



San Diego & Around

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Why Go?

New York has its cabbie, Chicago its bluesman and Seattle its coffee-drinking boho. San Diego, meanwhile, has the valet guy in a polo shirt, khaki shorts and crisp new sneakers. With his perfectly tousled hair, great tan and gentle enthusiasm, he looks like he's on a perennial spring break, and when he wishes you welcome, he really means it.

This may sound pejorative, but our intention is the opposite. San Diego calls itself 'America's Finest City' and its breezy confidence and sunny countenance filter down even to folks you encounter every day on the street.

What's not to love? San Diego bursts with world-famous attractions for the entire family, including the zoo, Legoland, the museums of Balboa Park and SeaWorld, plus a bubbling downtown and beaches ranging from ritzy to raucous, and America's most perfect weather.

Best Places to Eat

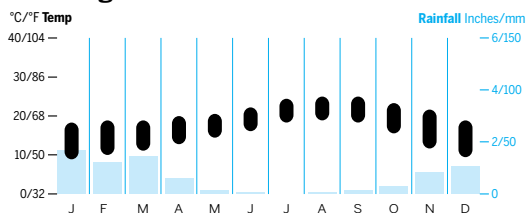
- ➔ Cucina Urbana (p641)
- ➔ Puesto at the Headquarters (p643)
- ➔ Urban Solace (p642)
- ➔ Fish 101 (p657)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hotel del Coronado (p639)
- ➔ Legoland Hotel (p659)
- ➔ La Pensione Hotel (p638)
- ➔ Hotel Solamar (p638)

When to Go

San Diego



Jun–Aug High season. Temperatures and hotel rates are highest.

Sep–Oct, Mar–May Shoulder seasons; moderate rates.

Nov–Feb Hotel rates fall while most of America is hard at work.

MISSION SAN DIEGO DE ALCALÁ

Although the first California mission was on Presidio Hill by present-day Old Town, in 1774 Padre Junípero Serra moved it about 7 miles upriver, closer to water and more arable land. Now the Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá (p632) has been lovingly restored into a pretty white church and ancillary buildings (including California's oldest) and welcomes visitors.

Up-and-Coming Neighborhoods

- East Village
- Little Italy
- North Park

Population

With a population of 1,322,553, San Diego is the USA's eighth largest city. San Diego County, at 3,095,313, is fifth largest.

Fast Facts

- **Area** 372 sq miles (city); 4526 square miles (county)
- **Coastline** 70 miles (county)
- **Telephone area codes**
☎ 619, ☎ 858, ☎ 760,
☎ 442

Balboa Park

San Diego's best-known attraction, the zoo, is ensconced in Balboa Park, one of America's great urban spaces. Balboa Park rose to fame with a world's fair about 100 years ago, the Panama-California Exposition of 1915-16. Grand Spanish-colonial revival-style pavilions were constructed, which dominated the California design sense for generations. Here's the thing, though: they were temporary, made largely of stucco, chicken wire, plaster, hemp and horsehair like Hollywood movie sets, but they proved so popular that many were later replaced with the durable concrete structures that you see today. And among the park's many stages and amphitheatres, the jewel is the 600-seat Old Globe, modeled after the London theater where Shakespeare's works were performed. At 1200 acres, Balboa Park is more than 50% bigger than Central Park in New York City (778 acres).

GAY & LESBIAN SAN DIEGO

Historians trace the roots of San Diego's thriving gay community to WWII. Amid the enforced intimacy of military life, gay men from around the US were suddenly able to create strong if clandestine social networks. Post-war, many of these new friends stayed, and by the late 1960s, a newly politicized gay community made its unofficial headquarters in the Hillcrest neighborhood, which still has the highest concentration of LGBT bars, restaurants, cafes and shops, though the center is gradually branching out to other neighborhoods including nearby North Park. Visitors and locals alike find San Diego's gay scene generally more casual and friendly than in San Francisco or LA.

San Diego County's Best Water-View Dining

- Anthony's Fish Grotto (p643) Seafood classic next to the great naval ships of the Embarcadero, by Downtown San Diego's seashore.
- Bali Hai (p643) Tiki to the max, baby; watch the sailboats go by off Point Loma.
- World Famous (p644) This spot in Pacific Beach has never given up the surfer vibe.
- George's at the Cove (p653) Consistently rated one of America's top restaurants, with three venues for your dining pleasure. The rooftop lounge has awesome views.
- Jake's Del Mar (p656) After a day at the races, stop for a cocktail and an awesome happy hour.