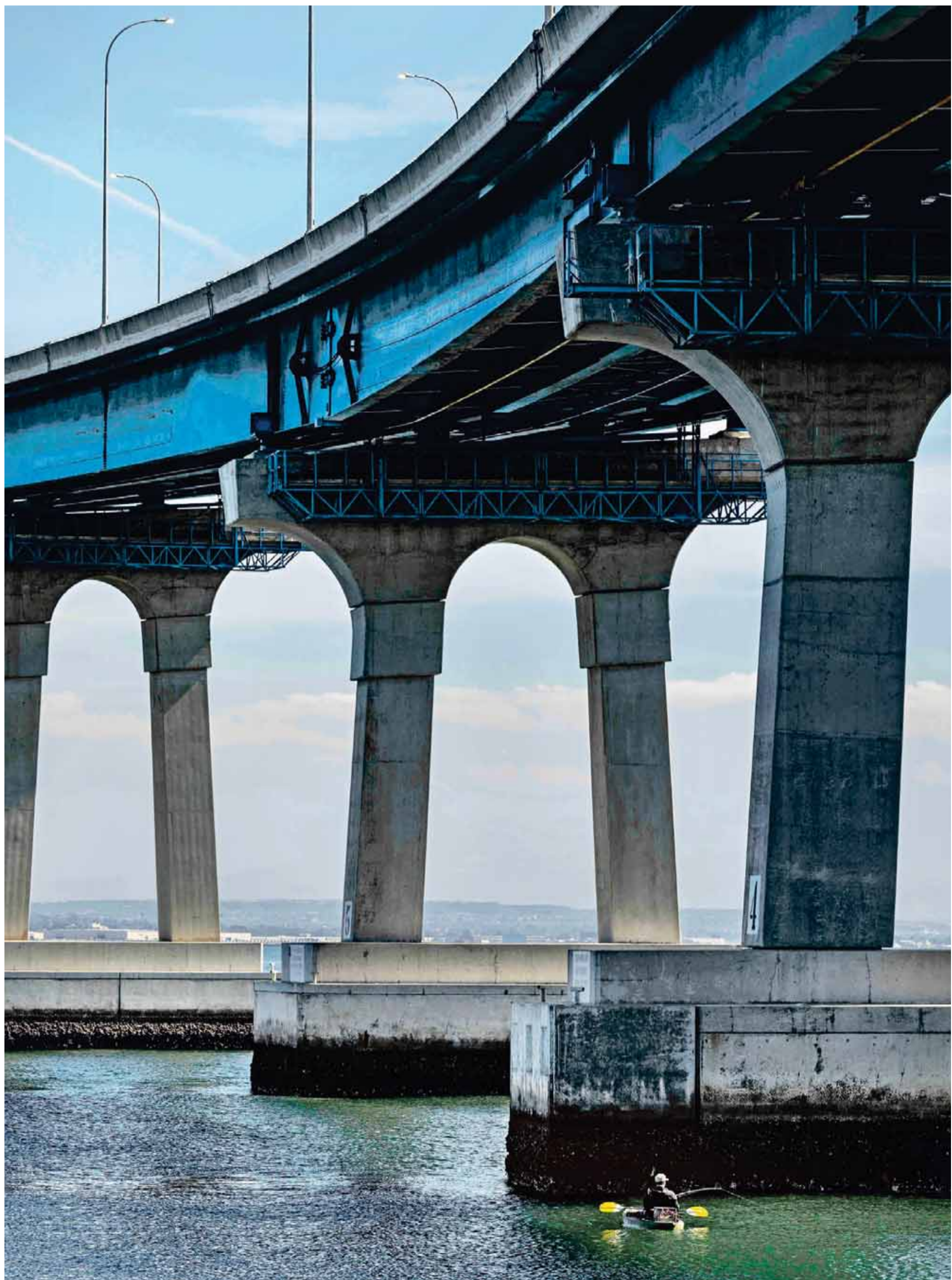


# TRAVEL



Photograph of an angler under the Coronado Bridge by RICARDO DEARATANHA Los Angeles Times

## SAN DIEGO SURPRISES

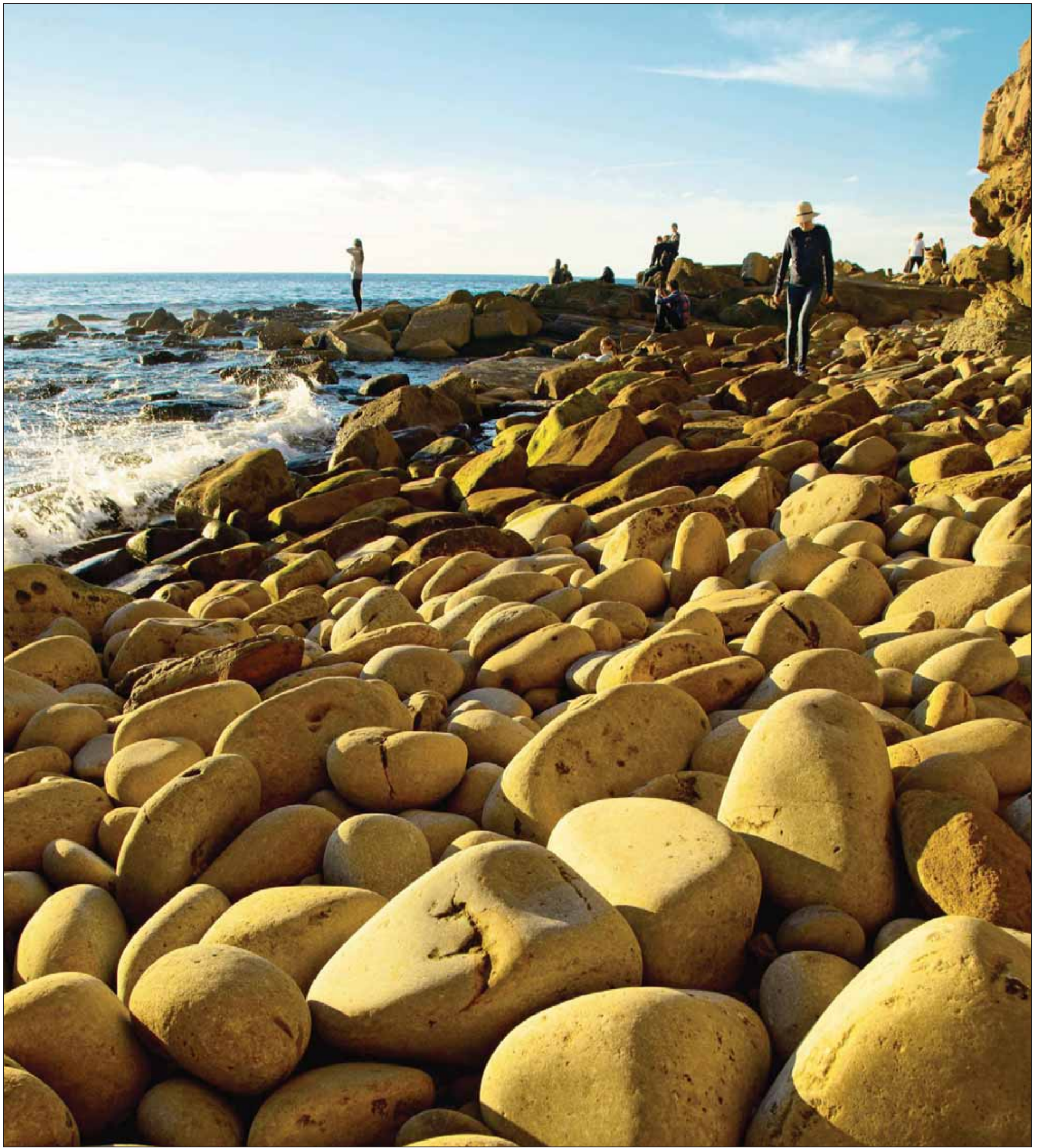
Sure, the city has lots of splashy attractions, but we wanted to find the gems that sometimes are overshadowed. Paddle. Hike. Bike. Sail. Shop. Eat. Look with us and prepare to be amazed. **L3-6**

Ibiza A-Grade Teak Sectional Sofa - Sunbrella® cushions are included as shown on our website! All in stock & fully assembled!

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RICARDO DEARANTHA LOS ANGELES TIMES

**POINT LOMA:** Explore the tide pools, walk the bluffs and gaze at the surfers at Sunset Cliffs Natural Park. The 68-acre park extends 1½ miles along the shoreline.

# SAN DIEGO ROCKS

Head south, travelers. San Diego, California's oldest city, turns 250 this year. Its baseball team turns 50. So does the Coronado Bridge, the long span that adds a curvaceous blue flourish to the skyline. Chances are good that you've already been to the San Diego Zoo; the Old Globe; the big art, science and aviation museums in Balboa Park; and the USS Midway Museum. But there's much more waiting a couple of hours' drive on Interstate 5. We're pointing you to some of our other favorite spots, including museums, campus landmarks, historic structures and more.

## NEIGHBORHOODS

### Balboa Park

Music may have charms to soothe the savage breast, but that wasn't the body part that needed attention. Instead, a chance to get off my feet and restore my sagging spirits drew me to Balboa Park's **Spreckels Organ Pavilion**. Once I was there, I never wanted to leave.

If you're not a lover of organ music, the hourlong concert may seem too high a penance to get off your feet, but only if you've not heard Spain's Raúl Prieto Ramírez, who enters his second year performing these concerts.

The animated organist opened with "America," segued into Bach's Adagio and Fugue in C major, switched seamlessly to movie music, gave us a little Louis-Nicolas Clérambault and topped it all off with the national anthem.

After the concert, audience members could take a closer look at the 5,000 pipes and 80 ranks that make up the historic instrument, which dates to 1914.

**Info:** For a schedule of performances: [spreckelsorgan.org/calendar](http://spreckelsorgan.org/calendar). Free.

— CATHARINE HAMM

Spend a relaxing afternoon browsing in charming **Spanish Village Art Center**, near the entrance to the San Diego Zoo. The 37 gaily painted studios and galleries surround a large courtyard — the paving stones are splashed with color too — and are home to more than 200 painters, potters, photographers and more.

The red-tile-roofed buildings were built in 1935 for the California Pacific International Exhibition. They were used as barracks in World War II, then claimed by artists in 1947. Look for: Joan Boyer's plein air paintings (Studio 2); handsome platters and vases at

the San Diego Potters' Guild (Studio 29); and colorful glass pieces by Andy Cohn and others (Studio 19). If you're lucky, you can watch a glassblower at work at the outdoor furnace.

**Info:** Open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. daily. 1770 Village Place; (619) 233-9050, [spanishvillageart.com](http://spanishvillageart.com). Free.

— ANNE HARNAGEL

With no kid in tow, I wasn't expecting to stay as long as I did at the **San Diego Model Railroad Museum**, believed to be the largest in the world. What I saw captivated me for more than an hour:

four intricate, historically accurate layouts of train routes through the Southwest. Local model railroad clubs began construction of the true-to-scale layouts in 1982; they now cover about 27,000 square feet of model train operations. Favorite scenes: a tiny, incredibly detailed church in El Centro — the organ pedals are made of toothpicks — and the Tecate Brewery.

**Info:** 1649 El Prado, Suite 4; (619) 696-0199, [sdmrm.org](http://sdmrm.org). Open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Adults \$11.50, \$6 for students, free for children 5 and younger.

— A.H.

The red carpet isn't the only place with stars. The San Diego Astronomy Assn. sets up telescopes for the public the first Wednesday of every month for its **Stars in the Park** event, which follows the **Fleet Science Center's** "Sky Tonight" planetarium show. I was here to view the Super Blood Wolf Moon, but the weather did not cooperate. Only a sliver of the blood-red moon was visible, but it was still a fun night.

**Info:** 1875 El Prado, [sdaa.org/events.htm#SP](http://sdaa.org/events.htm#SP). Dusk, first Wednesday of the month. Free.

— CALVIN ALAGOT



Sources: Nextzen, OpenStreetMap

Los Angeles Times

There may be grander Craftsman homes than the **Marston House**, but it's not the architecture that's the power of this 8,500-square-foot manse at the northwest corner of Balboa Park.

The house was built for George and Anna Marston, who moved in in 1905. It's no coincidence that a slightly yellow copy of the San Diego Union, carefully placed on the breakfast table, has a huge ad touting a sale on dresses and coats (from \$29.95) at Marston's department store.

A tour of the house is a better lesson in history than in home

decor. A Stickley piano, for instance, isn't original to the house, although Marston's was a purveyor of Stickley furniture. Instead, the magic of the house is learning how Marston took his business acumen and turned it into a civics lesson — if you do well, remember to do good — and a legacy. Balboa Park, the Presidio of San Diego and the public library system, Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, Anza Borrego State Park and more all have Marston's fingerprints.

**Info:** 3525 7th Ave.; (619) 297-9327, [bit.ly/MarstonHouse](http://bit.ly/MarstonHouse)

*and Gardens*. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays-Sundays. \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors (65 and older), \$7 for those 6-12 and 5 and younger admitted free.

— C.H.

If you're at Balboa Park at 11 a.m. on a Tuesday, you can take a free staff-led tour ([bit.ly/BalboaParkTours](http://bit.ly/BalboaParkTours)). And if you're not? You can do what I did and ride along El Prado on an electric bike at night when it's less crowded. (All sorts of scooters also are available, too.) Red **Jump bikes** can be found around the park. It's affiliated with Uber, so if you've already downloaded that app, you can be pedaling in no time.

**Info:** Jump bikes, [jump.com](http://jump.com). About 15 cents a minute. — C.A.

Do you really need a streusel-covered coffee cake with strawberries and raspberries from **Extraordinary Desserts**? A caramelized chocolate lava bun — a "flaky, croissant-like pastry with a center of creamy hazelnut-flavored chocolate"? A froissant — a croissant deep-fried with a vanilla custard topped with a berry? Are there not better uses for your \$6.25?

Answers: No, you do not need these, and perhaps there are better uses for your money, although I cannot think of one.

You don't have to have a pastry or a sweet when you go in, but why bother going in the first place? This place is all about desert, the most important meal of the day.

**Info:** 2929 5th Ave. (convenient to Balboa Park), (619) 294-2132, and 1430 Union St. (near Little Italy), (619) 234-7001; [extraordinarydesserts.com](http://extraordinarydesserts.com).

— C.H.

### Bankers Hill

Walk around San Diego long enough and you'll start to see it as a city of canyons and bridges,

[See **San Diego**, L4]



**EMBARCADERO:** The Downtown San Diego skyline flows by on a Hornblower cruise that also includes views of Coronado and Point Loma, not to mention gray whales, orcas

# NEW REASONS TO

[San Diego, from L3]

especially two spans that transport you from residential streets to woody heights within minutes. They're part of the city's 5 1/2-mile **Seven Bridges Hike**.

From 1st Avenue, turn east onto Quince Street to find a trestle-style bridge that looks like a Tinkertoy creation. The wooden bridge, built in 1905, once connected pedestrians and a trolley stop on 4th Avenue. Now people come and linger amid views of tree canopies and hillside homes from 60 feet in the air.

Farther north and west of 1st Avenue is the **Spruce Street Suspension Bridge**, a hidden gem that creeps and sways when you cross its 375-foot span. Stay calm. Cables anchored in the canyon below hold it firmly in place.

**Info:** [bit.ly/sevenbridgeshike](http://bit.ly/sevenbridgeshike).  
— MARY FORGIONE

## Barrio Logan

**Chicano Park** stands at the heart of Barrio Logan with the Coronado Bridge and Interstate 5 branching overhead like arteries. Murals throughout the park tell the story of a community that has fought hard to preserve its culture on this soil. The park also has a skatepark, playground and holds events that can be found on its online calendar. On April 20, locals are celebrating the 49th Chicano Park Day, memorializing the nonviolent militant takeover of the park by the community. Festivities include a low rider car show along with food and music.

**Info:** 49th Chicano Park Day, [chicano-park.com](http://chicano-park.com). — C.A.

## Coronado

**Bayview Park**, a quiet little space, offers a panoramic view of the San Diego skyline from the comfort of shaded benches. Other parks offer comparable views, but this intimate park feels special, surrounded by trees and away from the madding crowds. It makes for a good reason to make that trip across the Coronado Bridge. Bring a cup of coffee and watch the ships roll in.

**Info:** 413 1st St., Coronado; [bit.ly/BayViewPark](http://bit.ly/BayViewPark). Free. — C.A.

## East Village

Two panels outside the **Lillian Place** affordable housing complex at 14th Avenue and J Street offer a historical snapshot of the African American neighborhood that thrived here in the 19th and 20th centuries. Lillian Grant, one of the first black women to own property in San Diego, ran a racially integrated boarding house on the building's site. At Market Street and 2nd Avenue, the black-owned Douglas Hotel drew A-list jazz and blues artists such as Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday. It rated an entry in the Green Book travel guide for African Americans.

**Info:** 1401 J St. — M.F.

## Embarcadero

Take to the high seas on a **Hornblower cruise** in search of gray whales, orcas and dolphins. If you're lucky, you might see a whale breaching, but just being out on the water and getting fresh views of Coronado, Point Loma and downtown San Diego make the 3 1/2-hour cruise worth it. The bow is the place to be for the best experience, but bring a jacket because the wind is chilly even on a sunny day.

**Info:** Pier 2, 970 N. Harbor Drive; (619) 686-8700 or (619) 686-8715, [hornblower.com/port/fleet/sd](http://hornblower.com/port/fleet/sd). Daily tours at 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Tickets start at \$43, but through March 31 \$30 tickets are available by calling. — C.A.

## Little Italy

Live music and a fun crowd make the **Little Italy Mercato** an energetic place to spend your Saturday morning. Local restaurants provide pizza and gelato — what else do you really need? A long row of farm stands sell local produce, baked goods, honey, eggs and more — you'll definitely leave with a full stomach. A block from Waterfront Park.

**Info:** West Date Street between Kettner Boulevard and Front Street; (619) 233-3901, [sandiego.markets.com](http://sandiego.markets.com). 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays. Free. — C.A.

The **San Diego Firehouse Museum**, Old Fire Station Number 6, served the Little Italy community from 1915 to 1970. The bricks-and-mortar building now houses the museum and its collection of fire buckets, hoses and nozzles, helmets and protective gear and a 9/11 memorial. Nine fire engines have pride of place. The hand- and horse-drawn La Jolla No. 1 — a beauty — dates to 1841 and was that community's only fire protection in the early 1900s.

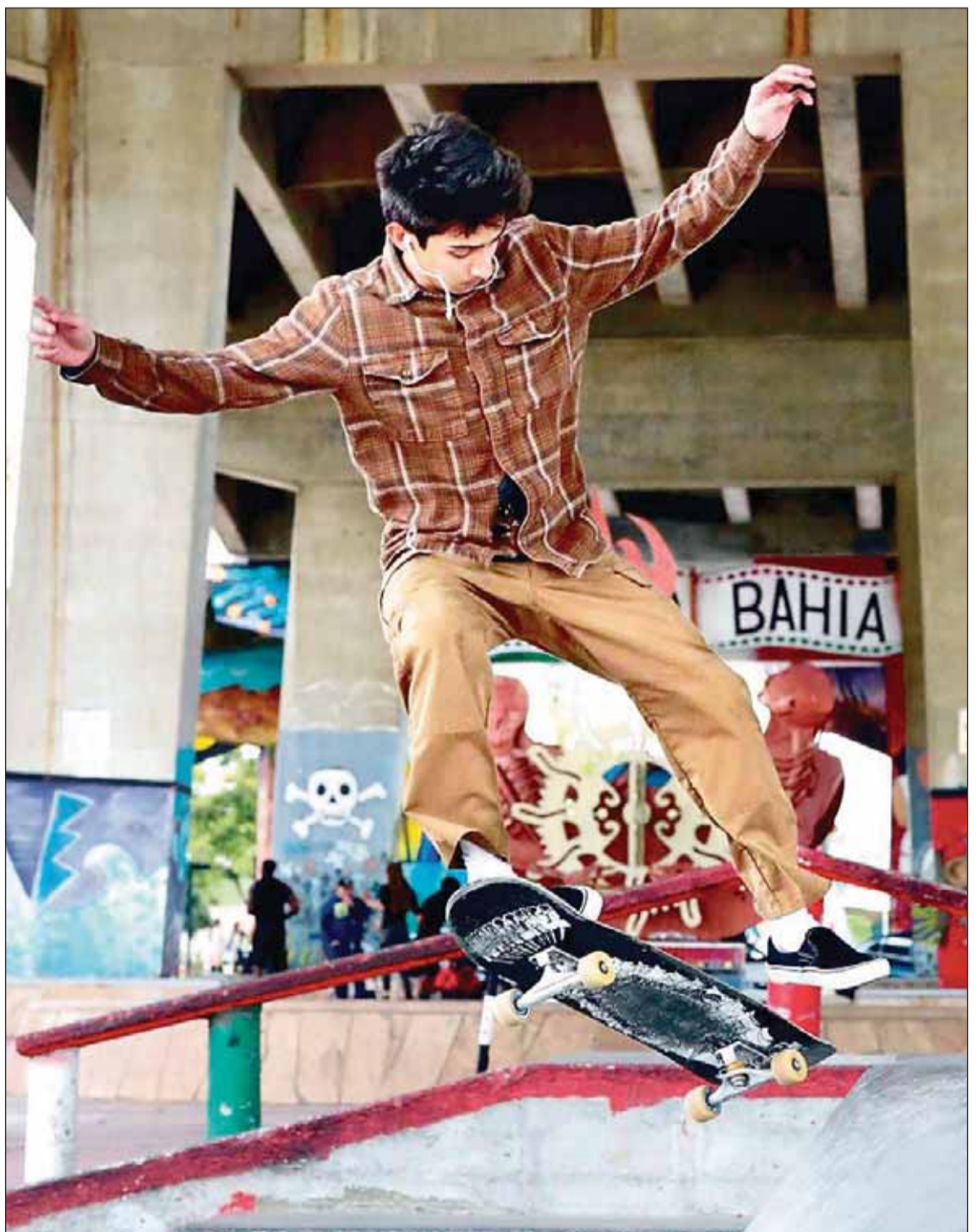
**Info:** 1572 Columbia St.; (619) 232-3473, [sandiegofirehouse.museum.com](http://sandiegofirehouse.museum.com). Open 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Admission \$3 for adults, \$2 for kids. — A.H.

## Mission Trails Regional Park

Lace up your boots, hike to the top of a peak, snap a photo to prove you made it, repeat four more times. That's how the **5-Peak Challenge** works, with a lot of inspiring vistas to keep you going.

Well-marked trails and fire roads wind through chaparral and up rocky flanks to San Diego's highest point, the 1,592-foot summit of Cowles Mountain, where you can see Tijuana in the distance as well as North and South Fortuna, Pyles and Kwaay Paay peaks.

The hikes are moderate (you have several routes to choose from), although most require a steep scramble to the summit. Do all of them and collect a finisher pin and certificate, free of charge,



CALVIN B. ALAGOT Los Angeles Times

**BARRIO LOGAN:** Wesley Ramos shows his tricks at the skatepark in mural-heavy Chicano Park.

at the visitor center. Trail runners may finish in less than a day, but take your time to absorb the beauty of the city's wild side.

**Info:** [bit.ly/5peakchallenge](http://bit.ly/5peakchallenge). — M.F.

Walk through the **Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor & Interpretive Center** and go straight to the outdoor terrace for a dramatic view of the rough-hewn ridges and valleys of Mission Gorge. It's a peaceful spot where volunteers remind visitors that this is what the land looked like before Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo arrived in 1542. The center, just 20 minutes from downtown, is a portal to the 7,000-plus-acres of park trails and history.

**Info:** 1 Father Junípero Serra Trail; (619) 668-3281, [mtrp.org/visitor-center](http://mtrp.org/visitor-center). Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily except Thanksgiving, Christ-

mas and New Year's Day. — M.F.

## Mission Valley

Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá marks the starting point of 21 missions that would transform Alta California. The original was founded by Father Junípero Serra in 1769 but moved to this location about six miles inland in 1774. Various iterations have stood here, its current one a majestic structure worthy of its position as the first.

You can visit the excavation project, look at the simple rooms where the friars lived and visit the museum. Try to be here at noon. It's then you get the fullest experience of hearing the ringing of the Mater Dolorosa. The sound from this 1,200-pound bell, which is also rung at 6 p.m., will put a punctuation mark on your mission musings.

**Info:** 10818 San Diego Mission Road; (619) 281-8449, [mission-sandiego.org](http://mission-sandiego.org). Adults \$5, students and seniors (55 and older) \$3, children younger than 12, \$2. — C.H.

## Old Town

Kids — and their parents — will find lots to interest them at the **William B. Kolender Sheriff's Museum**, which showcases the history of San Diego County Sheriff's Department since its founding in 1850. Future law enforcement officers can don a judge's robe taken in a jail cell, have their photo in a mock courtroom or sit on a motorcycle — it's OK to let the siren wall — and then check out two squad cars and a helicopter cockpit.

Exhibits on women in the department as well as its K-9 heroes, search-and-rescue unit and emergency responders also will keep



CALVIN B. ALAGOT Los Angeles Times

and dolphins. Head to the bow for the best seat in the house, but don't forget to bring a jacket; if the weather becomes too chilly, there's always the viewing area indoors.

# ADORE SAN DIEGO



RICARDO DEARATANHA Los Angeles Times

**BALBOA PARK-ADJACENT:** Extraordinary Desserts' apple *crostata* (baked tarts) are tempting.



RICARDO DEARATANHA Los Angeles Times

**BALBOA PARK:** Both kids and adults will have fun at the San Diego Model Railroad Museum.



MARY FORGIONE Los Angeles Times

**WATERFRONT PARK:** Niki de Saint Phalle's "The Serpent Tree" sculpture is a landmark.

them occupied.

**Info:** 2384 San Diego Ave.; (619) 260-1850, [sheriffsmuseum.org](http://sheriffsmuseum.org). Open Wednesdays-Sundays; check website for hours. \$5 donation; kids 12 and younger free with adult. — A.H.

Is the **Whaley House Museum** a Greek Revival home haunted by bad luck and misfortune? To hear the story of the Whaley family, one might believe that's so.

Thomas Whaley built the house in Old Town San Diego, where he and his wife, Anna, could raise their family.

This was no single-purpose structure. You still can see the courtroom where justice was dispensed, but that same space also had served as a school, a ballroom and a granary. You'll see a theater and stage, where a handbill touts the performances of the

Tanner Troupe offering "moral, chaste and versatile entertainments."

There were those who thought daughter Violet less than moral. In her 20s, she divorced her husband, who was, by all accounts, a scoundrel, but she suffered the societal consequences. Depressed, she shot herself with her father's Smith & Wesson.

The spirits that prowl about the place are thought to be hers, her baby brother's (he was a toddler when he died) and three thieves who were hanged on the spot where the house was built.

**Info:** 2475 San Diego Ave.; (619) 297-7511, [whaleyhouse.org](http://whaleyhouse.org). Opening and closing times (some evening hours are available) vary by season; call or check website for times. Daytime admission: \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors 55 and older, active

military and children 6-12; younger than 5, free. — C.H.

## Point Loma

**Liberty Station**, the former Naval Training Center, welcomed its first recruits in 1923. The city of San Diego assumed ownership of the property in 2000 and has repurposed the Spanish Colonial Revival buildings as a showcase for the arts and local businesses. You can spend the better part of a day strolling the park-like grounds and browsing the small galleries, museums and shops of the Arts District. Before you do, fuel up with breakfast sushi (\$14.95) or brioche French toast (\$9.95) at the Liberty Station outpost of the **Fig Tree Café** before heading out on Historic Decatur Road to explore.

**Info:** 2400 Historic Decatur Road, Suite 103; (619) 821-2044, [bit.ly/figtreelibertystation](http://bit.ly/figtreelibertystation). Open 7

a.m.-3 p.m. daily. — A.H.

Liberty Station's Building 202 houses several small museums and galleries, including the **Visions Art Museum**, which showcases the works of textile and fiber artists. On display through April 7: "Playing With a Full Deck," a colorful contemporary collection of 54 small quilts, each representing a playing card, and Ving Simpson's "Unknown Territory," industrial-looking wall hangings and sculptures incorporating roofing felt paper.

**Info:** Building 202, 2825 Dewey Road, Suite 100; (619) 546-4872, [visionsartmuseum.org](http://visionsartmuseum.org). Open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, noon-4 p.m. Sundays. \$7 admission; 18 and younger, free. — A.H.

The **San Diego Watercolor Society** hosts a monthly member art show and sale in its bright, white gallery that includes a small library stocked with exhibit catalogs, art books and videos/DVDs. Looking to hone your skills with a paintbrush? The society offers weekend art classes.

**Info:** Building 202, 2825 Dewey Road, Suite 105; (619) 876-4550, [sdws.org](http://sdws.org). Open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays, noon-4 p.m. Sundays. Free. — A.H.

"Marching Toward Empowerment," the permanent exhibit of the **Women's Museum of California**, incorporates items from the Alice Park Collection, one of California's leading suffragists, in its exploration of the suffrage movement from the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 to the ratification in August 1920 of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. Also of interest is a wall of fame honoring some of the state's leading women, including Clara Shortridge Foltz, the first female lawyer on the West Coast.

**Info:** Barracks 16, 2730 Historic Decatur Road, Suite 103; (619) 233-7963, [womensmuseumca.org](http://womensmuseumca.org). Open noon-4 p.m. Wednesdays-Sundays, \$5 for adults, \$3 for students and seniors, free for military and children younger than 12. — A.H.

If all that browsing has left you famished, head to the **Liberty Public Market**, where you can chow down on ramen, corned beef, empanadas, lobster rolls and more offered by 30-plus vendors. For me, the shrimp tacos with pineapple and habanero chutney (\$4.75 each) at **Cecilia's Taqueria** filled the void.

**Info:** 2820 Historic Decatur Road; (619) 487-9346, [bit.ly/libertypublicmarket](http://bit.ly/libertypublicmarket). Open 11 a.m.-8 p.m. daily. Some vendors open for breakfast. — A.H.

Are crumbling cliffs proof that California will eventually collapse into the ocean? No, but they're a reminder that the ocean is eating away at some of the most gorgeous corners of the state. For a demo, head to Point Loma's **Sunset Cliffs**

**Natural Park**, a 68-acre mini-park next to a residential neighborhood.

Once here, you can stroll on a bluff, gaze at the surfers or poke around in the tide pools.

If tide-pooling floats your boat, find your way to the stairs leading from the foot of Ladera Street to the water's edge. At the bottom, you'll find rocky territory that can be slippery and dangerous, especially if it's high tide. There's no shame in turning back, but those slippery rocks are filled with tempting tide pools and little creatures. Remember, though, do not touch.

**Info:** 1253 Sunset Cliffs Blvd.; [bit.ly/sunsetcliffspark](http://bit.ly/sunsetcliffspark). Free. — CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS

## Shelter Island

**Pacific Rim Park**, on the southernmost end of Shelter Island, rewards visitors with an easy walking trail that has views of the Naval Air Station on Coronado and downtown San Diego. With sculptures and monuments such as the Pearl of the Pacific and Friendship Bell, it's a cool spot to check out.

**Info:** 1407a Shelter Island Drive; [bit.ly/pacificrimpark](http://bit.ly/pacificrimpark). Free. — C.A.

## University Heights

There aren't many places like **Camera Exposure** where you can walk in and find an expert who will help you find the right gear. Kenneth Kahan, who has been in the camera repair business for more than 25 years, tends to all the equipment himself. The stock ranges from small 35-mm point-and-shoots to large-format cameras. You'll also find a good selection of 120 and 135 film.

**Info:** 2703 Adams Ave.; (619) 640-5300, [cameraexposure.com](http://cameraexposure.com). Open 12:30-5:30 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Fridays and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays. — C.A.

## Waterfront Park

Snakes in a park! Six towering, golden heads with gaping red mouths and glittery mosaic collars that twine together in a single stem have become a beloved local landmark. "**The Serpent Tree**" is a fantasy sculpture by the late Niki de Saint Phalle, a French American artist who once called San Diego home.

Other pieces amid the park's climbing rings, slides, swings and interactive fountains include a dazzling African American baseball player in a red shirt and blue and silver mosaic pants. It's so kinetic you can almost hear the crack of his shiny gold bat.

**Info:** 1600 Pacific Highway; open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. [bit.ly/kwaterfrontpark](http://bit.ly/kwaterfrontpark). — M.F.

## Points North: La Jolla

The **Torrey Pines Gliderport**, a windy haven atop a 300-foot sandstone cliff toward the north end of La Jolla, is a great place to watch the hang gliders and paragliders as they get in sync with the wind, then launch themselves. Once they [See San Diego, L6]

# NEW FAVES IN SAN DIEGO

[San Diego, from L4] catch an updraft, they can hang around for quite a while gliding above the cliff top.

Between human launches, you can wander over to see the model aircraft enthusiasts heaving their models skyward and piloting them remotely. Or check out the Gliderport's most notable recent addition — falconry lessons at the **Total Raptor Experience**, which includes a large enclosure in which several falcons roost between flights. (The 90-minute lesson [\$77] includes calling the birds to and from hand-held perches.)

At some point, belly up to the **Cliffhanger Café** for soup, salad or a sandwich. (Prices top off at \$9.49.)

If you want a little more nature and a little more exercise, there's a steep trail to **Black's Beach**, popular with nudists and skilled surfers (it's a demanding break). The clothing-optional zone runs from the bottom of the trail to the north for about a mile.

**Info:** 2800 Torrey Pines Scenic Drive, La Jolla; (858) 452-9858, [flytorrey.com](http://flytorrey.com). — C.R.

**UC San Diego** is best known for its top-ranked science programs. But it's also a great place to visit for arts and architecture. Its **Geisel Library** (William L. Pereira Associates, 1970), in particular, looks like a spaceship from a planet where concrete was cheap.

Scattered throughout the 1,200-acre main campus are 20 pieces of public art that make up the still-growing **Stuart Collection**. The colorful "Sun God" (Niki de Saint Phalle, 1983) was the first and may be the most beloved. But I have a soft spot for Terry Allen's "Trees" (1986), which includes two faux eucalyptus trees concealed within a eucalyptus grove. Their surfaces are wrapped in gray lead and periodically they "talk" — that is they play recorded songs, poems and stories.

**Info:** 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla; (858) 534-2230, [ucsd.edu](http://ucsd.edu). — C.R.

## Oceanside

Who would pay \$35 to take a nap and read? Someone who just can't seem to turn off the noise, perhaps. You can find a cloak of silence and a bit of history at **Mission San Luis Rey** in Oceanside, which offers an eight-hour retreat from the world, or Quiet Days, as they're called.

You register, show up at 9 a.m. and find your room (twin beds, desk and sink) with a locking door and a bathroom with toilets and showers just down the hall. You are free to roam the grounds of the mission established in 1798 by Fermín Francisco Lasuén, attend Mass if you wish (not required), enjoy a lunch (sandwich, salads, cookies the day I was there) and generally spend the eight hours doing whatever you want.

On a rainy Monday, my wants were more sleep, reading a "serious" book, wandering the gardens of the 56-acre grounds and generally savoring the absence of electronic intrusions. Worth it? Yes. At twice the price.

**Info:** 4050 Mission Ave., Oceanside; (760) 757-3659. See [bit.ly/sanluisreyquietday](http://bit.ly/sanluisreyquietday) for more on one-day retreats, which cost \$35 and require reservations. Longer retreats are available. — C.H.

## HOTELS

Take your basic U-shaped two-story motel from the '60s, update it with a smidge of Mid-century Modern and, voilà, you have the **Pearl Hotel** in Point Loma. The simply furnished guest rooms — my mattress sat on what appeared to be a shipping pallet — do have one sweet feature: Each is home to a betta swimming placidly in a fishbowl attached to a wall. (Scooter may have been my best roommate ever.) The 23-room lodge, about a 10-minute drive from the airport, is convenient to Liberty Station and Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery.

**Info:** 1410 Rosecrans St.; (619) 226-6100; [thepearlsd.com](http://thepearlsd.com). 10 parking spots; overnight street parking OK. Rooms from \$159 a night. — A.H.

Tropical hideaway **Humphrey's Half Moon Inn** on Shelter Island has its own restaurant and concert venue as well as a pool area with a bar and Jacuzzi. The spacious rooms have views of the water, and the "island" is laid-back and away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Just a 10- to 15-minute drive to downtown and the Cabrillo National Monument.

**Info:** 2303 Shelter Island Drive; (619) 224-3411 [halfmooninn.com](http://halfmooninn.com). Doubles from \$199 — C.A.

**Hotel Z** in the Gaslamp Quarter is within walking distance



**BALBOA PARK:** Catch a glassblower at work at Studio 19 at the Spanish Village Art Center, home to 37 galleries and studios. — RICARDO DEARATNHA Los Angeles Times



**CHULA VISTA:** Feast on spicy pork tacos with avocado sauce at Tacos El Gordo. — CALVIN B. ALAGOT Los Angeles Times

of teeming neighborhood clubs and bars as well as Petco Park — no Uber or Lyft needed. It's a Staypineapple hotel, a brand that strives to be the life of the party. Guestroom doors are covered with surreal scenes that tease what's inside: Floating goldfish? Zoo animals? A bushel of pineapples? Visitors make their bed using two rolled-up duvets and a slew of pillows. (There's a flashlight to help in case you're stumped.) The friendly staff, free suite upgrade and free breakfast were part of a recent experience. One drawback: \$45 a day to valet park; nearby lots charge less than half the price. Doubles from \$110, plus \$20 nightly fee and tax.

**Info:** 521 6th Ave.; (619) 330-6401, [bit.ly/hotelzsandiego](http://bit.ly/hotelzsandiego) — M.F.

**The Sofia**, on the edge of the Gaslamp Quarter, is a boutique hotel whose common areas are polished and pretty and whose rooms are snug but comfortable. Two drawbacks: The cost of my \$137-a-night-room grew because of more than \$17 in taxes, including the transient occupancy tax, and a \$15.58 guest service fee, which included Wi-Fi, which I used, and bikes, which I didn't. Tack on \$38 for valet parking and my bill was more like \$210.

**Info:** 150 W. Broadway; (619) 234-9200, [thesoftahotel.com](http://thesoftahotel.com). Doubles from \$144. — C.H.

Coronado's 29-room **La Avenida Inn** provided a comfortable room and a good beach-friendly location. It's a short walk to the swank Hotel del Coronado, where you can peek in. The motel offers free parking and Wi-Fi, a pastry and coffee breakfast, and boogie boards if you need 'em.

**Info:** 1315 Orange Ave., Coronado; (619) 435-3191, [laavenida.com](http://laavenida.com). Doubles from \$169, plus tax and fees. — M.F.

If you want to stay in the heart of buzzing Little Italy, **La Pensione** is for you. I asked for a quiet room away from the noise of India Street and the Piazza della Famiglia, and it was. The room was small, with limited amenities (tiny TV, \$3 for bottled water), but the shimmering silver wallpaper was fun, and the roomy shower was great. Check-in was challenging; the hotel website does say its parking is limited, which means 20 spots for the 67-room hotel. There was no loading zone or valet service. I ended up parking overnight in an unfenced, open-air lot with no apparent security five blocks from the hotel.

**Info:** 606 W. Date St.; (619) 304-6866, [lapensione.com](http://lapensione.com). Doubles from \$150 a night. — A.H.

**Found** hotel, housed in a 1910 building in Little Italy, has several

things going for it. First, the price. I paid \$94 on a Sunday winter night, including tax, for a comfortable deluxe queen room with a kitchenette and a private bath. You can pay less, but you get less: Shared rooms with bunks mean you and your bunkies will share a bath as well. The upside: Prices per night start as low as \$35 a person. (There are various iterations of rooms for those who require more privacy.) If you want parking, you'll need to find it. Fortunately, I did, two blocks away, and my car was there the next morning. In all, a win for the budget traveler.

**Info:** 505 W. Grape St.; (619) 230-1600, [bit.ly/foundSanDiego](http://bit.ly/foundSanDiego). Deluxe queen from \$119. — C.H.

My room at the **Bahia Resort** had room to spare and even a shaded balcony from which to enjoy the view of Mission Bay. The stretch of beach in front of my room was lined with cabana-beds that served as a welcoming beacon for guests. Also just outside my window was an old-timey paddle boat that I hoped might have a casino on it. It didn't, but it's free to hotel guests and it takes you across the bay to the Bahia's sister location, the Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa. After 9 p.m. the boat turns into a 21-plus nightclub with \$5 specials on Fridays and Sundays.

**Info:** 998 W. Mission Bay Drive; (858) 488-0551, [bahiahotel.com](http://bahiahotel.com). Doubles from \$165. — C.A.

## RESTAURANTS

**Charles + Dinorah**, the Pearl hotel's small bar and restaurant named for the original owners, opens onto a small saltwater swimming pool. As you dine or float, you can watch classic movies on a large screen attached to the building. The C+D winter salad (\$11) with baby gem lettuce, charred dates and acorn squash, and two orders of skewers — pork belly (\$12) and chicken (\$10) — were just the right mix of crunch and comfort on a January night.

**Info:** 1410 Rosecrans St.; (619) 226-6100. Mains from \$16. — A.H.

**Harbor Breakfast** serves that — and lunch too — in two bright blue rooms on a less frenetic stretch of India Street in Little Italy. The menu covers all the breakfast basics — the pumpkin pancakes (\$8) were scrumptious — and there's counter service and outdoor seating too.

**Info:** 1502 India St.; (619) 450-7926, [harborbreakfastsandiego.com](http://harborbreakfastsandiego.com). Omelets \$14-\$15, crab Benedict \$16. — A.H.

Settle down at cozy **Caffe Italia** and have a cup of Italian coffee or espresso. Its menu is mostly paninis and salads, but there's a waffle bar at Sunday brunch. It also has a

gelato counter that features locally made flavors, so you may find yourself wondering if it's OK to eat gelato for breakfast. (The answer is yes.)

**Info:** 1704 India St.; (619) 234-6767, [caffetailialittleitaly.com](http://caffetailialittleitaly.com). Lunch from \$6.25. — C.A.

**Prado** is part of the Cohn Restaurant group, a dining juggernaut in San Diego with restaurants that run the gamut from sassy to snazzy. Balboa Park's Prado is the latter, offering the ideal prescription for a pleasant meal: If it's a pretty day, get seated outdoors to soak up more Balboa vibe and peruse the menu. You can have vegetarian, greens, duck, beef, the menu touches most all of the notes. I chose the trio of grilled skewers (steak with chipotle honey, chicken with cashew curry, shrimp with mango ginger sauce on Asian slaw.)

**Info:** 1549 El Prado; (619) 557-9441, [bit.ly/pradobalboa](http://bit.ly/pradobalboa). Lunch main dishes from \$13.50, dinner from \$24. — C.H.

Here's what elevated **Blind Lady Ale House**, a Normal Heights pizza-y joint (it also has charcuterie and mussels and fries): a vegan pesto pizza among its more cheesy and meaty cousins. I'm not vegan, but I don't eat cheese and I really miss pizza. This one, with cremini mushrooms, pickled onions and arugula (\$16), was enough for lunch and dinner. Coupled with a Burgeon 3 Day Window IPA (chosen for me to go with the pizza), I practically floated out of Blind Lady Ale House, whose initials are BLAH but is anything but.

**Info:** 3416 Adams Ave.; (619) 255-2491, [blindladyalehouse.com](http://blindladyalehouse.com). Pizzas from \$11. — C.H.

Reviewers seem to either love or hate **Rolberto's Taco Shop** in Normal Heights. I fall in the love category. My *carne asada* nachos (\$6.60) had a lot of personality (tender, flavorful meat helped, as did the sauce). You say you can't judge a taco place by one dish? True. But the steady stream of returning customers on a Saturday afternoon suggested a following.

**Info:** 3462 Adams Ave.; (619) 563-0438, [rolbertos.menutoeat.com](http://rolbertos.menutoeat.com). Tacos from \$2.55. — C.H.

Breakfast at the **Mission** in Mission Beach offers creative dishes with a healthful edge, good for vegetarian and gluten-free diners. Soy chorizo and eggs with cream chipotle sauce, gluten-free cinnamon bread French toast and a Zen breakfast of egg whites and braised tofu share the menu with more mainstream breakfast burritos. It's a good spot to linger over a cup of coffee (they don't rush you).

**Info:** 3795 Mission Blvd. (also in North Park and SoMa East Vil-



**THE PEARL:** Each of the hotel's 23 rooms has one sweet feature: a betta in a fishbowl. — ANNE HARNAGEL Los Angeles Times

lage); (858) 488-9060, [themission.com](http://themission.com). Breakfast from \$7.95. — M.F.

Start with a parking plan (or maybe an Uber or Lyft) and a reservation at **Plumeria** in University Heights before you even think about dinner at this Thai vegetarian restaurant. The neighborhood is packed on weekends, and so is this cozy restaurant that's a good choice for vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free diners. Entrees have an aesthetic appeal: A spicy eggplant entree came with a star-shaped bed of brown rice. Menu includes stir fries, noodle dishes, curries and more.

**Info:** 4661 Park Blvd.; (619) 269-9989, [myplumeria.com](http://myplumeria.com). Appetizers from \$4.95, entrees from \$11.75. — M.F.

The large Buddha on a pedestal at the entrance to **Saigon on Fifth** sets a soothing tone at this Vietnamese restaurant in Hillcrest, the city's LGBTQ hub. You can spend time digesting the long list of menu options or go straight to the pho. Most use a beef-based broth, but when asked the kitchen produced a vegetarian version with fried tofu that didn't skimp on spicy flavor. Insider tip: The restaurant validates parking for two hours at an underground lot off 5th Avenue.

**Info:** 3900 5th Ave.; (619) 501-8988, [bit.ly/saigononfifth](http://bit.ly/saigononfifth). Appetizers from \$5.95, pho dishes from \$10.95. — M.F.

A month had passed since I first feasted at **Tacos El Gordo**, and I was itching to get back to the creamy avocado-sauce-covered spicy pork tacos that haunted my dreams. I tried to find Tijuana-style *adobada* tacos in L.A. but couldn't find an equivalent. If you go during peak hours, you could wait in line for a long while. On my February trip I arrived at 7 p.m. on a Saturday and stood in line for an hour and 45 minutes. But on my first trip in January, I strolled in at 2 a.m. on a Sunday and waited only 10 minutes. This place is so happening that it opened another location around the corner.

**Info:** 556 Broadway, Chula Vista; (619) 691-8848, [tacoselgordo.com](http://tacoselgordo.com). Tacos \$2.40 each. — C.A.

You're likely to encounter a line at **iSalud!**, a popular taco spot in Barrio Logan, but you'll have plenty to look at with art-covered walls that reflect the vibrant culture of the nearby Chicano Park. Of the many tacos on the menu, the breakfast taco (\$4.50) stood out: It was filled with bacon, cheddar, avocado and a runny egg that brought it all together. There's also a "not taco" part of the menu.

**Info:** 2196 Logan Ave.; (619) 255-3856, [saludsd.com](http://saludsd.com). Tacos from \$2.50. — C.A.

# TAP INTO TASTING ROOMS

By **IRENE LECHOWITZKY** >>> San Diego County's dynamic craft brewing industry has a mix of enticing new enterprises. A bonus is a renewed emphasis on food. If wine is more your style, local vintners have new offerings as well. ¶ Here are fresh places to enjoy a brew or glass of vino.

## Gravity Heights

Thousands of nearby high-tech workers cheered the January opening of Gravity Heights. This is a striking, large space with a patio bar in back.

Beer and food are on equal footing: The sophisticated menu offers items as diverse as tuna crudo and Moroccan vegetable tagine as well as 13 house beers.

**Suds scoop:** Brewer's Best amber was my favorite.

**Info:** 9920 Pacific Heights Blvd., San Diego (Sorrento Mesa); (858) 283-8206, [gravityheights.com](http://gravityheights.com)

## Modern Times

Like Gravity Heights, Modern Times was jammed from the get-go. Its tasting room, which opened in October in Encinitas, is a nice addition to the beach town's hipster scene. There are clever design touches throughout, and the wall of stadium-style "bleacher" seating is a hoot. Vegetarians: The food is all plant-based; the faux bratwurst was a hit.

**Suds scoop:** The nitro version of the Black House oatmeal coffee stout was tops.

**Info:** 470 S. Coast Highway 101, Encinitas; (760) 452-4304, [moderntimesbeer.com](http://moderntimesbeer.com)

## Amplified Ale Works

Amplified Ale Works, which opened in August in the East Village near Petco Park, isn't brewing on-site yet. For now, this casual, hip pub features an extensive lineup from its San Diego brewery and serves coffee, cocktails and Mediterranean food.

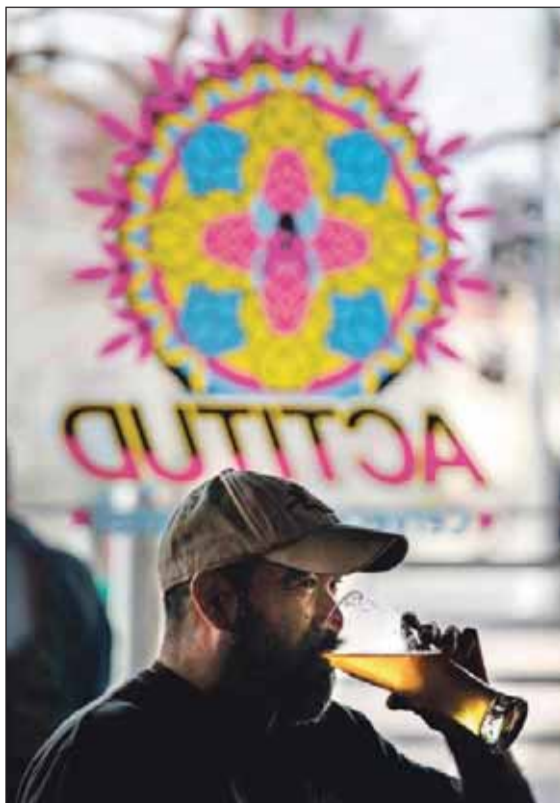
The large, dog-friendly patio has picnic tables on AstroTurf overlooking a pocket park and is an oasis even as condo towers go up next door.

**Suds scoop:** The Pig Nose Pale Ale was enjoyable.

**Info:** 1429 Island Ave., San Diego; (619) 458-9443, [amplifiedales.com/east-village](http://amplifiedales.com/east-village)

## Attitude Brewing

The modern tasting room Attitude Brewing opened in September (although it had its grand opening in February) in Barrio Logan, just a few blocks from the



**ATTITUDE BREWING** in Barrio Logan features a modern tasting room with 22 taps.

fantastic murals in Chicano Park. It features large tables and eye-catching works by Jalisco artist Paco Racru.

I can't quite explain it, but the wooden bar stools evoked memories of Jacob's ladder "click-clack" toys. Interesting wraps (ahi tuna, chicken curry salad) dominate the menu.

**Suds scoop:** The Famous, a Mexican lager, was bright and refreshing.

**Info:** 1985 National Ave., San Diego; (619) 795-4257, [attitudebrewing.com](http://attitudebrewing.com)

## Latchkey Brewing Co.

Latchkey Brewing Co., now just shy of its first birthday, follows in the footsteps of other local brewers who have graduated from the same space in the historic 1930s Mission Brewery Plaza.

It's small and dark, with a patio, but the vibe is cheery, the bartenders friendly and the beer

solid. Latchkey is a short hop from Old Town and the airport, but one-way streets and parking can be tricky.

**Suds scoop:** The SD 1915 rice lager was light and smooth.

**Info:** 2120 W. Washington St., San Diego; (858) 284-7076, [latchkeybrew.com](http://latchkeybrew.com)

## Northern Pine Brewing

Three blocks east of rapidly gentrifying downtown Oceanside, Northern Pine Brewing, which opened in October, has a wide-open parking lot, rare for the area. The well-lit tasting room has a long bar and tables that can handle big parties.

The menu includes good barbecue and such sides as collard greens and cornbread from That Boy Good, a local fave.

**Suds scoop:** Survival of the Littest, a strong barley wine beer, was excellent.



**CHEVAL WINERY** in the hills of Escondido features a huge patio with room for dancing.

**Info:** 326 N. Horne St., Oceanside; (760) 754-1434, [northernpinebrewing.com](http://northernpinebrewing.com)

## THE WINE SCENE

Starting a vineyard is very different from opening a brewery; if nothing else, you have to wait years for the vines to reach maturity. Nonetheless, San Diego County's first-rate winery scene, which is strong on reds, continues to flourish.

### Cheval Winery

In the hills of Escondido, Cheval Winery, which opened nearly a year ago, is the result of a happy accident: The owners, looking for a property for their show horses, bought an estate that came with 10-year-old vines begging to be harvested.

The tasting room features a huge patio with room for two-

steppin' and country wine (line) dancing.

**Tasting flight:** Four samples for \$15; the Bullet blend, a hearty red, was tops.

**Info:** 2919 Hill Valley Drive, Escondido; (760) 690-6617, [chevalwinery.com](http://chevalwinery.com)

### Orfila Vineyards & Winery

One of two new tasting rooms, Escondido's 25-year-old Orfila Vineyards & Winery planted a flag in Oceanside in January in a bright, modern downtown space a block from the beach.

You'll find charcuterie and cheese boards, tortilla flatbreads and such light fare as polenta cakes to go with the wine offerings, half of which are from estate-grown grapes and half from elsewhere.

**Tasting flight:** Six samples for \$15; the estate-grown red blend Full Fathom Five hit the spot.

**Info:** 221 N. Cleveland St., Oceanside; (760) 755-7040, [orfila.com](http://orfila.com)

### La Fleur's Winery tasting room

The San Marcos tasting room of La Fleur's Winery, which opened in May, is a family affair.

Owners Dana and Dave La Fleur and their daughter, Kayla Thomas, are gracious hosts. There's room in the warehouse for such events as country line dancing; it was amusing to watch folks take lessons while trying not to spill their wine.

La Fleur's is featuring more estate-grown wine from its Escondido vineyard (the rest uses grapes from Temecula, etc.).

**Tasting flight:** Five samples for \$12; the Right Bank blend had the right stuff.

**Info:** 215 S. Pacific St., San Marcos; (760) 983-2838, [lafleurswinery.com](http://lafleurswinery.com)

## MORE IN THE OFFING

Mermaid Valley Vineyard in Ramona and Starvation Mountain Vineyards in Escondido are almost ready to open, and Jack Simon Vineyards plans to open a tasting room in Carlsbad this year.


  
[/visitguatemala](http://visitguatemala.com)

# COLOR CALLS

During Holy Week, from the early morning, entire families get together to make a spectacle of art and beauty making the carpets that will decorate the streets. Come and see them!

**HOLY WEEK  
LA ANTIGUA GUATEMALA**

*Guatemala*  
Heart of the Mayan World

