Charming, Eclectic Old Towne Orange

The Historic Orange Circle, Orange CA

Billed as the “Antique Capital of California,” Old Towne Orange beckons visitors from all over suburban Orange County and Southern California to stroll its charming streets and sample its enticing wares. This charming neighborhood encompasses a full square mile of award-winning restaurants and cafes, coffee houses, eclectic galleries and gift shops, overflowing with finery — both contemporary and antique — and is just a short drive from the desert.

Located near the junction of Interstate 5 and the 22 Freeway, Old Towne Orange is just minutes from Disneyland and other popular area attractions. At the very heart of this unique, energetic community is Plaza Park, the centerpiece of the Plaza Historic District. The Plaza Square — which is, in reality, oval in shape — is one of the few places left in California around which one can drive. The centerpiece of this pristine parcel of real estate is a decorative fountain dating from 1937 and an array of finely manicured trees, shrubbery and beautiful rose gardens. Four memorial plaques adorn the fountain and the park forms a rotary from which Chapman Avenue and Glassell Street radiate outward in four directions.

The park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and is the oldest dedicated parkland in Orange County.

The City of Orange began in 1871, when two lawyers, Alfred Beck Chapman and Andrew Glassell, were deeded the land as payment for services, says Douglas Westfall in his A Tour of Old Towne Orange. The town was originally called Richland, and it’s unclear as to why the city ultimately assumed the name of Orange given that orange trees did not arrive in the area until the mid 1870s. It wasn’t long after its founding that the city became a bustling agricultural community that soon attracted trainloads of visitors to its warm climate and pleasant landscapes.

Today, the shops and eateries found along Old Towne’s eight block perimeter are as diverse and interesting as its varied past. Here is a quick peek at Old Towne’s offerings:

Citrus City Grill Known far and wide for the filet mignon, stuffed herb chicken and pastas. 122 North Glassell Orange, California 92866 714-639-9600 Open 11 a.m. – 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Closed Sunday. The Victorian Manor, A Tea Room and Garden This period tea room offers dozens of flavorful teas and a quaint gift shop. They also offer a masterpiece dinner theater once a month. 204 North Olive Street Orange, California 92866 714-771-4044 Open 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. www.victorianmanor.com. Chapman’s Antique Mall Reputed to have the largest jadeite collection in California, as well as some of the finest pottery, including Weller, Bauer and Brookwood. 201 East Chapman Orange, California 92866 714-633-0388 Open 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., daily.

How To Get There: Take I-10 west to California 60; continue on I-215 north for 4.7 miles. Take the I-215 exit and go .6 miles at which time the road becomes California 91. Continue along California 91 west to the 55 south. Exit and turn right on Chapman Avenue. Old Towne Orange is about one mile west of the freeway.

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