

Upcoming Surf Del Mar: A four-day festival of swell times and good vibes



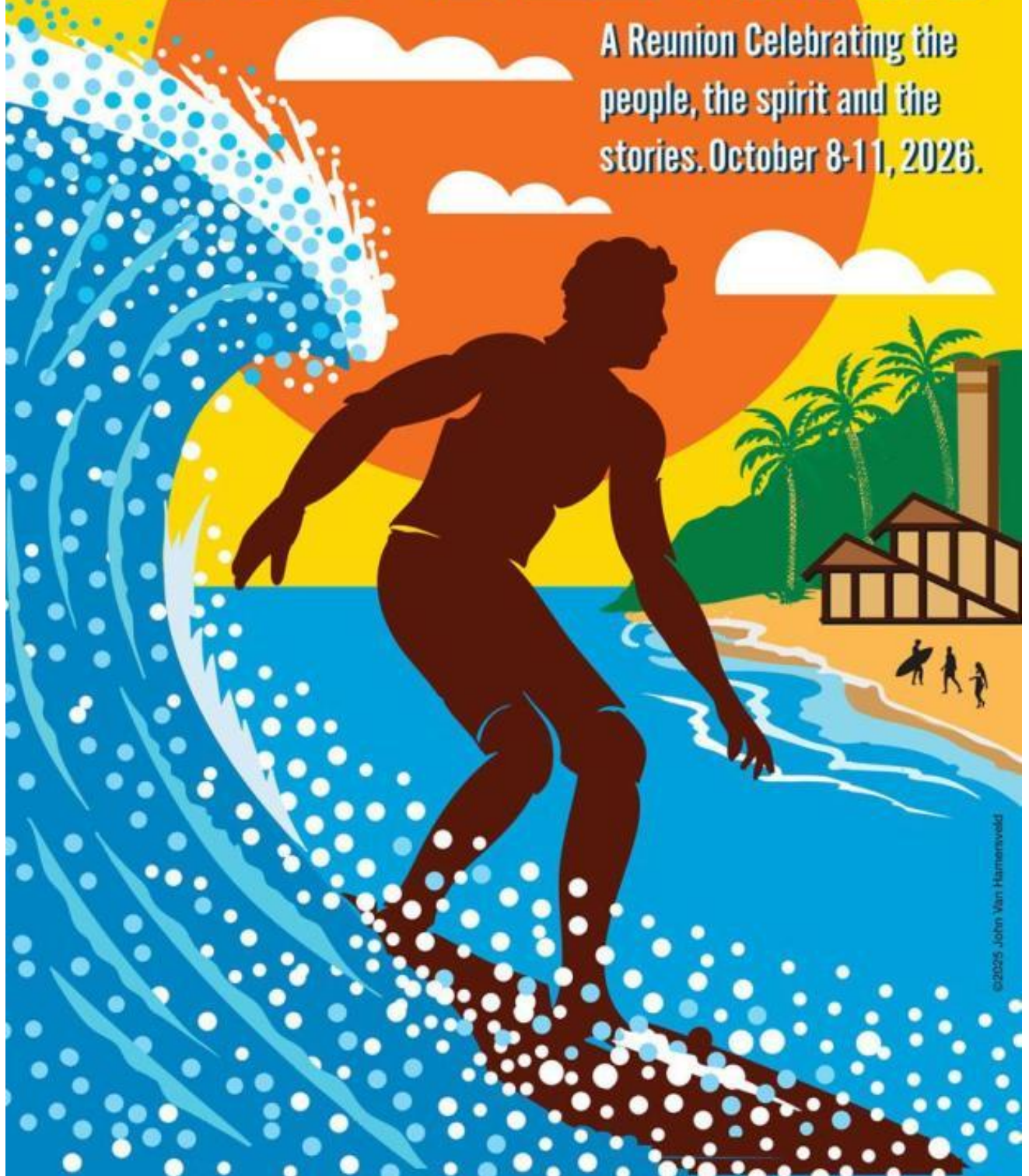
John Van Hamersveld signing a Surf Del Mar poster. (Courtesy of Alida Van Hamersveld)

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SURF DEL MAR

A Reunion Celebrating the
people, the spirit and the
stories. October 8-11, 2026.



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Whether you're a surfer dude sporting a custom board, "huarache sandals, and a bushy, bushy, blond hairdo" (as per The Beach Boys' lyrics), an environmentally-conscious steward of our oceans, or just a seeker of solace from the sound of the crashing waves along the shore, then the inaugural Surf Del Mar Festival will pull you in, hook, line, and sinker like a swirling rip tide.

From Oct. 8 through Oct. 11, the charming seaside town with a world-renowned surfing heritage will be transformed into a vibrant community gathering place for surfers and beach enthusiasts, musicians, artists, writers, movie buffs, marine advocates, and historians of all generations.

"Nothing like this has ever happened before," says Surf Del Mar Festival Co-Founder and Del Mar Historical Society Events Chair Susie Stevenson. "We want it to be a celebration that everyone will remember."

Pleasantly surprising, every event, like the peanuts at a bar lounge, is complimentary and open to the public.

The idea for this four-day hoopla that Stevenson jubilantly dubs "a surfer's reunion" began about a year ago when brainstorming with James Gooding, vice president of the Del Mar Historical Society and festival co-chair, whom she affectionately calls, "the roving ambassador of surfing goodwill," to create an original and exciting event for their organization.

The idea that started as a ripple appealed to Stevenson, a third generation Del Martian, who grew up immersed in the beach culture, and married a surf writer, enthusiast and board tester, quickly becoming part of a coastal enclave where surfing was not just a sport—rather a way of life. The concept soon caught a wave and city officials, organizers, and long-time denizens hopped on board to celebrate this deep-rooted Del Mar legacy.

"Surfing is so important to this community," Stevenson says. "Even people who don't surf understand that."

She calls the region in the early '50s and '60s, "the Silicon Valley of the surfing world," that stretches from La Jolla through Del Mar and north into Orange County, "where the coastline became a creative hub for surfboard shapers, photographers, artists, clothing manufacturers, filmmakers, and writers."

The festival will also pay tribute to the late Don Hansen, whose eponymous surf shop that he founded 65 years ago in Cardiff shaped the local beach town and made him one of the coast's most respected and legendary surfers and businessmen.

The festival will include oral histories, storytelling sessions, and panel discussions where surfers of all ages can connect and share treasured memories. One particular highlight will take place on the lawn near the Del Mar train station, where local surfing legends will gather to swap nostalgic tales reminiscent of the weekly surfer meetups that became a beloved tradition, and relive the glory days of big waves and big wavy hair.

David Cline, San Diego State University professor and notable raconteur, has helped preserve cherished stories through documented oral histories of local surfers and their contributions to the SoCal surfing culture.

"What we hope younger generations take away is an appreciation for these stories," Stevenson says. "They're part of who we are."

The lollapalooza schedule of events reflects the diverse and creative currents that flow through the surf scene. The Surf Writers Book Fair on Saturday and Sunday, hosted at L'Auberge Del Mar, will feature author talks and book signings by popular long-standing surf writers, photographers, and historians, including surf photographer Jeff Divine, world champion surfer turned motivational speaker Shaun Tomson, photographer and author Todd Glaser, and legendary surf writer and editor Chris Ahrens, whose raw and authentic work chronicles the colorful surfing history of Southern California.

Art fans can leisurely stroll along the adult art walk exhibit set to open the festivities Thursday evening at the Canyon View Garden Patio in Del Mar Plaza, while student artists from Torrey Pines High School, Canyon Crest Academy, and Earl Warren Middle School will showcase surf-inspired works Sunday afternoon at L'Auberge Del Mar.

Moviegoers can congregate at Friday's film festival with screenings of a variety of features, including Shaun Tomson's nostalgic *Busting Down the Door* revisiting the early surfing days. Melophiles will be treated to sets by

acclaimed guitarist (and avid surfer) Peter Sprague also during opening-night festivities, and live performances by the beloved local favorite vintage rock band, the Mar Dels on Saturday.

Then festival goers can dive into a truly iconic surf experience with a community showing of the classic surf flick *The Endless Summer* splashed on a jumbo screen at Powerhouse Park Saturday night. Adding to the nostalgic vibe is the official Surf Del Mar poster designed by legendary graphic artist John Van Hamersveld, (the original creator of *The Endless Summer* poster) with signed and numbered collector editions available to purchase as well as other assorted merchandise like T-shirts and beach towels.

A celebration of notable female surfers, scientists, authors, and environmental advocates during one of the festival's signature events aptly titled, "Women on Waves" will take place on Sunday at St. Peter's Parish Hall. The program, (in partnership with the California Surf Museum in Oceanside), which pays tribute to the growing influence and inspiration of women throughout this sphere, features such guests as world junior champion surfer Victoria Duprat and her mother, Valerie Duprat, a research scientist and respected surfboard shaper—an electrifying mother-daughter collaboration within the surfing sisterhood.

While the festival celebrates surfing's glorious heyday of the past, organizers also have their eyeballs on its future. A climate and sustainability symposium gathers researchers from the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, conservation advocates, along with representatives from private surf-industry companies committed to sustainable practices.

Speakers include environmental leader Serge Dedina, executive director of WILDCOAST, an international team dedicated to the conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems.

"Climate has such an impact on waves, water, and the sport itself," Stevenson says. "The ocean is rising. Beaches are eroding. Climate change affects surfing more than people realize."

The goal is two-fold: conserve and protect the coast while celebrating the culture that's inextricably meshed with it.

One of the crown jewels of the festival is the Wave Crest Woodies Parade which offers a nostalgic glimpse into the epic era of SoCal surfing. Vintage wood-paneled station wagons—the original surf culture mobiles—will cruise through town on Saturday before parking near the Del Mar train station for public display.

Whether you're a hardcore surfer or a surfing kook, a history buff, an environmental activist, or simply get stoked by the roar of the ocean, Surf Del Mar offers four days packed with totally rad stories, memories, and community spirit. "Surf's up, everybody!" Stevenson says. "Come out and have some fun!"

For schedules, sponsor and individual donations, and festival information, visit SurfDelMarFestival.com. Or for volunteer opportunities contact Susie Stevenson at goodstevenson@yahoo.com.