

SAN DIEGO TOP ATTRACTIONS

Balboa Park

Oasis is hardly hyperbole when it comes to describing this 1,200-acre cultural heart of San Diego. Take a peaceful stroll or plan a full day of perusing Balboa Park's many museums, theater spaces, gardens, trails, and playing fields. And don't forget the park's famous San Diego Zoo.

Beaches

San Diego boasts 70 mi of coastline, with beaches for everybody, from pail-and-shovel-toting toddlers to hard-bodied adventurous types—even nudists have their own sheltered spot at Black's Beach. Coronado is a family favorite, twenty-somethings soak up sun at Pacific Beach, and surfers swear by various stretches of shore. Life's a beach, here, literally.

Cabrillo National Monument

On the southern tip of the Point Loma peninsula, this landmark commemorates the 1542 landing of explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in San Diego Bay. Unparalleled harbor and skyline views, a military history museum, tidal pools, and an old lighthouse are among the offerings. In winter, lucky visitors may even catch sight of migrating gray whales along the coast.

Carlsbad Flower Fields

Fifty acres of flowers, mostly ranunculus, bloom in Technicolor hues every March on a hillside perched above the Pacific Ocean. Timing is everything, but if you visit in spring, don't miss this showy display of stunning natural beauty.

La Jolla

First things first: It's pronounced La Hoya. And it's one of the prettiest places in California, a wealthy enclave with a small-town feel and world-class scenic coastline. Visit the Children's Pool, populated by sunbathing seals, or watch locals ride waves at Windansea Beach. Then again, you could just shop and nosh the day away.

LEGOLAND California

A whole universe of LEGO fun awaits the pint-size set and their chaperones in Carlsbad, including more than 60 rides and attractions. Especially cool is Miniland USA, scaled-down cities built entirely from LEGO bricks, as well as Dino Island and the Egyptian-theme Dune Raiders, a 30-foot racing slide.

San Diego Zoo

One word: pandas. The San Diego Zoo has several of the roly-poly crowd pleasers. And yes, they're that cute. But the conservation-minded zoo offers much more, from Elephant Odyssey, the pachyderms' new \$45-million habitat, to oh-so-close encounters of lions, tigers, and bears. Explore the huge, hilly attraction by foot, or take advantage of the guided bus tours, aerial tram, and seated shows. Also a roaring good time: Escondido's Wild Animal Park.

SeaWorld

Awe-inspiring orcas and other cute sea critters perform splashy tricks at stage shows, but there's plenty else for families to enjoy, from the Journey of Atlantis water ride to feeding chum to bottlenose dolphins at Rocky Point Preserve. And don't miss SeaWorld's Penguin Encounter, one of two places in the world where emperor penguins are kept in captivity.

Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve

The nation's rarest pine tree calls this area home, as do the last salt marshes and waterfowl refuges in Southern California. Hikers can wind their way down windswept trails that stretch from the high coastal bluffs to sandy Torrey Pines State Beach below. Panoramic views abound.