

A little over a year ago, Katy Perry brought something major to our attention: California girls are “fine, fresh, and fierce.” Yes, it’s true- the golden state is home to beautiful, one-of-a-kind, sun-kissed darlings. But, newsflash, there’s another reason we’re flocking to the west coast: San Diego. This coastal city is chock-full of sun, surf, and swimming, and there are many reasons (five, to be exact) why Arizona Foothills has designated it to be one of our must-visit summer destinations.



Legoland



Who doesn’t love Legos? They were the building blocks of every little boy’s (and some girl’s) childhood—literally! Now, Legoland is like any little builder’s dream come true. This 130-acre park is ideal for fun and education that the whole family can enjoy. It is broken up into nine differently-themed sections for nonstop adventures. And their latest addition, the Legoland Water Park, is a great way to cool off.

Author’s Tip: While Legoland is full of family fun, the park is mostly targeted toward kiddies from 2 to 12. california.legoland.com.

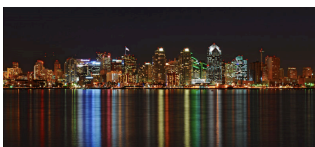
Mission Beach- Belmont Park



Speaking of cooling off, the beach is always a favorite. What makes Mission Beach so special is that it has more than your usual sand and water. Belmont Park is a special oceanfront amusement park, just a crab’s walk away from the shore. This park features shopping, food, and fun, fun, fun. With rides, miniature golf, arcade games and more, it’s easy to spend a whole day there and not even realize it. A personal favorite is the Wave House: an outdoor beach-style haven, complete with multiple bars and restaurants, hammocks, and FlowRider for those who want to experience the waves in a simulated environment.

Author’s Tip: Visit Mission Beach when the sun is hot and shining—or else you’ll suffer from the chills and cool air! www.belmontpark.com

Downtown San Diego



You could take a romantic stroll down Mission Beach or wander the streets of Downtown San Diego. This is the place where culture and commerce combine and liven up in the nighttime. As the metropolis of the city, downtown San Diego is made up of several districts that are as eclectic as the people who inhabit them. Right next to the San Diego Bay, you’ll find Seaport Village and a hodgepodge of seafood dining places that leave the air smelling absolutely scrumptious. Dish your dollars at the Horton Plaza or get ethnic at a Persian restaurant in Gaslamp

Quarter (my fav!). No matter which part of downtown you choose to explore, you'll find a plethora of luxury living, boutique shopping, vibrant nightlife, and more.

Author's Tip: Wear comfy shoes—you'll thank me. www.sandiego.org

SeaWorld



Take the family to get to know the creatures “under the sea!” Sea World is great for all ages; with 200 acres of park, there's something for everyone to enjoy. And of course, there's Shamu, the beloved and entertaining killer whale—and perhaps the star of the park. Watch him and his other marine mammal friends put on a show. SeaWorld also offers premiere dining options to refuel before visiting more aquatic attractions.

Author's Tip: Unless being soaked by Shamu is something you're looking forward to, put on a rain coat before watching the whale. www.seaworldparks.com

San Diego Zoo



Lions, tigers, bears: oh my! Yes, you can find those three animals at the San Diego Zoo along with more than 800 species of furry (or scaly, slimy, prickly) friends. The animal domain rests on 100 acres of land and is home to many exotic and endangered species. Get to know the animals behind the glass through up close and personal experiences: scrub a rhino, take a flick with a critter, or learn an animal language. Trek the park by foot, tour bus, or Skyfari, a sky-high lift to see the zoo from up above.

Author's Tip: To get the most out of your visit to the San Diego Zoo, take a park map and plan a route—there's a lot to see! www.sandiegozoo.org