or you can walk out onto the sand to shoot.

When you can approach a colony of harbor seals and get within 15 to 20 feet, the photo opportunities become fantastic. And that's what you've got in La Jolla, where Children's Beach (also known as the Children's Pool) has become *the* place to meet if you're a harbor seal. You may see as many as 165 of them on this little beach; when I was there I saw about 60.

The cove is protected by a seawall that curves around the beach and out into the water. You can walk along this seawall and

look right down onto the seals lolling on the beach below you. You can take full-frame portraits or you could take decent shots of the seals as they lumber out of the water and onto the beach.

Just offshore is Seal Rock, where you can photograph more seals just lounging around, and perhaps an occa-





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Cute little guy, but they do bite! So keep your distance. You don't want to disturb them, and you want to keep all your fingers.



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sional sea lion. (For the marine mammalogically challenged among you, the difference between a seal and a sea lion is that a sea lion has ears. Its flippers are somewhat different, too, enabling it to sit more upright. Seals tend to simply roll around. If there's a sea lion out on the rock, you'll notice it immediately.)

The seals weren't disturbed by our presence, nor were they bothered by a little dog on a leash that someone had

brought out onto the seawall. When a kayaker took off from the opposite end of the beach, however, about half of them went bolting into the water.

Early morning is a good time to visit, before the crowds begin forming. (Tour buses now stop at this beach, it's become such an attraction.) Any lens from 100mm to 400mm will work well for you. I always recommend photographers use tripods, but on a crowded day, you'll have a difficult time setting one up on this narrow little walkway. A monopod would be ideal. Or even a clamp-pod, which you could affix to the railing lining the seawall.

Children's Beach, which has now become the Seal Rock Mammal Reserve, is located on Coast Boulevard, just south of Jenner Street, in La Jolla.

Pelicans, too . . .

Also be sure to check out the cliffs just north of the Children's Pool, where scores of pelicans congregate in the winter. Especially colorful in their breeding plumage, these large birds can be easily photographed if you've got a long (400mm+) lens. My longest lens right now is a 300mm, and it's a bit wimpy for this type of photography.