

Family-Friendly Staying and Playing in San Diego

Written by Melissa Larsen

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It's that time of year when spring break trips have all been had and the summer vacation is on the horizon. With the promise of cooler temps, waves crashing nearby and sand between our toes, San Diego has long been a beloved spot for Valley families to spend a long weekend. Well, we're here to help make your summer vacation-planning a little easier as you ease into your post-spring break routine and want for that next trip to look forward to.



[The Catamaran Resort Hotel & Spa](#) is located on the north end of Mission Bay and offers a truly unique staying experience that seemingly plops San Diego visitors in the middle of Polynesia (yes, you read that right). With towering palms, koi fish palms, tropical birds and babbling waterfalls throughout the property, Catamaran feels like a Hawaiian escape—about six hours outside of Phoenix. Keen-eyed kiddos will even point out that the canoe used by Moana is even hanging in the lobby—OK, maybe not the exact one but it will delight youngsters nonetheless.

The rooms are coastal inspired with serene beachy tones and views of Mission Bay and the San Diego skyline. The bathrooms are particularly elegant; you might even been lucky enough to get a room with an in-mirror TV to watch the day's news while relaxing in the soaking tub. For the ultimate beach escape, request a room adjacent to Mission Bay. Within a few steps, the kiddos will be delightfully digging in the sand while Mom and Dad can enjoy a cold drink and a good book from their patio or one of Catamaran's beach loungers that are set up each morning. The water is calm and the area is quiet, with great people watching, so parents can enjoy a little serenity even while the little ones are enjoying their beachside fun.

The dining at Catamaran is top-notch, with Oceana Coastal Kitchen offering California coastal cuisine with local ingredients for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Grab a seat indoors near the jellyfish tank that will delight the youngest diners or on the large patio with bay views, a light breeze and, sometimes, even live music. For dinner, a starter of the Puget Sound clams and mussels, with chorizo, fennel, saffron cream and ciabatta crouton, is packed with flavor and freshness while the chile shrimp flatbread, with broccolini and bright, springy lemon ricotta, is a great way to get the kiddos to eat their green veggies. The true menu standout is the hamachi crudo with white miso, micro cilantro and jalapeño. The refreshing dish relies on just a few ingredients to make a delicious impact.



Mom and Dad Moment: For 140 minutes of utter bliss, book an Ancient Oceans Ritual at The Catamaran Spa. The decadent five-step spa experience starts with an exfoliation and a Swiss shower, followed by a warm body wrap that allows for the epitome of relaxation. A bubbly soak in the hydrotherapy tub with remineralizing seawater (the spa therapist is happy to bring you some cooling ice tea while you relax in the warm water) is next before the ritual ends with a decadent massage. The Catamaran Spa is the area's only waterfront spa, so be sure to spend some time in the open-air whirlpool looking out onto Mission Bay.

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Though [the Lodge at Torrey Pines](#) usually isn't regarded as a kid-friendly staying spot—and more so renowned for its famed Torrey Pines Golf Course—the La Jolla resort offers plenty to see and do for the entire clan. The wide open expanses of grass offer the perfect opportunity for kids to run around and maybe fit in a game of bocce ball while a dunk in the gorgeous pool, overlooking the golf course, is on the must list for any Torrey Pines guest. (And be sure to fit in a soak in the whirlpool on chilly San Diego evening.) And to kick off the day, the resort staff offers guided nature walks through the nearby Torrey Pines State Reserve, one of the area's most beloved attractions of both locals and visitors. (Guided nature walks are also offered in the late afternoon, too.) The easy, breezy walk to Broken Hill offers plenty of photo ops for families, with gorgeous views of the water, the golf course and plenty of vibrant fauna. You may even spy some curious wildlife, much to any child's delight.

In addition to the fun it offers, the warmth and coziness of the Lodge at Torrey Pines is reason enough to visit and take the opportunity to unwind and unplug. The lodge features a handsome Craftsman-style design with plenty of gorgeous dark woods and leather furnishings. Though there is a feeling of history and regality at the lodge, the amenities are all quite modern and the atmosphere is welcoming and comfortable. Take time to savor some quietude by the lobby fireplace in a rocking chair or find a spot to sit outside and enjoy the fog as it lifts from the golf course.



Mom and Dad Moment: Pull up a chair on the patio at The Grill at Torrey Pines for a front-row view of the golf course and a hearty, delicious meal. Cheers to your time together with a flower-topped Tropicali cocktail and dig into the likes of chicken and waffles, seasonal pasta plates and the famous Drugstore hamburger, which is said to be the best in the area.



If it's been a while since you have visited [SeaWorld](#), now is the time to make the trip (it is just minutes from minutes from Catamaran, after all). And coming this summer, there will be even more reason for your teens to want to visit. This year, the San Diego theme park welcomes what will be the area's tallest and fastest roller: Electric Eel (pictured). Riders will speed through the ride at more than 60 miles per hour, rocket skyward nearly 150 feet and take in the only upside-down view of Mission Bay.

While the big kids anticipate the opening of Electric Eel, youngsters—and those young at heart—have even more Elmo to look forward to. Come May, SeaWorld will also welcome the all-new Sesame Street Party Parade. This event features everyone's favorite Sesame Street friends, themed floats, plenty of music (including Sesame Street favorites, of course) and two show-stopping performances throughout the parade route. The Sesame Street Party Parade will take place weekends May 5 to July 1.