



Balboa Park is home to the San Diego Zoo and world famous San Diego Natural History Museum with its hanging mobile displays and traveling exhibits under their stunning skylight.

Romantic Balboa Park is the nation's largest urban cultural park consisting of a forest of exotic trees, well-kept gardens, and a majestic lily pond, which is the most photographed site in the park. Here too is the renowned Old Globe Theatre and 15 outstanding must-see museums, art galleries and one of the largest planetariums in the entire country. It is also the home of the world famous San Diego Zoo.

MUSEUMS

The part of Balboa Park that attracts the most attention is an area called **El Prado**, which is the street that runs east from the Laurel Street park entrance to the fountain in front of the **San Diego Natural History Museum (16)**. Here, nestled in beautiful gardens enhanced by majestic palm and eucalyptus trees, are

most of the park's impressive museums, galleries and other attractions. All are within walking distance of each other. The rest of the park is spread out over hundreds of acres.

There is also a **Free Balboa Park Tram** that circulates throughout the park for your convenience. The tram takes you right to the door of many must-see museums including the **San Diego Air and Space Museum (25)**. It operates daily Nov.–June 8:30 a.m.–6 p.m. and July–Oct. 8:30 a.m.–8 p.m. except Mondays 8:30 a.m.–6 p.m. The bright red tram picks up passengers every 10–15 minutes in front of the museums and in the parking lots in the park. See map. Riders can board and disembark the tram at their convenience.

Visitors are encouraged to park in lighted parking areas at night and to use

the well-traveled sidewalks from the parking lots. There are many parking lots throughout the park. They all offer free parking and are shaded in gray in the map in this chapter. Two of the largest and most convenient parking lots can be found in front of the **Air and Space Museum (25)** and the **Veteran's Museum and Memorial Center (31)**. Tram stops are located in both of these parking lots.

Another free service in Balboa Park is the **Balboa Park Visitors Center (13)**, which is located in the House of Hospitality (619-239-0512). It is open daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Gifts and event guides are available here.

They also offer free ranger-led tours, which meet in front of the Visitors Center. Park rangers discuss the historical and botanical treasures of Balboa Park every Tuesday and Sunday at 1 p.m.

A big money saver is **A Passport to Balboa Park**, which is a combination ticket that allows you to visit a selection of 14 museums and attractions for more than 50 percent savings in admission. The

passport is (\$45) and must be used within seven days of purchase. If you have only one day to spend in the park, the **Stay for the Day Pass** is a great value at (\$35). This package includes admission to five museums. Also ask about their passports for children ages 3–12 and their **Zoo/Passport Combo**, which includes admission to the San Diego Zoo. Passports are sold at most of the museums, the Visitors Center, and at [balboapark.org].

The museums are also great venues for elegant cocktail parties, sit-down dinners with tuxedo-clad waiters, and children's birthdays at themed museums like the **San Diego Model Railroad Museum (14)**. For the convenience of our readers, we've included information on banquets, catering, weddings and events for many of the museums. Also see the **Banquets & Catering** charts in the **SAN DIEGAN** or online at [sandiegan.com].

THE SAN DIEGAN TOUR

The **SAN DIEGAN** self-guided tour can start anywhere in the park, but a fascinating beginning is the **San Diego**

3 exhibits, 2 films (featuring 3D!), 1 great price!



Spend a few hours, or spend the whole day!

SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

WWW.SDNHM.ORG 619.232.3821

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Natural History Museum (16) (619-232-3821) [sdnhm.org]. It's an essential Balboa Park experience with its spectacular exhibits. Each year, the museum features several blockbuster traveling exhibitions in addition to its permanent exhibitions.

A "chilling" new exhibit features massive polar bears, comical penguins and brave explorers. **Ends of the Earth: From Polar Bears to Penguins** explores the unique nature of Earth's spectacular polar regions. This hands-on, family-friendly exhibit includes polar bears, penguin suits, videos, interactive games, animal skulls and authentic artifacts. It runs until April 15, 2012 and is included with museum admission.

The museum's permanent exhibition is **Fossil Mysteries**, which takes you on a journey through 75 million years into Southern California's rich history. View and touch fossils of dinosaurs, sharks, mastodons, and more at this interactive exhibition. The exhibit is presented against a backdrop of 12 massive murals depicting colorful prehistoric worlds by

award-winning paleontological artist William Stout.

One of the most popular exhibits is called **All That Glitters, The Splendor & Science of Gems and Minerals**. See a stunning collection of priceless jewelry, natural minerals and precious metals from around the world. Discover the science behind these seductive stones and learn how many are found right here in San Diego County!

One of Balboa Park's best-kept secrets is the museum's giant 3-D theater. All films are included in the price of admission and play several times daily.

The museum is open daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m. except Thanksgiving and Christmas. Admission is (\$17) adults, (\$15) seniors, (\$12) military and students with ID, (\$11) for children 3–12, children 2 and under are admitted free.

With the only rooftop deck in Balboa Park, **the San Diego Natural History Museum is a top pick for special events, parties and weddings** (619-232-3821 ext. 182). See Banquets and Catering.

In addition to educational and entertain-



ing exhibitions and films, the museum offers more than 300 nature-related experiences. If your trip to the museum piqued your interest in the world around you, try one of their free hikes around the county or sign up for a whale watching trip. Credit cards: AE, MC, VISA.

Across from the Balboa Park fountain is the **Reuben H. Fleet Science Center (11)** (619-238-1233) [rhfleet.org]. This large 93,505-sq. ft. science center showcases more than 100 interactive attractions. Plus, they offer monthly planetarium shows and several films on Southern California's only IMAX® Dome Theater that surrounds visitors, creating a "you-are-there" experience.

Admission (\$10) for adults; seniors and children 3–12 years are (\$8.75). IMAX films are extra. They open daily at 10 a.m. and close Mon.–Thurs. at 5 p.m., Fri. 8 p.m., Sat. 7 p.m., Sun. 6 p.m. with extended summer hours.

North of the Natural History Museum is the **Moreton Bay fig tree (4)**, which was planted prior to the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. This tree stands over 78 feet tall and is more than 120 feet wide.

Just past the Moreton Bay fig tree is one of Balboa Park's most beloved treasures. It's the **Spanish Village Art Center (3)** (619-233-9050) [spanishvillageart.com]. **Admission is free** to the 37 studios and five guild galleries that showcase the best local artists in San Diego. This historic village is comprised of charming cottages centered around a colorful courtyard, which was built to resemble a quaint Spanish village in 1935 for the California Pacific International Exposition.

Wander from gallery to gallery and marvel at the work of more than 200 artists. You may even see some of them at work. This is a perfect place to purchase high quality art at reasonable prices for your home or office. And be sure to admire their handcrafted pottery, sculpture, blown glassware, paintings and much more! Each gallery in the village offers something different.

A great place to find original artwork at reasonable prices is at Gallery 23, which houses the **Southwestern Artists' Association (3)** (619-232-3522). The association maintains an ever-evolving



SPANISH VILLAGE

ART



STUDIOS

in Balboa Park

**Over 200
San Diego County artists
in 37 working studios
located in beautiful
Balboa Park.**

Open 11am - 4pm daily



**Spanish Village
Art Center**
1770 Village Place
San Diego, CA 92101
619-233-9050



www.spanishvillageart.com

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exhibit of original paintings every month from their juried membership of more than 50 local artists! Their selection of San Diego landscape paintings is so captivating that the office of the SAN DIEGAN is decorated with many pieces from Gallery 23.

The village is open daily 11 a.m.–4 p.m. (closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's). If you have ever wanted to sit behind a potter's wheel, learn to blow glass or how to hold a paint brush, the Spanish Village offers art classes for adults and children. Also, demonstrations and events take place throughout the year including big patio art shows in the fall. Visit the annual calendar of events at [sandiegan.com] for exact dates and times.

One of the most endearing Balboa Park traditions, which has fascinated children of all ages for decades, is the **Balboa Park Miniature Railroad (1)**. Children and adults just love it! Admission is (\$2) and it's open school holidays and Sat.–Sun. 11 a.m.–4:30 p.m., and in the summer till 6:30 p.m.

Next door is the historic **Balboa Park Carousel (2)** circa 1910. It's one of the few carousels in the United States that offers a free ride if you catch the brass ring. Admission is (\$4) and it is open Sat.–Sun. 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Your next destination should be El Prado (see map). Here you will find the lion's share of museums and galleries. A must-see attraction is at the **Casa de Balboa Building (13)**. It is home to the largest permanent operating model railroad exhibit in North America with 27,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space. **The San Diego Model Railroad Museum (14)** (619-696-0199) [sdmrm.org] features interactive toy trains, Lionel-style electric trains and a 20-scale mile long rail crossing of the Southern Sierra Nevada mountain range. It is the only accredited railroad museum in the entire United States.

Always expanding and always under construction are new exhibits that are created by local railroad clubs. Also fascinating is the Toy Train Gallery, which is home to an impressive exhibit of an imaginary town with multiple train lines. The town changes with the seasons; look for autumn colors in the fall and Christ-

mas lights in the winter. Kids can even operate some of the trains with the push of a button!

Make sure not to miss a visit to the gift shop, which is filled with a fabulous array of railroad memorabilia for the railroad lover in your life. Their selection of vintage railroad posters is especially noteworthy. And if you are a history buff, their Erwin Welsch Railroad Research Library is a must.

Big attractions here are their themed birthday parties and special events for kids of all ages. Contact Ana Penagos (619-696-0199). Also see Banquets & Catering in the SAN DIEGAN and on our website at [sandiegan.com].

The museum and gift shop are open Tues.–Fri., 11 a.m.–4 p.m. and Sat.–Sun. till 5 p.m. Admission is (\$7) for adults, (\$6) for seniors 65 and older, (\$3) for students with ID, (\$2.50) for active military with ID, and free for children under 15 years. Admission includes access to their railroad history library. Credit cards: AE, DISC, MC, VISA.

Also in the Casa de Balboa building is without a doubt one of the most interesting museums in San Diego. It's the **San Diego History Center (14)** (619-232-6203) [sandiegohistory.org]. The Society is celebrating its 82nd year of preserving San Diego's rich history. In addition to exhibits, the museum offers lectures, workshops and educational programs. It's open Tues.–Sun. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is (\$6) for adults, (\$4) for seniors, students and military, and (\$2) for children ages 6–17. And on the second Tues. of every month, admission is free to San Diego residents with proof of residency.

Your next discovery should be the **Museum of Photographic Arts (14)** (619-238-7559) [mopa.org] on the west end of the Casa de Balboa building. The exhibits change three times a year and present captivating photographic works of art by well-known and up-and-coming photographers worldwide.

It's open Tues.–Sun. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and closed Thanksgiving and Christmas. Admission is (\$6) for adults and (\$4) for seniors, retired military and students. Admission is free to active military.

Next door to the west is the **House of Hospitality (13)**, which is home to the **Visitor's Center (13)** and the award-winning **The Prado Restaurant at Balboa Park (13)** (619-557-9441) [dinecrg.com]. The Prado also includes a popular cocktail lounge. Their unique menu and charming setting make it a great place to dine.

Camera buffs never tire of taking photographs of the **Lily Pond (9)**, which is one of the most photographed sites in the park. It was built in 1915.

Just behind the Lily Pond is the **Botanical Building (17)**, (619-239-0512) [balboapark.org] which contains more than 2,100 permanent tropical plants including an outstanding fern and orchid collection. The fine old wood lath structure is one of the largest of its kind in the world. It's open Fri.–Wed. 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Closed city holidays and Thursdays. Admission is free.

Equally impressive is the **San Diego Botanic Garden** located just 30 minutes north of Balboa Park in Encinitas at 230 Quail Gardens Dr. (760-436-3036) [sdbgarden.org]. This hidden treasure was once a private estate garden and is now open to the public as a plant conservatory and tranquil retreat. See Encinitas chapter.

The **Timken Museum of Art (12)** (619-239-5548) [timkenmuseum.org] is considered the most critically acclaimed collection of European Masters, 19th century American paintings and Russian icons. Their helpful audio tour guides you through an extraordinary collection of French, Italian and Flemish paintings, including works by Rembrandt and Rubens. **Admission is free**, and the audio tour is (\$3). Hours are Tues.–Sat. 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m. and Sun. 1:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and major holidays.

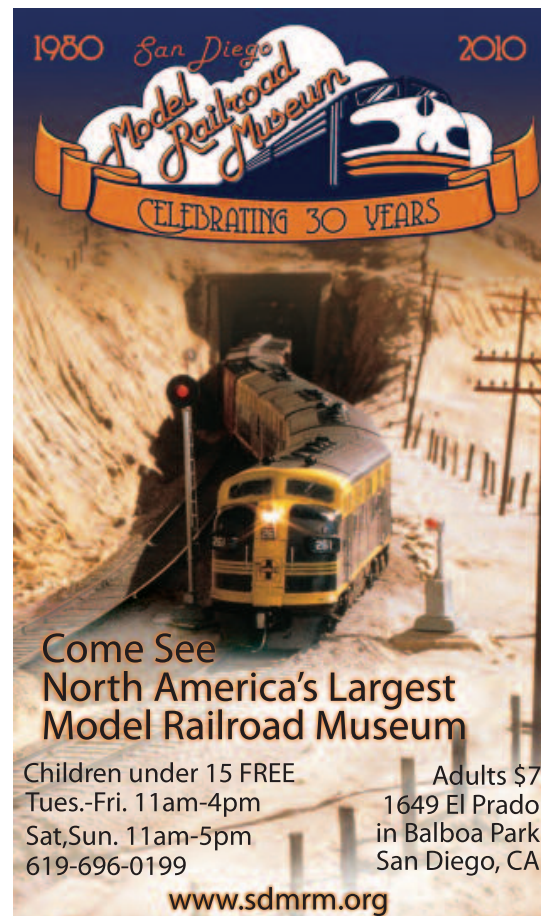
The historic **San Diego Museum of Art (10)** (619-232-7931) [sdmart.org] is the first, largest and most impressive art institution in the county. Its world renowned collections consist of 14,000 art pieces dating as far back as 1500 B.C. In addition, the museum has garnered international recognition for organizing and hosting major exhibitions featuring art from throughout the world. The museum is open Tues.–Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun.

noon–5 p.m. Adults (\$12), seniors and military with ID (\$9), students (\$8), children 6–17 (\$4.50).

While browsing through the park, you will undoubtedly hear the majestic sounds of the bells from the 198-foot **California Tower (7)** ringing every 15 minutes. The California Tower, which is in the **San Diego Museum of Man (7)**, (619-239-2001) [museumofman.org], is considered to be one of the finest examples of Spanish-style architecture in the United States. The museum features fascinating exhibits on human evolution, Egyptian artifacts, Kumeyaay culture and Mayan monuments.

The museum is open daily 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m. except Thanksgiving and Christmas. Admission is (\$10) for adults, (\$7.50) for seniors, active military with ID, students and youth ages 13–17, and (\$5) for children ages 3–12.

Tucked behind the Museum of Man is one of the country's leading regional theater complexes and one of California's oldest professional theater organizations. It's the world renowned, Tony Award-



1980 San Diego Model Railroad Museum 2010
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

Come See
North America's Largest
Model Railroad Museum

Children under 15 FREE	Adults \$7
Tues.-Fri. 11am-4pm	1649 El Prado
Sat,Sun. 11am-5pm	in Balboa Park
619-696-0199	San Diego, CA

www.sdmmr.org

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winning **The Old Globe (6)** (619-234-5623) [theoldglobe.org], which features 15 plays and more than 500 performances each year. The complex comprises three theaters—The Old Globe Theatre, The Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre and the Lowell Davies Festival Theatre.

Every summer, theatergoers flock to their Summer Shakespeare Festival. The festival runs June–Sept. and showcases two of the master playwright’s works performed under the stars.

Southeast of The Old Globe in the historic House of Charm is **Mingei International Museum (8)** (619-239-0003), which has been a big hit in San Diego for over 30 years. Here you’ll find Southern California’s largest and richest collection of *mingei*, which is art from all eras and cultures of the world. Their permanent collection consists of more than 20,000 objects from 141 countries. The museum features dynamic changing exhibits of historic and contemporary folk art, craft and design. The museum is open Tues.–Sun., 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Admission is (\$7) adults, (\$5) seniors, (\$4) youth ages 6–17, students and active military with ID.

To appreciate the works of more of San Diego’s artists, visit the **Museum of the Living Artist at the San Diego Art Institute (8)** at 1439 El Prado (619-236-0011) [sandiego-art.org], in the House of Charm. Every four to six weeks a new exhibition is presented showcasing the contemporary works of local and regional artists.

Admission is (\$3) for adults, (\$2) for seniors, students and military with ID, and children 12 and under are free. Open Tues.–Sat. 10 a.m.–4 p.m., Sun. noon–4 p.m. and closed Mondays.

Balboa Park is also home to the second largest outdoor pipe organ in the world, the **Spreckels Organ Pavilion (18)** (619-702-8138) [sosorgan.org]. It was first played here in Balboa Park in 1915 and its music resonates throughout the park. Best of all, organ concerts are free. Performances are held every Sunday at 2 p.m., rain or shine. Don’t miss the annual organ festival on Mondays at 7:30 p.m. from June 21 to August 30.

Don’t miss Balboa Park’s fascinating aeronautical museum. It’s the **San Diego**

Air and Space Museum (25) (619-234-8291) [sandiegoairandspace.org], which is located in the historic **Ford Building (25)**. The building is directly under the flight path of aircraft bound for nearby Lindbergh Field. You can hear these massive jetliners overhead as you browse this astounding collection of aircraft.

This huge museum displays famous aircrafts, engines, spacecraft and aviation artifacts from the dawn of aviation through the space age. Also here is the **International Aerospace Hall of Fame (25)**, which honors heroes of aviation and aerospace history.

The museum’s newest exhibit is the highly acclaimed must-see **SPACE: A Journey to Our Future**, which closes January 1, 2012. This dynamic, multimedia exhibit looks both back to the past and into the future of outer space exploration with fascinating exhibits into the history of aeronautics. It also examines the many unknown questions of existence posed by future space exploration.

As you explore this thought-provoking exhibit, you will undoubtedly be fascinated with both Earth’s destiny and its limitless possibilities. These out-of-this-world exhibits will enable you to explore what it might be like to visit a lunar base camp, build a futuristic space rocket and create your own mission to Mars. Plus, you can even touch actual moon meteorites and Mars rocks, meet today’s explorers and look far into the future of outer space exploration in a 360-degree theatre. Come explore Space: A Journey to Our Future and dare to dream!

You can also be one of the first to experience the new 3-D/4-D Zable Theatre, which is the first of its kind in Balboa Park! The theatre uses advanced 3-D technologies employing interactive seats and unique special effects to give a multi-sensory experience the whole family will enjoy.

The museum is open 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m. daily, with the last admission at 4 p.m. Extended summer hours till 5:30 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

Admission to the museum and the special exhibit is (\$24) for adults 12 and over; (\$21) for seniors, students and retired military with ID; (\$12) youth ages 3–11; children 2 and under are admitted

free. Active duty military (\$7.50); adult members of the SDASM (\$7); and SDASM youth members (\$5).

Admission to the museum only is (\$16.50) adults 12 and over; (\$13.50) seniors, students and retired military with ID; (\$6) youth ages 3–11; children 2 and under are admitted free. Active military with ID are admitted free. **Be sure to use their \$4 off adult mission coupons in this book.**

Banquets and special occasions including reunions, weddings and conventions are unforgettable under their canopy of historical aircraft. Contact Cassandra Saxton and Melissa Paris (619-234-8291). Also see Banquets & Catering.

Aviation enthusiasts should also visit **The Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum** on Miramar Road (858-693-1723). **Admission is free.** See Historical Museums chapter.

A tour of Balboa Park would not be complete without visiting the **Veterans Museum & Memorial Center (31)** (619-239-2300) [veteranmuseum.org] located in the former chapel of the Naval Hospital. This museum houses military artifacts and memorabilia from the Civil War to the present. Impressive murals of Pearl Harbor and significant historical military events adorn the walls.

A touching tribute to members of the armed forces is their beautiful Veterans Memorial Garden. Divided into three sections, it honors those who served “in the air, on land and at sea” with a walkway of flags, an amphitheater, fountain and a B-24 replica.

The museum is open Tues.–Sun. 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Admission is (\$5) for adults, (\$4) veterans and seniors, (\$2) for students with ID, and is free to children 12 and under and military and their dependents with ID. **Show their ad in the SANDIEGAN for a 2 for 1 discount on admission.** Memorial services are held the fourth Saturday of each month at 11:30 a.m. honoring San Diego veterans. See Historical Museums chapter.

SAN DIEGO ZOO

Another must-see attraction in Balboa Park is the **San Diego Zoo (5)** (619-231-1515) [sandiegozoo.org], which celebrates its 95th birthday this year. The 100-acre

zoo is home to more than 4,500 animals including giant pandas, river hippos and gorillas.

Because the zoo encompasses 100 acres, it's a good idea to take the 35-minute guided, double-decker bus tour. Try to get a seat on the left side of the bus; you will see more animals. During the three-mile ride, you will view 75 percent of the zoo grounds, particularly the areas that would take some exertion to reach on foot.

The San Diego Zoo opens at 9 a.m. and closes its gates at 5 p.m. in the winter and 6 p.m. in the spring. In the summer they are open 9 a.m.–9 p.m. The One-Day Pass has the best value because it includes a bus tour, express bus and Skyfari aerial tram package which is (\$40) for ages 12 and older, (\$30) for children 3–11. Children 2 and under and military with ID are admitted free. **Save money by using the Zoo coupon online at [sandiegan.com].**

For your convenience and easy chapter reference, look to the top of each page.

FREE Admission For Residents

Residents of San Diego County, military personnel and their dependants are offered free admission to many of Balboa Park's best museums and attractions on the first four Tuesdays of the month! Proof of residency is required.

First Tuesday

Natural History Museum
Reuben H. Fleet Science Ctr.
Model Railroad Museum
Centro Cultural de la Raza

Second Tuesday

Museum of Photographic Arts
San Diego History Center
Veterans Museum & Memorial Center

Third Tuesday

San Diego Art Institute
Mingei International Museum
San Diego Museum of Art
San Diego Museum of Man
Japanese Friendship Garden

Fourth Tuesday

San Diego Air and Space Museum
San Diego Automotive Museum
San Diego Hall of Champions
Select International Cottages