3-DAY TRAVEL GUIDE

3 Days in San Diego: Coast, Culture & Local Food

A three-day San Diego itinerary adding Balboa Park, Spanish Village and the San Diego Zoo to the La Jolla and downtown waterfront core.



AT A GLANCE

01	*Day One* **La Jolla Coast & Local Favorites**	Wayfarer Bread & Pastry / La Jolla Cove / Windansea Beach
02	*Day Two* **Balboa Park, the Zoo & Dinner**	Balboa Park / San Diego Zoo / Kingfisher
03	*Day Three* **Waterfront, Coronado & Downtown Night**	San Diego Embarcadero / USS Midway Museum / Coronado Island

LA JOLLA - UNIVERSITY CITY

Day One: La Jolla Coast & Local Favorites



STOP 1 / 8:30 AM

Wayfarer Bread & Pastry

A popular craft bakery in Bird Rock that bakes French pastries by hand daily We tried a bunch, but the seasonal pear pastry was my absolute favorite



STOP 2 / 9:30 AM

La Jolla Cove

A compact cliffside walk with close-up coastal views and frequent sea lion sightings. There's literally MILES of SEALIONS!!!

BOOK THIS STOP >



STOP 3 / 10:30 AM

La Jolla Shores

A mile-long sandy beach with calmer waves for a laid back beach picnic day or a dip in the ocean! You can also book a guided kayak tour to view kelp beds and marine-wildlife habitat up close I'd choose this beach if you are a...

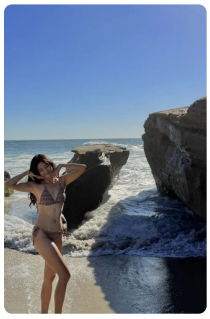
BOOK THIS STOP >



STOP 4 / 2:00 PM

The Taco Stand

Baja-style tacos with tortillas, salsas and guacamole made from scratch daily This is our San Diego tradition-the al pastor and carne asada never disappoint!



STOP 5 / 3:30 PM

Windansea Beach

A rocky La Jolla beach where nearshore reefs create powerful, photogenic surf breaks Caution: the waves are STRONG here. Don't go too far in unless you are a confident swimmer!

BALBOA PARK - GOLDEN HILL - CONVOY

Day Two: Balboa Park, the Zoo & Dinner



STOP 1 / 8:30 AM

Balboa Park

A free 1,200-acre cultural park packed with architecture, gardens and 17 museums El Prado and the Botanical Building are free even without museum tickets!

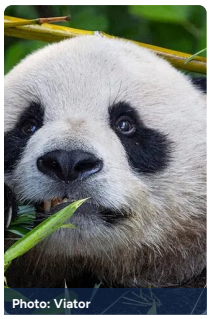
BOOK THIS STOP >



STOP 2 / 10:00 AM

Spanish Village Art Center

A colorful working-artists' village with more than 200 local creatives across dozens of mediums Watch artists work, then browse the small studios for genuinely local souvenirs



STOP 3 / 11:00 AM

San Diego Zoo

A wildlife park where admission includes a guided bus and Skyfari aerial tram. Wear comfortable shoes. This is a BIG zoo, you could spend a whole day here!

BOOK THIS STOP >



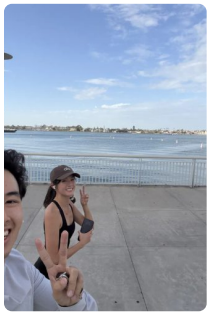
STOP 4 / 6:00 PM

Kingfisher

A polished Vietnamese-inspired dinner with dramatic cocktails and a gorgeous curved bar We came for smoked dry-aged duck, but the crispy pork ear salad stole the show

EMBARCADERO - CORONADO - GASLAMP

Day Three: Waterfront, Coronado & Downtown Night



STOP 1 / 8:00 AM

San Diego Embarcadero

A two-mile downtown waterfront linking piers, museums, public art and bay views This is the perfect stretch for a paved morning run.

BOOK THIS STOP >



STOP 2 / 9:00 AM

Tuna Harbor Dockside Market

A Saturday morning open-air market selling seasonal seafood directly from local fishermen right along the Embarcadero Come early, then grab poke, ceviche or fish and chips beside th...


Photo: Viator

STOP 3 / 10:30 AM

USS Midway Museum

A retired aircraft carrier with more than 20 historic Navy aircraft on its flight deck Explore crew quarters, engine spaces and the bridge with guided audio

BOOK THIS STOP >


Photo: GetYourGuide

STOP 4 / 1:30 PM

Seaport Village

A waterfront stroll along the Embarcadero with more than 50 local shops, snacks and bay views

BOOK THIS STOP >



STOP 5 / 2:30 PM

Coronado Island

A picturesque coastal community just across San Diego Bay from downtown San Diego with quiet resort vibes, Visit Hotel del Coronado for the classic red-roofed iconic hotel postcard scene! Take the ferry to the island for the...

BOOK THIS STOP >



STOP 6 / 6:30 PM

Tacos El Gordo

A Tijuana-style counter stop with authentic tacos! You're simply not doing San Diego right without ordering those adobada tacos! Each meat has its own line, so split up if your group is ordering different tacos to beat the lines.



STOP 7 / 8:00 PM

Arcade Monsters San Diego

A 13,000-square-foot downtown arcade with two floors, 200-plus games and unlimited play! You could lose hours here-it's honestly one of my most underrated San Diego finds They also serve beer...

EXTEND YOUR TRIP

Have more time?

Consider these stops.

OTHER ITINERARY LENGTHS: 2 days in San Diego - 4 days in San Diego



OLD TOWN - POINT LOMA - OCEAN...

San Diego Ghosts & Gravestones Trolley Tour

Ride an evening trolley through haunted Old Town and city landmarks with theatrical local-history storytelling.

BOOK NOW >



OLD TOWN - POINT LOMA - OCEAN...

San Diego Hop-On Hop-Off Trolley Tour

Ride a narrated trolley loop connecting Old Town, Balboa Park, the Gaslamp Quarter, Coronado, and San Diego's waterfront.

BOOK NOW >



OLD TOWN - POINT LOMA - OCEAN...

San Diego: Hop-on Hop-off Narrated Trolley Tour

Explore San Diego at your own pace with a one- or two-day narrated trolley pass connecting more than 100 points of interest.

BOOK NOW >



OLD TOWN - POINT LOMA - OCEAN...

Downtown & Old Town GoCar Tour

Drive a talking GoCar through downtown, Balboa Park, Old Town, or the beaches on a self-guided route.

BOOK NOW >



OLD TOWN - POINT LOMA - OCEAN...

Old Town Food Tour: Tequila, Tacos & Tombstones

Pair Old Town history and ghost stories with tacos, tequila drinks, and restaurant tastings on a guided walk.

BOOK NOW >



OLD TOWN - POINT LOMA - OCEAN...

Old Town San Diego Walking Food Tour: Tequila, Tacos &...

Pair Old Town history and ghost stories with tacos, tequila cocktails, and several restaurant stops.

BOOK NOW >

EXTEND YOUR TRIP

Have more time?

More bookable ideas for extending your trip.



OLD TOWN - POINT LOMA - OCEAN...

Haunted San Diego Ghost Tour

Trace San Diego's darker history with a guide and exclusive entry to select haunted sites.

BOOK NOW >



OLD TOWN - POINT LOMA - OCEAN...

GoCar 3Hr Tour: Sunset Cliffs and Beaches Adventure

Drive a narrated GoCar route through Liberty Station and Point Loma to Cabrillo, Ocean Beach, and Sunset Cliffs.

BOOK NOW >