

# Diving Redondo Beach - Submarine Canyon



Redondo Canyon at Veteran's Park is unique in so many different ways, and always comes through when all other dive sites are undivable. Why do so many instructors choose the Redondo Submarine Canyon for checkout dives, for night dives, for navigational dives?

There is ample parking and overall the facilities are excellent. In addition to the clean restrooms, there are showers and picnic facilities at adjacent Veteran's park. If you don't feel like bringing your own and using the picnic area, you can take a very short stroll to the north and partake in just about any food choice you may want at the many restaurants and fast food windows at the Redondo Pier.



Surf is usually very calm here, partly due to the proximity of the Submarine Canyon offshore, as well as the harbor breakwater to the north and a jetty to the south. It is easiest to start your dive directly out from the showers at the bottom of the steps from the south corner of Veteran's Park.

Once you make your way through the relatively short shore break the bottom drops away at a 45° angle from approximately 35 feet less than 100 yards out to 80 or 90 feet. Once out to that depth, the slope is milder and takes a gradual pace to several hundred feet. Make sure you stay to the south. You do not want to wander into the harbor mouth or under the pier. It is illegal to dive either place, and extremely dangerous to venture near the harbor mouth. There is a large amount of boat traffic year-round and especially so during summer.

The easy surf entry, and calm sandy bottom is a great introduction to the underwater world for the new student diver. You will find multiple classes on any given weekend morning. Though don't let this beginner site fool you. I am always amazed at what I find during a dive here. I have never gotten out of the water and said, "That was boring". I always find a new or intriguing encounter.



The sand holds sand dollar beds and sea pens that I love to play with (okay, maybe I am easily amused, but I like to watch them wave at me and then retreat quickly if touched.) Schools of fish, sometimes quite large, swim in from the canyon and will move into the shallows at times. The large wide open expanse of sand is readily used for navigational classes. You will sometimes find grid patterns in the sand left by a previous class to be used at a later time. Many instructors may leave a dive float in place to use later in the afternoon to use with a different class. Please do not disturb those items you may come across.

For the more experienced diver and definitely the non-student, venture into the **canyon**. You will know when the canyon starts by the sharp downward slope of the sand and the darker the water gets. On the slope you will find debris that washed up from the canyon from storms and also debris that slips off the slope from thoughtless beachgoers.

As a night dive this is one of the area's best. The invertebrates really come out in the dark. Look for small octopus, even more crabs and odd small fish. During the winter and early spring, squid spawn here at night.

Crabs can be found crawling around on the sand up and down the slope. Look closely for sarcastic fringeheads, you will find them living in large shells, bottles and other open mouthed debris. They are aggressive and will confront you if you impose yourself on their home. Bring along a plastic or metal mirror (no glass) and try showing the fish its reflection. It will think it is another fish moving in and will react. You can see first hand how the underwater world works.

## **Dive Spots At A Glance**

**Location:** North of the Redondo Beach Pier and the bottom of the steps just off from Veteran's Park.

**Access and Entry:** Large parking lot, moderate to easy stairs to easy beach entry.

**Skill Level:** All with beach diving experience in small surf to the lip of the canyon. More experience needed into the depths of the canyon.

**Depths:** 15 to 40 sandy bottom, 40 to 80 on canyon wall. Deeper beyond.

**Snorkeling:** Poor

**Photography:** Good for macro

**Hunting:** Poor

**Facilities:** Restrooms, showers, metered parking on street and parking lot. Restaurants nearby.

**Conditions:** (310) 379-8471

## **Fishing in the Canyon**

The deep-water of **Redondo Submarine Canyon** hugs the pier rather close, making the area uniquely convenient for **fishing**. While the pier has long been deemed the mackerel hotspot, expert anglers know the deep water is home to several different species. Smaller baitfish attract barracuda at night and yellowtail in early fall.

## Diving out of Veteran's Park, Redondo Beach Pier

Many LA County divers are likely familiar with Veteran's Park and the offshore Redondo Submarine Canyon, as it's a popular spot for training entry-level scuba students. The canyon is also a great location for more advanced classes.

After a short swim you drop down to a 25-30 foot sand bottom and move west. As you reach a depth of about 35 feet, you'll start down a rather steep slope to about 75-80 feet, which quickly drops to below 100 feet and then to the abyss. This is the Redondo Submarine Canyon.

While the sand leading out to the canyon edge has a lot of marine life, most divers like the deep mud flats. Long before "muck diving" became popular with photographers at some fancy tropical resorts, southern California divers were visiting sand and mud flats at local submarine canyons. Just as with these resort destinations, our muck has much to offer in the critter department.

Look for small creatures like a camouflaged octopus or brightly colored nudibranchs, which can be spotted year-round. In late fall through winter months, lucky night divers can witness market squid mating in massive numbers. It's been described as a blizzard of frantic activity. After the mating the seafloor will be carpeted in large clusters of white egg cases — and dead or dying adult squid, who kick the bucket shortly after they do the deed. Whether it is squid season or not, this place is an excellent night dive with a lot of small animals to be seen.

One creature that can be found on nearly every dive, day or night, is the massive sheep crab. Its clumsy motions are comical to observe but watch out for the claws! Their pinch is insanely strong. The sheep crabs here are the biggest you'll find anywhere along our coast. Some of them measure three feet across!

There is also no shortage of fish life. Keep an eye out for the long and slender pipefish. They blend in with the bottom. To come across the territorial sarcastic fringehead is a real treat. This small fish usually cowers down in its home of a large empty mollusk shell, but if challenged will sometimes come out in a fantastic threat display.

Other vertebrate animals here include juvenile black sea bass and small rockfish. Look up every once in a while and you might spot a passing school of pelagic bonito.

Water clarity here is not always the best. When the surf is low, 15 feet of visibility is about normal. That said, days of 30 even 40 feet have been reported. When you have days of good vis come up off the bottom and you'll notice that the bottom actually has an interesting contour of small hills and valleys.

This is a cold-water dive. Something about the canyon traps and holds cold water that consistently hovers in the mid to low 50s. Dress appropriately.

One of the easiest things about the dive is navigation. Head west out to deeper water and east to head upslope. A good dive strategy, by the way, is to make the deep portion of your exploration first and then head up into the shallows for your safety stop. The bottom even in 15 feet holds a lot of interesting creatures. From the stairs, head out and north along the slope. This is the most interesting portion of the canyon. But stay clear of the pier, as it is illegal to dive under or close to the pilings.

Surf conditions here are generally milder than surrounding beaches. An excellent live-view webcam can be found at [redondo.org/depts/hbt/harbor/web\\_cams/piercam.asp](http://redondo.org/depts/hbt/harbor/web_cams/piercam.asp). For more scientific reports check out [surflife.com](http://surflife.com) or [surf-forecast.com](http://surf-forecast.com). And to avoid the frequent wind chop, dive first thing in the morning.

Beyond the great diving, Veteran's Park has a lot to offer. There is a well-kept bike/walk path along the beach and the park has plenty of nice picnic spots, or you can enjoy a sunset dinner on the pier. Divers return to this dive site time and time again. With all it has to offer, above and below water, it is easy to understand why.