San Diego, California, was the first European settlement on the Pacific Coast of the United States and Canada. Presidio Hill is the site of the first California mission established by Spanish Franciscan missionary Father Junípero Serra and a group of soldiers.


Other museums in the city include the San Diego Maritime Museum; New Children’s Museum; USS Midway Museum, which is located aboard the Navy aircraft carrier; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego in La Jolla and Downtown; Birch Aquarium at Scripps (in La Jolla); and Juniperro Serra Museum. The Aviation Museum preserves the contributions made by Marine Corps aviators and their ground support personnel.

Balboa Park also has many performing arts centers, such as the Old Globe, Starlight Theatre and Bowl, Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Casa del Prado Theater, Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater, Recital Hall, War Memorial Building, and Balboa Park Club. Other venues in the city include Balboa Theatre, Civic Theatre, Diversionary Theatre, Birch North Park Theatre, Humphrey’s Concerts by the Bay, and La Jolla Playhouse. The Centro Cultural de la Raza and the WorldBeat Center promote and preserve various cultures through art, music, dance, and education.

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San Diego Unified School District educates approximately 132,000 students in 117 traditional elementary schools, 9 kindergarten through 8th grade schools, 25 traditional middle schools, 24 high schools, 49 charter schools, and 14 atypical/alternative schools. Students may attend schools other than their resident schools. Magnet programs are available at all levels.

San Diego offers many opportunities for higher education. The University of California, San Diego, and San Diego State University provide education at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels. The University of California, San Diego, has a school of medicine and a school of pharmacy. University of San Diego and Point Loma Nazarene University have a religious focus and provide undergraduate and graduate programs.

Specialized higher education is available at the NewSchool of Architecture & Design, Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, The Scripps Research Institute, California College San Diego Coleman University, Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, The Art Institute of California—San Diego, San Diego Culinary Institute, Design Institute of San Diego, IPBS College, Alliant International University, Bethel Seminary, National University, Southern States University, California Western School of Law, and Thomas Jefferson School of Law. San Diego Community College District consists of San Diego City College, San Diego Mesa College, and San Diego Miramar College and offers associate degrees and certificates.

San Diego is served by 11 hospitals that together have more than 3,500 adult and pediatric acute care beds. In addition, Naval Medical Center San Diego and the VA San Diego Medical Center are located in the city. Facilities are able to supply long-term acute care services, psychiatric treatment, and substance abuse treatment.

San Diego, CA

Balboa Park has 17 specialty gardens, including the Botanical Building and the San Diego Zoo, which has a prominent botanical collection in addition to rare and endangered animals.

Mission Bay Park is the largest man-made public aquatic recreational area in the world and features walking, jogging, and biking paths; playgrounds; boat docks and launching facilities; basketball courts; and 8 designated swimming areas.

SeaWorld San Diego offers interactions with various aquatic animals, shows, rides, and other activities.

San Diego has many professional sports teams, including the San Diego Padres (baseball), San Diego Chargers (football), San Diego Sockers (indoor soccer), and San Diego Gulls (hockey).

Neighborhoods

San Diego’s six downtown neighborhoods—Columbia District, Cortez Hill, Gaslamp Quarter, Little Italy, East Village, and Marina District—feature high- and mid-rise condominiums, lofts, townhomes, and apartments. Old Victorian-style homes, row-style townhomes, and historic buildings converted into various residential options are intermixed with buildings in contemporary designs.

Located adjacent to Balboa Park, South Park was built between 1906 and the 1930s, and features large Arts and Crafts homes, modest Bungalows, Spanish-style homes, and some newer apartment and houses. Nearby North Park is the site of the Dryden Historic District, which consists of 136 homes in styles ranging from late Victorian to Craftsman, Spanish Revival, and early California Ranch built between 1912 and 1941. Mission Hills is characterized by older stately homes, Craftsman bungalows, large mansions, and winding hilltop streets. In the mid-city area, Kensington was developed in the 1930s, and features large Arts and Crafts homes, modest Bungalows, large mansions, and contemporary designs.

San Diego Culinary Institute, Design Institute of San Diego, IPBS College, Alliant International University, Bethel Seminary, National University, Southern States University, California Western School of Law, and Thomas Jefferson School of Law.

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Parks and Recreation

San Diego has more than 340 parks; 13 swimming pools; 3 public golf courses; 5 skate parks; open-space parks; trails for hiking, biking, and equestrian use; 56 recreation centers; 11 public beaches; 2 fishing piers; and 15 designated off-leash dog areas. Some beaches are recommended for surfing or scuba diving, whereas others are restricted for swimming.

Education

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Health Care

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City Stats

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<tr>
<td>City Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Statistical Area Population</td>
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Photograph courtesy of John Bahu.