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### [CALIFORNIA](#)

Whether you fly into San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego or drive into California you will find plenty of activities, attractions and entertainment in the Golden State. Residents of the state spend a lifetime here and still don't see it all. California has more than 1,100 miles of beautiful pacific coastline, hundreds of state parks, the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains, Mt. Whitney, ancient redwood forests, deserts, great year-around climate, and the center of the worlds entertainment industry, Hollywood. There are a total of 163,696 square miles to explore.



BOOK YOUR CALIFORNIA VACATION



### [San Francisco](#)



Lets start with the world famous city in the northern part of the state, **San Francisco**. The San Francisco Bay Area is home to over 7-million people who love it. The beauty of the area and cultural diversity makes San Francisco one of the world's most popular tourist destination. The picturesque scenery regularly attracts the motion picture industry to film on location and promote the city to the world. San Francisco is like a little piece of Europe hanging on to the edge of

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the world, connected by bridges and the San Francisco Peninsula to the mainland.

Its most famous bridge, The Golden Gate Bridge, is the city's most visible landmark. Completed in 1937, the deck of the bridge is about 260 feet above the water, the span of the bridge is 1.2 miles (1.7 including the approaches), the towers are 746 feet high, and the main suspension cables are made of 80,000 miles of wire. Although it's not the largest suspension bridge in the world, its still an ominous engineering wonder for its time. Its beauty makes for one of the City's favorite photo opportunities for all visitors. Taking a drive, walk, bike or skating across the bridge is a must.



Just to the east of the Golden Gate Bridge, sitting in the middle of the San Francisco Bay, you can't help to notice the little island of Alcatraz, the historic high security prison. The faces of Al Capone, the Bird Man Robert Stroud, Machine Gun Kelly and other notorious characters disappeared long ago but the legends are preserved. The "rock" as it's called is now a historic park operated by the National Park Service. It's a little less than 19 acres. The rock served as a military base, a military prison and later a federal prison during the great depression and prohibition. No prisoner had ever successfully escaped from Alcatraz although there were numerous unsuccessful attempts. Daily tours of Alcatraz are available by ferry service from San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf.

Fisherman's Wharf is one of San Francisco's most popular tourist attractions. Situated along the northern waterfront of the city, it's the place to go for the local Dungeonus crab and clam chowder served in a San Francisco Sour Dough bread bowl (Bodin's at the Wharf is the best). You'll find many top gourmet seafood and Italian restaurants along the waterfront. Dining here is a favorite past time. Shopping in the Wharf area is a lot of fun. Here you can pick up some of those only in San Francisco souvenirs. A main attraction in the area is the many street performers and local artists. You can hear local musicians, watch hip-hop dancers, mimes, magicians, comics and just people watch. Be sure to stop into Lou's Blue's Club for a beverage. Lou's has some of the best local musicians all day long. Local Wharf attractions include the Wax Museum, Ripley's Believe it or Not Museum, Girardelli Square, the Maritime Museum, Aquatic Park and the cable car turn-around.



No visit to Fisherman's Wharf is complete without stopping at Pier 39 and seeing the many wild Sea Lions that mysteriously hang out there. They'll bark and entertain you with their antics. Pier 39 is a tourist attraction of many local shops, restaurants and bars. A good place to eat on the Pier is The Pier Market. At Fisherman's Wharf we recommend dining at The Franciscan, Scoma's, Pompie's

Grotto, or The Blue Mermaid. The Pier Market, Pompei's Grotto and The Blue Mermaid allow dogs to dine with you on their patios (Great if you're traveling with your pet. Also The Sheraton at Fisherman's Wharf allows pets to stay).

Adjacent to Fisherman's Wharf is San Francisco's primarily Italian North Beach neighborhood famous for its fine Italian restaurants, many cafes, Jazz, Blues and nightclubs. Baseball legend Joe DiMaggio grew up in the neighborhood and later had a home there with his famous wife Marilyn Monroe. Janis Joplin also lived there. This neighborhood loves it many street fairs. North Beach is recognizable from the many Hollywood films that have been shot here.



If you are a shopper you can head into the heart of San Francisco and visit Union Square. This is San Francisco's high-end shopping district. Names like Gucci, Tiffany, Cartier, Rolex, Louis Vitton, and Coach are common. This is the place to find the latest fashions & trends. The Union Square area is also popular for its theatres featuring live Broadway performances. Some of San Francisco's finest hotels and restaurants are found in the area. The famous San Francisco Cable Car Line runs through Union Square on Powell Street. It's a great place to catch a cable car and experience this historic mode of transportation. Just a few blocks away from Union Square is Chinatown. This is one of the largest Chinatowns outside of Asia. The food is authentic and the Dim Sum is simply the best in the country. A great place to eat in the Union Square area is John's Grill, a historic landmark.

Some other popular San Francisco attractions are: Angel Island, the Aquarium on the Bay at Pier 39, Golden Gate Park, the San Francisco Zoo, the Palace of Fine Arts, the Height & Ashbury neighborhood, Coit Tower, the San Francisco Ferry Building, Embarcadero Center and the Transamerica Pyramid.



COIT TOWER



PALACE OF FINE ART



FERRY BUILDING

Leaving San Francisco, to the east across the bay you'll find Oakland. To the north you'll find Marin County, Sonoma & the Napa Valley wine country. To the south are San Jose, the famous Silicon Valley, Santa Cruz, Monterey and Carmel by the Sea. Day trips around the greater Bay Area can yield great site seeing, many attractions and enjoyment for the entire Family. The Wine Country, about an hour north of San Francisco, is one of the most popular day trips.



You can wine & dine

among the gorgeous vineyards and beautiful green valleys. Wine tasting from winery to winery is a great way to spend the day. Add a gourmet lunch or diner in one of the many fine restaurants the area has to offer and you have a memorable day. Children and teens opt to visit one of the areas theme amusement parks such as Great America, Six Flags Discovery Kingdom (formerly Marine World Africa USA), or the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. If you're willing to venture several hours by car and perhaps spend the night you can visit Lake Tahoe, Mt. Shasta & Lake Shasta, Yosemite National Park, the rugged Mendocino coast, Monterey, or Hearst Castle.

If you continue driving south towards Los Angeles along the California coast you will pass the beautiful beach town of Pismo Beach. Downtown includes a municipal pier with some adjacent beachfront hotels, restaurants, and shops. Newly added hotels include The Vespera Hotel and the Inn at the Pier. The Vespera is one of Marriott's "Autograph Collection" properties. It includes a wonderful on-site restaurant & bar, gym, an ocean front pool & pool bar. Oceanfront dining near the pier includes The Oyster Loft and Wooly's Beach Bar & Grill. Wooly's includes a dog friendly beachfront deck and bar, which is always a great place to watch the sun go down.



YOSEMITE



HEARST CASTLE



MONTEREY

**VoyageMonkey.Com recommends the following top hotels in San Francisco:**



**Four Seasons** – The 5-Star Four Season's is located at 757 Market St. just a few blocks from Union Square in the heart of the shopping district. Its proximity to The Westfield Centre makes this an ideal location for the shopper in the family. You'll be walking distance from great shops, restaurants, bars and entertainment. Great public transportation like BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit), light-rail and the cable car line are steps from your front door.

There are 277 guest rooms including 46 suites with stunning views of the city. You can dine at the casually elegant Season's restaurant, enjoy the fitness center and indulge in a spa treatment. Guests can enjoy the junior Olympic pool at Sports Club/LA.

**Mandarin Oriental** – The 5-Star Mandarin Oriental is located at 222 Sansome St. near Embarcadero Center



in the heart of the financial district. The hotel is just a short walk from BART, light-rail, California cable car line, Embarcadero Plaza and the historic Ferry Building & ferry terminal. Many of the rooms have spectacular views of the city and the bay. The hotel has a 24-hour fitness center and a business center. Guest can dine on-site at Silks, voted one of the top restaurants in San Francisco for Pacific Rim Cuisine, or simply enjoy The MO Bar for soft music and cocktails before going out on the town. The hotel offers excellent 5-Star service. The concierge can assist you with all your activities while in San Francisco.



**The Westin St. Francis** – The 4-Star Westin St. Francis is located at 335 Powell St. directly in front of Union Square along the Powell St. cable car line. The hotel has the best view of Union Square and is great for its location, location, location. The historic part of the hotel that overlooks the square opened in 1904.

The tower building was added later. There are over 1,200 guest rooms each featuring Westin’s trademark Heavenly Pillow-Top Beds. Guest can order an in-room spa treatment or visit the health club & spa. On-site restaurants include Michael Mina’s, The Oak Room, Caruso’s and the Clock Bar. Other guest amenities include the Westin Kids Club for guests traveling with children.

**Hyatt Regency** – The 4-Star Hyatt Regency is located at 5 Embarcadero Center on Embarcadero’s Justin Herman Plaza across from the historic Ferry Building & ferry terminal. The hotel has a large open atrium style design with a large open middle indoor courtyard. There are 802 comfortable guest rooms with city or bay views. The hotel has front door access to BART, light-rail, the California cable car line and the ferry terminal. The hotel includes on-site dining, bars & entertainment. There is a 24-hour gym and substantial meeting facilities. There is usually some event going on in the plaza and this is a great hub location to tour the city.



Other recommended hotels include: The Argonaut Hotel at Fisherman’s Wharf (4-Star); Le Meridian in the financial district (4-Star); The St. Regis south of Market St. near Yerba Buena Gardens (5-Star); and The Sheraton at Fisherman’s Wharf (3-Star, dog friendly and short walk to Pier 39).



LE MERIDIAN



ST. REGIS



SHERATON

**Los Angeles**





About 400 miles south of San Francisco is California's largest city, **Los Angeles** (L.A.). The City is spread out over 469 square miles not including the surrounding metropolitan areas, which altogether is home to approximately 13 million people. Some of these residents are famous celebrities as L.A. is home to the world's entertainment, motion picture & television industry. It is not uncommon to see celebrities around town going about their business. The average annual temperature in L.A. is around 66°F although temperatures in the summer are usually around 80°F but can exceed 100°F on very hot days. This makes for great beach weather. L.A. has over 50 miles of beautiful coastline and 33 public beaches.

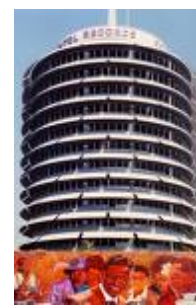
Visiting Hollywood, the Sunset Strip and Beverly Hills is a great way to start seeing L.A. as a tourist. A good place to start is Hollywood Blvd. Near Vine St. Here you'll find the landmark Capital Records building, the world's first circular office tower, and the historic Pantages Theatre (once home to the Oscar Awards). Further down Hollywood Blvd. You'll find the Hollywood & Highland Center and the Kodak Theatre (the new home of the Oscar awards). The Hollywood & Highland Center is a great place to shop for the latest fashions and it's a great place to get a photo of the famous Hollywood Sign on the hill. As you continue down Hollywood Blvd. The Hollywood Walk of Fame begins. You can stroll down the sidewalk and find the bronze star of your favorite celebrity. The Hollywood Walk of fame will take you past the world famous Grauman's Chinese Theatre where you can find famous celebrities' footprints and handprints immortalized in the cement courtyard. There is always lots of activity going on around Hollywood Blvd.



WALK OF FAME



GRAUMAN'S

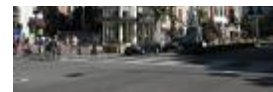
CAPITAL  
RECORDS

Just south of Hollywood Blvd. Lies Sunset Blvd., commonly referred to as "The Sunset Strip." Generations of the L.A. rock and comedy scene have passed through this strip from Jim Morrison & the Doors to George Carlin, Cheech & Chong, Motley Crue and Guns & Roses. The Strip is lined with famous clubs such as The Roxy, House of Blues, The Viper Room, The Laugh Factory and The Comedy Store. The strip is a great place to come at night for entertainment. Shopping at Sunset Plaza is a great place to keep an eye out for celebrities.

If you keep going west on Sunset Blvd. You'll reach UCLA and the affluent celebrity communities of Beverly Hills, Bel-Air and Brentwood. You can



obtain a celebrity homes map and check out the neighborhoods looking for your favorite celebrities' homes (don't knock on the door). The famous Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills is a good place to "window shop." The Beverly Hills Hotel on Sunset Blvd. is always a good place to stop in for a drink and hors d'oeuvres.



MALIBU

Continuing west on Sunset Blvd. you'll reach the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) and the beaches. Malibu and Zuma Beach are just to the north and Santa Monica and Venice Beach are just to the south. While visiting Malibu make sure to dine on the beach at Paradise Cove Beach Cafe. It has fabulous food and the best beach setting. Duke's Malibu restaurant is also very popular for food and drinks and its perfect oceanfront setting. Further south lay the Beach communities of Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach and the City of Long Beach. The L.A. area has some of the best beaches. Many of the beaches are very long and wide making them ideal for beach volleyball and other beach activities.

Start with a visit to the Santa Monica Pier's Pacific Park where you can ride the Ferris wheel, play arcade games and drive bumper cars. Here you can rent a bike or skates and stroll down the boardwalk to Venice Beach. At Venice Beach there are hundreds of local vendors & artist along the boardwalk (Ocean Front Walk) as well as small shops and boutiques. Venice is a great place to people watch. Venice is the home of Muscle Beach where body builders are working out at an outdoor gym on the beach. You'll find everything here from girls skating in skimpy bathing suits, beach volleyball, basketball courts, handball courts, swammies on skates playing guitar, surfing, sun bathing, street performers and professional masseuses giving chair massages along the beach. If you are into people watching this is the place for you.



One of Los Angeles's most popular tourist attractions is Universal Studios Hollywood. Kids will enjoy the thrill rides and impressive shows. The star attraction is the studio tour where you will get a behind the scenes look at sets of hit movies and favorite television shows. You'll see how movies are made and how some of those spectacular stunts are captured on film. The park is located next to the USC Campus.

Probably the most popular attraction of the area for families is The Disney Land Resort, which includes The Disney Land Park & Disney's California Adventure Park. The resort is located around 45-minutes south of Downtown L.A. The expansion of Historic Disney Land to include Disney's California Adventure Park was completed in 2001 to create a resort atmosphere similar to Florida's Disney World. The resort hotels include Disney Land's Grand California Hotel & Spa, The Disney Land Hotel and Disney Land's Paradise Pier Hotel. The Disney Land Park strives to be the "happiest place on earth" while Disney's California Adventure Park is a "California-Golden State" theme celebrating the treasures of the golden State. It's like a Mimi-California.



A popular day excursion is to take a ferry out to Catalina Island. Ferry service runs regularly from the Port of Los Angeles, Marina del Rey or Long Beach to Avalon, Catalina's main town. You can stroll the quaint streets of Avalon, enjoy the restaurants and shops or explore the island and observe its flora, American Bison and foxes that call the island home. Since cars are restricted, bicycles are a popular way to get around. The Island is only 22 miles long by 8 miles wide. The only other town on the island is Two Harbors at the northern end. Around 4,000 people live on the island, most in or near Avalon. The landmark art deco Casino in Avalon was constructed in 1929 as a dance hall. Today, part of the dance hall serves as a movie theatre. It has never been used for gambling. Descanso Beach just west of the casino is a popular place for tourists to relax and soak up the sun.

Other theme parks and attractions in the greater L.A. area include: Six Flags Magic Mountain & Hurricane Harbor Water Park; California's largest water park - Raging Waters in San Dimas; Knotts Berry Farm; the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach; The Getty Center; UCLA Campus; Griffith Park and the Griffith Observatory; The Walt Disney Concert Hall; Chinatown, Koreatown and Little Tokyo; The Museum of Art; The Coliseum, Staples Center and Dodger Stadium; and, The Hollywood Bowl.



HOLLYWOOD BOWL



PALM SPRINGS

North of L.A. along the coast you'll find the City of Santa Barbara. South of L.A. sits the city of Long Beach and Orange County's ("OC") affluent beach communities of Seal Beach, Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, Laguna Beach, Dana Point, San Clemente and San Juan Capistrano. These beach communities are well worth a visit to get a good taste of the California lifestyle. To the east of L.A a couple hours by car you can visit Palm Springs, the Mojave Desert, and Death Valley.

**VoyageMonkey.Com recommends the following top hotels in the Los**



## Angeles area:

**Four Seasons** – The 5-Star Four Seasons is located at 300 S. Doheny Dr. in the affluent Beverly Hills community minutes from Rodeo Drive. There are 285 luxurious guest rooms and suites, all with private balconies and twice daily house keeping service. The hotel features a luxurious tropical garden pool terrace complete with cabanas. Enjoy the fitness center or a spa treatment at one of Los Angeles' most exclusive spas and perhaps rub elbows with the stars. There are several restaurants and lounges as well as in-room gourmet dining. The service is excellent and it's hard to beat the Hollywood ambiance.



**Omni Los Angeles** – The 4-Star Omni Hotel is located at 251 S. Olive St. on historic Bunker Hill at California Plaza in the heart of downtown near the Civic Center. The 17-story hotel includes 453 luxurious guest rooms and suites fully equipped for business & leisure travelers. The presidential suite offers 2,855 square feet of space. Hotel amenities include an outdoor lap pool, fitness center, The Spa at the Omni, The Grand Café, and the highly acclaimed Noe Restaurant and Bar that offers progressive American cuisine with a Japanese touch. The Omni allow pets under 25 lbs. Complimentary town car service is available within a 3-mile radius of the hotel (first come first serve basis). The hotel offers a great downtown location.

**Sofitel Los Angeles** – The 4-Star hotel is located at 8555 Beverly Blvd. at Beverly Center in the Beverly Hills community. The hotel features French styling mixed with Hollywood glamour. The lobby is very modern looking with sleek lines and colors. There are 295 state-of-the-art guest rooms offering high-definition TV, WiFi Internet service and French bath amenities. The hotel is within minutes of Rodeo Drive, Melrose Ave. and Sunset Blvd. The hotel features the Simon LA Restaurant and Stone Rose Lounge offering excellent gourmet food, drinks and music. Other amenities include LeSpa at Sofitel, a 5000-square-foot facility, a fitness center, outdoor heated pool and sauna. The service at the hotel is excellent.



**Hyatt Regency Century Plaza** – The 4-Star Hyatt Regency is located at 2025 Avenue of the Stars near Westfield Century City shopping, the Los Angeles Country Club and Beverly Hills. The hotel features 726 luxury guest rooms that include marble baths, private balcony with mountain or ocean view, and 32" LCD flat screen TVs. The central location is ideal for shopping, dining and entertainment. Hotel amenities include luxurious spa with 20 treatment rooms, fitness center, outdoor pools and jacuzzi, private cabanas, lush gardens, fine dining restaurant, bars & lounges. The X-bar lounge is a popular indoor/outdoor lounge with fire pits. The X-bar offers small-plates

& appetizers and is a great social gathering place. Other amenities include room service, valet parking, business services, and concierge service. The concierge can make tour recommendations and arrange all your activities.

**Shutters on the Beach** – The 4-Star beach hotel is located at 1 Pico Blvd. in Santa Monica. The location is ideal for beach goers. It’s directly on the beach near the Santa Monica Pier and about a 20-minute walk to Venice Beach. The hotel features 186 rooms and 12 suites. The rooms are decorated in elegant home comfort charm with modern amenities, marble bathrooms, Jacuzzi tub, and panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean. Hotel amenities include a luxurious spa, fitness center, pool, Jacuzzi, beach center with bike rentals, the elegant One Pico Restaurant, Coast Beachside Café & Bar, and 24-hour room service. The elegant lobby bar is a great place to relax and enjoy a cocktail.



Other recommended hotels in the L.A. area include: Intercontinental Los Angeles at Century Plaza (4-Star); Westin Bonaventure in downtown (4-star), The Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows in Santa Monica at the beach (4-Star); and the pet friendly Sheraton Delphina in Santa Monica for those traveling with pets (3-Stars, short walk to the beach).



FAIRMONT



INTERCONTINENTAL



WESTIN

Just down the coast from L.A., the **City of Long Beach** is an often overlooked destination with fun restaurants, shops and attractions. There are great hotels that will generally run you less than L.A. and put you in a central location to visit L.A. as well as the Orange county beaches. Long Beach has fabulous restaurants, bars, and shops along Pine St. and Belmont Shores. The Shoreline Village at the marina is filled with great retail shops, bars, restaurants and live entertainment. Parker’s Lighthouse Restaurant has great seafood and a spectacular view of the harbor. The adjacent Pine Street Pier also has several great restaurants and bars along the beautiful marina. Gladstones Restaurant at the pier has great seafood and sushi. In Long Beach you will find the grand old ocean liner, the Queen Mary, once the worlds largest cruise ship. Its now a hotel which serves as a great location for cruise passengers boarding at the adjacent cruise ship terminal at the port of Long Beach. Long Beach also host a world-class aquarium, a convention center, performing arts center, as well as comedy clubs, theaters, and other attractions.





The best hotels in Long Beach with great central location near Shoreline Village and Pine St. are: The Hyatt Regency, The Westin, and the Renaissance. We recommend these three Long Beach Hotels, which are all walking distance to Shoreline Village.



HYATT



WESTIN



RENAISSANCE



As you travel south down the scenic Pacific Coast Highway from Long Beach, You'll enter the affluent Orange County with its popular coastal communities of Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, Laguna Beach and Dana Point. Most tourists will stay in the beautiful Newport Beach area with its fantastic beaches, bays, harbors, marinas, hotels, mega-yachts, multiple islands, shopping, restaurants, golf and family entertainment. Here you can rent bikes, Kayaks, boats, surf boards, jet skis, or visit the Balboa Pier or Balboa Fun Zone with its arcades, restaurants, nautical Museum and fun beach shops. Balboa Island, which is accessible by bridge or ferry service, is a great place for shopping, restaurants & bars and the home of the chocolate covered frozen banana at Sugar & Spice, as seen on the TV show The OC. If it's high-end shopping you want, the local Fashion Island Mall features stores like Bloomingdale's, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom's as well as high-end fashion specialty stores and restaurants. The area boasts a number of championship golf courses that bring golf enthusiasts from around the world. Huntington Beach, Laguna Beach and Dana Point are all just minutes by car from Newport Beach and each have very quaint coastal downtown areas for dining and shopping as well as beautiful beaches and resorts.

If you visit Newport Beach or the Orange County coastal communities, we recommend the following hotels for your visit: Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach (across from beach); The Island Hotel Newport Beach (minutes from beach); Hyatt Regency Newport Beach (minutes from beach); Montage Resort Laguna Beach (Beachside); Ritz Carlton Laguna Niguel near Dana Point (Beachside); and, the St. Regis Monarch Beach Dana Point (Beachside). These are all 5 or 4-Star resorts with full amenities and excellent service. There are also plenty of other good 4-Star hotels to choose from up and down that coast.



HYATT HUNTINGTON



RITZ CARLTON



MONTAGE



ST. REGIS



RUSTY PELICAN

For your dining pleasure in the area we recommend: 21 Oceanfront, at the beach overlooking the Balboa Pier in Newport Beach; Mastro's Ocean Club, on Pacific Coast Highway with nice ocean views near the south end of Newport Beach; Wildfish Seafood Grill, awesome seafood, appetizers and bar on Bison Ave. near Highway 73 in Newport Beach; Sol Cocina, fine Baja style Mexican grill on the coast highway marina, overlooking the boats in Newport Beach; Bluewater Grill, on Lido Park Dr., overlooking the marina boats in Newport Beach; the Rusty Pelican on the coast highway marina, overlooking the boats in Newport Beach; Duke's in Huntington Beach overlooking the beach and the Huntington Pier on the Pacific Coast Highway; The Californian, at the Hyatt Huntington Beach Resort, Nick's Laguna Beach on the Pacific Coast Highway across from the beach; Watermarc Restaurant Laguna Beach on the Pacific Coast Highway across from the beach; Las Brisas Laguna Beach with its fabulous views overlooking the beach; and House of Big Fish in Laguna Beach with its ocean view, casual bar atmosphere and reasonably priced menu.

## San Diego



California's southern most metropolitan city is The City of **San Diego**. San Diego is about 120 miles south of Downtown L.A. along the Pacific Coast near the Mexican Border. It's the southwest corner of the US. San Diego is the second largest city in California behind L.A. San Diego hosts 16 military facilities, numerous colleges & universities, and is home of a popular downtown cruise ship port. Downtown San Diego is located on San Diego Bay, a haven for sailing and boating enthusiasts.

San Diego has some of the best year-around weather in the US making it a great tourist destination. Sunshine is the typical forecast with average temperatures of around 70°F. Rarely does the temperature exceed 90°F. A large influx of Arizona residents vacation here in the summer months renting or owning beach houses in the Mission Beach/Pacific Beach areas.



MISSION BEACH

San Diego's beach communities include: Coronado and Point Loma which sit on a peninsula that creates San Diego Bay; to the north is Ocean Beach; further north is Mission Beach and Pacific Beach that create the mission bay aquatic park area; and, La Jolla, a very affluent Beach community north of Pacific

Beach. Together you have miles of beautiful beaches and coastline for excellent Southern California style fun in the sun.



Downtown San Diego is full of great hotels, restaurants & cafes, entertainment, shopping and nightlife. A popular spot for tourist is the Gaslamp Quarter (the Quarter). Many of the city's events and festivals are held in the Gaslamp Quarter and the downtown baseball stadium is located near the Quarter. The historic downtown Victorian Era neighborhood dates back to 1867 and stretches about 16 blocks from Broadway to Harbor Drive between 4<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> streets. The name Gaslamp refers to the gas lamps of that era that were used to light the streets. Once a sailor's entertainment district, the quarter is now the city's most popular entertainment area for locals and tourists.

A popular destination just a short drive from downtown is Coronado. Often referred to as Coronado Island, it is actually connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land call the Silver Strand. Coronado is a little less than 8 square miles and has beautiful beaches and small boutiques. Part of Coronado is a US Naval Air Station. The best way to get to Coronado is to take the landmark San Diego-Coronado Bridge that gracefully stretches over San Diego Bay. The main landmark on the island is the historic Hotel del Coronado built in 1888. This top resort hotel has been visited by presidents, celebrities, sports legends and historic figures. It's worth a visit.



For another historic site, be sure to visit Old Town San Diego, a State Historic Park on the National Registry of Historic Places. The park preserves the old city from its post 1821 Mexican War of Independence Era prior to California Becoming a State. A number of original adobe structures are preserved as well as other historic buildings. The park includes shops and restaurants that serve excellent Mexican Food. Old town is located a few miles north of Downtown.

If you are a history buff and want to go back even further in history visit Mission San Diego established in 1769. This was the first California Mission and is said to be California's first church. Today the mission is an active Catholic Parish. The Mission is located north east of downtown in Mission Valley near San Diego State University.



If the beach scene and people watching is your preference, then you will want to visit the Mission Beach & Pacific Beach areas. A boardwalk runs along the beach all the way from South Mission Beach up to Pacific Beach. This area is full of vacation homes and vacation rentals. The long wide white sandy beach attracts tourists and locals to come out and strut their stuff. You'll find cyclists and skaters up and down the

boardwalk, top local surfers hitting the waves, beach volleyball, and plenty of tan skin sporting swim suit fashions. You'll find bars, restaurants and nightclubs in the area. In the center of it all you'll find Belmont Amusement Park that includes a historic roller coaster and other attractions. Mission Beach and Pacific Beach separate the Pacific Ocean from Mission Bay, a man made bay used for aquatic recreation and public parks. There are several hotels & resorts in the Mission Bay area as well as the Sea World theme park, one of San Diego's main attractions.



PACIFIC BEACH



BELMONT PARK



MISSION BEACH

Sea World marine adventure park is home to Shamu the famous Killer Whale. Sea World sits on 200-acres along the south shore of Mission Bay. Attractions include marine mammals, roller coaster type rides, water rapid-raft rides, gondolas, shark encounter, aquariums, aquatic animal shows, Dolphin interaction, and a children's Sesame Street Bay of Play. Sea World also has sister parks in Orlando Florida and San Antonio Texas.



Another popular adventure theme park attraction is San Diego's Wild Animal Park. The 1800-acre park features more than 3000 animals of over 400 species. The park features large open-range enclosures where animals appear to run wild in their natural habitats.

Tram tours take you through the various enclosures to view the animals up close. Park animals include Lions, Cheetahs, Giraffes, Elephants, Zebras, Gorillas, and Rhinos. The park also features extensive botanical gardens. The park is run by the Zoological Society of San Diego. The park is located about 30 miles north east of Downtown San Diego.

The Zoological Society also operates the famous San Diego Zoo located at Balboa Park close to Downtown San Diego. Founded in 1922, the Zoo is one of the largest in the world and features over 4000 animals of over 800 species. The park sits on 100 acres. It can take all day to view all the exhibits. Guided tour buses are available and a gondola can take you from one end of the park to the other. The zoo has an extensive collection of mammals, reptiles, birds and rare plant life.



Other popular San Diego area attractions include: Balboa Park near downtown; downtown's Horton Plaza; the Convention Center; The San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum; Legoland near Carlsbad; and Tijuana Mexico. A light rail system will take you from



TIJUANA

downtown to the Border.

**VoyageMonkey.Com recommends the following top hotels in the San Diego area:**

**US Grant Hotel** – The 5-Star historic US Grant Hotel is located downtown at 326 Broadway near the Gaslamp Quarter and Horton Plaza shopping. The landmark luxury hotel opened in 1910 and recently had a \$56 million renovation. The hotel features 270 guest rooms and 47 suites, including two bi-level presidential suites and a penthouse suite. Guest rooms feature imported carpets, marble bathrooms, 300 count linens and pillow top beds. The hotel’s legendary Grant Grill & Lounge opened in 1951 and has been San Diego’s power lunch & dinner spot serving fresh seafood and prime meats. Hotel amenities include a fitness center, art gallery, ballroom, elegant grand lobby and cocktail lounge, and in-room spa treatments.



**Hotel Del Coronado** – The 5-Star Hotel Del Coronado is located on Coronado Island at 1500 Orange Ave. The historic Victorian castle like structure has been a San Diego landmark since opening its doors in 1888. The resort sits on 28 beautiful oceanfront acres and has been the backdrop for dozens of Hollywood movies. The resort features 679 guest rooms in the Victorian building, ocean towers & cabana buildings, and 78 cottages & villas in its Beach Village. Resort amenities include three dining restaurants, several bars & lounges, 24-hour room service, “The Shops at the Del” shopping promenade, a world-class spa featuring 21 treatment rooms, fitness center, two pools, water sports activities, nearby Coronado Golf Course and a Kids Camp. You’ll enjoy this great piece of California history.

**The Grand Del Mar** – The 5-Star Grand Del Mar is located at 5300 Grand Del Mar Court in the affluent La Jolla community about 20-minutes north of downtown, five miles from the Pacific Ocean. The resort overlooks The Grand Golf Course, a Tom Fazio design golf course, and sits on lush grounds in the beautiful Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. The old-world Mediterranean style resort features 249 luxury guest rooms and rich decorative art from Italy, Portugal, Spain and Morocco. Amenities include a state-of-the-art spa, fitness center, four pools with private cabanas, tennis courts, and miles of hiking trails. The resort offers six dining venues including fine elegant dining to casual poolside fare, and provides live entertainment in the lobby lounge. You’ll find excellent service and pleasing luxury throughout the resort.



**Omni Hotel** – The 4-Star Omni Hotel is located in the heart of downtown at 675 L Street near the Gaslamp Quarter, the convention center and next to the downtown ballpark. The San Diego Trolley (light-rail)



is steps from the front door. The luxury hotel features 511 guest rooms and suites decorated in contemporary style with modern amenities, and floor to ceiling windows with spectacular views of San Diego. Hotel amenities include a spa & fitness center, 6<sup>th</sup> floor 8000 square foot terrace with heated pool and spa, on-site fine & casual dining choices, business center, concierge service, and 24-hour room service. The hotel is pet friendly for those traveling with their furry friends (Check first if you have a large dog, the rule is under 40 lbs but Golden Retrievers appear to pass). This hotel offers a great central location.

**Hyatt Regency Mission Bay Spa & Marina** – The 4-Star Hyatt is located at 1441 Quivira Road at Mission Bay close to Sea World and Mission Beach. The resort sits on 8 bayfront acres and features 430 guest rooms that include 32” flat screen TVs and private balconies. The resort offers spectacular ocean views, waterfront dining and a poolside lounge. Amenities include fine & casual dining restaurants, water playground with three pools with multiple water slides, a 24-hour waterfront health club & spa and full service marina offering boat charters, kayaks and jet ski rentals. This resort has a great location just four blocks from Mission Beach and access to all the public parks of Mission Bay. You can rent bikes at the hotel and head for the Mission Beach Boardwalk.



**Loews Coronado Bay Resort** – The 4-Star Loews resort is located at 4000 Coronado Bay Road on the Silver Strand State Beach section of Coronado Island. The resort sits on a private 15-acre peninsula. The resort features 440 guest rooms including 37 suites.

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Other recommended hotels in the San Diego Area include: The Lodge at Torrey Pines in La Jolla (5-Stars); Marriott San Diego downtown at the Gaslamp Quarter (4-Stars); The Coronado Island Marriott in Coronado (4-Stars); Embassy Suites in La Jolla (3-Stars); and, The Bay Club Hotel & Marina at Shelter Island San Diego Bay (3-Stars).





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