



SAN DIEGO TRAVEL GUIDE

By Lexi • @ExploringWithLexi

Things To Do • Where To Eat • Where To Stay • Budget Breakdown

San Diego surprised me. The food and drinks are expensive, I won't sugarcoat that haha. But the city itself is genuinely beautiful, the Mexican food is supposed to be some of the best and there are enough unique experiences to keep you busy for days. Here's everything I'd tell a friend planning a trip, including what's actually worth it and what to skip.

The San Diego Playlist

I typically make a playlist for a lot of my travels that show my vibe during the trip unfortunately I don't have one for San Diego but you can check out my LA one below

Listen on Apple Music: [LA playlist](#)

Press play before you land. 

Quick Tips Before You Go

- Best time to visit: May–October for the best weather
- Getting around: Uber/Lyft throughout — La Jolla is about \$35 from downtown
- Food & drinks are pricey — budget accordingly or pregame before going out
- San Diego is close to the Mexican border — the Mexican food here is authentic
- Missed my flight home and it cost an extra \$200 — give yourself buffer time at the airport 😬

BUDGET BREAKDOWN — 5 Days

Lexi's Spend — San Diego (5 Days)

Flights — \$200

Hotel — \$900

Food — \$196.18

Drinks — \$97.82

Experiences — \$345

Uber — \$211.33

TOTAL: \$1,950.93 — Includes ~\$200 from a missed flight

💡 How to spend less

- Pregame before going out — drinks at restaurants and bars are \$20-30 each
- Head to WNDR Museum for cheaper drinks compared to Little Italy restaurants
- Eat at Mexican bakeries and taquerias instead of sit-down restaurants for authentic food at better prices
- Book your flight with enough buffer time — missed flights are expensive 😬

📌 THINGS TO DO

Lexi's Top Experiences

- **WNDR Museum** **Worth it** ✅ — **\$33** — Immersive, interactive museum with drinks you can take around with you. Perfect for a fun night out. I've been to the Chicago location too, both are worth it.
- **The Whaley House** **Worth it** ✅ — **\$14-15** — America's most haunted house. Executions, tragic deaths, and spirits in guest photos. Includes a tour of the grounds. Night tours available if you're brave. 🧛
- **Eco Boat Rentals** **Worth it** ✅ — Pedal boats and automatic boats on the water, you can connect your own music to the speaker. A unique, fun experience that's different from the usual bar scene. Daytime and nighttime options are available.
- **The Shout House** **Worth it** ✅ — Live piano bar where you write a song and the band plays it. Artists bring people on stage, celebrate anniversaries, and keep the energy going all night. Cover charge on some nights but worth it.

- **La Jolla Seals** **Fun stop** ✓ — Baby seals on the shore in summer, adorable but the smell is something else 🤢. About \$35 Uber from downtown. Go earlier in the day to also visit the Cave Store — a shop with a secret path to the ocean.

Museum Ratings

Lexi's Museum Ratings

WNDR Museum **Worth it** ✓ — \$33 — *drinks included, immersive and fun*

The Whaley House **Worth it** ✓ — \$14 — *genuinely creepy and interesting*

Mingei International Museum **Your call** — \$15

The Museum of US + Cannibal Museum **Okay** — \$20 each — *fun but geared towards kids in parts at the cannibal museum*

Gaslamp Museum (Davis-Horton House) **Your call** — \$8

Comic Con Museum **Skip** — \$25 — *not worth it in Lexi's view*

💡 Activity Tips

- WNDR Museum is better as an evening activity — get drinks and enjoy it at night
- La Jolla is worth the Uber but combine it with a stop at Cave Store and Bird Eye Rooftop
- The Shout House doesn't always charge a cover — check ahead before you go
- Fun fact from the Museum of US: some pigeons score higher on tests than 3-year-old children 🐦

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Don't Miss

- **Panchita's Bakery** **Must visit** ★ — Authentic Mexican pastries close to the border. Everything was in Spanish — I had no idea what I ordered because it was in Spanish, but loved every bite. Add this to your list.
- **Provecho Café** **Must visit** ★ — Authentic Mexican coffee shop. Great vibes and genuinely good food.
- **The Invigatorium** **Must visit** ★ — The most vibey coffee shop in San Diego. Reasonable prices, cool atmosphere, great work-from-anywhere spot. Drinks everywhere else in the city are \$20-30 — come here instead.
- **Bird Eye Rooftop (La Jolla)** **Worth it if budget allows** — Cute rooftop bar near La Jolla. Great views but pricey — budget accordingly.

Skip List

- **Barbusa Restaurant (Little Italy)** **Skip** ❌ — Main reason I went — rumored Bachelor Nation spot. No celebrities spotted and the food was just okay. Entrees \$30-50, drinks \$20. Not worth it in my view.

Food & Drink Tips

- San Diego is close to the Mexican border — lean into the Mexican food, it's the best value and most authentic
- Little Italy restaurants are expensive and overrated in parts — walk one street back for better value
- Drinks at most bars and restaurants are \$20-30 — pregame or head to WNDR Museum where they're cheaper
- Panchita's Bakery and Provecho Café are the hidden gems most tourists miss completely



WHERE TO STAY

Where Lexi Stayed

- **Carte Hotel** — Boutique property — a more unique, design-forward stay for those who want something different from a standard chain.
- **Grand Hyatt San Diego** — Larger, upscale property. Great location and amenities — solid choice for a comfortable, reliable stay.

By Neighborhood

- **Downtown / Gaslamp Quarter** — Best base for first-timers. Central, walkable, close to restaurants, bars, and nightlife.
 - **Little Italy** — Great food and atmosphere. More boutique hotel options. Walking distance to the waterfront.
 - **La Jolla** — Quieter, more upscale. Best if you're prioritizing the beach and seals over nightlife. Factor in Uber costs to downtown.
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- ◆ Stay downtown for your first visit — everything is more accessible
 - ◆ La Jolla is beautiful but factor in \$35 each way in Uber costs if you stay there
 - ◆ Book hotels in advance — San Diego fills up fast in summer

GETTING AROUND

San Diego is a car-friendly city. There is a train/metro in the city but i only used it once. Downtown is walkable but you'll need Uber/Lyft for other things on this list

- **Uber / Lyft** — Most reliable way to get around. Budget around \$211 for 5 days as a reference point.
- **La Jolla** — About \$35 each way from downtown — factor this into your budget.
- **Airport tip** — Give yourself plenty of buffer time — I missed my flight home and it cost an extra \$200.

Lexi's Suggested Itinerary (5 Days)

- Day 1: Arrive → Check in → Little Italy → explore Gaslamp Quarter
- Day 2: Mingei Museum → Museum of US + Cannibal Museum → The Shout House at night
- Day 3: Provecho Café → Las Cuatro Milpas → Panchita's Bakery → Whaley House → WNDR Museum in the evening
- Day 4: La Jolla seals → Cave Store → Bird Eye Rooftop → Eco Boat Rentals
- Day 5: The Invigatorium coffee → explore Little Italy → fly home (with buffer time!)

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