



umbrellas and beach pails. My dog, Teddy, is always eager to reach the ocean as soon as we get out of the car. I challenge you to find happier creatures than the water-loving canines at this beach. Of course, you could say the same for the people who are drawn to the region's varied and exciting coastal spots.

Exploring San Diego's waterways

Sea lion-dotted La Jolla Cove, located north of downtown San Diego, is a prime destination for water sports.

Some of the most popular activities are kayak and snorkel tours, where you may spot Gari-

baldi fish and leopard sharks. The La Jolla Underwater Park spans 6,000 acres and is also a scuba diver's dream, where you can see all types of fish and sea creatures.

Companies such as Everyday California rent equipment and also sell waterproof cameras, all the better for getting pictures of the underwater inhabitants.

And the postcards don't lie: The San Diego area is a surfing haven. The generally protected La Jolla Shores is a great spot for beginners, while Sunset Cliffs on Point Loma—and various beaches from north La Jolla to the Torrey Pines area—are better suited to experienced surfers, thanks to the strong current and the tricky

San Diego's Beach Scene

Experiencing the city's coastal joys ● BY ARCHANA RAM

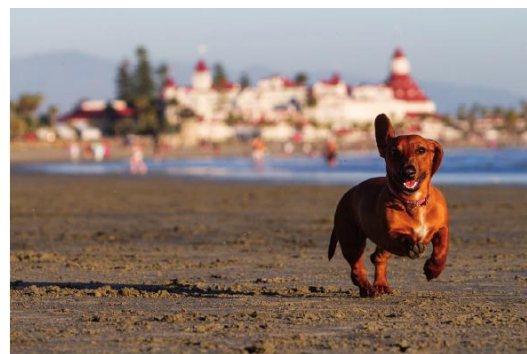
THERE'S NOTHING like getting onto the sandy beach, bolting across to the ocean, feeling that cool, salty water—and licking the hand of your master. At least, that seems to be the case for Teddy, my energetic four-year-old golden retriever, who's a regular at Coronado Dog Beach near San Diego.

The popular dog beach in Coronado, the resort town just a few miles from downtown San Diego, also borders one of the nation's top beaches for people, thanks to the mica-flecked sand,

the Point Loma landscape in the distance and Hotel del Coronado as a backdrop.

The iconic hotel, where Tony Curtis famously romanced Marilyn Monroe in the film *Some Like It Hot*, has a dedicated, humans-only beach area that is known for its gentle surfing waves, great sand and tide pools.

The dog beach is where San Diegans with their furry friends come to play. I often see families and young couples with their pooches on the sand, with picnics,



Beach activities, from sunbathing to surfing sports, left, are popular in San Diego. Coronado Dog Beach, above, on Coronado Island, is a top spot for San Diegans to bring their four-legged friends.

terrain you must navigate to get down to the water.

Mission Bay fun

Stand-up paddleboarders will find plenty of places to explore at Mission Bay. The serene sport provides a challenging workout that exercises your abs and legs as you paddle across the water.

LEFT, LISA CORSON / GALLERY STOCK; RIGHT, JOHN COCOZZA

California

Plenty of outfitters, including Surfari Surf School and Aqua Adventures, line Mission Beach and offer rental equipment as well as lessons. Those who prefer a more relaxed way of getting out on the water can charter a sailboat, or try a new spin on traditional boating with the company Hot Tub Cruisin. The open boat holds up to 10 people and has a hot tub in the center section. You can motor around Mission Bay or hire a captain and cruise in style.

Whale-watching season runs roughly from December to April, with boat excursions departing from various locations in San Diego Harbor and Mission Bay. Point Loma's Cabrillo National Monument—where in 1542 Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo became the first-known European to set



Kayakers paddle through the waves at La Jolla Bay.

foot on the West Coast—is also a good spot to watch the migrating mammals. The monument also has many trails offering views of the Pacific and of San Diego Harbor. The Torrey Pines State Nature Reserve provides amazing views and rock formations to explore. To find more information on activities in the San Diego area, visit sandiego.org. ✈

Archana Ram plays with Teddy, her golden retriever, and writes from San Diego.

Alaska Airlines offers daily flights to destinations throughout the state of California. To book a flight, go to alaskaair.com. You can book a complete Alaska Airlines Vacations package to California at alaskaair.com/vacations.

San Diego Sites

Balboa Park, a large green space in the city, is home to museums, the San Diego Zoo (whose sponsors include Alaska Airlines) and botanical gardens, as shown below. Climb the California Tower within the Museum of Man for panoramic views of the area.



The **Embarcadero** on San Diego's waterfront has attractions ranging from shopping and restaurants at Seaport Village to touring the renowned USS Midway Museum, which includes the aircraft carrier itself. The museum has flight simulators, climb-aboard aircraft and a chance to see what life is like on a carrier.

Downtown San Diego's **Gaslamp Quarter** marks its 150th anniversary this year. The area is celebrating its journey from a quiet 16-block area located in the heart of the city to a vibrant enclave full of restaurants, cocktail bars and brewpubs.

Northwest of Gaslamp is **Little Italy**, one of the city's go-to dining destinations, with most of the restaurants, cafes and bars lining India Street and Kettner Boulevard. You'll also find boutiques selling clothing and handmade crafts. —A.R.

Dining Options



In La Jolla, **George's at the Cove's Ocean Terrace** is the gold standard of San Diego's ocean-view dining. The upstairs patio of the restaurant has the same commitment to farm-to-table sourcing and quality cocktails as the main restaurant. It's so popular for watching the sun set that George's website updates sunset times daily.

In the Hillcrest neighborhood, **Trust Restaurant** is a friendly establishment, specializing in American cuisine that is served in shareable small plates. Save room for the cocktails and excellent desserts, such as profiteroles, shown below.



KIM MARCELO



Officine Buona Forchetta in Liberty Station, a former naval base that is now a shopping-and-dining complex, features Neapolitan pizzas with blistered crusts, housemade pasta and appetizers such as pizza in a jar—fried dough that is combined in a jar with San Marzano tomato sauce and cheese. Bonus: The back patio includes a kids' play area.