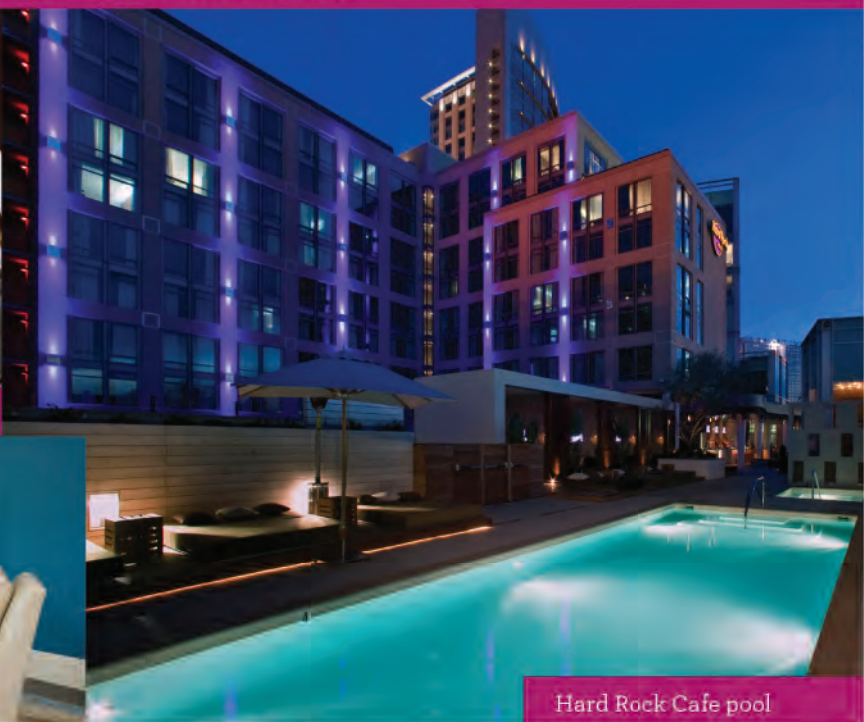




The cliffs of La Jolla



Hash House a Go-Go mocha



Hard Rock Cafe pool



US Grant Hotel

true san diego

With a rich history dating back to the 17th century, gorgeous beaches, mild weather and a laid-back attitude, San Diego is Southern California the way the world—and many Californians—imagine it. Come see where perception meets reality and get your dose of California cool.



THREAD COUNT

The **US Grant Hotel** (326 Broadway, 800-237-5029) is the city's grand dame, dating back to 1910 when the son of Ulysses S. Grant founded it.

Mission Bay's **Paradise Point Resort & Spa** (1404 Vacation Rd, 800-344-2626) features an exotic South Pacific motif, airy and sophisticated with sleek hardwoods, handcrafted Batik-style bed throws and expansive views of the water.

For hipster style in the Gaslamp District, **The Hard Rock Hotel** (207 Fifth Ave, 619-702-3000) offers top-notch service, an active nightlife and rooftop pool scene plus a choice location in the middle of San Diego's nightlife district.



FOOD FIX

Hash House a Go-Go (3628 Fifth Ave, 619-298-4646) serves huge, delicious breakfasts and lunches. Try the Benedict platters with a sage fried chicken combined with hardwood-smoked bacon and griddled mozzarella.

In the Gaslamp District, Chef Brian Malarkey, *Top Chef* finalist, recently opened **Searsucker** (611 Fifth Ave, 619-233-7327) with a menu that focuses on sustainable, seasonal fish and beef.

Bencoto (750 W Fir St, 619-450-4786), located in Little Italy, is where chef Fabrizio Cavallini concocts traditional Italian dishes and handcrafted pastas inspired from his culinary education in Milan.



NIGHT OUT

At **FLUXX** (500 Fourth Avenue, 619-232-8100), the adult treehouse and 15-foot rope chandelier let you mix your inner child with high-energy dance music.

The oversized rooftop pool deck at **Solamar Terrace** (435 Sixth Ave, 619-819-9500) atop Hotel Solamar, turns into a lounge scene at night, complete with private cabanas.

At the East Village's **TOAST Enoteca & Cucina** (927 J St, 619-269-4207) guests can sample wine by the bottle, glass or self-serve Enomatic dispensers.



LEGOLAND



DON'T MISS

The San Diego Air & Space Museum (2001 Pan American Plaza, 619-234-8291) inside Balboa Park recently opened a new 4D theater with interactive seats so you “feel” what you see on screen.

January and February are peak months to witness the **gray whales** migrate past San Diego. Hornblower Cruises (1066 N Harbor Dr, 888-467-6256) offers twice-daily 3.5-hour trips out to sea to view these gentle giants.

It's rare to find prime snorkeling spots on the Pacific Coast, but you can do it in La Jolla Cove's **Ecological Underwater Park** with Snorkel San Diego Scuba (1133-1188 Coast Blvd, 858-539-0054) and

see starfish, rays, sea lions, lobster and dolphins.



STONE'S THROW

Temecula, an easy 60-mile drive north from the heart of San Diego, features more than 30 wineries, hot air balloon rides, the sprawling Pechanga Casino and golf resort and an old town that dates back to 1859.

Carlsbad, a 40-minute drive north along the coast from San Diego, is home to **LEGOLAND** (1 Legoland Dr, 760-918-5346) and the new LEGOLAND Water Park. With more than five acres of wet and wild structures, children of any age will be entertained all day long. 🗝



San Diego-native Luke Walton may work in Los Angeles for the NBA's Lakers, but his heart and soul remain tied to San Diego. When he comes home, here's where he goes.

EATS:

I love **El Cuervo Taco Shop** in the Hillcrest neighborhood. Best Mexican food in California (110 W Washington St, 619-295-9713).

NATURE ESCAPE:

I grew up playing at **Balboa Park**, and I still go back there and hang out. I really like the zoo and all the new stuff they've recently added (1549 El Prado, 619-239-0512).

BEACH:

La Jolla has great beaches. There's always something going on there, from snorkeling to surfing or kayaking. It's a great place to just hang out and relax.

WHAT \$100 BUYS YOU IN SAN DIEGO

- A pair of tickets to the opera at the **San Diego Opera House** (1200 Third Ave, 619-533-7000).
- A round of golf at the **Riverwalk Golf Resort**. The rebuilt course features a variety of new water hazards including waterfalls and the San Diego River (1150 Fashion Valley Rd, 619-296-4653).
- Two tickets to **Anthology**, an upscale jazz venue that doubles as a fine dining restaurant (1337 India St, 619-595-0300).
- Admission for two to the world-famous **San Diego Zoo**, one of the first zoos to incorporate native-like habitats for its animals (2920 Zoo Dr, 619-231-1515).

Sue Richter is an international travel journalist, author and screenwriter who calls San Diego County home.