

# San Diego: Balboa Park Walking Tour

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Finalized Tour Link - <https://izi.travel/en/0608-san-diego-a-stroll-through-balboa-park/en>

## Introduction

Hi. Welcome to iziTRAVEL's Historic San Diego: Balboa Park Walking Tour, presented by ListenUp Audio. We're so glad you'll be joining us today! I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I'll be your guide. A few notes before we get started. This tour takes approximately an hour and a half to complete. You can stop at any time and start again at the same spot later. If you'd like, you can put your phone in your pocket and just listen from here. I'll be giving you clear directions and the audio will automatically start playing when you get close to the next point of interest. If a site is closed or your path is blocked, don't worry. Just go around it. The tour will pick up at the next location. And this is important: PLEASE make sure you stay aware of your surroundings at *all* times and obey *all* traffic signals.

(pause)

Welcome to San Diego's Balboa Park! As the nation's largest urban, cultural park, Balboa Park is home to some of the finest scientific and cultural experiences in all of San Diego. From its exciting variety of museums and art venues, to its gardens and cultural centers, there's never a shortage of entertainment. On our walking tour through the park, we'll explore San Diego's rich, cultural legacy, one which dates all the way back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whenever you're ready to begin, make your way to the San Diego Zoo via the following address: **2920 Zoo Drive, San Diego, CA.**

## San Diego Zoo

We begin our tour with a visit to the world-famous San Diego Zoo. Home to some of the planet's most exotic and exciting animals, San Diego Zoo was born from the dream of its founder Dr. Harry Wegeforth. As the founder of the Zoological Society of San Diego,

Mr. Wegeforth's love of exotic animals was a strong one. Seeking to continue the abandoned exhibitions of the Panama–California Exposition after 1915, Wegeforth's plan soon took shape.

The result is one of the largest zoos in operation today, hosting a staggering 3,500+ rare and endangered animals. Comprising more than 650 species and subspecies, many of these exotic animals have individual stories of their own. A Bornean orangutan named Ken Allen is known as the “The Hairy Houdini” of San Diego Zoo for his many escapes. Likewise, the world's only albino koala calls the zoo his home. Named “Onya-Birri” or “ghost boy” in Australian Aborigines, he remains a popular attraction since his birth in 1997.

Yet like many zoos across the globe, the San Diego Zoo also features an impressive and beautiful assortment of flowers and exotic plant life. Boasting more than 700,000 across its 1800 acres, the walks between each animal exhibit hold their own sense of beauty. Always true to its commitment in the protection and conservation of endangered species, the San Diego Zoo is a must-see on *any* San Diego Tour.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head south toward Zoo Pl. Turn right onto Zoo Pl. Turn left toward Village Pl. Slight right onto Village Pl. Turn left. Turn right.**

### **San Diego Natural History Museum**

Having enjoyed the exotic sights over at the San Diego Zoo, we take a moment to tour the San Diego Museum of Natural History. Established in the early 1870s as the San Diego Society of Natural History, the museum itself once occupied a number of different buildings. It was the region's only source of scientific culture during this time, and many of its members soon realized the need for adequate space.

Taking up the necessary mantle, San Diego architect William Templeton Johnson jump-started construction on the new building with generous funding from American philanthropists. Seated neatly in Balboa Park, the new museum excitedly opened its doors to visitors in the early 1930s. Affectionately known as “theNAT” today, San Diego's Natural History Museum offers an impressive list of seasonal and annual exhibitions. From insightful glimpses into Earth's mysterious, giant whales, to studies on the unique habitats of Southern California, there's truly something here for everyone. Visitors might even find themselves transported through time, looking 75 million years into the fossils of San Diego's past.

Even better, the NAT promises to offer more exciting tours in the future. Upcoming events like their *Biomechanics* exhibit will illustrate how every living thing is its own kind of “machine.” Likewise, their *Best of Nature* exhibit will show off some of the finest nature-based images from photographers all over the world. With a never-ending stream of scientific discovery, there’s always something to learn here at the Natural History Museum.

**When you’re ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Walk for 125 ft. Take the elevator down to the 1st floor. Walk for 46 ft. Head north. Turn left toward Village Pl. Turn left onto Village Pl. Turn left. Turn right.**

### **Reuben H. Fleet Science Center**

Keeping with the science theme, we find ourselves at the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center. Built in the early 1970s, it offers some of San Diego’s best interactive science exhibits and shows. Exhibitions like *Nano* allow visitors to dive into the exciting world of nanotechnology, glimpsing their real-world and future applications. Likewise, events like *Super Cells* explore the exciting world of Stem Cell research, detailing how our cells help keep us alive. Even better, future exhibitions like *Science Fiction*, *Science Future* will quite literally bring the science of the future to the present. Museum goers will be offered the chance to move objects with their mind, become “invisible,” and even play with a robot.

Topping off these exciting exhibitions, the Fleet offers a variety of stunning displays at its planetarium and IMAX Theater. Visitors to the planetarium are encouraged to set aside the first Wednesday of each month, to take part in the planetarium’s *Sky Tonight*. There they can tour our great solar system, learning about new topics each month on their journey through the cosmos. Likewise, the Fleet’s IMAX Theater hosts a variety of its own shows as well. Visual adventures like *Dolphins* explore the underwater depths of our planet. From the dazzling coral reefs of the Bahamas, to the wind-swept seas of Patagonia, it is truly a sight to behold. No matter your schedule or preference, the Fleet offers something exciting and new with every visit.

**When you’re ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head west on El Prado toward Village Pl. The destination will be on your left.**

## **San Diego Model Railroad Museum**

We move now to a set of San Diego's best museums. Starting with the city's Model Railroad Museum, we explore the origins of model railroading as it first appeared in Balboa Park. Tracing back all the way to the mid-1930s, model railroading in San Diego owes much of its legacy to the California Pacific International Exposition. It was here that legendary model railroader Minton Cronkite was asked to build his now famous replica of the AT&SF railroad system. A great many doors were opened through the building of this replica, and doing so paved the way for the founding of San Diego's Model Railroad Club here in Balboa Park.

In the years following, members of this same club eventually founded the Railroad Museum seen today. At the present, it remains the only model railroad museum accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. To add to this, it also remains the largest in the country. Key exhibits include a large-scale replica of The San Diego & Arizona Eastern rail line, a replica of America's Tehachapi Pass, and a faithful reproduction of the nation's Pacific Desert Lines. Offering additional exhibits and a library dedicated to model railroading, the museum marks a popular stop for railroad enthusiasts the world over.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head west on El Prado. Turn left toward El Prado. Turn right toward El Prado. The destination will be on the right.**

## **The San Diego Museum of Art**

The next stop on our tour brings us to The San Diego Museum of Art. Nestled in the heart of Balboa Park, it remains one of San Diego's best resources for fine art, seeking to "inspire, educate, and cultivate" the curiosity of all its visitors. Like the zoo visited previously on our tour, San Diego's Museum of Art can trace its origins to America's Panama-California Exposition of 1915. This exhibition had showcased San Diego's potential as a growing cultural center, leading many to desire a permanent art gallery in the city.

Choosing Balboa Park as the grounds for such a gallery, the museum was first established in the mid-1920s as The Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego. In the fifty years following, it was re-commissioned as the San Diego Museum of Art, and today hosts one of the largest collections of Spanish, African, Oceanic and Native American artwork in the region.

Of these collections, the museum's Spanish collection is its unequivocal strongpoint. Featuring encyclopedic pieces from the likes of Murillo, Cotán, and El Greco, the museum is renowned for its displays of many of these artists' greatest masterpieces. With other pieces ranging from 5000 BC to 2012 AD, there's a truly rich history to be learned.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head west on El Prado. The destination will be on the left.**

### **Mingei International Museum**

Moving along in our explorations of artistic culture, we find ourselves at the Mingei International Museum. Established in the late 1970s by San Diego art professor Martha Longenecker, the museum was founded on the professor's desire to bring the visions of Japan's Mingei Association to America. Meaning "art of the people," the word mingei had a special meaning for Professor Longnecker. As a fellow craftsman herself, she had taken quickly to the ideologies of the Japanese philosopher who'd coined it. Mingei's roots were steeped in the timeless beauty of everyday objects, and Longnecker was convinced that many more would share the same opinion.

To this end, the museum was founded to "collect, conserve, and exhibit arts of daily use." From anonymous craftsman of ancient times, to more traditional pieces found throughout the world, The Mingei International Museum continues to exhibit these pieces to this day. Beginning with an inaugural exhibition titled *Dolls and Toys of the World*, the museum exploded onto the scene with dolls and folk toys made of wood, metal, fiber, and paper. Since then, over 180 separate exhibits have graced its walls, ranging from Pre-Columbian beadwork, to ancient, African pottery. Celebrating human creativity the world over, the museum continues to attract art enthusiasts from all backgrounds.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head west on El Prado. The destination will be on the right.**

## **San Diego Museum of Man**

Focusing a bit more on the human side of things, we take a moment to learn about San Diego's Museum of Man. As a museum dedicated to the science of anthropology, it too holds a special connection to San Diego's cultural scene. Its founders were equally inspired by the Panama–California Exposition of 1915, and many sought to keep a number of its exhibitions as a permanent part of San Diego. Of these exhibitions, a particular one titled *The Story of Man through the Ages* quickly earned critical acclaim.

Soon after, the Museum of Man was established under the direction of noted archaeologist Dr. Edgar Lee Hewett. In the years since, the museum has collected an incredible number of artifacts from a wide variety of Western cultures. Focusing primarily on the pre-Columbian history of these cultures, its collections range from ancient Guatemalan textiles, to Peruvian ceramics, and even large, stone monuments traced back to the Mayans. As an added bonus, the museum hosts one of the largest collections of Ancient Egyptian artifacts in the United States. Totalling well over 400 pieces, its reserves include hieroglyphic stone carvings, jewelry, and even a number of ancient coffins.

If that weren't enough, the museum's other exhibitions are sure to excite and frighten its visitors all at once. Exhibits like *Cannibals: Myth & Reality* provide an unnerving, but deeper understanding of cannibals across several different cultures. Likewise, its famed *Monsters* exhibit explores ancient monsters from across the globe, providing rich detail as to their origins and myths. Always full of surprises, San Diego's Museum of Man never fails to inspire, excite, and impress.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head east on El Prado. Turn right toward Pan American Rd E. Turn left toward Pan American Rd E. Turn right toward Pan American Rd E. Turn left toward Pan American Rd E. Turn right toward Pan American Rd E. Turn left toward Pan American Rd E. Turn right toward Pan American Rd E. Slight left toward Pan American Rd E. Turn left onto Pan American Rd E. Slight right.**

## **Japanese Friendship Garden**

Having learned a great deal about San Diego's cultural connections, we take a moment to explore one of its most beautiful gardens. Named as an expression of friendship between San Diego and Japanese culture, the Japanese Friendship Garden remains one of the city's absolute best outdoor experiences. Opened in the early 1990s to critical acclaim, its 12-acre plot includes exquisite collections

of Japanese bonsai, cherry trees, large azalea, and many others. Further bolstered by the addition of a Japanese Koi pond, the garden plays host to a variety of stunning, Japanese Koi fish. Recognized for their excellence from the Mayor of Yokohama, Japan, many of these fish live their lives in glorious display at the garden, subject to the absolute best in care and appreciation.

Yet like many of Balboa Park's attractions, the Friendship Garden holds some additional entertainment venues as well. Its Exhibit Hall is known to collaborate with the Mingei International Museum on occasion, and prime exhibits include its stunning display of kimonos brought directly from Japan. Likewise, future exhibitions will delve into Japan's "kawaii" culture, promising to provide a deeper understanding of Japan's fascination with all things "cute." No matter your level of interest in Japanese culture, there's always something new and exciting to see here at the Friendship Garden.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head west toward Pan American Rd E. Continue onto Pan American Rd E. Turn left. Turn left. Turn left, and the destination will be on the left.**

### **Spreckels Organ Pavilion**

Having seen some of the most beautiful attractions in Balboa Park, it seems only natural that we take the time to listen to one of them as well. Standing here at Spreckels Organ Pavilion, you're now staring at one the world's largest outdoor pipe organs. Added to Balboa Park's landscape in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Spreckels Organ was a gift from John and Adolph Spreckels, two wealthy brothers from the San Diego area.

Gifted in honor of "the peoples of San Diego and the world," it has remained a staple of the park ever since, blasting its harmonies to thousands of visitors each year. Though its original construction totaled at an impressive 4,725 pipes, future additions promise to increase that number to an even more impressive 5,000+. Hosting free, weekly concerts every Sunday, along with special dedication concerts and civic gatherings, Spreckels Organ remains one of Balboa Park's greatest treasures.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head west. Turn right toward Pan American Rd E. Turn right toward Pan American Rd E. Turn left onto Pan American Rd E. Continue onto Pan American Plaza. Turn right toward Pan American Plaza. Turn left onto Pan American Plaza, and the destination will be on the right.**

## **San Diego Automotive Museum**

Adding to Balboa Park's impressive list of museums and outdoor attractions, San Diego's Automotive Museum has been a beacon of the city since its inception in the late 1980s. Hosting a stunning variety of cars and motorcycles from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all the way to the present, it's a favorite of automotive enthusiasts everywhere. Among its most prized exhibits, the museum's dedication to America's legendary Indian motorcycle brand remains a constant favorite. Providing a rare glimpse into the company's profile as one of the world's largest, it never fails to impress. Highlights include some of Indian's earliest 20<sup>th</sup> century models, while newer variations from the company's reinvention turn heads as well.

Likewise, the museum's *British Invasion* exhibit provides an awe-inspiring look at some of Britain's earliest and most valuable automobiles. With classic models spanning a number of collectible decades, many of the museum's true show stoppers call this exhibit their home. Speaking of show stoppers, the museum itself dedicates an entire exhibit to their display. Premiere models include a 1911 Ford Model T Speedster, a 1925 Bently 3L Red Label, and a 1981 DeLorean to name a few. True to its reputation, San Diego's Automotive Museum provides a rich automotive history to Balboa Park, never failing to bring out the kid in its older visitors.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head southwest on Pan American Plaza. Turn left to stay on Pan American Plaza. Turn right to stay on Pan American Plaza, and the destination will be on the right.**

## **San Diego Air & Space Museum**

Taking a momentary break from the ground to focus on the sky and beyond, we find ourselves at San Diego's Air and Space Museum. Established in the early 1960s, the museum is a dedication to the city's rich aviation legacy, one that leads a number of U.S. cities by a considerable margin. As the birthplace of such models as the B-24 Liberator and Charles Lindberg's Spirit of St. Louis, the city has been home to a number of famous aircraft. Seeking a permanent home for these aircraft and more, prominent San Diego businessmen met and established the necessary funds for such a venture. The museum soon took shape, and today it hosts an even larger collection of impressive aircraft.

Chief among these craft, the museum's collection of Apollo spacecraft modules remains a popular favorite. Providing valuable insight into America's historic Moon landings, the modules continue to excite aviation enthusiasts to this day. Likewise, many of its aircraft



possess history deeply rooted in both World Wars. From their streamlined frames, to their deadly arsenal of machine guns, these aircraft tell a story all their own. Just as well, its more classic aircraft, those rooted in the earliest history of flight, provide an equally valuable learning experience. Additional exhibits include a detailed exploration of women's role in aviation, with another focusing on the world-famous Atlas Rocket series. Indeed, there's much to see and do at the Air and Space Museum, and the sky is no limit here.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head northeast on Pan American Plaza. Turn right.**

### **San Diego Hall of Champions**

Marking the city's equally rich history in sports, the San Diego Hall of Champions comes in as the next stop on our tour. Established in the early 1950s, the hall was born from the concepts of San Diego's Breitbard Athletic Foundation. These included the "promotion of educational work, competition, and the recognition of significant athletic achievement" within the city. Having established these principles, the Hall of Champions serves to honor various athletes from over 20 different sports.

Spanning football, baseball, basketball, and many more, athletes honored at the Hall of Champions are among the best of the best within their respective teams. Those in lesser covered sports like archery and badminton even find a place in the hall as well, while many of San Diego's local athletes have become inductees themselves.

Likewise, the hall even features an assortment of museum exhibits dedicated to the memorabilia of some of its athletes. Its *San Diego Padres* exhibit chronicles the legacy of one of the city's best baseball players. In addition, local San Diego surfers have their own exhibit, their stories told against the smooth backdrop of their surfboards. With new inductees every February, the Hall of Champions remains an exciting place for sports enthusiasts of all ages.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head north toward Pan American Plaza. Turn right onto Pan American Plaza. Turn right onto Presidents Way. Turn left toward Chapel Rd. Turn right toward Chapel Rd. Slight right onto Chapel Rd.**

## **Veterans Museum & Memorial Center**

Honoring the brave men and women of the nation's armed forces, the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center marks the next stop on our tour. Established in the late 1980s, it functions first and foremost as a collection of permanent and rotating military exhibits. As they are patriotic in nature, these exhibits host a wide variety of war-memorabilia ranging from artifacts, to photographs, and even artwork created by veterans. Highlights include artwork from soldiers of the Civil War, artifacts dating back to WW I & II, and even an exhibit honoring women in the military.

Likewise, special programs serve to keep these memories alive, providing a special comfort to the friends and family of those honored at the museum. These programs often extend into educational, charitable, and scientific avenues as well. In doing so, they serve to promote awareness to the contributions and sacrifices of those who've served and continue to serve within the Armed forces. Adding to this, the museum hosts a number of social gatherings and events throughout the year, seeking to bring together these men, women, and their families in fellowship. Given its reputation, the museum has quickly become a regular meeting place for San Diego's regional veterans. Active duty members are often seen in attendance as well, and all visitors are encouraged to stop by and hear their stories. As one of Balboa Park's most honored sites, it's an experience not easily forgotten.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head north toward Chapel Rd.**

**Turn right toward Curl Rd. Turn right onto Curl Rd. Turn left onto Inspiration Point Way. Turn left onto Park Blvd. Turn right, and the destination will be on the right.**

## **Centro Cultural de la Raza**

Nearing the end of our tour, we take time to explore San Diego's rich Spanish heritage at the Centro Cultural de la Raza. Established in the early 1970s, the Centro was originally founded as a cultural center for San Diego's Chicano community. As an alternative space that encourages and facilitates the cultural growth of these community members, it has quickly become one of Balboa Park's most historic attractions. Dynamic classes and events serve to bolster the richness of San Diego's Spanish heritage. Likewise,

rotating exhibits, musical performances, and even film screenings continue to bring together visitors and residents of the San Diego/Tijuana region.

Of these classes and workshops, special instruction in Aztecan, Puerto Rican, and Afro-Cuban dance remains a community favorite. Likewise, exhibits such as *La Dualidad* provide valuable insight into ancient Mesoamerican philosophies of duality. Exploring the concepts of positivity and negativity through art, visitors are given an exciting glimpse into ancient Spanish depictions of light and darkness. Adding to this, the Centro provides valuable space for its visitors to practice and create their own pieces. With the ever-present understanding that artists will always meet other artists here at the Centro, the possibilities are endless.

**When you're ready to continue the tour, proceed via the following directions: Head southeast toward Park Blvd. Turn left onto Park Blvd. Turn left. Turn right. Turn left. Turn right.**

### **Pepper Grove**

Having explored the rich, cultural highlights of San Diego's Balboa Park, we end our tour here at Pepper Grove. Named for its collection of Pepper Trees spread throughout, the grove offers some of the best rest and relaxation in the area. As a popular play area for local children, it is equally noted for its big fields, shaded picnic areas, and stunning views of the San Diego sky.

As such, the park is separated into two major areas, with its playground remaining a local favorite. Children younger than five years old are treated to a giant sandbox and cushioned floors, while its swings and slides boast the same protection. Meanwhile, the other side of the park offers older children their own share of excitement. Here kids can scale the large jungle gym, cruise the faux zip line, or even spin to their hearts' content on an assortment of creative and exciting playground equipment. As beautiful as it is spacious, Pepper Grove marks the perfect bookend to our tour.

**This concludes our walking tour of San Diego's historic Balboa Park. We hope you've enjoyed yourself. Should you wish to continue to where we started, please follow these directions to the San Diego Zoo: Head north toward Space Theater Way. Turn right onto Space Theater Way. Turn left onto Park Blvd. Turn left toward Zoo Pl. Turn right toward Zoo Pl. Turn left onto Zoo Pl. Turn right, and you'll be right at the zoo.**