

# Family friendly

San Diego is a city with something for any and all ages

by ANN NELSON



Clockwise from below: Balboa Park botanical building; flamingos at the San Diego Zoo; Coronado Island



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: © FIIPHOTO, WIRESTOCK; BENNYMARTY / STOCK.ADOBE.COM



MELODIE SOLOMON

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**S**an Diego is blessed with a mild, sunny climate, breathtaking beaches and myriad fun family destinations. I've lived here for 30 years and never tire of exploring the many places this alluring city has to offer.

## Parks and recreation

For a taste of quintessential San Diego, Balboa Park is my favorite place to take visitors. The stunning architecture, gardens and 17 museums are hard to beat. During a recent visit to the San Diego Air & Space Museum, my 8-year-old nephew donned a spacesuit and took a ride in a flight simulator.

Our next stop was the San Diego Museum of Art. The highlights of the museum include the ongoing *Of Sea and Sand: California Paintings* exhibit and the current *Monet to Matisse* exhibition, on view through August 7. Step outside to see *Art of the Open Air*, a display of sculptures by the likes of French bronze master Auguste Rodin. You can also view them from the

museum's Panama 66 restaurant while enjoying a meal or local craft beer.

Legoland, a 128-acre theme park that's 32 miles north of downtown San Diego, offers rides, a water park, interactive exhibits and live shows. The replicas of cities built using 20 million tiny Lego bricks are amazing!

## Where the wild things are

The world-class San Diego Zoo is a paradise for old and young. The zoo resembles a botanical garden, with habitats for an amazing array of animals, including giraffes, koalas, polar bears and Tasmanian devils. Plan to spend most of the day to take it all in; the 40-minute bus tour is a great way to get the lay of the park.

To see even more animals in an even more expansive environment, visit the San Diego Zoo Safari Park. The park is spread over 1,800 acres, giving the animals lots of room to roam. Board the Africa Tram tour and venture into grassy savannas to explore herds of elephants, zebras and other endan-

gered species. (Tip: Combo tickets for the zoo and Safari Park are offered at a discount.)

## On the waterfront

SeaWorld, right on Mission Bay, is home to a variety of marine animals, including giant sea turtles, whales and walruses, and features interactive attractions, aquariums and educational programs. You can also jump on the Emperor, California's tallest, fastest and longest floorless dive coaster.

The waterfront Embarcadero area is a great place to stroll and enjoy sculptures, restaurants and maritime history. At the USS Midway Museum, you'll explore the legacy of this aircraft

carrier, with jets and helicopters on the flight deck. From the Embarcadero, board the Coronado Ferry and discover Coronado Island, tour the bay on a harbor excursion cruise or book a Segway tour.

## Natural beauty

If you're looking to relax in nature, my personal favorite is Torrey Pines State Reserve, with 8 miles of trails on windswept ridges with beautiful vistas. La Jolla Cove is ideal for swimming, and Cabrillo National Monument offers walking trails, tide pools and sweeping views all the way to Mexico. ■

## Foodie heaven

San Diego has a thriving food scene—Little Italy, the Gaslamp District, North Park and Barrio Logan are among the areas with

restaurants opened by top chefs. With seven food stations, the Little Italy Food Hall (Piazza della Famiglia) menu includes lobster rolls, pesto grilled cheese sliders and (of course!) gelato.

George's Ocean Terrace in La Jolla features rooftop fine dining with breathtaking views; the gourmet dishes are prepared by nationally renowned chef Trey Foshee.—AN

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