

Carlsbad's Icon of Happy

**The Flower Fields are a bright reminder
that spring is here.**

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People in Buffalo may laugh when we say this, but it's been a long, cold winter. For us, "lake effect" means there are no good waves from Ponto to the Point. This winter we've had to layer. And we don't layer. But when the ranunculus buds begin to open, it's like Carlsbad peeling off those layers. People in Buffalo may be laughing at us, but the metaphor works. We are sunny-and-72 people. A ranunculus in full bloom is Carlsbad's icon of happy.

Carlsbadians of a certain age remember that spring sprung in greater efflorescence 50 or 60 years ago. Just south of Carlsbad High School and on to the Leucadia border, the bird of paradise would begin to preen almost to Agua Hedionda, then gladiolas stood tall and the ranunculi looked like a rainbow's end to the edge of Batiquitos and Ponto. South Carlsbad in the spring was a spectacle of living color.

The Flower Fields at Carlsbad Ranch is both a working farm and a remembrance of things past. It is, along with the Carlsbad strawberry fields, an agri-tourism destination. The 50-plus acres of the Flower Fields give you plenty of room for wandering. You can hitch a ride on an antique tractor if you're not trying to add a workout to the experience. Out among the ranunculi, it can feel like the sun hit the earth and the flowers are its echo.

"Visitors can't help but smile here," says Fred Clarke, general manager. "Each spring, The Flower Fields invites our visitors to 'live colorfully.' It is our distinct honor to serve as a multi-hued backdrop to so many family trips, romantic dates and even proposals and weddings."

Before or after you walk through the flowers there are many activities for all ages. There is a sweet pea maze, a cymbidium (orchids) greenhouse, seven unique gardens—including the illusion garden, the butterfly garden, artist garden and more—and an American flag created with petunias. A swath of sunflowers is perfect for family pictures and u-pick blueberries make for a nice souvenir. Once you've worked up an appetite, there is a pizza trolley and treats like ice cream, kettle corn and strawberry shortcake.

Check out the website for special events like yoga, photography and flower art workshops. There are also tea times, wine tastings and live music, and themed days for everyone from kids to moms. Locals can get season passes to drop in on the events, or just walk again among the yellow, red and orange ranunculi, smell the sea breeze and remember when.

The Flower Fields are open March 1 through May 14. All tickets are sold online and can't be purchased on-site. To buy tickets or get more information, including a calendar of special events, visit theflowerfields.com.

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