



Sunset Travel Guide

Best of San Diego:
Hotels, Dining, and Attractions 2010



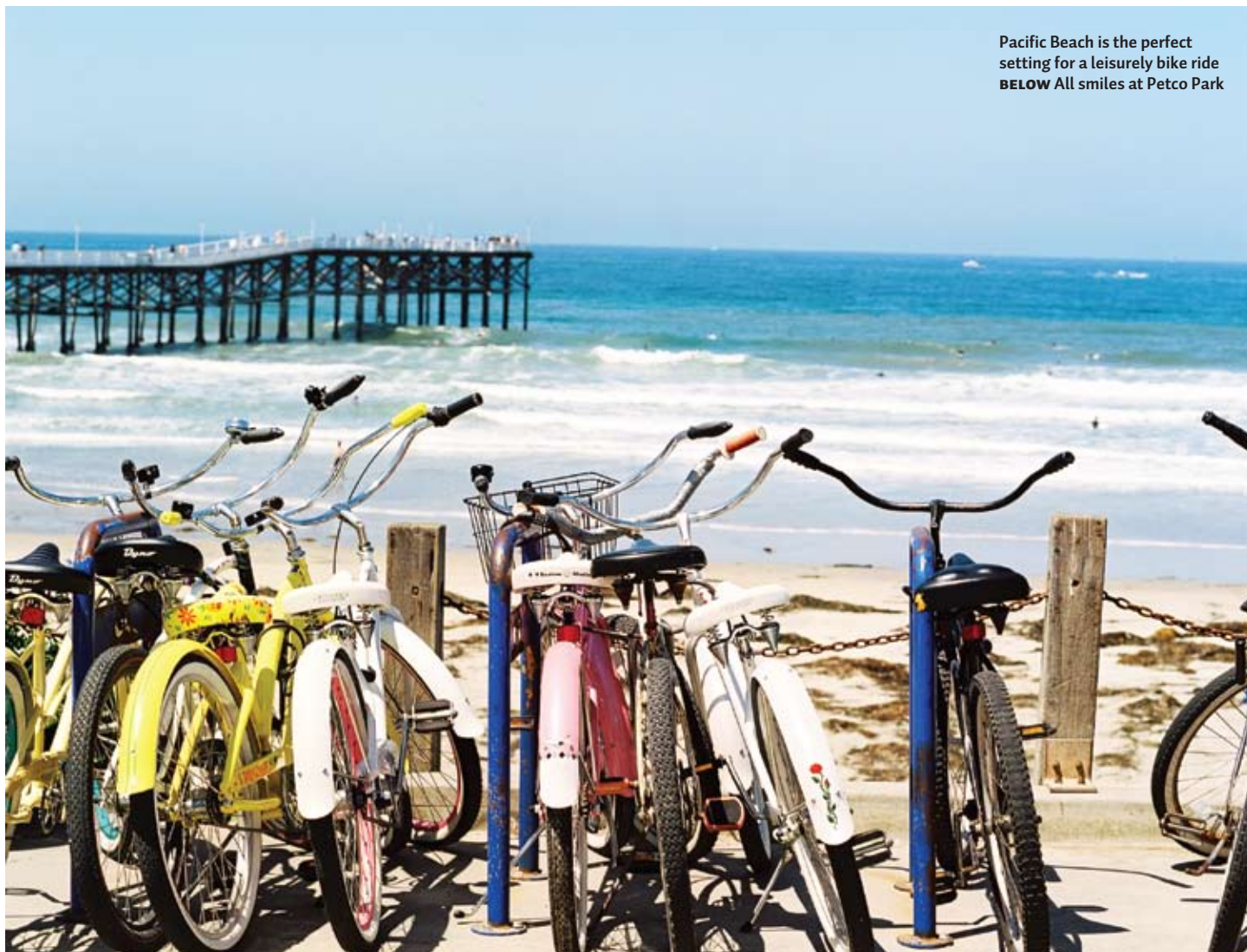
Sunset Travel Guide



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Pacific Beach is the perfect setting for a leisurely bike ride
BELOW All smiles at Petco Park

Sun Diego

Beaches, baseball, and a recharged downtown make the city an ideal summer getaway



At the end of Crystal Pier along San Diego's Pacific Beach, a pod of dolphins surfaces near surfers waiting on boards that rise and fall with the swell. A set comes in, and the first wave surges through the pilings, sending tremors up to the pier that cause it to shimmy and shake. The surfers paddle hard to catch the wave, and as the face builds, the sun turns it a glassy jade, revealing the dolphins as luminous silhouettes within the rolling wall.

Nine hundred feet away at the foot of the pier, Ocean Front Walk, the strand that links the city's beach neighborhoods, is rocking

and rolling too. It's a Sunday in August, and this boardless boardwalk is approaching Times Square density, hardly a surprise in a city where life is so famously lived in the sun, the sand, and the ocean.

We all know San Diego, right? Endless summer and endless tourist attractions: the zoo, Shamu, and all that coastline, too. But summer in San Diego isn't just about the beach. The San Diego Padres' ballpark has helped reinvigorate downtown, which bustles with clubs and restaurants. And few cities anywhere in the world can boast of an urban oasis with the architectural and botanical grandeur of Balboa Park.

Waves, baseball, and a touch of Europe—welcome to summer, San Diego—style.

San Diego plays ball

Petco Park is buzzing as the Padres prepare



Killer cocktails and views of the game at Altitude Sky Lounge **RIGHT** El Prado's ornate exterior



to play ball. Fans arrive by light rail or walk to the ballpark past the Victorian buildings of the Gaslamp Quarter and the onetime warehouses of downtown's East Village neighborhood.

At Petco, the city is as much a part of the ballpark as the ballpark is of the city, a Southern California take on the retro baseball stadium trend. Swaying palm trees cast shadows on the park's sandstone face as cool breezes blow in from San Diego Bay. The century-old brick Western Metal Supply Company building forms a section along the left-field line, and families picnic in the grassy area beyond the centerfield fence known as "the park in the park." Here kids play spirited Wiffle Ball on a tiny diamond, and toddlers frolic in a sandy play area that bumps up against the warning track.

From the grandstands behind the plate, fans look toward the skyline, where cranes

hover over the city as luxury buildings promising field views begin their rise. While the ballpark is the most impressive symbol of the changes downtown, the area is also being transformed by a seemingly endless number of residential projects.

Somewhere beneath all that construction, the tables at Cafe Chloe in the East Village are filling up. With its chocolate brown and white interior and Man Ray photographs on the walls, this is the kind of neighborhood bistro that every neighborhood should have. It's simple and elegant, a perfect complement to the French-inspired creations of chef Katie Grebow.

"Just a little place for the community," says Alison McGrath of the restaurant that she and her husband, John Clute, opened after moving back to San Diego from San Francisco. "No one was doing a true European-style cafe. This is a place where you can

nurse your coffee and work on your laptop. It's really egalitarian. We get people from 8 to 80. Artists and working-class folks. Grandmas for tea. And hot young couples heading for Gaslamp clubs."

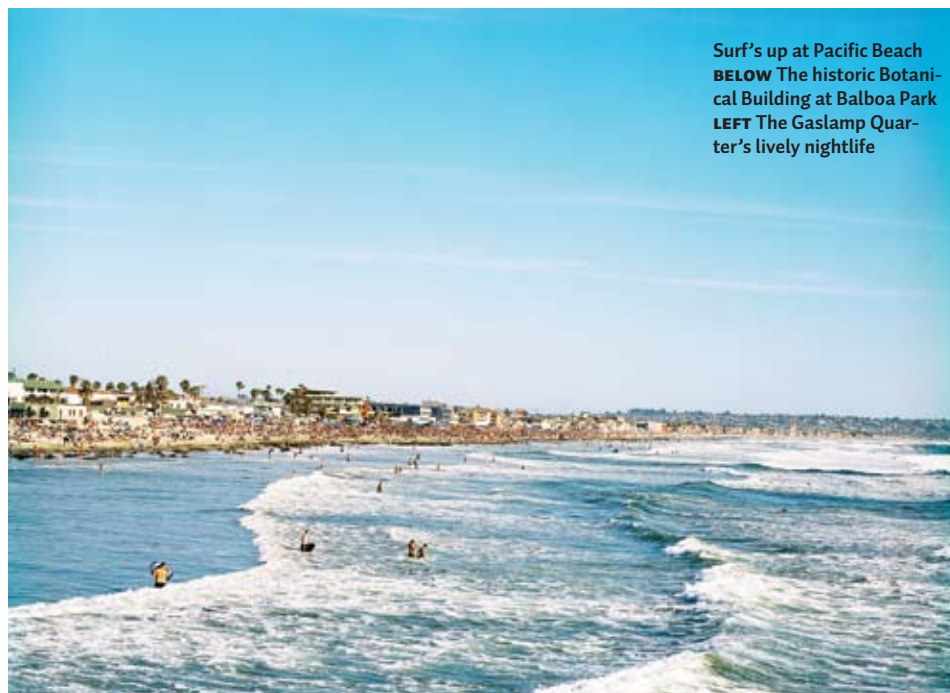
With its late-19th-century buildings, the Gaslamp may be a National Historic District, but Colonial Williamsburg it's not. Unlike Cafe Chloe, many Gaslamp restaurants and clubs—with their waterfalls, cabanas, \$20 covers, and firepits—have the production values of summer blockbusters.

And there are nights when the Gaslamp positively hums as flocks of 20-somethings, locals sampling the latest restaurants, and wide-eyed tourists become part of a good-time tableau. The revelry isn't restricted to the streets, though. The Altitude Sky Lounge perches on the 22nd floor, and as beautiful as its design and many of its patrons may be, nothing can rival the twilight view: down into the ballpark, across the bay to Coronado and out to Point Loma, and south into Mexico.

A city built around a park

Inside San Diego is a separate city, quieter, lush, more exotic. Cross Cabrillo Bridge—a 1,500-foot, seven-arch span—into Balboa Park, and you feel less like you've entered a standard American city park than some outpost of empire. Looking like the San Diego raj, lawn bowlers in their crisp whites stand out sharply against the brilliant hue of the bowling green. A dense forest of eucalyptus fills the air with an aromatic blast. And all around is a botanical fantasy-land of themed gardens—Japanese, replicas of formal designs from Spanish palaces, and thickets of cactus from around the world.

At the heart of the park is El Prado, the promenade of Spanish Colonial architecture built for the 1915 world's fair, the Panama-California Exposition. The bell tower and the Moorish tile dome of the fair's California Building contrast vividly with the San Diego sky. But grand as El Prado may be, Balboa



Surf's up at Pacific Beach
BELOW The historic Botanical Building at Balboa Park
LEFT The Gaslamp Quarter's lively nightlife



Park—like the beach—is above all a place where San Diego lives.

A Buddha-like bulldog riding in a red Radio Flyer wagon is wheeled beneath arcaded walkways and past façades thick with saints, martyrs, explorers, and goddesses. Flamenco music lures passersby as a guitarist plays beside a lily pond, and beneath the sweeping white colonnade of the park's organ pavilion, a man stands before the sea of empty seats, singing arias in a sweet tenor. For himself and anyone who pauses to listen.

In addition to El Prado, the other great gift of the 1915 fair is the San Diego Zoo; the exposition's modest animal exhibits grew into

what many consider the world's finest zoo. It's best known for marquee animals rarely seen in the United States, such as koalas and giant pandas. Three pandas have been born in the past two years. The zoo's current box office sensation is the panda cub Su Lin, who draws long lines of people hoping to watch her chomp on bamboo leaves.

To be honest, Su Lin seems to spend hours napping invisibly among the foliage. So as you wander the zoo's landscaped paths, give the other animals their due. Flocks of pink flamingos pose poolside like starlets awaiting their big break. Thick and ungainly on land, hippos reveal unexpected grace when you glimpse them (as you can here)

underwater. They don't actually swim, but instead tiptoe along the bottom with the delicacy of a prima ballerina en pointe—that is to say, a 3-ton dancer sans tutu.

Then there are Bornean bearded pigs. What's in a name? Exactly that: These are large tropical pigs with wild, bristly ZZ Top beards, animals so glorious in their ugliness that they seem destined to star in their own Pixar feature.

Along the San Diego sea

It's late afternoon, and the crowds along Pacific Beach have thinned, but the beach party isn't over just yet. The more motivated play touch football in the sand while summer-climatic expatriates from Arizona mix drinks on the patios of vacation rentals.

San Diego has its more sedate and natural beaches, but the boardwalk's nearly 4-mile stretch south from Pacific Beach through Mission Beach is decidedly urban, a hybrid of the Jersey Shore, Venice Beach, and the malecones of Latin America.

Balboa Park may be classical and operatic, the ballpark all-American. The beach, however, is the classic songs of summer come alive, even at post-punk Taang Records, a seaside music label and store, where all the young dudes watch the pretty California girls go by.

Timeless as the beach can be, something also marks the scene as distinctly of San Diego. There's an old Tom Petty song, "Louisiana Rain," which begins on this boardwalk, along the shores of what he called "the San Diego Sea." Geographic accuracy aside, that phrase captures San Diego's feeling of separateness, hemmed in as it is by the Mexican border, the Pacific, and the mountains to the east. This may be Southern California, but it is definitely not Los Angeles: The water is warmer, and the air is balmier, sweetened by a margarita of a breeze that blends the ocean, desert, and a splash of the tropics.

At the end of Crystal Pier, the view extends across the waves to where Mexico's *Islas Los Coronados* ride the horizon. The Coronados are just shadows as the sun drifts lazily toward the sea. The sandstone cliffs on the far north end of the beach begin to fire and glow. There's a noticeable pause and hush as everyone takes a break to check out the sunset. Because sometimes you just know that you're in the right place at the right time. And San Diego in summer is summer as it was meant to be.



A sailboat on San Diego Bay
RIGHT Flamingoes at the legendary San Diego Zoo
BELOW Enjoying a run in Balboa Park's Palm Canyon
LEFT Refreshing drinks at an East Village bar



Seeing San Diego

Balboa Park. With its concentration of museums specializing in everything from photography to model trains, it has been dubbed “the Smithsonian of the West.” Even excluding the San Diego Zoo, you could easily spend a couple of days here. A variety of tours are offered, and if you plan on hitting a number of museums, consider purchasing a Passport to Balboa Park (\$45, \$75 with San Diego Zoo admission), which covers admission to 14 attractions. For more park information, stop in at the visitor center (9:30–4:30 daily; 1549 El Prado). www.balboapark.org or 619/239-0512.

The Old Globe. One of the country’s top regional theaters, it has three stages in Balboa

Park. In Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way; From \$29. www.theoldglobe.org or 619/234-5623.

Petco Park. The ballpark has transformed downtown, and it’s well worth combining a game with dinner in the Gaslamp. 100 Park Blvd.; www.padres.com or 619/795-5000.

San Diego Zoo. Rare creatures, including giant pandas, and sensitively designed habitats such as the Monkey Trails environment make this a must-see. \$37. In Balboa Park at 2920 Zoo Dr.; www.sandiegozoo.org or 619/234-3153.

Other classics

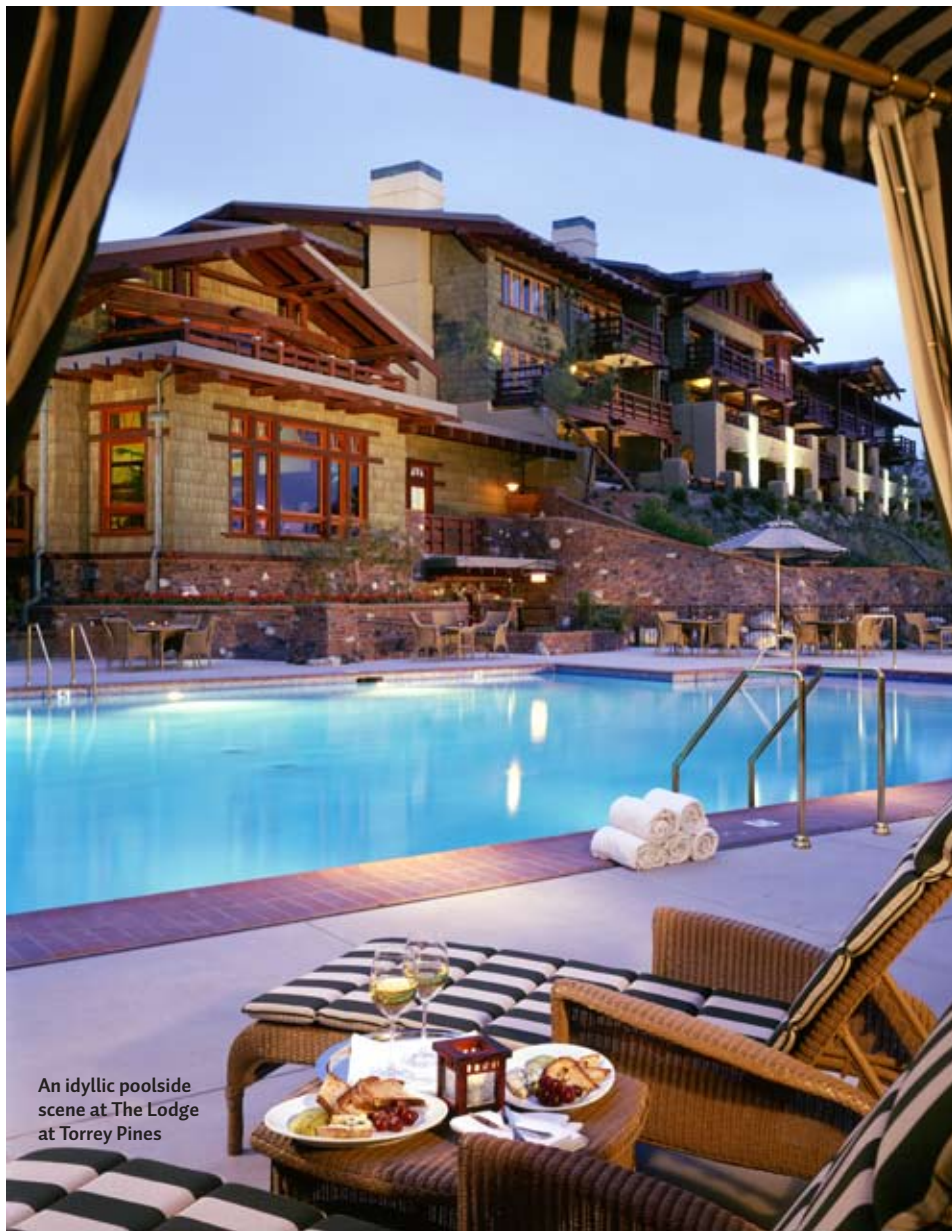
Coronado. Drive across the landmark San Diego–Coronado Bridge or hop a ferry from downtown to visit this island, which is a

world apart. Ferry \$3 one way; departs from 1050 N. Harbor Dr., San Diego; www.sdhe.com or 619/234-4111. (For more on Coronado, see page 17.)

Maritime Museum of San Diego. Vessels include the 1863 sailing ship the Star of India and a Soviet submarine. \$14. 1492 N. Harbor Dr.; www.sdmartime.org or 619/234-9153.

San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum. San Diego has a long naval history, and here you can tour the massive USS Midway. \$18. 910 N. Harbor Dr.; www.midway.org or 619/544-9600.

SeaWorld. The marine park debuts a new Shamu show this summer. From \$59. 500 Sea World Dr.; www.seaworld.com or 800/257-4268.



An idyllic poolside scene at The Lodge at Torrey Pines

Hot properties

Book a stay to remember at our favorite San Diego hotels

Bahia Resort Hotel. Located in lovely Mission Bay, this place just rocks. From the patio of your bayside room, the scene looks like Elvis and Ann-Margret will stroll by. *From \$209; www.bahiahotel.com or (858) 488-0551.*

The Bed and Breakfast Inn at La Jolla. Strike up the band. Located a block and a half from the beach, this B&B is the onetime home of composer John Philip Sousa. But it's not only the inn's pedigree that makes it special—it's

the details: sherry and fresh flowers in each of its traditionally styled rooms. The lower-priced rooms are a bit small, but you can stretch out in the inn's gardens and deck if you need a little extra space. *From \$239; www.innlajolla.com or 800/582-2466.*

Britt Scripps Inn. Elegant 1887 Queen Anne Victorian is perfectly situated for exploring Balboa Park. *From \$249. 406 Maple St.; www.brittscripps.com or 888/881-1991.*

Crystal Pier Hotel. Perched on a historic pier, these clapboard cottages are as close to the Pacific as you can get without having to hoist a jib. Lots of places tout their oceanfront setting, but these go one better: Try ocean-top, with the sea lapping beneath your bed as fresh salt air pours through the windows. With kitchenettes and killer sunsets, Crystal Pier is a wonderful place to hole up on a winter's weekend. Just plan ahead; they fill up early. *From \$235; www.crystalpier.com or 800/748-5894.*

Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa. The neighborhood couldn't be more contemporary California. It's next door to the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and across the street from the University of California, San Diego. You can feel the brain waves emanating from future Nobel Prize winners. But step inside the 9½-acre retreat, and you find tile-roofed guest rooms and lavender-scented courtyards—all so old California you expect Antonio Banderas as Zorro swashbuckling on a balcony. Estancia got its rancho roots honestly: It was once the site of La Jolla's Black Family Horse Farm. The casual Mustangs & Burros restaurant (\$\$-\$\$\$) and the more formal Adobe El Restaurante (\$\$\$\$) have a serene, secluded feel. As for the spa, with its garden suites for alfresco massages (*from \$115 for a 50-minute massage*), even Zorro and Nobel Prize winners must relax now and then. *From \$189; www.estancialajolla.com or 877/437-8262.*

Four Seasons Resort Aviara. Working from a thatched poolside shack, an official surf concierge makes waves with guests at this classy resort near San Diego. For experienced surfers, Gaughen is the go-to guy for surf conditions. For guests who are surfing neophytes, he puts together lessons at nearby beaches. Beginners are rewarded with a photo of their first ride. *Rooms from \$410; two-hour lesson \$100 for groups, \$125 private (resort guests only; 760/603-6800 ext. 6000); www.fourseasons.com/aviara or 800/332-3442 (hotel reservations).*

Glorietta Bay Inn. No need to stay at San Diego's sublime but pricey Hotel del Coronado (aka the Del) to enjoy all that it has to offer. Instead, stay across the street at this less-expensive nonwaterfront hotel and visit the Del for playtime on the beach, drinks at Eno Wine Tasting Room (*wine-and-cheese flight \$28*), a massage at the spa, or a bike ride along the beach with a cruiser from the on-site rental shop. *Glorietta Bay Inn: from*



\$185; gloriettabayinn.com or 800/283-9383. **Hotel del Coronado:** from \$355; hoteldel.com or 800/468-3533.

Hotel Indigo. Zoom up to the Phi Bar & Bistro on the ninth floor, pull up a couple of wicker chairs around the firepit, and order a local microbrew or two and a few appetizers (far better than the \$5 fries you'd get at the ballpark)—then wait for the first pitch across the street at Petco Park. From \$135, restaurant \$\$; hotelindigo.com/sandiego or 619/727-4000.

Hotel Solamar. Inspired by its surroundings, the property has adopted a theme of “art lies within” to celebrate the nearby, burgeoning East Village art scene. The interiors, done in chocolate browns and pale blues, are breathtaking indeed. So are the panoramic views of downtown from LOUNGESix, the bar located on the fourth-floor pool's deck. And business travelers will find that the hotel lies an easy ½-mile walk to San Diego's convention center. When spring arrives, though, Padres fans may think less about art or business

conventions than about baseball: The Solamar—which marks the first Southern California outpost of the San Francisco-based Kimpton Hotel & Restaurant Group—is so close to Petco Park that you almost feel as if you're partying in your own box seat. From \$145; www.hotelsolamar.com or 877/230-0300.

The Lodge at Torrey Pines. Situated near Torrey Pines State Reserve—home to one of only two natural stands of its namesake trees, the rarest pines in North America—the hotel draws its inspiration from this setting and offers another reason to visit the area. Meticulously constructed in the Craftsman style popular in Southern California a century ago, the lodge manages the difficult task of building soul from scratch. The porte cochere was based on Henry and Charles Greene's design for Pasadena's landmark Blacker House. The hotel's stained-glass doors depict a Torrey pine on an oceanfront bluff; designed by the Judson Studios of Highland Park, fourth-generation glassmak-

ers, they were inspired by the entrance of Pasadena's Gamble House. The lodge is a splurge. But day visitors can enjoy many facilities too, including the spa, which offers familiar treatments (from \$140) like hydrotherapy along with more exotic ones like the Indian-inspired foot and hand massages of the Ayoma Ritual. The lodge's restaurant, A.R. Valentien (\$\$\$\$), features contemporary California cuisine. From \$400; www.lodge.torrey.pines.com or 858/453-4420.

Tower23. Along with all the scenery comes quite a scene. The hotel, named after a nearby lifeguard tower, adds a touch of minimalist grace to the fun and funk of the city's Pacific Beach neighborhood. Think of it as the anti-Del: If the the Hotel del Coronado celebrates 19th-century elegance, Tower23 is all about 21st-century cool. As a Tower23 guest, you become part of the beachfront action, which includes the hotel's bar and its restaurant, JRDN (\$\$\$\$; *call for hours*). Whether from a lounge by the reflecting pool or a balcony room facing the water, it's fascinating to watch bicyclists along the beach slow down to take a look at this glassy apparition—and to check out who is staying here. Rooms are furnished simply but filled with creature comforts, including high-tech foam mattresses and 32-inch flat-screen TVs. But then again, who needs the tube when the best scenes happen just outside your window? From \$389; www.tower23hotel.com or 866/869-3723.

U.S. Grant. Once the hotel of choice for presidents (it's hosted 13 of them), it got a little tired toward the turn of the century. The 1910 landmark entered a new era following a \$52 million renovation and reopened with the panache of a classic city hotel and the style of a contemporary boutique inn. The materials of a bygone age—gold leaf, travertine, and alabaster—recall the hotel's heyday at the center of San Diego life. But the U.S. Grant is no exercise in nostalgia. The headboard in each room features one-of-a-kind modern works by French artist Yves Clement. And the hotel's restaurant, the Grant Grill (\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$), and its lounge are very much part of downtown's vibrant nightlife. From \$202; www.usgrant.net or 866/837-4270.



A fire dancer at Catamaran Resort **BELOW** Cool kitsch at Mister Tiki

Pineapple expressed

Save your dollars and find aloha in San Diego



Hawaii may seem a world away, but there are plenty of big waves and tiki-style spots closer to home. Here are some San Diego-based ways to catch the Hawaiian spirit.

Make your own lei

If a luau is on your tropical to-do list, the **Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa** offers a demo and the materials to design a floral garland for the event. A needle and thread, a pile of seasonal flowers such as plumerias,

orchids, mini carnations, and tuberose, and the rest is up to you. The resort's resident tropical macaw and cockatoo birds might make an appearance while you're at work. leis stay fragrant and can last more than a week if you refrigerate them and mist with water periodically.

A sunset luau

It's TGIF, Hawaiian-style. The **Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa** throws a Friday-night luau on the lawn by Mission Bay—and that means hula dancers in grass skirts, fire knife dancing, piña colodas, tiki torches, a ceremonial roast pig on parade, and Polynesian drumbeats from a live band. Dances and costumes come from different parts of Polynesia. It's faux Hawaii, of course, but the festivities are enough to spark your island imagination.



Paradise Point's pool **ABOVE** The resort's private beach **LEFT** Hula at Catamaran Resort

An ocean adventure

Bright orange Garibaldi fish, leopard sharks, giant sea turtles, sea lions, and seven sea caves to explore—it's not Kauai, it's La Jolla Shores. The caves are just a half-mile from shore via kayak, and **OEX Dive & Kayak Center** offers two-hour tours that include guided trips inside the Clam—one of just two caves you can enter (at high tide, you can go all the way through). About those silhouettes gliding underneath the boats: Hundreds (sometimes even thousands) of leopard sharks swim below the kayaks, and they're most abundant in summer. Thankfully, leopard sharks have small teeth (they use suction to eat). For the daring, snorkeling is another option.

Tiki-style

Mister Tiki Mai Tai Lounge—the name alone promises tropical cocktails and Polynesian kitsch, and the place truly delivers. The giant tiki masks on the walls, tableside lava lamps, and handblown glass blowfish on the ceilings add to the tropical flavor of this spot in downtown's Gaslamp Quarter. The drinks are delicious and pure tiki—try the lilikoi mojitos with white rum, passion fruit, fresh mint, and lime, or a coconut kiss martini with coconut rum, pineapple, and coconut cream (with an orchid floating on top). The happy hour (5–7 p.m.; \$5) includes sushi rolls and pupus (Hawaiian appetizers) like shiitake–goat cheese wontons.

48 hours of aloha in San Diego

FRIDAY Two tropical-themed spots to stay are **Paradise Point Resort & Spa**, a waterfront oasis with a Balinese-style spa and five swimming pools (from \$159; paradisepoint.com), or the **Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa** (from \$289, catamaranresort.com) with koi ponds, gardens, and a beach on Mission Bay. Hit the Catamaran Resort first for lei-making (3:30 Fri through Labor Day Weekend; \$10), then stay for the weekly Friday-night luau with Hawaiian music, fire dancing, and hula (6 p.m. Fri through Labor Day Weekend; \$35, \$15 ages 5–12; nonguests \$58, \$25 ages 5–12; 3999 Mission Blvd.; tickets at catamaranresort.com/luau).

SATURDAY Kayak to see the La Jolla Caves with **OEX Dive & Kayak Center** (from \$50; 2158 Avenida de la Playa; 858/454-6195). Have lunch at **Aloha Sushi Lounge** (\$\$; 7731 Fay Ave.; 858/551-5000). Drive to the nearby Pacific Beach neighborhood to **Motu Hawaii** (4150 Mission Blvd., Ste. 115; 858/272-6688), where you can buy a fresh flower lei (from \$10). Just blocks away is the gargantuan **Pangaea Outpost** (909 Garnet Ave.; 858/581-0555) with more than 70 spaces, some selling tropical soaps or tiki partyware. It's a 20-minute drive to the Gaslamp Quarter to dine at **Mister Tiki Mai Tai Lounge** (\$\$; 801 Fifth Ave.; 619/233-1183).

SUNDAY Take a private surfing lesson at the La Jolla Shores Beach with **Surf Diva** (\$83 for private 1-hour lesson; reservations required; surfdiva.com). Then head to **Buster's Beach House & Longboard Bar** (\$\$; 807 W. Harbor Dr.; 619/233-4300) for a tropical drink and an order of Hawaiian pork luau.

Hang 10

Surfing isn't just the sport of beach bums. These days anyone can ride a wave, and La Jolla Shores Beach is great for beginners, with its sandy-bottom shoreline and small waves. **Surf Diva**, a surf school started by twin-sister surfers in 1996, gives private or group surf lessons (wetsuit and board included). Lessons start on the sand, where you'll learn how to paddle, pop up, and master the surf stance before you hit the water.



Local ingredients cooked to perfection at Nine-Ten
BELOW Farm-fresh bounty hits the kitchen

Perfect veggies

A small group of locavore chefs are turning their restaurants into the best in San Diego's North County



Arterra

Brian Pekarcik meshes vibrant flavors from area produce, in consultation with überchef Bradley Ogden—king of California local and seasonal. Cucumber-pepper relish, an avocado terrine, and a mango emulsion all have a role in Pekarcik's lobster-and-crab salad. \$\$\$\$; *in the San Diego Marriott Del Mar, 11966 El Camino Real, San Diego; 858/369-6032.*

A.R. Valentien

Jeff Jackson comes in on the hearty end of

ingredient-based cooking, in an exquisite Craftsman resort setting. Juicy chicken roasted under a brick with smashed, then fried, fingerling potatoes and baby artichokes is always on the menu in some form. \$\$\$\$; *in the Lodge at Torrey Pines, 11480 N. Torrey Pines Rd., La Jolla; 858/777-6635.*

George's California Modern

Arguably the county's best waterfront food now, thanks to Trey Foshee. Dishes are built around grower-named produce, from Chino farm mâche salad to sea bass in a jumble of daikon radishes, pea shoots, and shiitake mushrooms. The once formal main dining room—bright and casual now—takes even better advantage of the sweeping views; the rooftop terrace offers open-air dining. \$\$\$\$



Delectable dining with a view at George's California Modern **RIGHT** Artful decor and presentation at Cafe Chloe



(Ocean Terrace Bistro: \$\$); 1250 Prospect St., La Jolla; 858/454-4244.

Market Restaurant + Bar

After years of working with Bradley Ogden at Arterra, Carl Schroeder opened his own place last July and now packs in the crowds with his eclectic, produce-driven menu. He still makes his longtime signature short ribs, but the scallops with sweet-pea pasta and a cipollini onion-and-mushroom ragout can't be far behind as new Schroeder favorites. \$\$\$; 3702 Via de la Valle, Del Mar; 858/523-0007.

Mille Fleurs

One of the priciest restaurants in the county and just a radish's throw from sensational produce source Chino farm (about a mile). Martin Woesle was the first local chef to come knocking, 20 years ago. From Germany,

he's a masterful adventurer in Continental territory: pickled herring on Chino beets, venison with blueberries. Vegetables on the side are the high point—the carrots are irresistible. \$\$\$\$; 6009 Paseo Delicias, Rancho Santa Fe; 858/756-3085.

Nine-Ten

Taste interesting, ingredient-conscious dishes from Jason Knibb—white asparagus salad with slow-poached egg, black truffle vinaigrette, and baby spinach and bell pepper (edgily cooked en sous vide) with a flatiron steak. \$\$\$\$; in the Grande Colonial Hotel, 910 Prospect St., La Jolla; 858/964-5400. Altitude Sky Bar and Garden Lounge. Rooftop bar with awesome people-watching. At the San Diego Marriott Gaslamp Quarter, 660 K St.; 619/696-0234.

More of our favorite citywide eats

Cafe Chloe. A gem in the East Village neighborhood with an excellent wine selection to boot. \$\$-\$\$\$; 721 Ninth Ave.; 619/232-3242.

Croce's Restaurant & Jazz Bar. Contemporary American cuisine and a solid musical lineup have made this a Gaslamp institution. \$\$\$\$; breakfast and lunch Sat–Sun, dinner daily. 802 Fifth Ave.; 619/233-4355.

The Fishery. In Pacific Beach, it has some of the best seafood in town. \$\$; 5040 Cass St.; 858/272-9985.

Kono's Cafe. Classic beachfront breakfast joint. \$; breakfast and lunch daily. 704 Garnet Ave.; 858/483-1669.

The Prado. Mexican and Mediterranean dishes and an outdoor patio in the heart of Balboa Park; perfect for pre-Old Globe dining or a relaxing sit-down meal during a park visit. \$\$\$; lunch daily, dinner Tue–Sun. 1549 El Prado; 619/557-9441.

Stingaree. Amid all the flash here, the food holds its own, especially such entrées as slow-braised Kobe beef. The rooftop bar has a preballgame menu. \$\$-\$\$\$; dinner Tue–Sun. 454 Sixth; 619/544-9500.



Tasting at Pizza Port
Carlsbad **RIGHT** Duck
tacos paired with a pint
at Stone Brewing Co.

Suds city

Welcome to the West's newest, most exciting capital of beer

"I guess i don't look like the guy running the joint," says Tomme Arthur. Port Brewing Company, the suburban San Diego County brewery that Arthur oversees, is tiny, but the brewmaster has a giant reputation—he's won "brewer of the year" honors three times at Denver's Great American Beer Festival.

"They have these expectations of someone wiser and older," says the baby-faced brewer, who turns 35 this month, as he pours

his Belgian-inspired Lost Abbey brews. "All of a sudden, they realize I'm the guy they came to see."

"They" are the masses of ale and lager connoisseurs from Belgium, England, Germany, Australia, and beyond who come to meet the man. Though he's not what people expect, Arthur perfectly represents San Diego's booming beer scene. Like just about all brewers here, he's as laid-back as a



day at one of the local beaches, yet his creations are surprisingly bold and sophisticated. And in this, he's far from alone.

A try-anything spirit

"For diversity, there is nowhere else like this anywhere in the world—the different styles, the different flavors," says Paul Buttrick, former brewmaster for British brewery Boddingtons and now a brewery consultant based in the United Kingdom.

San Diego's emergence on the beer scene flowed from the microbrew revolution of the 1980s and '90s. The national movement gained strength in this region for an odd reason: Southern California's notorious rootlessness. Without strong local brewing traditions, San Diegans were free to try anything and everything.

"Some of the most creative and interesting brewers in San Diego are simply following their own muse," says Greg Koch, co-founder and CEO of Stone Brewing Co. "We're creating our own reality." Here's another quirk: The beer scene here benefited by coming late to the microbrew party. "In the '80s and '90s, you already had well-established breweries in Oregon and the Bay Area," says Tom Nickel, a former brewer who owns O'Brien's Pub. "In San Diego, the attitude was, 'Oh, what's next?'"

The answer: beers that are coveted for their assertive hops, which provide bitterness and fresh, herbal notes; barrel-aged beers; cask-conditioned ales; and variations on traditional Belgian styles.

"You'll find pockets of this in Seattle, New York, Philly, San Francisco," Koch says. "But on a per-capita basis? We definitely have this going on."

A microcosm of microbrews

Though San Diegans take pride in their beers,



The gardens at Stone Brewing Co.

the local surf culture discourages beer snobbery. So tourists feel free to ask Beer 101 questions of Port Brewing Company's Arthur and of Peter Zien, whose AleSmith brewery has an international reputation in the world of beer. Thousands of visitors take the free daily tours at Stone Brewing Co., then stay for a meal in that brewery's lovely World Bistro & Gardens. Or they enjoy a pint at O'Brien's Pub, a renowned tavern where local brews share tap space with notable and rare beers from around the world.

While Belgian imports are hot here, San Diego's border location makes it an ideal place to get a taste of Mexico's resurgent microbrew scene. Tijuana Guera, Tijuana's well-balanced "session" beer (an easy-drinking brew), is one of several Mexican labels that's hard to find elsewhere in the States. Its availability here is yet another sign that when it comes to beer, all roads lead to San Diego.

A beer lover's guide to San Diego: 10 top spots

Beer Tasting only

AleSmith Brewing Co. One of California's smallest breweries, AleSmith has a huge following. Tours, on the final Saturday of

each month, draw visitors from around the world. Try: YuleSmith (released in winter as a double red ale and in summer as a double IPA) and Speedway Stout, considered one of the world's great beers. *Tastings (50 cents) and free tours (reservations required); call for hours; 9368 Cabot Dr., San Diego; alesmith.com or 858/549-9888.*

Alpine Beer Company. Its double West Coast IPA, Pure Hoppiness, is alone worth the drive into Mt. Laguna's foothills. Firefighter-brewer Pat McIlhenney's masterpiece starts with massive bitterness yet finishes smooth. How in blazes does he do that? Try: Pure Hoppiness and its triple IPA brother, Exponential Hoppiness. *Tastings (\$1) Tue-Sat; 2351 Alpine Blvd., Alpine; alpinebrewing.com or 619/445-2337.*

Ballast Point Brewing Company. This San Diego microbrewer produces ales and lagers in two locations: a nondescript warehouse and a strip mall. Try: Malty Calico Amber Ale and the stunning (but limited-production) Victory at Sea, a coffee imperial porter. *Tastings (from \$1.25); call for hours and locations; ballastpoint.com or 858/695-2739.*

Green Flash Brewing Co. Tucked into an industrial park, this place is hard to find but worth the effort. Try: West Coast IPA, a classic rendi-

tion of this SoCal style, with a bristling hoppiness. *Tastings (50 cents) and free tours 3:30-7:30 Fri and 12-4 Sat; 1430 Vantage Court, Vista; greenflashbrew.com or 760/597-9012.*

Port Brewing Company. What happens if you cross surf culture with the brewing traditions of Belgian monks? You get Tomme Arthur's Lost Abbey brews. Try: Cuvée de Tomme, with sour cherry and bourbon flavors. *Tastings (\$1) 4-8 Fri 12-5 Sat, and 12-4 Sun; 155 Mata Way, Ste. 104, San Marcos; lostabbey.com or 800/918-6816.*

Beer Tasting and Dining

Hamilton's Tavern. The full-service tavern in charming South Park has a jukebox, game tables, and a menu of organic pub grub. But the real attraction is the smartly curated beer list. Try: One of the cask-conditioned ales; the on-tap menu rotates weekly. \$; 1521 30th St., San Diego; hamiltonstavern.com or 619/238-5460.

O'Brien's Pub. Though it sits in a strip mall surrounded by noodle shops, this place, with 20 tap handles and 100-plus bottles to try, is often ranked among the country's top 10 beer bars. Try: Cabernale, the grape-infused ale from Pasadena's Craftsman Brewing Company, and Fantôme Saison, a Belgian farmhouse beer with a berry aftertaste. \$; 4646 Convoy St., San Diego; obrienspub.net or 858/715-1745.

Pizza Port Carlsbad. Part of the Port Brewing Company family, this barnlike brick building is the site of annual festivals celebrating ales and huge Belgian-style beers. Try: Hop Suey, a double IPA with oily, intense hop bitterness, plus touches of menthol and grapefruit. \$; 571 Carlsbad Village Dr., Carlsbad; pizzaport.com or 760/720-7007.

Stone Brewing Co. Dine in the airy restaurant or lovely gardens. Ken Wright's tours, on topics like how Arrogant Bastard Ale got its name, are fun and informative. Try: Stone Pale Ale and Stone Smoked Porter, both aggressive yet balanced. \$\$; free tours daily; 1999 Citracado Pkwy., Escondido; stonebrew.com or 760/471-4999.

Toronado San Diego. This sister to San Francisco's Toronado was an instant hit when it opened in 2008. Blame the 50 tap handles, strong on local brews and hard-to-find Europeans. Try: Rodenbach Grand Cru, a classic sour ale. \$; 4026 30th St., San Diego; www.toronadosd.com or 619/282-0456.

Couples enjoy a romantic stroll at Torrey Pines State Reserve



Love in La Jolla

Amazing art, graceful Torrey pines, and plenty of romance

It's late afternoon, the sweetest part of the La Jolla day.

A couple holding hands stops to watch a wedding along the scalloped shore. They begin to resume their stroll when an older man approaches them. He is distinguished in the way of an emeritus professor and dressed formally, with a scarf wrapped around his neck. Grinning shyly, eyes glistening and playful as if recalling some great love from long

ago, he says, "I can tell just by looking at you: You are so happy to have found each other."

It's not that such a moment, one that transforms an afternoon walk into a lifelong memory, couldn't happen in another town. But in La Jolla, where romance suffuses the air as surely as the Pacific breezes that sweep across the bluffs—well, maybe it's just a bit more likely.

Tempting as it is to describe La Jolla as

The scoop

STAY Hotel Parisi. Boutique hotel with European flair and great village location. From \$245; www.hotelparisi.com or 858/454-1511.

La Valencia Hotel. A pink-hued classic in the heart of La Jolla. From \$125; www.lavalencia.com or 800/451-0772.

The Lodge at Torrey Pines. Even if you don't stay here, it's a destination. Have a meal at A.R. Valentien and admire the architecture (see *Hot Properties*, page 7).

Scripps Inn. Luxurious B&B-style boutique hotel just across from the shore. From \$265; www.scrippsinn.com or 858/454-3391.

EAT Mission Coffee Cup. Retro decor and a modern take on comfort foods. \$; breakfast and lunch only; 1109 Wall St.; 858/454-2819.

Ocean Terrace Bistro. Casual, stylish, and with tremendous views—a sister spot to more formal George's at the Cove downstairs. \$\$\$; 1250 Prospect St.; 858/454-4244.

The Whaling Bar and Grill. Clubby and still a favorite La Jolla watering hole. \$\$\$; in La Valencia Hotel; 858/551-3761.

DO Gallery hop. Our favorites ranged from modern sculpture at the **Tasende Gallery** (closed Sun–Mon; 820 Prospect; 858/454-3691) to historic rock 'n' roll photography at the **Morrison Hotel Gallery** (1230 Prospect; 858/551-0835).

La Jolla Playhouse. A leading regional theater and the launching pad for this year's Tony-winning musical *Jersey Boys*. On the UCSD campus; www.lajolla-playhouse.com or 858/550-1010.

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. A must-see. Closed Wed; \$10; 700 Prospect; www.mcasd.org or 858/454-3541.

Torrey Pines State Reserve. Its namesake trees can best be seen on the Parry Grove and Guy Fleming trails. The Broken Hill Trail leads to an impressive overlook. \$6 per vehicle Mon–Fri, \$8 Sat–Sun; www.torrey.pines.org or 858/755-2063.

Old World, what really survives here is a graceful, vintage vision of Southern California. It's a place where folks converge at a palm-lined waterfront park each evening—no doubt to see the sunset but also to see who is out and about, taking part in a long-time La Jolla ritual.

A graceful village

Centered on the pink-hued, tile-topped tower of La Valencia Hotel, La Jolla climbs from the water's edge up gently curving,

Whimsy at MoCA
RIGHT Catch a
performance at the La
Jolla Playhouse



sloping streets. The village—nobody in this swanky community would ever call the commercial district anything so urban as downtown—tops a rocky peninsula.

It gives the ocean a more tangible presence here; look up from the village streets and you might see squadrons of pelicans gliding just above rooftop level.

La Valencia commands the village, both geographically and spiritually. It's one of those grand Southern California hotels that recall the era when wintering in balmy climes was part of the annual cycle of the well-to-do.

Elaborate tilework and painted Spanish details adorn its main lobby and lounge. Here you can settle in with a drink and take in a view across the hotel's red tile roof and through the swaying palms to the ocean. But its most evocative spaces are subtle ones: a tiny elevator still run manually and the Whal-

ing Bar and Grill, with vintage red leather banquettes and a now politically incorrect whale hunt mural.

A few minutes' walk away, the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego takes a similarly elevated position above the shore. There isn't a more beautifully situated museum in the country—and while you might expect a museum here to be devoted to something traditional, the collection is instead filled with challenging contemporary works. Many keep the sea close in mind, including *Pleasure Point*, a Nancy Rubins installation of canoes, rowboats, and kayaks that literally bursts from the building like the lid of an REI catalog.

Rare pines and a luxe resort

North of the village, the coast climbs to a mesa fronted by sandstone cliffs. The cliffs tower 300 feet above the ocean, creating an

isolated 5-mile-long beach as wild as the rest of La Jolla is refined.

Finding this kind of coastal seclusion is remarkable. But atop the bluffs is something more precious still: some of the rarest pine trees in all the world.

Torrey pines grow naturally only here, at their namesake reserve, and at Santa Rosa Island off the Santa Barbara coast. The trees survive from a forest that went into decline as the climate became drier 10,000 years ago. The fogs that wash over the bluff have allowed the Torrey pines to endure, though their twisted shapes convey the species's struggle to carry on in a changing world.

The trees have a place of honor at another one-of-a-kind spot atop this bluff: the Lodge at Torrey Pines. Set against a golden sky with the ocean in the distance, a Torrey pine atop a crag is depicted in stained glass in the lodge's grand entry doors. If ever an entry set the tone for a building, this is it. Every detail throughout reveals craftsmanship that belongs to another era, from the post-and-beam construction to the hammered copper fireplaces. Though it has only been open since 2002, you would swear it dates back to the heyday of the Arts and Crafts movement in the early 1900s.

The lodge is exquisite, managing the difficult task of benefiting from its location without intruding upon the scene—not unlike the city itself. They say that La Jolla means “the jewel.” Beautiful as a rare gem may be, it's never truly complete without its setting.

Tidelands Park Beach all abuzz
BELOW San Diego skyline views
from Coronado



There's no place like Coronado

Celebrate summer on San Diego's island of Oz



Follow the yellow brick road far enough, and you just might end up on Coronado Island along San Diego Bay. L. Frank Baum wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* on the 14.3-square-mile peninsula. It sprouts Technicolor cottages, beaches, and flowers—no wonder he called Coronado “the Queen of Fairyland.” Here are our top magical summer moments on Coronado.

VISIT EMERALD CITY With its towers and beach cabanas clustered like villages, **Hotel**

del Coronado just may have been Baum's inspiration for the Emerald City. After all, he wrote *Oz* while he was staying here. You don't have to be an overnight guest at the Del to get a taste of this glamorous spot, which has hosted presidents and movie stars and was the setting for the 1959 film *Some Like It Hot*. Try a sea salt exfoliation at the spa, sip margaritas at the beachside bar, or take a history tour and learn about (and maybe even see) the hotel's ghost.

GO EXPLORING Rent a cruiser and **bike** along Glorietta Boulevard to peek at stately mansions; take the Silver Strand bike path along the bay; or pedal through neighborhoods to check out the cottage gardens. For

GINA SABATELLA, SD DIRK (ON FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)



The Del, a Coronado icon
BELOW Savoring summer
LEFT The island's quaint
 architecture



an on-the-water perspective, rent a **kayak** at Glorietta Bay.

BROWSE FOR BEACH READS **Bay Books** has loads of magazines, plenty of literature, and, with its proximity to the naval base, a stock of military history books.

BEACH YOURSELF **Coronado Central Beach**, broad and long, with sugary sand, stretches out from the Del. Farther afield, look for the dog beach and surfing spot **toward North Island Naval Air Station**, where you can watch fighter jets land. Explore tidepools, then stay after dark for a bonfire. Quieter, smaller beaches are at **Tidelands Park** or the **ferry landing**.

ADD SOME SPICE Take a beach break and head

to **Miguel's Cocina**, across from the Del. Try the shrimp burritos with the famous jalapeño white sauce, or the grilled swordfish tacos. The Mexican eatery spills out onto the tiled courtyard of the Spanish-style 1902 El Cordova Hotel, dotted with shops.

COOL OFF WITH A TREAT **MooTime Creamery** is the gathering spot in the village on summer nights. Try black raspberry ice cream mixed with chocolate chunks.

EAT LIKE AN ISLANDER Start your day with a spinach, tomato, and gruyère cheese quiche at **Tartine**, a sunny cafe near the ferry landing.

RIDE THE FERRY Take a 15-minute ride from Coronado **across the bay to downtown San Diego**. You'll get gorgeous views of the bay,

48 hours in Coronado

FRIDAY **Hotel del Coronado** (from \$355; hoteldel.com) is the obvious choice, but there are more budget-friendly lodging options. Try **Glorietta Bay Inn** (see *Hot Properties*, page 6), former home of Coronado developer John D. Spreckels. Check out an enlightening exhibit (\$4 suggested donation) at the **Coronado Visitor Center** (1100 Orange Ave.; coronadovisitorcenter.com), or take a history tour (Fri–Sat; from \$10; 617/437-8788). Watch the sunset over drinks at the Del (\$; 1500 Orange; 619/522-8490).

SATURDAY Breakfast at **Tartine** (\$; 1106 First St.; 619/435-4323), then get beach reads at **Bay Books** (1029 Orange; 619/435-0070). Shop at **Emerald City** (1118 Orange; 619/435-6677) for beachwear before hitting the sand (coronado.ca.us). Take the **San Diego Bay Ferry** (\$3.50 one way; Coronado Ferry Landing, 1201 First; sdhe.com/san-diego-bay-ferry.html) to explore downtown San Diego, or return for dinner at **Miguel's Cocina** (\$\$; 1351 Orange; 619/437-4237). Catch a play at **Lamb's Players Theatre** (1142 Orange; lambplayers.org), then try the ice cream at **MooTime Creamery** (1025 Orange; 619/435-2422).

SUNDAY Fuel up with pancakes from **Clayton's Coffee Shop** (\$; 979 Orange; 619/435-5425), then rent a bike from **Holland's Bicycles** (from \$7 per hour; 977 Orange; hollandsbicycles.com) or a kayak from **Seaforth Boat Rentals** (from \$18 per hour; 1715 Strand Way; seaforthboatrental.com). **Boney's Bayside Market** (155 Orange; 619/435-0776) has picnic fare for lunch.

the San Diego–Coronado Bridge, the skyline, plus the naval station's aircraft carriers.

SAMPLE ISLAND CULTURE The professional company at the **Lamb's Players Theatre** puts on performances year-round in the ornate 1917 Spreckels Building.

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