

Get to Know SOCO

Tired of the same old haunt? Discover a new scene to shop, eat and stroll—any day of the week



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Hyland Avenue
Costa Mesa, CA

SouthCoastCollection.com

IF YOU'RE ANYTHING LIKE ME, YOU MAY HAVE PASSED THE OVERSIZED, TOWERING S-O-C-O LETTERS OFF THE 405 COUNTLESS TIMES and heard buzz of the place from your stylish friends, but something still stopped you from exiting the 405 near the South Coast District to check it out. Could the four or more stores visible to the eye really be worth your time? And why go—what exactly is the place? Shopping, a hangout, design stores?

Well, you may kick yourself once you finally decide to stop by. I know I felt a certain sense of rue for not checking it out sooner once I ventured in to peruse the progressive shopping space spanning 20 acres and over 300,000 square feet of stores (way beyond what you see from the freeway).

The officially titled South Coast Collection—SOCO to regulars—is exploding with some of the most current stores, freshest restaurants and upscale event venues in Orange County. The Collection is the “style” child of the owner and developer of BURNHAM USA; Burnham-Ward Properties who have spent millions giving SOCO its fresh, progressive identity and carefully crafted spirit of community.

Just one quick visit to SOCO and you’ll begin to see the appeal: from large, luxe, unique home design stores (Fixtures Living, Scalamandre, tpt home, Stark) to indulgent hair and body boutiques such as 88 Orange Home and Body Products and Paul Mitchell The School. SOCO is a synergistic neighborhood of stylish shops that are complemented by a sustainable landscape of Zen gardens, succulents, olive trees and bamboo filling open spaces. Within the eco gardens lies a hub of quirky specialty boutiques that make up the diverse OC mart MIX. Add this all together and you have a trendy trifecta of intriguing, original and green shops to meander through.

The MIX was inspired in part by visits to The San Francisco Ferry Building, and you’ll undoubtedly recognize the open, warehouse-like-feel and exposed plan paired with a touch of Fred Segal-flavored brands. The space offers something for everyone with stores such as Alexander Gray (optical), Eva’s Trunk-Denim Bar, Nirve Bikes, Milk and Honey Baby, Stoned Jewelry, Derringer’s Cycle (motorbikes for the most discerning riders), the organic-only Portola Coffee Lab hangout and We Olive & Wine Bar.

When I visited SOCO, I saw all walks of life—from plugged-in businesspeople to indie art types to moms with strollers and shoppers on a mission. The wide range of visitors is easily understandable as the very regional South Coast District center distinguishes itself even further with showrooms of many exclusive wholesalers, including the likes of 88 Orange and the Pal + Smith Design Lab.

On top of the myriad shopping opportunities, you’ll find a park-like setting, complete with a bocce court that invites family fun. Or, check out the Farmer’s Market any given Saturday for a different, but equally engaging, type of shopping. O

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It’s worth noting that the center is also overflowing with events, each with its own eclectic flavor. The locale serves as a venue for everything from fashion/charity shows, a SOCO Artist Walk, children’s concerts, foodie fests during the holidays, movie nights, food truck visits, weddings, and other informal weekly happenings such as Taco Nights (Thursday) and live music in the coffeehouse and wine bar (visit SouthCoastCollection.com and TheOCMartMix.com for full event listings).

Finally, if you find SOCO is your kind of place, you might also want to keep your eye on some of the other progressive properties owned by Scott Burnham, now the largest owner of individual commercial properties in our local Newport/Mesa community (behind the Irvine Company). And be on the lookout for this innovative company’s latest local endeavors: the new Black Starr and Frost Jeweler (America’s Oldest Jewelry Store) on Bayside Drive and the new Greenleaf Café coming soon on 17th Street, which are sure to possess the creative characteristics unique to the Burnham brand. O

