

San Diego's Balboa Park is badass



Take time to reflect at the Lily Pond



Sea lions livin' the life

## san diego, california

ENJOY ETERNAL SUNSHINE  
IN THIS CITY BY THE SEA

[BY MEGAN O. ANDERSEN]

WHILE SAN DIEGO may bring to mind postcard images of sun-bleached surfers, sailors in crisp white uniforms, and Will Ferrell's mustachioed anchorman Ron Burgundy, this sprawling Southern California city has much more to offer than tan lines, military bases, and a rad zoo. What you may not know is that it's got a small-town vibe and is rich with historical sites, lush parks, swank eateries, and local dive bars, as well as those breath-taking beaches that are welcoming year-round.

Kick off your stay with San Diego's biggest and best breakfast at the bustling **Hash House a Go Go** (3628 5th Ave.). You can't go wrong with their fried-chicken Benedict with maple reduction, bacon mashed potatoes, and biscuits skewered on five-inch rosemary sprigs. Walk off the calories with a stroll to the springy **Spruce Street Suspension Bridge** (Spruce St. and First Ave.), where you can catch a glimpse of the downtown skyline peeking above the treetops from the ravine below. Then, for a heavy dose of beauty, art, and culture, head into the heart and soul of San Diego: **Balboa Park** (1549 El Prado), a huge, quiet, eucalyptus-lined area that houses museums, parks, art installations, gardens, and the world-famous zoo. Check out crazy plants at the **Botanical Building**, and

watch giant koi glide through the reflective **Lily Pond**. Both are picture-perfect and totally free.

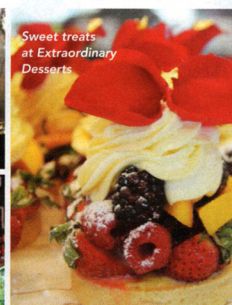
Once you've gotten your fill of nature, get your shop on in the up-and-coming North Park neighborhood. **Rubber Rose** (3812 Ray St.) is an adult toy- and bookstore owned and operated by ladies who love lovin' and who make X-rated shopping fun. Up the street at **Pigment** (3827 30th St.), an eco-friendly home-décor and gift boutique, enchanting globe terrariums hang from the ceiling, and a lush "living wall" grows above the counter, making this store feel like a secret garden. Across the street, grab a cup of premium coffee at **Caffé Calabria** (3933 30th St.), where the beans are freshly roasted. For extremely wearable vintage threads, don't miss the decidedly stylish **Frock You** (4121 Park Blvd.). Now that you've worked up an appetite, grab dinner in neighboring South Park at the hipster-y **Hamilton's Tavern** (1521 30th St.), a lively pub that pleases all palates with menu items such as hand-ground sausage, vegan chili, and vegetarian Baja dogs. Continue your good times at the **Turf Super Club** (1116 25th St.), a low-lit dive bar packed with vinyl booths, a killer jukebox, and racehorse-themed décor, where salty bartenders have been serving up cheap, classic drinks like Side Cars and



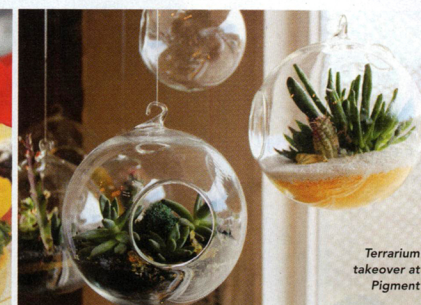
Vintage goods at Architectural Salvage



Hangin' out at Hamilton's Tavern



Sweet treats at Extraordinary Desserts



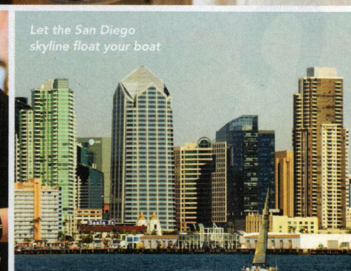
Terrarium takeover at Pigment



Mouthwatering margaritas at El Vitral



Coffee break at Caffé Calabria



Let the San Diego skyline float your boat

Old-Fashioneds since 1950.

After a good night's sleep, start your day in Old Town, the birthplace of San Diego. Pick up some fresh-made flour tortillas at **Casa Guadalajara** (4105 Taylor St.), and drift through the street vendors and old-timey shops. Test your nerves in the haunted **Whaley House** (2476 San Diego Ave.), a historic home built in 1857 and decorated just as it would've been in the 19th century. It doubles as a museum full of So Cal history and has been called the single most haunted house in the United States. Legend says that among the other spook sightings, visitors often see the "ghost dog" that haunts the grounds. For spirits of a different kind, head to the impeccably designed bar **Starlite** (3175 India St.), a quick drive away in the nearby neighborhood of Mission Hills. A hexagonal wooden entryway leads to a sunken bar; the stacked rock walls that surround it are adorned with staghorn ferns. The environment alone will get you in the door; the tasty drinks will keep you there. Walk off your daytime buzz in the nearby Gaslamp Quarter downtown. Once a red-light district lined with saloons,

brothels, and casinos frequented by Wyatt Earp, the century-old brick buildings now host trendy restaurants, clubs, bars, and specialty shops. Refuel with a diesel margarita at the colorful tequila lounge in Mexican restaurant **El Vitral** (815 J St.).

For some seaside sightseeing, hop on the **Old Town Trolley** ([www.trolleytours.com](http://www.trolleytours.com)) to Coronado Island, a laid-back peninsular beach community. Soak in the awesome view of the San Diego skyline from across the bay, then disembark at the iconic **Hotel Del Coronado** (1500 Orange Ave.), which you may recognize from the classic 1959 Marilyn Monroe flick *Some Like It Hot*. Grab a snack at one of the poolside restaurants, or take your towel and claim a spot on this uncrowded beach known for its great bodysurfing waves. Reserve a water taxi (619-235-8294) from the hotel to take you back downtown, for a seal's-eye view of the bay for only \$7. Or, for beachfront entertainment sans sand in your hair, get arty at the **Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego** (700 Prospect St.) in posh La Jolla. Peek over the nearby cliff to see sea lions basking in the sun. This cool space has an enlightening collection with a killer ocean

view. Then say buon giorno to Little Italy for delectable eats in a good-natured neighborhood. Don't miss dinner at family-owned and -operated **Filippi's Pizza Grotto** (1747 India St.), where patrons happily wait in the ever-present line to dine on mouthwatering pizza and classic rustic pastas under a ceiling of Chianti bottles. Then follow the siren-scent of buttercream to **Extraordinary Desserts** (1430 Union St.) or grab a cannoli from **Caffé Zucchero** (1731 India St.). As you munch your treats, walk over to the treasure chest that is **Architectural Salvage** (2401 Kettner Blvd.) to sift through the store's collections of vintage crystal doorknobs, weathered window frames, and other distinctive remnants. End your night down the street by watching a band rock the **Casbah** (2501 Kettner Blvd.) at this legendary hole-in-the-wall venue.

With an average annual temperature of 65 degrees and so much to offer in the way of food, culture, entertainment, and natural beauty, San Diego could come off as boastful, yet this seaside town remains down-to-earth about its impressive offerings. In the words of this So Cal city's favorite son, Ron Burgundy, way to "stay classy San Diego."