

Image Travel:

The Best way to Get From Here to There

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Getting there, it's been said, is half the fun.

Presumably, whoever said this doesn't drive home through the Sorrento Valley merge every day. But being on the road is a staple of Southern California culture, and some drivers have decided that getting there can be much more than just half the fun. It can be one hundred percent adrenaline-filled excitement, when you're hitting the highways and byways in vehicles that are a high-octane blend of personality and power, style, and sophistication.

Driven by a desire to distinguish themselves from everyone else on the road, some Southern Californians have concluded that it's not just about getting where they're going anymore, but how they're getting there. Whether on two wheels or four, on workdays or weekends, they're finding exciting alternatives to more ordinary forms of transportation. They're re-discovering the pure pleasure of getting from here to there in and on vehicles that are so eye-catching they're literally stopping traffic.

Whether you want to live like a high-roller behind the wheel of a premium performance vehicle, or cruise the county's back roads aboard a high-end hot rod, here are a few new ways you can get your kicks on Route 56, or anywhere else in Southern California.

For motorcyclists, one of Southern California's most appealing distinctions is the diversity of its landscape. Beautiful beaches, quiet backcountry mountain towns, and the desolate desert floor are separated by just a few miles, and connected by roads that tempt riders to find new ways to reach their favorite destinations, and discover new ones.

Fueled by exposure on the Discovery Channel's *American Chopper* and *Biker Build Off*, there's a growing interest in custom-built choppers. The classic American hot rod is enjoying a renaissance, and the brand that's blazing the trail is American IronHorse motorcycles.





With wild paint schemes in bold colors over stretched gas tanks, raised handlebars reaching out to long forked tubes and billet wheels, and low profile saddles over a fat back tire, American IronHorse motorcycles put their riders at the center of attention. This is a class of bike so distinctly designed, it's simply impossible not to notice.

Predictably, IronHorse is creating quite a buzz on the street. "You stop at a traffic light, and people roll down their windows and talk to you," says Tim McElheney, Assistant General Manager of San Diego IronHorse. "I've had seven conversations while stuck in traffic. It's amazing!" The attention these bikes generate for their buyers is certainly part of the appeal. They turned heads at the beach this summer. People were doing double takes at traffic lights. Girls were sneaking shots with camera phones. "People want something that not everyone else has. You walk out of a place where there's seven Harley Fat Boys. Which one's yours?" McElheney asks rhetorically. "People are tired of that. They're moving toward custom-production motorcycles. With an IronHorse, you know which one is yours."



You'll never confuse an IronHorse with a more conventional street bike or cruiser. This is part of the reason buyers are embracing the brand,

which was established in 1995, but came to San Diego just this spring. There's a uniqueness to each of the models in the product line, with a multitude of customizing options that give the owner an endless array of options to reflect their own personality. The Texas Chopper is the model of choice, outselling the others six to one.



In the late Sixties, the film *Easy Rider* helped cultivate the image of the chopper as one of the defining symbols of non-conformist counterculture, and its riders as rebels. But in the 21st century, the image of the chopper, and the person who owns one, has definitely evolved. When a rider of an American IronHorse chopper removes his helmet, he's more likely to look like a banker than a biker. "The demographic has changed dramatically," says Mike Shannon, General Manager of San Diego IronHorse. "Now they're doctors and lawyers and rich guys." Shannon says the average customer in the market for one for these bikes is an affluent baby boomer, generally age 45 and older. Small business owners, corporate executives, and other successful white collar professionals have bought from San Diego IronHorse since they opened their Kearny Mesa showroom.

In American IronHorse, this generation of biker is finding a vehicle that combines a high performance ride, an unmistakably unique look, and gives its riders a feeling of freedom and a sense of adventure. Mike Shannon describes the sensation he feels as a rider, and one that's frequently reiterated by his customers. "When you get out there and ride, all your senses are in full use and you're just sort of 'in the moment.' It's the sensory impact you get when you're blasting down the road." In addition to the rush of adrenaline, he also describes the experience as a very therapeutic release for the rider. "The noise, the wind, the power, and the acceleration forces you to empty your mind. It's a wonderful stress relief tool."



Hopping on a cherry chopper also gives its owner a connection to the days they first saw Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper head out on the highway in *Easy Rider*. "The whole chopper craze takes them back to when they were young," says Shannon.

Favored weekend treks include beachfront rides on Pacific Coast Highway to Oceanside, through the foothills up to Lake Henshaw and Palomar Mountain, or cruising the boulevards in Mission and Pacific Beach. San Diego IronHorse also schedules group outings for its owners. There's a social connection developing among local IronHorse riders. "This is a Mecca for motorcycles," Shannon says, citing the mild year-round weather conditions that make almost every day a perfect opportunity to ride and relax.

But perhaps you'd like a little more rubber on the road. Maybe the chopper isn't the ideal vehicle for transporting you and a date to a lavish social affair, or making an impression on your business associates. Your preference might be to arrive at your next corporate conference in a Bentley Continental GT, or toss the keys to your Lamborghini Gallardo to the valet at your favorite restaurant. You'd love nothing more than to feel the rush of power cruising up the coastline in your 400-horsepower Ferrari 360, but the \$176,000 price tag represents a slight obstacle for you.





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Join the Club.

Membership in Luxury Toy Club presents a new and much more pragmatic way for you to drive your dream car - several of them in fact. You might opt for the Aston Martin to show clients around America's Finest City, or drop the top on your classic Corvette convertible for an afternoon ride in the sun.

Luxury Toy Club makes the fantasy possible, and makes the impractical practical. It enables members to choose from a variety of high performance and luxury vehicles without incurring the expense of personal ownership. There are no maintenance or insurance costs. You don't take a hit on depreciation and you don't pay for storage. It's a premise that appeals to people who want to look like a million bucks behind the wheel, without having to spend several hundred thousand for the privilege.

San Diegans are joining Luxury Toy Club at one of three levels, depending on which cars they're interested in driving. After paying the initial membership fee, they have access to a number of the world's finest luxury and performance vehicles, and consent to pay a daily-use fee a minimum of fifteen times a year. Co-owner Robert Mackey describes the concept behind the club. "We like to think we're like a combination of a country club with fractional ownership, and a high-end real estate timeshare."

The essence of Luxury Toy Club is giving members access to extraordinary vehicles when they want them, without the liabilities of full-time ownership. Usage fees to club members can be less than a third of what daily-use luxury car rental companies charge.

Members are split into two basic profiles. "Car nuts," says Mackey, who know all the engineering and performance details about the cars, and people who don't know what's under the hood, but they love how it feels to be in the driver's seat. They don't know or care about the history of the car. They just know that it looks cool, goes fast, and handles great. And they know they get a lot more attention when they're in it."

Recreational destinations for LTC members include weekend trips to coastal or desert resorts and getaways to Beverly Hills, where their cars may often outshine the others along Rodeo Drive. A Luxury Toy Club driver may also choose to reserve a car for entertaining or transporting a potential client, or just for the impact and attention it attracts when the member arrives at a social function. Mackey calls it "valet presence."

"The most common situation, Mackey says, is that we bring the car to their house on Friday evening, and then pick it up from their office Monday morning so they can maximize their fun on the weekend, but still drive to the office and show it off Monday morning." (After spending the weekend putting your Ferrari through its paces, would you be anxious to return it on Monday?)



Photography By Tim Kellogg



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Just like its membership ranks, the LTC fleet of brand new or very low mileage vehicles, continues to grow. "As our membership grows, we add new vehicles. The members help us determine what the vehicles are; they literally get a vote for new vehicle acquisition." Currently, Mackey and his business partner are torn between a new Ferrari convertible and a yet to be released Bentley Flying Spur as their next purchase. "There's been a lot of debate about which one to get," Mackey says. "Frankly, I'd like to get both." Join the club.

Many clients have already owned ultra luxury cars, but prefer to access one on an as-needed basis. Robert Mackey quoted one former luxury car owner as saying, "I don't

have to service the car or make

car payments. I just get to have fun. I've owned different exotic cars. I don't really have room in my garage for one sitting all the time. I'm only driving it 30 days a year, but I'm paying for it 365 days a year." The driver asks hypothetically, "How can I do this so I'm only paying for the 30 days I'm using it?" The answer, of course, is membership in Luxury Toy Club.

Just like the owners of IronHorse motorcycles, members of Luxury Toy Club have often been the focus of impromptu paparazzi. Mackey says he's had his picture taken "thousands of times" while he's been delivering his company's Lamborghini. Maybe next time he'll be driving a Bentley sedan or a Mercedes Benz convertible, but it's highly doubtful he'll be any less conspicuous.

Whether you're grinding through gridlock, or taking the road less traveled, there are exhilarating options to take you from Point "A" to Point "B", or from Point Loma to Point Mugu.

Owners of IronHorse motorcycles and members of Luxury Toy Club have discovered the vehicles that separate them from the pack, and provide them with a sense of individuality and distinction on crowded California motorways today and for years down the road.

