

California GIRL

Melissa d'Arabian shows us the best of San Diego.

When she moved to California from Seattle two years ago, Melissa d'Arabian reunited with her two best friends: her sister and the sun. The *Ten Dollar Dinners* star, her husband, Philippe, and their four children (Valentine, 8; Charlotte, 7; Margaux and Océane, both 5) live in Coronado—five miles south of San Diego, and just down the street from her sister, Stacy, and her five children. The two big families now spend a lot of time together outdoors. “We ride our bikes everywhere,” Melissa says. “We live out of our beach bags—they’re always packed. I use my car only to go to the grocery store.” The move also brought the Arizona native closer to her roots: “I grew up with Mexican food,” she says. “And here, we’re just minutes from the border, so we have a lot of it.” Melissa took us on a tour of some of her favorite spots in town.

Spreckels Park

Melissa brings her family to this park near her home for the summer concert series. The acts are varied (Neil Diamond cover band one night, '50s music the next), but the show is beside the point: “The kids run around, and we see everyone we know,” she says. “It’s like Mayberry.”

PHOTO: CORAL VON ZUMWALT; HAIR AND MAKEUP: HILDA LEVERGE

La Jolla Cove

About 10 miles north of San Diego is the popular coastal village of La Jolla, one of Melissa's favorite mini getaways. She says the town's hidden gem is the small beach at La Jolla Cove. “There's a spot right near the access stairs where you can see—and hear!—hundreds of seals sunbathing on the warm rocks.”



Sushi Ota

Melissa insists that San Diego's best sushi is in this strip-mall restaurant, which has been open for more than 20 years. She particularly loved the omakase menu (chef's tasting menu) prepared and served by Mr. Ota himself. “The food was so fresh, he cut the shrimp right in front of us while they were still alive.” 4529 Mission Bay Dr.; sushiota.com



Hotel del Coronado

The 125-year-old Hotel del Coronado has a rich history of celebrity guests and movie cameos (it appeared in the Marilyn Monroe film *Some Like It Hot*). Melissa makes cameos there, too. “I just have lunch there,” she says. “You go for a burger and feel like you're staying in a \$700 room.” The spa and salon are also available to nonguests. 1500 Orange Ave.; hoteldel.com



El Zarape

There's no shortage of Mexican restaurants in San Diego, but Melissa swears by this one. It's known for tacos—particularly the popular battered fish tacos, priced at just 99 cents each—but Melissa's go-to dish is the chile rellenos. *Two locations;* 619-692-1652



Extraordinary Desserts

You wouldn't think a bakery specializing in flower-decked cakes would have a late-night scene, but this spot gets packed with an after-dinner crowd. Most people go for the rich chocolate cakes; Melissa prefers fruit-based confections like the lemon bar: “My husband loves lemon desserts, so these bars are a real treat.” *Two locations;* extraordinarydesserts.com

