



Destination Guide: San Diego



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AAA Destination Guide: San Diego includes trip-planning information covering AAA recommended attractions and restaurants, exclusive member discounts, maps and more.

San Diego calls itself “America’s Finest City,” a difficult slogan to live up to, but one you’ll likely agree with if for no other reason than the city’s marvelous weather. This is sunny Southern California at its best; the region centered about downtown very rarely sees temperatures above 80 in summer and below 40 in winter—courtesy of prevailing Pacific Ocean breezes—and only about 10 inches of annual rainfall.



But while catching some rays on one of San Diego’s postcard-beautiful beaches is mandatory, it’s certainly not the only way to enjoy your stay. You could spend an entire day just wandering through Balboa Park even if you didn’t step inside a single one of its 15 museums; their ornate Spanish-style exteriors are worth a look just by themselves. And then there’s the park’s outstanding San Diego Zoo with its lovely, leafy habitats designed to appeal to both animal residents and human visitors alike.

Hiking along Point Loma’s bluffs in Cabrillo National Monument will make your heart beat faster either due to the exercise or the stunning vistas; take your pick. And you won’t have to shun the sun just to go shopping either: Such locales as Seaport Village, Horton Plaza and the Gaslamp Quarter let you savor San Diego’s balmy climate while souvenir hunting in an eye-pleasing, alfresco setting.

Essentials

Hop aboard the [San Diego-Coronado Ferry](#) for a scenic 15-minute ride to Coronado, the peninsula separating San Diego Bay from the Pacific Ocean. If you’d rather drive there, the San Diego-Coronado Bridge stretches more than 2 miles across the bay and soars 200 feet into the air, providing you with a wonderful vantage point from which to survey the city, the bay and [Coronado](#).

Once in Coronado, drink a toast to Victorian opulence at the “Del,” the grand [Hotel del Coronado](#), a San Diego landmark since 1888. Beneath its distinctive red, peaked roof are almost a dozen restaurants, cafes and bars, making this historic beach resort a perfect spot for an elegant repast or a beachside cocktail.

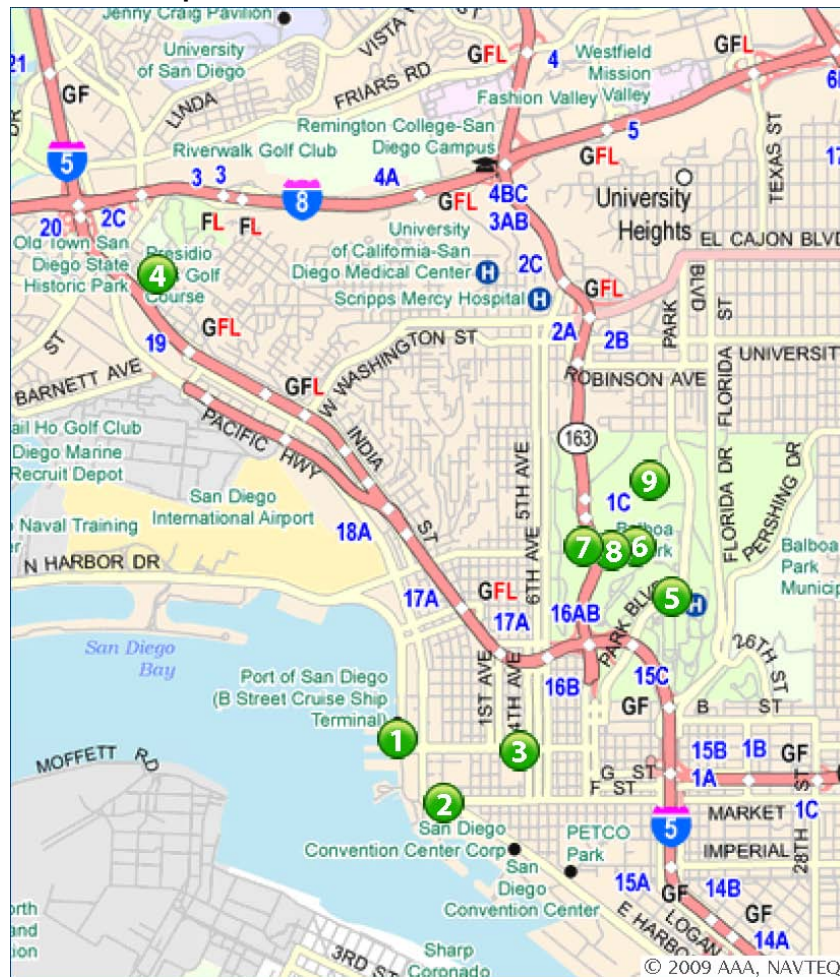
Take in the spectacular views from [Cabrillo National Monument](#) on Point Loma. The monument commemorating Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo’s 1543 exploration of the area is an interesting historical backdrop to the panoramic views of San Diego that are the real draw. Gray whales migrating offshore lure crowds of watchers to the monument and nearby [Sunset Cliffs](#) in winter.

Peer into tidal pools at La Jolla Cove where crabs, snails and other sea creatures dwell. A sand beach nestles between picturesque sandstone cliffs, and the cove’s clear water is famous among snorkelers and divers.

Wander along the Embarcadero, downtown San Diego’s waterfront, a celebration of all things quaint and nautical and home to many of the city’s best seafood restaurants. Just an oyster shell’s throw away is [Seaport Village](#), a shopping center disguised as a 19th-century California harbor town.



Essentials Map



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Rest up for an evening on the town in the historic Gaslamp Quarter, hub of San Diego's nightlife scene. Crowded with restaurants, cafes, nightclubs and boutiques, this 16-block vintage business district adjoins eye-catching Westfield Horton Plaza, the 5-story shopping and entertainment complex you can't miss thanks to its eye-catching jumble of balconies, stairs and walkways painted a spectrum of festive colors.

Essentials Details - Get additional information on AAA.com



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- Exclusive AAA member discounts available

1. San Diego-Coronado Ferry

1050 N. Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 234-4111

2. Seaport Village

849 W. Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 235-4014

3. Westfield Horton Plaza

324 Horton Plaza
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 238-8180

4. Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

4002 Wallace St
San Diego, CA 92110
Phone: (619) 220-5422

5. Balboa Park

El Prado & Pan American Rd
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0512

6. San Diego Museum of Art

1450 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-7931

7. The San Diego Museum of Man

1350 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-2001

8. Mingei International Museum

1439 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0003

9. San Diego Zoo

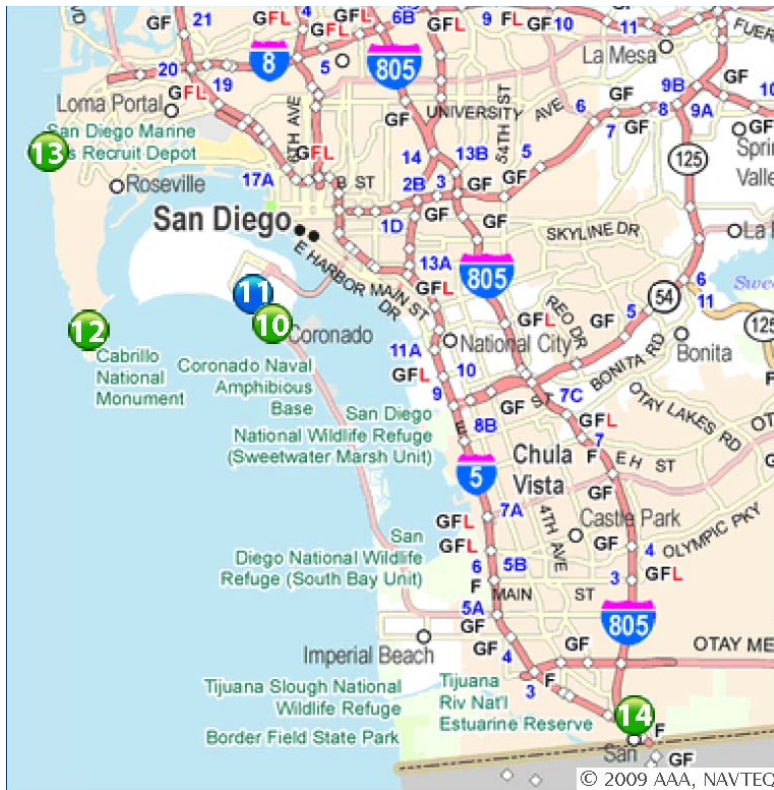
2920 Zoo Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (888) 697-2632

Climb aboard the San Diego Trolley's Blue Line and head for the border at San Ysidro where you're just a short walk and a taxi ride away from duty free shopping along Tijuana's Avenida Revolución. Whether you're searching for cheap souvenirs or imported goods from around the globe, you'll find them here and possibly at bargain prices. Added bonus: the vast majority of stores here accept U.S. dollars.

For a taste of Mexico closer at hand, stop by Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, a collection of structures—including seven original adobes—at the site of California's first permanent settlement. The flavor is decidedly Spanish and Mexican here, and a handful of Mexican-themed restaurants and shops will satisfy your craving for south-of-the-border cuisine, art objects and handicrafts.



Essentials Map



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Explore [Balboa Park](#), the site near downtown where San Diego hosted two international expositions in the early 20th century. Balboa Park is like a theme park only the theme is Spanish Colonial Revival-style architecture characterized by colonnades, red-tile roofs and elaborate plaster details adorning soaring entryways and towers. Within these lovely stucco buildings are more than a dozen museums, including the [San Diego Museum of Art](#), the [San Diego Museum of Man](#) and the [Mingei International Museum](#).

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- GEM Attraction offers a *Great Experience for Members*

10. Coronado

Visitor Center
 1100 Orange Ave
 Coronado, CA 92118
 Phone: (619) 437-8788

11. Hotel del Coronado

1500 Orange Ave
 Coronado, CA
 Phone: (619) 435-6611

12. Cabrillo National Monument

1800 Cabrillo Memorial Dr
 San Diego, CA 92106
 Phone: (619) 557-5450



13. Sunset Cliffs

Sunset Cliffs Blvd & Adair St
 San Diego, CA 92107

14. Tijuana, Baja California

Talk to the animals at the [San Diego Zoo](#)—if you are so inclined—but be forewarned that your vocal cords are in for a real workout. More than 4,000 animals crawl, gallop, slither, fly and swing from limb to limb at this world-class Balboa Park facility. Ride the double decker bus for a 40-minute zoo overview or, for a different kind of overview, ascend above the treetops aboard the Skyfari Aerial Tram.

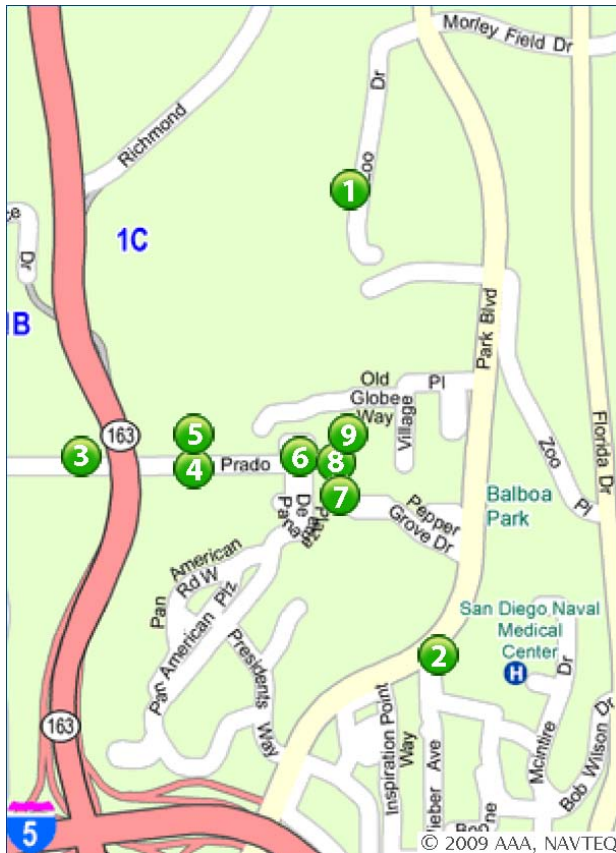
San Diego in 3 Days

Three days is barely enough time to get to know any major destination. But AAA travel editors suggest these activities to make the most of your time in San Diego.

Day 1: Morning

You can't go wrong beginning your San Diego sojourn at the world-renowned [San Diego Zoo](#), in urban San Diego's picturesque cultural hub, [Balboa Park](#). If you've missed breakfast, stop by the Flamingo Café just inside the zoo entrance where you'll have a perfect view of the Flamingo Lagoon while you fortify yourself for the day's activities with eggs and toast.

San Diego in 3 Days – Day 1 Map



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For a quick orientation, take the guided bus tour (included in the zoo's Best Value ticket) aboard a double-decker bus departing from Flamingo Plaza. You'll survey about three-fourths of the animal park during the 40-minute trip. Other buses displaying green signs offer express transportation to five stops throughout the park, something to keep in mind should you poop out on the zoo's far side. The Skyfari Aerial Tram offers another way to get around, and the bird's-eye view can't be beat. The aerial tram drops you off near the Polar Bear Plunge, a highlight on

the opposite side of the zoo from the entrance. An underwater window reveals that the bears are surprisingly graceful swimmers. The Monkey

Day 1 Details - Get additional information on AAA.com;

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- Exclusive AAA member discounts available

1. San Diego Zoo

2920 Zoo Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (888) 697-2632



4. Mingei International Museum

1439 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0003



7. Museum of Photographic Arts

1649 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 238-7559



2. Balboa Park

El Prado & Pan American Rd
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0512



5. San Diego Art Institute

1439 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 236-0011

8. Museum of San Diego History & Research Library

1649 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-6203



3. The San Diego Museum of Man

1350 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-2001



6. Timken Museum of Art

1500 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-5548

9. Botanical Building

1550 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0512

Trails and Forest Tales habitat, one of the park's newest attractions, beautifully re-creates the rainforest home of several rare species of monkeys including colorful mandrills you'll identify by their bright red and blue snouts. Next door is Gorilla Tropics— another garden paradise—this one home to colobus monkeys, bonobos and, of course, gorillas. The Scripps Aviary continues the tropical theme with waterfalls and lush foliage providing a habitat for more than 100 colorful African birds.

Afternoon

If there's more growling going on inside your stomach than in your surroundings, order lunch at the Treehouse complex adjacent to Gorilla Tropics and the Scripps Aviary. You have a choice of two restaurants

here, and both make the most of their leafy surroundings. The Treehouse Café is casual and sells salads, sandwiches and a few hot entrees, but what makes this eatery so popular is the view: the outdoor dining area occupies decks built out over a forested canyon. Adjacent to the café is Albert's, which also boasts an open-air deck only this one faces a pretty waterfall. This full-service restaurant offers a more diverse menu complete with appetizers, pasta, steak and fish as well as beer and wine.

Exhibits you should try to visit: the Absolutely Apes enclosure (orangutans and siamangs), the Ituri Forest (hippos, okapis and otters), Tiger River (tigers, tapirs and freshwater crocodiles) and the Giant Panda Research Station. If you have kids, then the Children's Zoo near the entrance is a must, and the entertaining Sea Lion show is next door at the Wegeforth Bowl.

As difficult as it might be, try not to linger too long among the zoo's exhibits because you'll want to see a bit of surrounding Balboa Park, an expansive jewel within sprawling San Diego just a few minutes from downtown. This all-purpose city park houses not only the zoo but most of San Diego's big museums, as well as theaters, hiking and biking trails, sports facilities and formal gardens.

After having walked along paths bordered by dense walls of vegetation, you might find it hard to believe that the area was once dry scrubland. Transforming a windswept mesa into a landscaped showplace and cultural focal point didn't happen overnight. The park got its start more than a century ago and only approached its current character after serving as the site of two world's fairs: the 1915 Panama-California Exposition and the 1935-36 California Pacific International Exposition. Balboa Park's signature buildings—its ornate Spanish Colonial Revival facades, its colorful, tile-inlaid fountains and charming arcades—were built for these events, and although many of them were temporary plaster and wood structures, San Diegan's found them too beautiful to simply tear down after the exposition crowds had departed. Many were rebuilt of more durable materials as the park was developed.

The California Building, housing the [San Diego Museum of Man](#), is the park's chief landmark by virtue of its elaborate 200-foot-tall tower and multihued tile dome. When visitors describe the setting as "romantic," this

is the image they usually have in mind. Stroll along El Prado, the main east-west thoroughfare of the 1915 Exposition, from the graceful arches of the Cabrillo Bridge at the park's western entrance through the grand gateway formed by one wing of the California Building and past the Alcazar Garden; House of Charm (containing the [Mingei International Museum](#) and [San Diego Art Institute](#)); Plaza de Panama with its statue of the Spanish hero, El Cid; House of Hospitality (a visitors center); [Timken Museum of Art](#); Casa de Balboa ([Museum of Photographic Arts](#) and [Museum of San Diego History & Research Library](#)); Casa del Prado (containing a theater); and the [Botanical Building](#) with its photogenic reflecting pool. You'll end up giving your shutter button a workout as every few steps seems to yield a new vista begging to be preserved in a snapshot.

Evening

Although it's a bit pricey, eating at The Prado inside the House of Hospitality is worth it. The location is not only convenient but beautiful, with outdoor patios overlooking manicured gardens. The cuisine is a blend of Spanish and Italian and each dish brings together all sorts of subtle flavors. Entrees include center cut pork prime rib, rack of lamb and New York steak, and the desserts range from vanilla bean cream cheese flan to ultra-rich Belgian chocolate soufflé. Because it's such a desirable dining locale, try to make reservations. As you approach the entrance, notice the fountain sculpture of a seated woman pouring water from a jug. Designed in 1935, "Woman of Tehuantepec" has become a park icon you're likely to see repeated on publications and postcards.

Day 2: Morning

It might not have the whimsical buildings and lush gardens of Balboa Park, but downtown San Diego, far from being just a workaday central business district, has a lot to offer out-of-towners, too. Here you'll find the San Diego Convention Center, PETCO Park (home of the Padres), the [Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego \(MCASD\) Downtown](#), the historic Gaslamp Quarter, shopping centers, restaurants and the boat- and ship-crowded waterfront known as the Embarcadero, home to two of San Diego's best museums.

San Diego in 3 Days – Day 2 Map



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The [Maritime Museum of San Diego](#) is a diverse collection of historic ships beautifully restored and maintained. The largest is the *Berkeley*, a more than 100-year-old steam ferry that in its heyday carried survivors of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake to safety. Glass cases filled with sundry nautical antiques and photos recount different eras of San Diego's maritime history. Did you know that San Diego was once one of the largest tuna fishing ports in the world and that it's the largest U.S. naval port on the Pacific? You will after checking out the exhibits here.

**Day 2 Details - Get additional information on [AAA.com](#)
AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)**



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1. Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD) Downtown

1001 Kettner Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (858) 454-3541



2. Maritime Museum of San Diego

1492 N. Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 234-9153



3. The USS Midway Museum

910 N. Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 544-9600



4. The Fish Market & Top of the Market

750 N Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-3474

5. Seaport Village

849 W. Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 235-4014

6. Westfield Horton Plaza

324 Horton Plaza
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 238-8180

7. Coronado

Visitor Center
1100 Orange Ave
Coronado, CA 92118
Phone: (619) 437-8788

8. San Diego-Coronado Ferry

1050 N. Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 234-4111

9. Hotel del Coronado

1500 Orange Ave
Coronado, CA
Phone: (619) 435-6611

10. Sheerwater Restaurant

1500 Orange Ave
Coronado, CA 92118
Phone: (619) 522-8866

The prettiest ship in the collection is the *Star of India*, a sailing ship launched from the Isle of Man in the British Isles in 1863. Exhibits and hands-on displays on board give you an idea of what it was like to work on a wind-powered vessel back when the *Star of India's* iron hull was cutting-edge technology. Among the other sundry ships in the museum's collection: a 1904 luxury steam yacht and the H.M.S. *Surprise*, a Royal Navy frigate replica you might have seen in the Russell Crowe movie, "Master and Commander." For an additional fee, you can cruise the harbor aboard a 1914 pilot boat or take turns manning the helm during a harbor excursion on the tall ship *Californian*, a replica of an 1847 schooner.

Dwarfing all of the maritime museum's vessels *combined* and bigger even than the cruise ships docking at the nearby terminal, the USS *Midway*, a few blocks south of the maritime museum, was the largest ship in the world when it was built in 1945. After serving her country for nearly 50 years, this behemoth is now [The USS Midway Museum](#) and you can spend hours exploring its decks with the help of an audio tour guide. You'll see a couple dozen restored aircraft and all sorts of exhibits about naval aviation as well.

Afternoon

For lunch, walk over to [The Fish Market & Top of the Market](#) next to the USS *Midway*. This local landmark has a prime location on the bay with great views, especially from Top of the Market, which is the full-service restaurant on the second floor. Downstairs is The Fish Market, the casual counterpart to the restaurant upstairs, and like the name suggests, the fish is market fresh. Although particulars on the menu change according to what's in season, you can expect an extensive selection of raw shellfish, seafood cocktails, sashimi and sushi as well as smoked and mesquite-grilled fish. The sushi and the fish and chips are done especially well.

Spend the rest of the afternoon shopping and enjoying the scenery at [Seaport Village](#) right next door to the Fish Market. The theme here is "quaint seaside village" with many shops imitating ramshackle bait shops and lighthouses. Some might find Seaport Village tries a little too hard to be cute, but mixed in among the souvenir vendors catering to tourists are

some interesting little specialty shops selling everything from hot sauces to imported Scandinavian sweaters and jewelry. There are more than 50 stores in all along with several eateries and cafes, and Seaport Village makes the most of its waterfront location with fountains, trees and a walkway along the bay offering splendid views of Coronado and the Coronado Bay Bridge. There's also a Loeff carousel, horse-drawn carriage rides, and on the weekends, street performers.

If Seaport Village only whets your appetite for more shopping, walk just a few blocks east to [Westfield Horton Plaza](#), a multilevel, open-air mall that's one part traditional shopping center and one part carnival funhouse. A maze of walkways and terraces here connects a jumble of stores (more than 100), with stairs and escalators leading up and down to the various floors. Unwary shoppers tend to get lost, but if you approach it with the right frame of mind, wandering through its network of corridors can be fun. Head to the top floor for a great view of the whimsical complex and the rest of downtown.

Since you're in the neighborhood, check out San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter, bordering Westfield Horton Plaza on the east. Signs arching over the street proclaim this district to be the "Historic Heart of San Diego." Beautifully restored Victorian-era commercial buildings, brick sidewalks and streets lined by old-fashioned, wrought-iron lamp posts with white globe lights give you a taste of what life was like here in the 19th century. You'll find several shops and restaurants in the district, but this place really starts hopping after dark when all the bars and nightclubs open for business.

Evening

Follow the setting sun to [Coronado](#), an exclusive island enclave (actually it's virtually an island but technically a peninsula). You have two options to get there: the [San Diego-Coronado Ferry](#) departs from the dock at Broadway and Harbor Drive near the USS *Midway*; crossing takes about 15 minutes and you'll have a nice perspective of the city. But if you want a truly breathtaking panorama of San Diego and its surroundings, take the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge, a graceful ribbon of concrete that soars 200 feet above the bay allowing huge U.S. Navy ships to pass underneath and providing stunning views to drivers.

Coronado is home to two naval bases, a few high-end resorts and some very well-heeled homeowners, so the atmosphere here is generally upscale. It's the inviting beaches that first attracted visitors here, and with visitors came hotels and, in 1888, the grande dame of Coronado, the [Hotel del Coronado](#). This rambling Victorian masterpiece, with its iconic towers, whitewashed walls and high-pitched red roofs, set the standard for luxury in San Diego and continues to do so today. From the swaying palms and lush landscaping to the rich dark wood interiors, "The Del," as it is fondly called by locals, is a landmark you shouldn't miss. And if you time it right, sipping a cocktail overlooking the beach at sunset will be a highlight of your trip.

Cap off this day of sightseeing with dinner at the Del's [Sheerwater Restaurant](#), which offers indoor seating as well as a large outdoor terrace with ocean views. Evenings in San Diego can get chilly, but don't let that dissuade you from dining al fresco; the Sheerwater has plenty of fireplaces and strategically placed heaters to take the nip out of the air. The fare is California Coastal, appropriately enough, with seasonal seafood dishes including house specialties cioppino, a fish stew made with tomatoes, and fish and chips. You'll also find steaks, burgers and pasta on the menu.

Day 3: Morning

Drive out to [Cabrillo National Monument](#) on Point Loma, the spit of land separating San Diego Bay from the Pacific. The views from the point are spectacular, encompassing the city and the entire harbor as well as a sweeping expanse of the Pacific that includes migration routes used by Pacific gray whales in winter. Make sure your camera battery is charged because this is one of San Diego's most scenic views.

A 14-foot sandstone statue near the parking lot honors Portuguese explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, who was the first European to step onto what would eventually become the West Coast of the United States. Paved pathways lead to overlooks, a lighthouse, a military exhibit and a visitors center with displays about Cabrillo as well as general park information. The Bayside Trail on the park's east side meanders through

native coastal scrub, and a road branching off near the main parking lot leads down to a rocky shore with tide pools on the park's Pacific side.

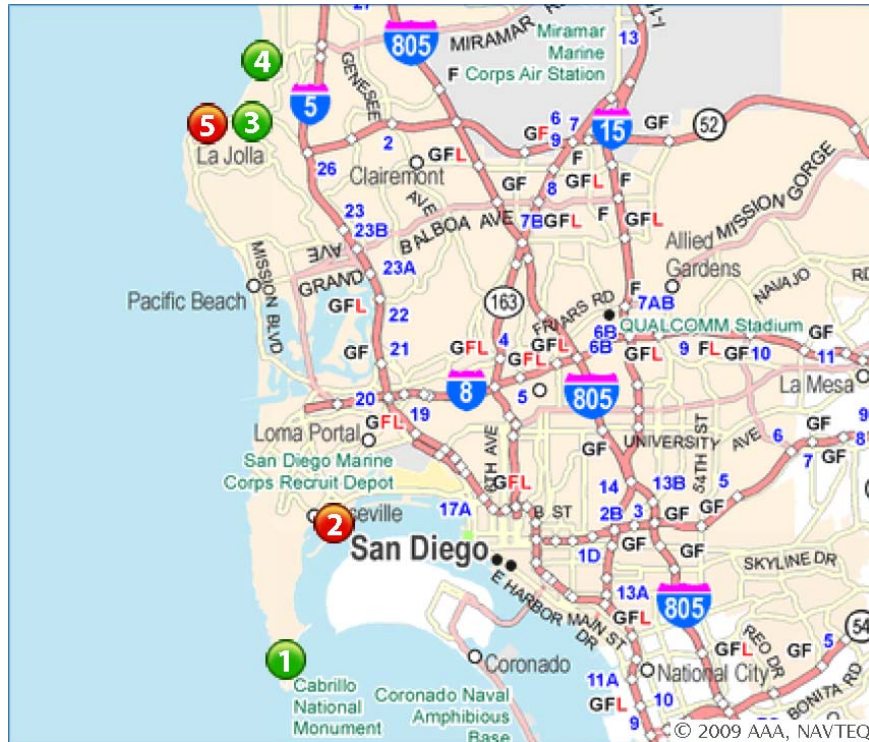
Afternoon

For lunch visit [Humphrey's](#) on Shelter Island, about a 5-mile drive north of Point Loma along the coast of San Diego Bay. You'll have great views of a sailboat-crowded marina and the fine houses on Point Loma, and the dishes are beautifully presented and combine a variety of carefully chosen flavors to excellent effect. If you happen to be passing through on a Sunday, try Humphrey's Sunday brunch, which is so popular that you might not get in without having made reservations first. And if you do have brunch there, one word of advice: you might want to watch how much of the unlimited champagne you consume.

Continue north through the towns of Ocean Beach, Mission Beach and Pacific Beach to the tony seaside community of [La Jolla](#). Palm fronds swaying in the sea breeze above red-tile roofs and gorgeous ocean views characterize La Jolla, and downtown is known for its beach resorts, fine dining and upscale boutiques as well as lovely little La Jolla Cove with its steep rock bluffs and sandy beach.

Enjoy the rest of the afternoon wandering among the marine exhibits at the [Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography](#), north of downtown on the University of California, San Diego campus. There are more than 60 habitats represented here. Don't miss the huge Kelp Tank filled with schools of fish swimming among a swaying kelp tendrils or the

San Diego in 3 Days – Day 3 Map



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Tropical Seas Gallery with its colorful live coral. The Shark Reef exhibit, home to an array of shark varieties, is equally fascinating, and the Tide-Pool Plaza acquaints visitors with this habitat common to California's coastline. You can even touch some of the marine critters that live in tide pools. An added bonus: The picture spot outside the aquarium from which you can see La Jolla Cove, Scripps Institute pier and the cliffs near the university campus.

Evening

Celebrate your third evening in San Diego with a sumptuous dinner in an equally sumptuous setting at George's California Modern, part of George's at the Cove, which is tucked in among the boutiques and art galleries of downtown La Jolla. You'll have an amazing ocean view and

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AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)**

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- Exclusive AAA member discounts available

1. Cabrillo National Monument

1800 Cabrillo Memorial Dr
San Diego, CA 92106
Phone: (619) 557-5450



2. Humphrey's

2241 Shelter Island Dr
San Diego, CA 92106
Phone: (619) 224-3577

3. La Jolla

4. Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography

2300 Expedition Way
La Jolla, CA 92037
Phone: (858) 534-3474



5. George's California Modern

1250 Prospect St
La Jolla, CA 92037
Phone: (858) 454-4244

the sleek, elegant décor and carefully designed lighting creates an aura of luxury you'll really enjoy. The menu changes daily, but be assured that the California cuisine is as sophisticated as the ambience. You'll need reservations, and should a table not be available, consider the rooftop Ocean Terrace upstairs. It's less pricey, more casual, the view is incredible and your chances of getting in without a reservation are better. George's Bar, the third dining room at George's at the Cove, serves from the same menu as the Ocean Terrace and has a balcony that also takes advantage of the building's primo location.

Restaurants

Our favorites include some of this destination's best restaurants—from fine dining to simple fare.



Although most of San Diego's major attractions lie outside the downtown area, the city center lures visitors with its trendy shopping areas, vibrant nightlife, sports and convention venues, dozens of hotels and many of San Diego's top restaurants. Epicenter of all the colorful goings-on is the historic Gaslamp Quarter, which extends several blocks along 4th and 5th avenues. Among the Quarter's carefully restored 19th-

century buildings you'll find [Monsoon](#), which welcomes guests to its spacious dining area with a bubbling fountain, subdued lighting and paintings of India.

As you'd expect from the decor, Monsoon serves authentic Indian cuisine—Northern Indian to be precise—with the chef's specialty being malai kofta, vegetarian meatballs in a creamy sauce. There are entrees to please both vegetarian and meat-lovers alike. If you favor spicy food, try the jahl frezi, a dish seasoned with cumin seeds, ginger, onion and garlic. (Be sure to specify that you want your curry mild or medium if you're not used to spice.) Monsoon is a great place for families, and the patio area will give you a front-row seat for the Gaslamp Quarter's happenings.

Just a few blocks south on 4th Avenue you'll come to J Street and [Oceanaire](#), where the dark, rich interiors and nautical details evoke a 1930s ocean liner. Guests navigate a grand, winding staircase to the sprawling dining room filled with plush booths and tables. The oyster bar is very popular during the week thanks to its half-price oysters and shrimp cocktail, and traditional caviar service also is available. Seasonal specialties may include jumbo lump crab cakes, Alaskan halibut "T-Bone," Gulf of Mexico red snapper and, of course, Maine lobster.

Portions are generous so you may want to share a side dish—asparagus, green beans amandine or the sour cream and onion mashed potatoes. Be sure to save room for dessert like the classic 95-cent root beer float.

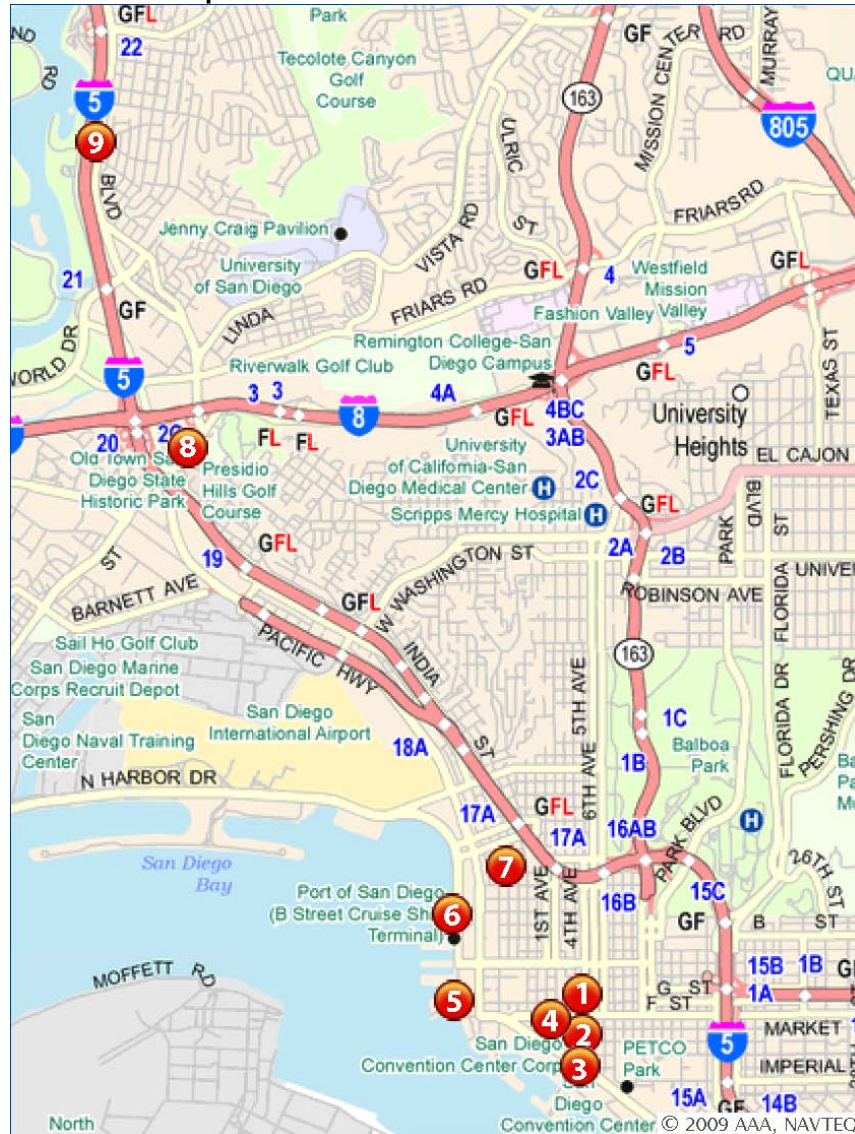
Another block south in the Gaslamp Quarter, on K Street within walking distance of San Diego's Convention Center and PETCO Park, is [Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar](#), where cuts ranging from the 8-ounce filet mignon to the 20-ounce bone-in New York strip steak are served a la carte. And what meal at Fleming's would be complete without one of the fit-for-sharing side dishes such as sautéed spinach or creamy jalapeno-cheese potatoes? Not a steak lover? Fleming's also offers seafood, and the extensive wine list boasts more than 100 varieties by the glass. What's more, the dining room's dark, rich woods and soft amber lighting create a relaxing setting in which to enjoy the food.

Just around the corner on 3rd Avenue, [Candelas](#) offers an inviting Mexican hacienda-style atmosphere. The chef prepares dishes with Mexican ingredients utilizing French cooking techniques. His specialty is langosta baeza—lobster stuffed with mushrooms, chiles, onions and bacon accented with a hint of aged tequila. The menu also includes entrees featuring beef, fowl or seafood with select vegetables and spices. The wine list is modest and includes products of several Mexican vineyards.

Although businesses along the nearby Embarcadero—downtown's waterfront district between Market and Grape streets—tend to cater to out-of-towners, both locals and tourists alike enjoy [The Fish Market & Top of the Market](#). The downstairs market offers fresh fish takeout, while in the dining room upstairs an enormous menu printed daily lists more than a dozen fresh catches, all grilled over mesquite. Selections may include ahi, grouper, mako and mahi mahi. The oyster bar at the heart of the restaurant offers such favorites as bay shrimp and Dungeness crab cocktail and baked clams, as well as a sampler of their smoked fish.

Two other seafood restaurants share the same address about a half mile farther north on the Embarcadero. There's [Anthony's Fish Grotto](#), part of

Restaurants Map



Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using [TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com](#)

**Restaurants Details - Get additional information on [AAA.com](#);
AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)**

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1. Monsoon </p> <p>729 4th Ave
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 234-5555</p> | <p>4. Candelas </p> <p>416 3rd Ave
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 702-4455</p> | <p>7. Cafe Zuccherò </p> <p>1731 India St
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 531-1731</p> |
| <p>2. Oceanaire </p> <p>400 J St
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 858-2277</p> | <p>5. The Fish Market & Top of the Market </p> <p>750 N Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-3474</p> | <p>8. Casa Guadalajara </p> <p>4105 Taylor St
San Diego, CA 92110
Phone: (619) 295-5111</p> |
| <p>3. Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar </p> <p>380 K St
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 237-1155</p> | <p>6. Anthony's Fish Grotto </p> <p>1360 Harbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-5103</p> | <p>9. Baci's </p> <p>1955 Morena Blvd
San Diego, CA 92110
Phone: (619) 275-2094</p> |

a family-owned chain where you can enjoy bay views while savoring a variety of seasonal catches that may include swordfish, Pacific red snapper, Alaskan crab legs and broiled lobster. Anthony's is a great place for families.

Adjacent to the Embarcadero, San Diego's Little Italy is home to Cafe Zuccherò, a popular café serving panini sandwiches, pizza and a few pasta and risotto dishes. In the evening, the menu features entrees with chicken, veal and seafood. You must try one of the many desserts made daily on the premises, which include tempting homemade cakes, marzipan creations, ice cream and gelato.

One of San Diego's most visited districts, Old Town lies just north of downtown in Mission Valley. This state historic park re-creates 19th-century San Diego as it looked during its Mexican and early American periods, and it's here you'll encounter the festive, colorful atmosphere of Casa Guadalajara, a favorite spot enjoyed by both San Diegans and tourists. Authentic regional flavors include such specialties as *pescado a la naranja*, *pollo a la Mexicana* and tequila lime shrimp. There are a number of "heart smart" dishes as well as the traditional Mexican

favorites. If weather permits, ask for a seat on one their two garden patios.

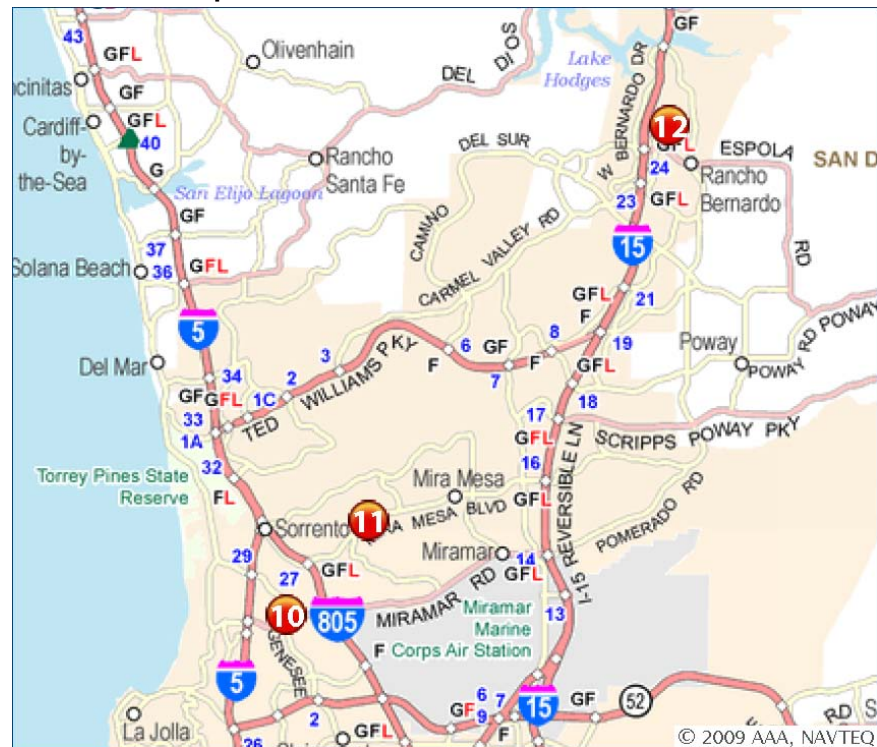
Another wonderful place to enjoy Southern California's mild weather is the covered patio at Baci's, a San Diego institution since 1979. Conveniently located near Mission Valley, Mission Bay and La Jolla, Baci's has three inviting, indoor dining areas with cozy seating, while its patio's golden colors create a soothing outdoor space infused with light. Here you can relish such tasty Northern Italian cuisine as broiled veal chops, sweet clams and mussels, osso buco and veal Marsala.

A bit farther north in fashionable La Jolla, Donovan's Steak & Chop House has a relaxed club atmosphere enhanced by plush booths, imported mahogany walls and an extensive art collection. USDA Prime beef is the star and is always prepared to your liking whether you opt for the filet mignon, the 20-ounce porterhouse or the 24-ounce rib-eye chop. For the non-steak lover there's pork chops, rack of lamb or Australian lobster along with a range of other entrees. Because of Donovan's popularity you might want to make reservations.

Continuing north beyond La Jolla and Marine Corps Air Station-Miramar you'll arrive at the Sorrento Mesa area. Here in a warehouse district near I-805 is a wine shop with a restaurant upstairs known as The WineSellar & Brasserie. The chef here presents French-influenced dishes using the freshest, seasonal ingredients. Specials may include grilled yellowfin tuna, Pacific scallops or pan-roasted pheasant stuffed with summer root vegetables. Complementing the delicious food is WineSellar's unsurprisingly extensive wine list, which has been declared one of the world's best by *Wine Spectator Magazine*.

To get to Rancho Bernardo and El Bizcocho Restaurant, you'll need to travel northeast to the Rancho Bernardo Inn. El Bizcocho's charming dining room delights guests with contemporary, French-inspired cuisine. Dishes change seasonally, and may feature day-boat scallops with snap pea froth or braised Kobe beef short ribs. Longtime favorites like lobster bisque with Armagnac and Chateaubriand for two remain on the menu. A wine-paired tasting menu also is available.

Restaurants Map




Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using [TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com](#)

**Restaurants Details - Get additional information on [AAA.com](#);
AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)**

10. Donovan's Steak & Chop House 
4340 La Jolla Village Dr
La Jolla, CA 92122
Phone: (858) 450-6666

11. The WineSellar & Brasserie 
9550 Waples St, #115
San Diego, CA 92121
Phone: (858) 450-9576

12. El Bizcocho Restaurant 
17550 Bernardo Oaks Dr
Rancho Bernardo, CA 92128
Phone: (858) 487-1611

Attractions

In a city with dozens of attractions, you may have trouble deciding where to spend your time. Here are the highlights for this destination, as chosen by AAA editors. GEMs are “Great Experiences for Members.”



At first glance you might think that the Spanish Colonial-style buildings in [Balboa Park](#), a AAA GEM attraction, are remnants from the city’s earliest days as a Franciscan mission and military fort, but the park’s origins are far more recent. Originally called City Park, the 1,200-acre landscaped area was renamed in 1910 after a contest. Since it offered views of the Pacific, and since Vasco Núñez de Balboa was the first European to see Earth’s largest ocean, the choice seemed natural.

Many of the buildings were constructed for the 1915-16 Panama-California Exposition including the California Building, which you can’t miss thanks to its 200-foot-high bell tower and multihued tile dome. This churchlike building has housed anthropology exhibits since the exposition’s 1915 opening, but today the museum inside is called the [San Diego Museum of Man](#) and focuses on peoples of the western Americas.

Several museums line El Prado, Balboa Park’s central pedestrian thoroughfare, and the connecting Plaza de Panama. Among these are the [Mingei International Museum](#), an international folk art museum housed in the reconstructed mission-style House of Charm, and the [San Diego Museum of Art](#), which contains the works of European old masters, 19th- and 20th-century American art and a comprehensive Asian collection behind its richly detailed façade—a facade complete with caravels, cherubs and busts of famous artists sculpted in relief.

Continuing to the eastern end of El Prado will bring you to two noteworthy science museums. The [San Diego Natural History Museum](#) is housed in

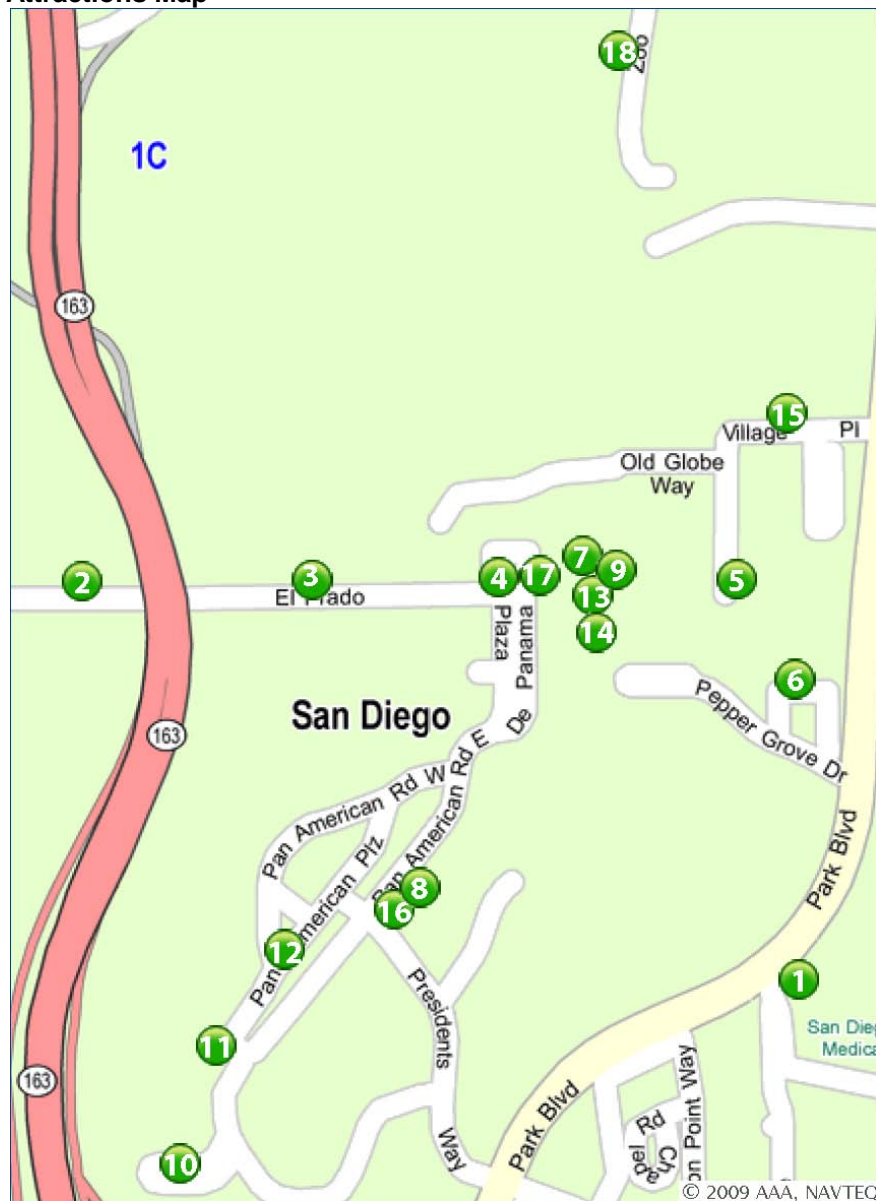
a stately white building constructed in 1933 and expanded dramatically in 2001. In addition to the fossils and living specimens that you’d expect, the museum also has a 300-seat, giant-screen theater and hosts all sorts of changing exhibitions covering topics ranging from the human genome to the Dead Sea Scrolls to chocolate.

Facing the natural history museum on the opposite side of a plaza with a circular fountain is the [Reuben H. Fleet Science Center](#), where the theme shifts to science, technology and most importantly, child-friendly “edutainment.” The center’s interactive, hands-on exhibits—along with motion simulator rides and the world’s first IMAX Dome Theater—are designed to engage visitors, particularly younger ones.

The list of Balboa Park’s attractions is a long one and includes the [Botanical Building](#), [Japanese Friendship Garden](#), [Museum of Photographic Arts](#), [San Diego Air & Space Museum](#), [San Diego Automotive Museum](#), [The San Diego Hall of Champions Sports Museum](#), [Museum of San Diego History & Research Library](#), [San Diego Model Railroad Museum](#), [Spanish Village Art Center](#), [Spreckels Organ Pavilion](#) and the [Timken Museum of Art](#).

Obviously there’s no way you could see everything in Balboa Park in just one visit, but you’ll see more and save your feet if you take advantage of the free tram that stops at various points within the park. Whatever you do, make sure you set aside some time, preferably a full day, for the park’s premiere tourist draw, the [San Diego Zoo](#), a AAA GEM attraction. World-renowned for its huge collection of animals—more than 4,000—along with its conservation programs, the San Diego Zoo shows off its impressive menagerie in a setting lush with tropical and subtropical vegetation. Cageless enclosures simulate natural habitats and make it easier to view the various creatures on display. If you’re pressed for time, make sure you at least stop by the Giant Panda Research Station, where you might see a rare panda cub. You should also see Gorilla Tropics, where the apes’ rainforest has been recreated with waterfalls and tropical trees and is continued within the adjacent Scripps Aviary, which is filled with hundreds of colorful African birds.

Attractions Map



Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using [TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com](#)

Attractions Details - Get additional information on [AAA.com](#)



- GEM Attraction offers a *Great Experience for Members*



- Exclusive AAA member discounts available

1. Balboa Park
El Prado & Pan American Rd
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0512



2. The San Diego Museum of Man
1350 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-2001



3. Mingei International Museum
1439 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0003



4. San Diego Museum of Art
1450 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-7931



5. San Diego Natural History Museum
1788 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-3821



6. Reuben H. Fleet Science Center
1875 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 685-5744



7. Botanical Building
1550 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0512

8. Japanese Friendship Garden

2215 Pan American Rd E
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-2721

9. Museum of Photographic Arts

1649 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 238-7559



10. San Diego Air & Space Museum
2001 Pan American Plaza
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 234-8291

11. San Diego Automotive Museum
2080 Pan American Plaza
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 231-2886

12. The San Diego Hall of Champions Sports Museum

2131 Pan American Plaza
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 234-2544



13. Museum of San Diego History & Research Library
1649 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 232-6203



14. San Diego Model Railroad Museum
1649 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 696-0199



15. Spanish Village Art Center
1770 Village Pl
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 233-9050

16. Spreckels Organ Pavilion
2211 Pan American Rd E
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-0512

17. Timken Museum of Art
1500 El Prado
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 239-5548

18. San Diego Zoo
2920 Zoo Dr
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (888) 697-2632



Let's say you've managed to hit Balboa Park's highpoints and are ready for more. Downtown San Diego, just a few minutes away, should be your next stop. On the Embarcadero—the city's waterfront along Harbor Drive roughly between Grape and Market streets—you'll come across the [Maritime Museum of San Diego](#), a AAA GEM attraction. Don't look for a museum building; most of the museum's exhibits are aboard the *Berkeley*, a 289-foot steam ferry launched in 1898 that transported survivors of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. The 1863 *Star of India*—an iron hulled, three-masted sailing ship—is another nautical jewel in the museum's seafaring collection. Among the other historic ships and ship reconstructions you'll find here: a luxurious 1904 steam yacht, a 1902 sloop built in San Diego, the *Californian*, a replica of a 19th-century revenue cutter and the H.M.S. *Surprise*, a replica of Royal Navy frigate used in the movie "Master and Commander."

A separate attraction docked nearby on the Embarcadero is the USS *Midway*, a 1945 aircraft carrier decommissioned in 1992 that now serves as home to the [The USS Midway Museum](#). MP3 audio tours of the huge ship—the largest in the world when it was built—cover the flight and hangar decks and describe the various aircraft on display including fighter jets (an F-14 Tomcat, an F/A-18 Hornet are two examples) and a Huey Gunship.

To experience the Embarcadero as well as other San Diego locales faster and more easily, climb aboard an air conditioned minibus with [San Diego Scenic Tours](#). The company picks up guests at most area hotels for narrated half- and full-day tours that provide a wonderful introduction to the city's most beautiful districts including Balboa Park, the Gaslamp Quarter, Coronado and La Jolla Cove.

North of San Diego Bay and adjacent to the international airport is a Marine Corps Recruit Depot featuring the [Marine Corps Recruit Depot Command Museum](#). Military history buffs will enjoy all the displays of equipment, weapons and personal memorabilia not to mention the insight that the audiovisual kiosks provide into Marine Corps life. One particularly

interesting exhibit describes the role Navajo Code Talkers played in keeping military communications secure during World War II.

South and west of the depot, Point Loma shields the entrance to San Diego Bay from the Pacific Ocean. The point's high, rocky cliffs provide an extremely photogenic setting for [Cabrillo National Monument](#), a AAA GEM attraction. A monument to Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, the first European to set foot on what would become the west coast of the United States, stands on an overlook commanding fantastic ocean views, and you can watch Pacific gray whales migrating offshore in winter. The 1855 Old Point Loma Lighthouse stands 422 feet above sea level; its squat, whitewashed walls and stubby central tower are a frequent subject of visitors' snapshots.

The monument also offers a panoramic view of San Diego, San Diego Bay and Coronado, the peninsula that forms the western side of the bay opposite downtown. The [Coronado Museum of History and Art](#) occupies a 1910 bank of commerce building. Galleries within describe local history, with special attention paid to the massive [Hotel del Coronado](#), Coronado's landmark Victorian resort that stands presides over a lovely stretch of sandy beach just a few blocks away.

While the "Del," as it is affectionately called, has been a San Diego landmark for more than a century, the [Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá](#), a AAA GEM attraction in Mission Valley, has been one for even longer. Originally founded by Father Junípero Serra farther west at Presidio Hill as the first of his chain of missions along the California coast, the current church building—distinguished by its red-tile roof, bright whitewashed exterior and picturesque three-tiered bell wall—was constructed at this site in 1813 and restored in 1931.

The Spanish Revival-style building currently standing atop Presidio Hill was built by the San Diego Historical Society in 1929 as a museum dedicated to Father Serra's role in the state's history. Open only to school groups, the museum overlooks [Old Town San Diego State Historic Park](#), a AAA GEM attraction re-creating a 19th-century California settlement during the Mexican and early American periods. You can peek into a

handful of historic adobe homes to see period tables decked out as if guests are expected for dinner, while other reconstructed buildings show off wagons and stage coaches. Tucked in among the arcaded porches and plazas landscaped with drought-hardy foliage are Mexican-themed restaurants and shops selling a spectrum of souvenirs.

Attractions Map



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West of Mission Valley in Mission Bay is [SeaWorld San Diego](#), a AAA GEM attraction that combines theme park rides with educational marine-life shows and exhibits. Of course, Shamu the killer whale is the star of his own show, but other crowd-pleasing performers include sea lions, otters, dolphins and even trained cats and dogs. Sharks, penguins and manatees each have their special habitats designed to keep them comfortable while presenting them to great effect. Adding some variety to SeaWorld San Diego's animal-centered attractions are such water-oriented thrill rides as Journey to Atlantis and Shipwreck Rapids, where passengers are likely to get a little wet.

Attractions Details - [Get additional information on AAA.com](#)
AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)



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- Exclusive AAA member discounts available

19. Maritime Museum of San Diego

1492 N. Harbor Dr
 San Diego, CA 92101
 Phone: (619) 234-9153



20. The USS Midway Museum

910 N. Harbor Dr
 San Diego, CA 92101
 Phone: (619) 544-9600



21. Marine Corps Recruit Depot Command Museum

1600 Henderson Ave, Bldg 26
 San Diego, CA 92140
 Phone: (619) 524-4426

22. Cabrillo National Monument

1800 Cabrillo Memorial Dr
 San Diego, CA 92106
 Phone: (619) 557-5450



23. Coronado Museum of History and Art

1100 Orange Ave
 Coronado, CA 92118
 Phone: (619) 435-7242

24. Hotel del Coronado



1500 Orange Ave
 Coronado, CA
 Phone: (619) 435-6611

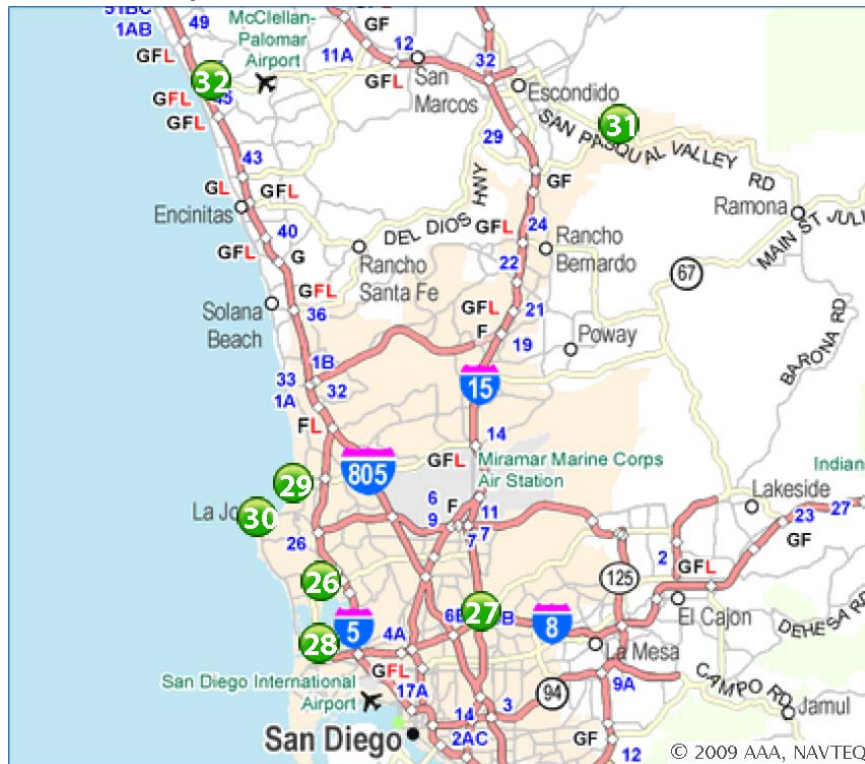
25. Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

4002 Wallace St
 San Diego, CA 92110
 Phone: (619) 220-5422



If SeaWorld San Diego fails to quench your thirst for knowledge about ocean life, then you need only travel 11 miles north to La Jolla and the [Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography](#), a AAA GEM attraction, to learn more. As the name implies, Birch Aquarium concentrates more on scientific exploration and less on thrill rides, but the variety of display tanks containing all sorts of strange and beautiful sea critters makes for a fascinating visit nonetheless. The outdoor Tide-Pool Plaza Discovery Center lets you touch a sampling of tide pool denizens including hermit crabs, barnacles and sea anemones. The views of the Pacific from the plaza are outstanding; the aquarium sits atop a seaside bluff.

Attractions Map





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Occupying another ocean view location is the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD) La Jolla, where you'll find changing exhibitions of art executed in a variety of media and ranging from thought provoking to downright befuddling but never dull. The museum's permanent collection comprises more than 3,000 works produced since 1950 specializing in Pop art, minimalism, conceptual art and art from California and the San Diego metro area.

While Balboa Park's San Diego Zoo was created with human visitors in mind, San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park, a AAA GEM attraction 35 miles north of Balboa Park in Escondido, was designed to provide as much room as possible to its animal residents. The park's enormous field

Attractions Details - Get additional information on AAA.com

-  - GEM Attraction offers a *Great Experience for Members*
-  - Exclusive AAA member discounts available

26. San Diego Scenic Tours

2255 Garnet Ave
San Diego, CA 92109
Phone: (858) 273-8687



27. Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá

10818 San Diego Mission Rd
San Diego, CA 92108
Phone: (619) 281-8449



28. SeaWorld San Diego

500 SeaWorld Dr
San Diego, CA 92109
Phone: (800) 257-4268



29. Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography

2300 Expedition Way
La Jolla, CA 92037
Phone: (858) 534-3474



30. Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD) La Jolla

700 Prospect St
La Jolla, CA 92037
Phone: (858) 454-3541



31. San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park

15500 San Pasqual Valley Rd
Escondido, CA 92027
Phone: (760) 747-8702



32. LEGOLAND California

1 LEGOLAND Dr
Carlsbad, CA 92008
Phone: (760) 918-5346



exhibits approximate the natural habitats of a host of exotic wildlife, which is great for the park's conservation efforts but makes getting around a real challenge. The park solves this problem with the Wgasa Bush Line Railway, an electric monorail on which you can enjoy a guided hour-long tour into the heart of the African and Asian field exhibits. During the journey you'll encounter herds of antelopes, Cape buffaloes, elephants, giraffes, rhinos and zebras—among other herd animals—in addition to lions and tigers. The park's walking trail is another way of getting a close look at the wildlife.

Twenty miles west in Carlsbad, you can get an even closer look at a diverse collection of animals at LEGOLAND California, a AAA GEM

Twenty miles west in Carlsbad, you can get an even closer look at a diverse collection of animals at [LEGOLAND California](#), a AAA GEM attraction, only these are built of the popular snap-together plastic blocks for children. Along with all the famous landmarks and colorful critters painstakingly rendered in LEGOs, the pre-teen-oriented theme park has play areas for small kids and thrill rides for older children. One of the newest rides is Knights' Tournament, a bone-jangling journey at the end of a giant robotic arm that spins, flexes and twists like the arm of sword-wielding knight.

Events

In addition to its many cultural and historic landmarks, this destination hosts a number of outstanding festivals and events that may coincide with your visit. GEMs are "Great Experiences for Members."

[Balboa Park](#) with its lush landscaping and ornate Spanish Colonial-style buildings serves as a beautiful, not to mention appropriate, setting for [EarthFair](#) in mid-April. The more than 200 exhibitors promoting one aspect of environmentalism or another include wildlife preservation groups, organic farmers and advocates of alternative energy vehicles. Children's activities, music and earth-friendly food also are on EarthFair's program.

In early May, [Old Town San Diego State Historic Park](#) hosts [Fiesta Cinco de Mayo](#), a celebration of Mexican history and culture among Old Town's restored adobes. The week-long event showcases Mexican cuisine along with mariachis and activities for children. Live music and entertainment on seven stages round out the fiesta's schedule.

Head out to the Del Mar Fairgrounds in June or early July, and you'll find the traditional county fair is alive and well. The [San Diego County Fair](#) is one of the largest in the United States and even if a delicate constitution keeps you from climbing aboard the Skycoaster or the Tilt-a-Whirl, you can still sample an assortment of carnival food, win a stuffed animal by demonstrating your ring-toss prowess or sway to the music at one of the

performance venues. And of course, what county fair would be complete without livestock exhibits?

In mid-September the roar of finely tuned engines heralds the start of the aptly named Thunderboat Regatta in Mission Bay. Called "World Series of Powerboat Racing," the 2-day regatta showcases the world's fastest hydroplanes, drag boats and tunnel hulls, among other classes of powerboats, and draws more than 100,000 racing fans each year.

If you can't get enough of screaming engines and blurring speed, you'll only need to wait a month: the [MCAS Miramar Air Show](#) takes to the skies for 3 days in early October. Civilian pilots perform precision takeoffs and landings along with heart-stopping aerial stunts, but it's the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels that steal the show as they guide their signature blue-and-gold painted F/A-18 Hornets through a series of breathtaking choreographed formations. Groundside you'll get an up-close look at all sorts of aircraft ranging from the massive Lockheed-Georgia C-5A Galaxy to propeller driven ultralights.

Late November finds music lovers grooving to the sounds of nearly two dozen jazz, Dixieland and swing bands during the [San Diego Thanksgiving Dixieland Jazz Festival](#). Held at the convention center of the [Town and Country Resort Hotel](#), the festival's venues include both large concert rooms and more intimate spaces.

San Diego's snow-free climate might make it difficult to get into the holiday spirit, especially for transplants used to winter wonderlands, which is probably why [Balboa Park December Nights](#) is so popular. Held the first weekend in December, this family-oriented event draws around 100,000 people to Balboa Park with festive decorations, ethnic food from around the world, hands-on crafts lessons, bands and choral groups as well as free admission to many of the park's museums.

A few days later, Old Town is the scene of [Las Posadas and Luminarias](#), a traditional reenactment of Mary and Joseph's search for shelter for the Christ child. The procession—with wise men, shepherds and even a donkey—begins in nearby Heritage Park.

Things to Do Shopping

San Diego has no shortage of locales to “get your shop on.” From megamalls and Mexican craft stalls to unique boutiques and used bookstores, you’ll definitely want to pack the high-limit/low-interest plastic.

In the neighboring Mexican border town of Tijuana, the recent plunge in tourism has resulted in unbelievably good bargains. For those who’d rather stay in the U.S.A., Las Americas Premium Outlets, an open-air factory outlet mall just shy of the border crossing, has rock bottom prices on name brand merchandise. Downtown, don’t miss the Westfield Horton Plaza and Seaport Village.

Antiques

San Diego’s most fertile antiquing grounds are found in local neighborhoods. Northeast of downtown in the University Heights area, Adams Avenue Antique Row doesn’t have as many stores as it once did, though still plenty to keep you busy. There’s a cluster of shops on Adams Avenue near the corner of Park Boulevard. To explore the rest of Antique Row and Adams Avenue Book Row, which extend a couple miles east, you’ll need a car.

Heading east on Adams Avenue into the Normal Heights area, mixed in among the neighborhood pubs, herbal remedy shops, coffeehouses and tattoo parlors, are more antique dealers and a handful of used booksellers. Adams Avenue Bookstore, 3502 Adams Ave., first opened its doors in 1965 and stocks some 90,000 titles. Record collectors should hit the brakes at Folk Arts Rare Records, 2881 Adams Ave. Occupying a little old wooden house, the shop is packed to the rafters with vintage vinyl and specializes in classic folk, blues, jazz and rock.

In the bohemian-hipster enclave of Hillcrest, just north of Balboa Park, shops trend more toward chic housewares and kitsch gifts, but there are a few antique stores, vintage clothing boutiques and used bookshops sprinkled about. Footnote Books, 1627 University Ave., stuffs an amazing

number of general interest tomes into its tiny space; serious collectors will find some nice first editions for sale in the back of the store.

Perhaps San Diego’s best antique wheeling-and-dealing happens down by the seaside in Ocean Beach. Head west on I-8 (Ocean Beach Freeway), which becomes Sunset Cliffs Boulevard, and follow it to Newport Avenue, the center of the action.

The Ocean Beach Antique Mall and Newport Avenue Antique Center display vintage jewelry, art glass, period furniture, china, pottery and '50s fashion accessories from hundreds of dealers. Out on the street, one of the more interesting stand-alone shops is the Oriental Treasure Box, 4847 Newport Ave., which offers an impressive selection of high-dollar Japanese antiques and art.

Malls

Mission Valley has two large shopping centers—Fashion Valley and Westfield Mission Valley. The two centers are within a few minutes of each other and have a combined total of more than 340 stores and restaurants. Fashion Valley, at SR 163 and Friars Road, is anchored by JCPenney, Macy’s, Neiman-Marcus, Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue, while Mission Valley, at I-8 and Mission Center Road, offers Macy’s Home & Furniture.

Other regional shopping centers include Grossmont Center in La Mesa, near the intersection of I-8 and SR 125, and La Jolla Village Square, west of I-5, and Westfield UTC, east of I-5, in La Jolla. These contain a variety of department stores, including Macy’s, JCPenney and Saks Fifth Avenue.

Outlets

Prices are discounted up to 40 percent at area factory outlet centers. Las Americas Premium Outlets, 4211 Camino de la Plaza, has more than 110 stores, including Banana Republic, Bass, Neiman-Marcus Last Call, Nike and Old Navy, offering great savings on clothing, shoes, perfume, jewelry, toys, housewares and other goods.

Specialty Districts

San Diego's historic Gaslamp Quarter, while primarily a dining and nightlife center, also is interspersed with chi-chi art galleries and fashionable brand-name boutiques (think Lucky Jeans, American Apparel and Quicksilver). Sky-high rents have forced out many of the independent shops, but some doggedly hang on.

Bubbles, 226 5th Ave., which bills itself as a "unique boutique," carries handcrafted bath products, casual women's clothing and cutesy gift items. Industry 453 Clothing Boutique, 449 5th Ave., stocks trendy women's fashions and \$150 jeans. San Diego Trading Company, 534 5th Ave., is the place to procure a San Diego Padres cap or an "Old Guys Rule" T-shirt.

Little Italy, a few blocks inland from the northern end of the Embarcadero, is known for its multitude of spaghetti-and-meatball joints. But there's also a concentration of hip art, design and home furnishings stores (especially along India Street) known as the Art & Design District. Check out Masquerade, 1608 India St. #105, for Old World art and home furnishings; DNA European Design Studio, 1990 Columbia St., specializes in contemporary decor.

Stained Glass Windows, 1971 India St., mainly deals in custom art glass but also sells affordable sun-catchers and smaller window hangings with sun-and-surf themes. Nelson Photo Supplies, 1909 India St., will prove invaluable to traveling shutterbugs who've lost a lens cap or desperately need a polarizing filter.

The harbor-front Seaport Village, sits southwest of the Gaslamp Quarter at the southern end of the Embarcadero. If you're in the market for San Diego-emblazoned souvenirs, nautical-themed gifts, seashells, jewelry, beach wear or a coffee mug with your name on it, this is the place.

Ferry Landing Marketplace in Coronado is a similar, although smaller, waterfront village of shops. There are casual eateries as well as Peohe's, a sit-down seafood restaurant with outstanding city views. Landscaped walkways and gardens as well as bicycle paths attract as many lovers of

the outdoors as shoppers. Clowns and other street performers entertain on weekends.

Coronado's palm-lined Orange Avenue has a few high-end clothing boutiques, plus Bay Books, 1029 Orange Ave., a thoughtfully stocked independent bookstore. If you visit the Hotel Del Coronado, take time to browse the dozen-or-so "Shops at the Del." Prices are predictably high, but the merchandise (resort wear, jewelry, ladies accessories, Del-themed keepsakes) is top of the line.

Pacific Beach and Ocean Beach are the go-to towns for laid-back surf shops, bikini boutiques and outdoor sports gear. On Pacific Beach's main drag, Pangea Outpost, 909 Garnet Ave., offers shoppers a funky departure from the usual flip-flops and board shorts. Gathered under one roof are more than 60 local merchant stalls selling everything from dashboard hula dolls and Mexican folk art to windchimes and world music CDs.

La Jolla's exclusive Prospect Street makes for exquisite browsing with its art galleries and boutiques. Prepare for serious price-sticker shock though. La Jolla's Coast Boulevard has more casual shops, plus beautiful vistas of the Pacific coast. Ocean-side shopping can be found a bit farther north at Del Mar Plaza, a complex of chic shops and restaurants hidden behind boulder walls.

Shopping is a major pastime in Old Town San Diego. Many of Old Town State Historic Park's adobe structures now house gift shops squarely aimed at tourists. Old Town General Store, 2701 San Diego Ave., is a prime spot to load up on cheesy trinkets, T-shirts and pewter spoons. If it's Mexican pottery, tile or ceramics you're after, there are several stores to tempt you.

Bazar Del Mundo, 4133 Taylor St., across the street from the Historic Park, houses a collection of shops selling Mexican folk art, crafts and jewelry. Merchandise is priced for the tourist trade (translation: a tad high) and quality ranges from surprisingly good to mass-market mediocrity. The recently remodeled Fiesta de Reyes courtyard (formerly Plaza del

Pasado), 2754 Calhoun St., is home to Mexican restaurants and nearly a dozen specialty shops.

San Diego bargain hunters have traditionally been lured to the Mexican border city of Tijuana and its free port status. But ongoing violence related to drug-trafficking has put a major dent in Tijuana tourism. Those who do venture south of the border will find even better deals than usual. Major shopping areas include Mercado de Artesanias (Mexican Arts and Crafts), Plaza Rio Tijuana Shopping Center and Avenida Revolución, the city's oldest tourist shopping area.

Nightlife

Unlike Hollywood, San Diego nightspots—from live music venues to high-decibel dance clubs—are not on the stalkerazzi radar, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be on yours.

Downtown is the busiest nightlife district and the most convenient to visitors. But don't overlook nocturnal happenings in the city's local neighborhoods. The free weekly newspaper *San Diego CityBeat* is a good resource for live music listings.

In the Gaslamp Quarter, House of Blues (1055 5th Ave.) packs 'em in with its trademark Southern juke-joint décor and line-up of quality bands playing everything from punk to funk; phone (619) 299-2583. Croce's (802 5th Ave.), opened in 1985 by the wife of late singer-songwriter Jim Croce, is a longtime Gaslamp favorite featuring live jazz nightly; phone (619) 233-4355.

Tapas, sangria and salsa rhythms fill the bill at Café Sevilla (555 4th Ave.), a hip Spanish taverna that stages a Friday night dinner show with live Flamenco music and dancing; phone (619) 233-5979. If the tropics are more your thing, try Mister Tiki Mai Tai Lounge (801 5th Ave.), the Gaslamp's Polynesian-themed party place; phone (619) 233-1183.

San Diego meets South Beach at Deco's (731 5th Ave.), a multilevel, velvet-rope dance club where the 20- and 30-something crowd hope to hook up and "shake their thang" to hip-hop, house and electronica; phone

(619) 696-3326. The Hard Rock Hotel (207 5th Ave.) has a handful of nightlife offerings, including its hipster chill-lounge, 207, and outdoor concert space, Woodstock; phone (866) 751-7625.

High atop the Marriott Gaslamp Quarter hotel (660 K St.), Altitude Sky Lounge caters to club kids with its low-pro couches, high-priced cocktails and DJs spinning hip-hop and dance music. The open-air rooftop bar's birds-eye view directly into Petco Park draws boisterous crowds during Padres home games, when the atmosphere is decidedly more casual; phone (619) 696-0234.

If you're lookin' to kick-back, quaff a brew and watch the big game on TV, Gaslamp Tavern (686 5th Ave.) has a good selection of beer taps and a dozen big screens showing NFL, NBA, MLB and NHL action; phone (619) 239-3339. Trophy's (570 K St.) is another solid choice; phone (619) 237-9700. Those who prefer their touchdowns and slam-dunks with a side of ogling will find the downtown Hooters branch at 410 Market St.; phone (619) 235-4668.

In Little Italy, nightlife mainly revolves around restaurant bars. There are a few exceptions. At Princess Pub & Grille (1665 India St.), you can knock back a cold one, shoot pool and fill up on decent pub grub amidst British tavern decor; phone (619) 702-3021. The Casbah (2501 Kettner Blvd.) draws the indie-rock faithful with live bands several nights a week; phone (619) 232-4355.

Northwest of downtown on Shelter Island, Humphreys Concerts By The Bay (2241 Shelter Island Dr.) often attracts big name national touring acts to its intimate 1,400-seat outdoor performance venue. Recent headliners include Diana Krall, John Legend and Robert Plant with Alison Krauss; phone (619) 220-8497.

At Canes Bar & Grill (3105 Ocean Front Walk) in Mission Beach, you can catch live bands, dance to DJs or sip a cocktail on the beachfront deck and watch the stars twinkle; phone (858) 488-1780. Further north, Pacific Beach (known as "PB") parties hard at neighborhood bars like

Moondoggies (832 Garnet Ave.), phone (858) 483-6550, and the Silver Fox Lounge (1833 Garnet Ave.), phone (858) 270-1343.

If you're staying in points far north of downtown San Diego, consider catching a live gig at the venerable Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach (143 S. Cedros Ave.), about a half-hour drive from the city center. Over the years this funky old venue has hosted everyone from the New York Dolls to Death Cab for Cutie; phone (858) 481-8140.

At the La Jolla outpost of L.A.'s legendary The Comedy Store (916 Pearl St.), local comics perform most weeknights. The big names usually pack the joint on weekends; phone (858) 454-9176.

Spectator Sports

San Diego's spectator sports are many and varied. Outdoor sports draw nearly as many visitors to the city as the sightseeing attractions. Qualcomm Stadium, 9449 Friars Rd. in Mission Valley, is the home of the San Diego Chargers; PETCO Park, located at 100 Park Blvd. in downtown, is home to the San Diego Padres; and San Diego Sports Arena, 3500 Sports Arena Blvd. in the Point Loma neighborhood, plays host to special sports events.

Baseball

Win or lose, the San Diego Padres can boast one of the most attractive settings of any Major League Baseball stadium—steps from the waterfront amid the always-popular Gaslamp Quarter in downtown San Diego, where PETCO Park opened in 2004. The Padres play April through September; phone (877) 374-2784.

Football

The NFL's San Diego Chargers were an immediate hit when they relocated from Los Angeles in 1961 and have maintained a loyal fan base ever since throughout their ups and downs in the standings. Despite numerous trips to the playoffs, they've reached the Super Bowl just once, in 1995 when they lost to the San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl XXIX. In

recent years they've been perennial contenders, winning the AFC Western Division crown in 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

College football fans support the San Diego State University Aztecs, who compete in the NCAA Division I Mountain West Conference. Both the Chargers and the Aztecs play at Qualcomm Stadium in the fall. Phone (619) 280-2121 for Charger ticket information; phone (877) 737-8039 for Aztec ticket information.

Hockey

The San Diego Gulls play minor-league hockey at the iPayOne Center at the Sports Arena; phone (619) 224-4171.

Horse Racing

Horse racing takes place at Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, 20 miles north of town, founded by Bing Crosby and Pat O'Brien in 1937. This palatial facility at the Del Mar fairgrounds attracts the nation's top jockeys and steeds. The racing season is July through September. Satellite wagering is available in the off-season. Phone (858) 755-1141 for information or (877) 538-7238 for tickets.

Note: Policies concerning admittance of children to pari-mutuel betting facilities vary. Phone for information.

Recreation

Because of its mild climate, San Diego is a haven for year-round recreation. Following are descriptions of several activities available in the San Diego area. More information can be obtained from the various Community Park and Recreation Divisions: Community Parks II (which covers the Inland Division), (619) 525-8222; Community Parks I (which covers community parks and recreation centers), (619) 221-8900; and Developed Regional Parks (which covers coastal beaches and regional parks), (619) 235-1169.

Bicycling

Bicycling is a good way to tour this sunshine city. There are several

marked bike routes and numerous rental shops. San Diego fosters bicycling with safe, marked bicycle lanes. Many share the county's roadways; a particular favorite is the Pacific Highway (S21) between La Jolla and Oceanside.

Coronado's wide streets also are ideal for bicyclists. Bikes & Beyond offers rentals at Coronado's Ferry Landing Marketplace; phone (619) 435-7180. Bicycles can accompany passengers on the San Diego-Coronado Ferry for an extra 50 cents fare. Mission Bay Park is a bicyclist's haven. Visitors can rent bikes from Cheap Rentals on Mission Beach; phone (800) 941-7761.

Fishing

Fishing enthusiasts can enjoy many varieties of the sport: deep-sea, surf, pier, bay, shell and freshwater. Bottom-feeding fish are attracted by offshore kelp beds, and nearby Mexican waters contain barracuda, bass, bonito and yellowtail. Pier fishing does not require a license; try your luck from the public piers at Shelter Island, Ocean Beach and Imperial Beach. Fishing charters depart from Point Loma and Quivira Basin at Mission Bay Park.

Golf

Few cities can match San Diego's near-ideal conditions for golf. Rain seldom interferes, and mild temperatures promote year-round playing. Courses in San Diego County number more than 90, ranging from seaside to desert locations. Mission Bay Golf Course is lighted for evening play. Advanced reservations are a good idea.

The following courses offer at least 18 holes and are open to the public all year: Balboa Park Municipal Golf Course, 2600 Golf Course Dr., (619) 235-1184; Castle Creek Country Club, 8797 Circle R Dr. in Escondido, (760) 749-2422; Coronado Municipal Golf Course, 2000 Visalia Row in Coronado, (619) 435-3121; Eagle Crest Golf Club, 2492 Old Ranch Rd. in Escondido, (760) 737-9762; Eastlake Country Club, 2375 Clubhouse Dr. in Chula Vista, (619) 482-5757; Fallbrook Golf Club, 2757 Gird Rd. in Fallbrook, (760) 728-8334; Meadow Lake Golf Course, 10333 Meadow Glen Way E. in Escondido, (760) 749-1620; Mission Bay Golf Course and

Practice Center, 2702 N. Mission Bay Dr., (858) 581-7880; Mission Trails Golf Course, 7380 Golfcrest Pl., (619) 460-5400; and Torrey Pines Municipal Golf Course, 11480 N. Torrey Pines Rd. in La Jolla, (800) 985-4653.

Hiking

Hikers take advantage of the varied terrain north and east of the city. The hiking trails at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, just north of La Jolla, have ocean views. Mission Trails Regional Park, 8 miles northeast of downtown at 1 Father Junípero Serra Tr., covers nearly 5,800 acres of rugged hills and valleys. The visitor center, (619) 668-3281, contains exhibits that relate to the park's flora, fauna and history. Free hiking trail maps also are available. The visitor center is open daily 9-5.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding clubs offer horse rentals and riding facilities, and there are several horse rental agencies throughout the area. Within the Otay Sweetwater Wildlife Refuge, Bright Valley Farm, 12310 Campo Rd. in Spring Valley, boasts thousands of acres of open space crisscrossed with riding trails; phone (619) 670-1861.

Sweetwater Regional Park, south of San Diego and east of the town of Bonita, has about 70 acres for equestrian campers; day-use corrals are available as well. Miles of trails follow the Sweetwater River and Reservoir. Meanwhile, Border Field State Park (*see Recreation Chart*), bounded by the Mexican border on the south and Pacific Ocean on the west, has the only beach in Southern California where horseback riding is allowed; phone (619) 575-3613.

Jogging and Walking

Mission Bay Park is perhaps *the* destination for joggers. Other popular spots are the trails winding through Balboa Park, and along the Embarcadero downtown.

Kayaking

For those who just cannot make up their minds how to spend their

energy, Hike, Bike, Kayak San Diego offers many choices of day-long activities. Phone (858) 551-9510 or (866) 425-2925.

Tennis

Although many tennis courts throughout the San Diego area are at private clubs or hotel complexes, there are some convenient public facilities, some located in the major tourist areas. The La Jolla Recreation Center, 615 Prospect Ave. in La Jolla, offers nine free courts (five are lighted). The Balboa Tennis Club at the Morley Field Tennis Complex in Balboa Park makes its 25 courts available to nonmembers for a nominal fee; phone (619) 295-9278. There also are public courts at Mission Bay Park, Point Loma Park and at Coronado's city parks.

Water Sports

Miles of shoreline and two large, protected bays provide ideal settings for all types of water sports. Swimming opportunities include the ocean, Mission Bay and public pools. Ocean swimming is best June through September. The more popular beaches have lifeguards on duty daily.

Boating is a favorite pastime; hundreds of pleasure boats dot the ocean and bays daily. The major boating centers are Shelter and Harbor islands, Glorietta Bay and Mission Bay marinas. Rental and launching facilities for paddle and fishing boats, sailboats and powerboats are available at these areas.

Scuba divers favor La Jolla Cove and San Diego-La Jolla Underwater Park. For a recorded update about weather and diving conditions phone (619) 221-8824. To arrange a boat excursion try Ocean Enterprises; phone (858) 565-6054, respectively.

Surfing is an all-year activity, but wet suits are advised during all but the summer months. Among the popular surfing beaches are Imperial Beach, Mission Beach, Ocean Beach, Pacific Beach Park, Sunset Cliffs, Tourmaline Surfing Park and Windansea Park. Several more fine breaks dot the county coastline north of San Diego all the way to Oceanside.

Water skiing conditions are excellent on the calm waters of the bays. San Diego Bay has restricted areas due to naval and commercial traffic, but water skiing is permitted within Glorietta Bay. Skiing is permitted in certain sections of Mission Bay from dawn to dusk.

In addition to playing on and in the water, San Diegans also soar above it. Near Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve is the Torrey Pines Gliderport, (858) 452-9858, at 2800 Torrey Pines Scenic Dr. (Note: The gliderport is not accessible from the entrance to the reserve.) Here paragliders and a few hang gliders patiently wait for just the right gust of wind to send them sailing over the Pacific. On favorable weather days the cliff tops are lined with gliders sporting their colorful paraphernalia, and the view of the aerial acrobatics is superb.

Performing Arts

San Diego has become a major city in terms of its varied cultural offerings. The San Diego Concourse on 1st Avenue between A and C streets contains the City Administration Building, exhibit halls, the 3,000-seat San Diego Civic Theatre, home to the San Diego Opera and Broadway San Diego, and the 4,000-seat Golden Hall. The theater and hall are venues for ballets, operas, plays, musicals and concerts.

Copley Symphony Hall, a converted 1929 movie house at 7th and B streets, is home to the San Diego Symphony and is the cornerstone of Symphony Towers, which also contains a hotel and shopping arcade.

ARTS TIX, a public service of the San Diego Performing Arts League, sells discounted performance-day tickets for many theaters throughout the county. The box office is downtown at Broadway and 3rd Avenue in Horton Plaza Park; phone (619) 497-5000 Tues.-Thurs. 11-6, Fri.-Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5.

San Diego Convention Center, located along the bay at 111 W. Harbor Dr., has a futuristic architectural style with a roof line suggesting huge sails. The sprawling 650,000-square-foot complex has exhibit halls along with an open-air covered pavilion and an amphitheater

Dance

The California Ballet Company, (858) 560-5676, performs at several area venues. San Diego's two premier modern dance companies are Academy of Performing Arts, (619) 282-1884, and Malashock Dance & Company, (619) 260-1622, and they perform at various locations. Also performing throughout the area are the lively Filipino companies Samahan, (619) 422-3695, and PASACAT, (619) 477-3383, the Teye Sa Thiosanne African Drum and Dance Co. and Danza Mexicayotl Aztec troupe.

Visiting companies performing ballet, modern dance, jazz, tap and other dance styles appear at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido and at Mandeville Auditorium, on the campus of the University of California at San Diego. For schedule and ticket information phone (800) 988-4253 (California Center for the Arts, Escondido), or (858) 534-8497 (UCSD box office).

Film

In addition to the ubiquitous suburban multiplexes showing the latest Hollywood blockbusters—among them a 20-screen conglomeration in Mission Valley—there are several houses that specialize in non-mainstream features. The four branches of the Landmark show foreign films, offbeat independent productions and “small” movies targeting selective audiences. The landmark five-screen Hillcrest Cinemas, 3965 Fifth Ave., (619) 819-0236, is in the Hillcrest neighborhood; and Ken Cinema, 4061 Adams Ave., (619) 819-0236, is in the Kensington neighborhood northwest of Balboa Park. In nearby La Jolla is the La Jolla Village Cinemas, 8879 Villa La Jolla Dr., (619) 819-0236.

Music

The San Diego Symphony Orchestra performs its summer season at the Embarcadero, 206 Marina Pkwy.; during the regular season it offers its pops programs at Symphony Hall, 750 B St. Phone (619) 235-0804 for San Diego Symphony information. La Jolla has its own performing company, the La Jolla Symphony & Chorus; phone (858) 534-4637. The La Jolla Music Society presents classical music throughout the year. The

Celebrity Series, performed at the San Diego Civic Theatre, 3rd Avenue and B Street, and Copley Symphony Hall, 750 B St., showcases distinguished musicians and orchestras from around the world. The series of chamber music concerts comprising the Revelle Series take place at Sherwood Auditorium in La Jolla, along with the annual Summerfest series of concerts; for information phone (858) 459-3728.

Orchestra Nova San Diego offers the La Jolla Series in the Sherwood Auditorium on Mondays, the Downtown Series at St. Paul's Cathedral in Banker's Hill (near Balboa Park) on Friday nights, and the Qualcomm Series at the Irwin M. Jacobs Qualcomm Hall in Sorrento Valley on Saturday nights; phone (858) 350-0290. The 4th & B, 345 B St., offers a choice of standing room or seating and provides music of all genres, but only to patrons aged 21 or older; phone (619) 231-4343.

Free outdoor concerts are given Sundays at 2 at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park. During the summer, evening concerts take place Mon. at 7:30 p.m. The San Diego Men's Chorus holds an annual free concert at the pavilion as well; phone (877) 296-7664. The Gay Men's Chorus of San Diego performs regularly throughout the region; phone (619) 574-6273.

Opera

The San Diego Opera, founded in 1965, attracts international talent and has developed a reputation for outstanding productions. The season of four operas runs from January to April at the San Diego Civic Theatre. Free backstage tours of the state-of-the-art building are offered by reservation Sundays before matinees; phone (619) 533-7000.

Theater

Theater thrives in San Diego, where acclaimed stages and traveling Broadway hits are augmented by a healthy crop of emerging experimental and ethnic companies. Balboa Park's The Old Globe consists of three facilities: the Tony Award-winning Old Globe Theatre; the 251-seat Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, offering theater in the round; and the 615-seat, outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theatre. Contemporary and classic plays and musicals are presented throughout

the year, with Shakespeare receiving top billing in the summer. Phone (619) 234-5623.

Mandell Weiss Center, on the University of California San Diego campus in La Jolla, presents plays and musicals by professional touring groups.

The resident acting company at the San Diego Repertory Theatre emphasizes ethnically diverse plays. The company takes the stage at the Lyceum Theatre, within the downtown Westfield Horton Plaza complex. The Lyceum houses both the 545-seat Stage Theatre and the more intimate 270-seat Space Theatre. Phone (619) 544-1000.

For a more alternative theatrical experience try the Sledgehammer Theatre, downtown at 930 10th Ave., for cutting-edge satire and daringly thematic plays; phone (619) 544-1484. Also performing throughout the area is the Sushi Performance and Visual Art Group; phone (619) 235-8466.

The Coronado Playhouse, 1835 Strand Way, stages cabaret-style musicals; phone (619) 435-4856. The Welk Resort Theatre in Escondido entertains guests with Broadway hits; phone (888) 802-7469. Mystery Cafe presents interactive dinner theater; phone (619) 544-1600.

Special Events

San Diego celebrates St. Patrick's Day with a parade and festival in mid-March. April activities include the San Diego Crew Classic at Mission Bay, while May brings the Cinco de Mayo celebration. One of the city's most popular events, it celebrates Mexican cultural pride and brings historical re-enactments, folkloric music and dance performances, delicious food and old-fashioned fun to Old Town and the Embarcadero.

Balboa Park's San Diego Lesbian and Gay Parade, Rally and Festival begins on Friday of the last weekend in July; phone (619) 297-7683. Summer also brings a string of musical events to town, including the Harlem West Fest & San Diego Jazz Parade each July in downtown, followed in August by the San Diego Blues Festival at Embarcadero Marine Park South and the Encanto Street Fair and Cultural Arts Festival

in southeast San Diego. Summer wraps up with the Ocean Beach Jazz Festival in September at the foot of the Ocean Beach Pier.

In mid-September the San Diego Thunderboat Regatta is held in Mission Bay. Miramar's Marine Corps Air Station Air Show takes place in October. The Thanksgiving Dixieland Jazz Festival, in the waning days of November, is a popular event, while the Pacific Life Holiday Bowl college football game is a perennial sellout at Qualcomm Stadium each year in late December.

The Cabrillo Festival, held in late September, commemorates Spanish explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo's landing at the site of present-day San Diego in 1542. Festivities include a flag-raising ceremony; Mexican, American Indian, Spanish and Portuguese dances; and a re-enactment of the historic landing at Ballast Point.

Insider Info

Attraction Passes

The Southern California CityPass offers savings at five major Orange County and San Diego attractions. The pass includes a 3-day Disneyland® Resort Park Hopper Pass to Disneyland® park and Disney's California Adventure™ park; a 1-day ticket to Universal Studios Hollywood; a 1-day ticket to SeaWorld San Diego®; a 1-day ticket valid for admission to either the San Diego Zoo or the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park.

Through Jan. 3, 2011, the pass, valid for 14 days once the first attraction is visited, is \$269; \$229 (ages 3-9). The Southern California CityPass is available from participating attractions. For information phone (208) 787-4300 or (888) 330-5008.

Go San Diego Card is an all-access pass offering admission to more than 50 San Diego attractions. The card, which is purchased by the day (1, 2, 3, 5 or 7 consecutive calendar days), includes such attractions as the San Diego Zoo, LEGOLAND, the U.S.S. *Midway*, a whale watch cruise and a tour of Tijuana. Priced as low as \$28 per day (based on a 7-day card), Go San Diego Card is available at the International Visitor

Information Center, at 1040 1/3 W. Broadway at Harbor Drive; phone (800) 887-9103. The card also is available at the Birch Aquarium, 2300 Expedition Way in La Jolla.

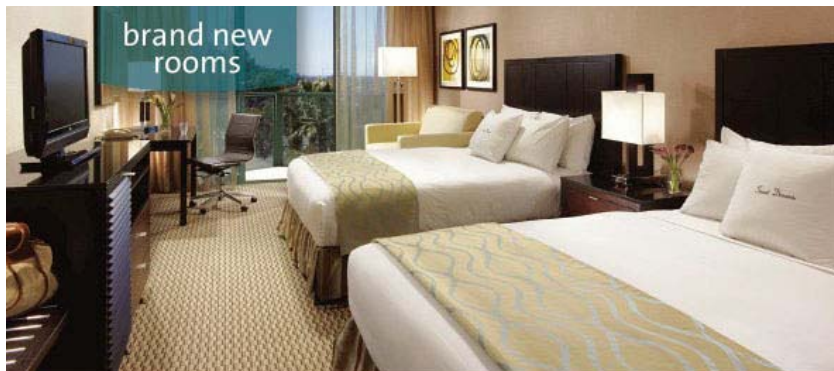
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A large graphic advertisement for AAA Travel. At the top, the text "It's Your Dream" is written in a large, elegant red cursive font. Below this, the text "...That Makes It Ours, Too" is written in a smaller, blue sans-serif font. To the left of this text are two small square images: the top one shows a river flowing through a rocky landscape, and the bottom one shows a group of people in red and white uniforms. To the right of the text, there is a block of text: "Access AAA.com/travel around the clock to research, plan and book your vacation. Or, let experienced AAA Travel professionals arrange all or part of your dream vacation for you." The bottom of the graphic features a collage of images including a tiger, a cityscape, a bridge, and the Sydney Opera House. At the very bottom, there is a red banner with the AAA Travel logo on the left and the text "AAA.com/travel" in white on the right.

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\$109* Sleeps up to 5 guests
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June thru August \$159*

Deluxe Room King or two queen beds featuring luxurious Sweet Dreams® by Doubletree premium bedding, private balcony, sofa sleeper, wireless high speed Internet, 32" LCD TV with Nintendo and free HBO and Cartoon Network, Wolfgang Puck coffeemaker, and refrigerator.



Features Heated pool & spa with poolside fire pit, Panini Grill & Bar, high speed wireless Internet access, state-of-the-art fitness center, gift shop, business center, and a warm cookie upon arrival. 100% non-smoking hotel.

Directions I-5 to I-8 East (El Centro); immediately move into the right lane. Exit Hotel Circle/Taylor St.; turn left at stoplight onto Hotel Circle South. Hotel is 1/2 mile down on the right.

\$149* Sleeps up to 6 guests
March and April \$179*
June thru August \$199*

Family Suite Kids room with bunk bed, activity table & chairs and 32" LCD TV. Separated by French doors, parents room has king or 2 queen beds and 32" LCD TV.

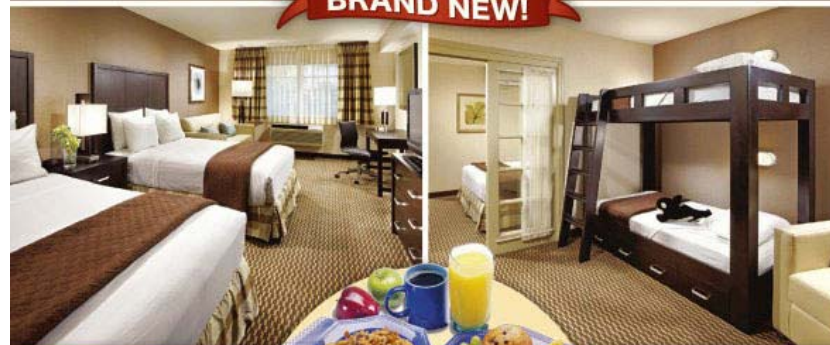
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San Diego, California 92108



*Subject to limited availability. Higher rates apply on some dates, holidays, for groups & special events. Rate reflects AAA discount. \$30 early departure fee. Parking fee additional.

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DELUXE ROOM
\$89⁹⁵*
SLEEPS UP TO 4 PERSONS
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FREE DELUXE BREAKFAST

Buffet includes an assortment of pastries and muffins, boiled eggs, toast, Belgian waffles, bagels, fruit, hot and cold cereals with milk, coffee, tea and a variety of juices.

SUITE OR KIDS SUITE
\$109⁹⁵*
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March and April... **\$129⁹⁵***
June thru August... **\$159⁹⁵***

Features 200 spacious brand new rooms and suites with refrigerators, heated pool, spa, sundeck and fitness center. Free wireless high speed Internet access & local calls. Business center. Pay-per-view movies, free cable TV with HBO, The Disney Channel and Cartoon Network. Phones with voicemail. Guest coin-operated laundry. Next to restaurant and lounge. 100% non-smoking.

SeaWorld. 2 for 1 Special!
Purchase a discounted one-day ticket at the hotel and your second day at SeaWorld is completely free!

Kids Suite (sleeps up to 4 persons) Give kids their own private bedroom with a bunk bed & 32" LCD TV. Separated by French doors, the parents' room has a king bed, a 32" LCD TV, coffeemaker, activity desk, microwave, refrigerator and iron/ironing board. Stylish new bathrooms.

Suites Have a private bedroom with two double beds and a living room with a sofa-sleeper, microwave, refrigerator, coffee-maker, two 32" LCD TVs, work desk with ergonomic chair. Brand new bathrooms with granite countertops.

Directions From I-5 take I-8 East (El Centro). Take first exit Taylor Street/Hotel Circle, turn left, then take first left (go over the bridge). Hotel is on the left.



ZOO/SEAWORLD AREA

2485 Hotel Circle Place, San Diego, California 92108 • 619-881-6200

*Subject to limited availability. Higher rates apply on some weekends, holiday periods, for groups & special events. Rate reflects AAA discount.



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