

TRAVEL

SAN DIEGO SUMMER

Just a short drive south, San Diego plays host to island adventures, sun, surf and fresh cuisine.

By Linda Domingo

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Coronado Bridge

STAY

Located about 4.5 miles from Coronado Village, you could say Loews Coronado Bay is on an island of its own. Set on the water, the resort provides a paradisiacal vantage point from which to experience San Diego's beach-centric culture (loewshotels.com). The hotel's 439 rooms, including 37 suites, feature elegant designs inspired by the sea and amenities inspired by the comforts of home. Ideal for family vacations, romantic getaways or business travel, the resort offers plenty of features and activities that take full advantage of its island-like setting, including three pools, sailing, bike rentals, outdoor tennis



Loews Coronado Bay

courts and gondola rides in the bay. Enjoy cuisine at one of the hotel's eateries, including the dockside Market Cafe, the quick and casual Market To Go or the sophisticated Mistral restaurant, which offers seafood, farm-fresh produce, Mediterranean flavors

and an extensive wine list. Or for a sunset cocktail, have a seat in Cays Lounge or poolside at La Cantina. Loews Coronado Bay recently completed new redesigns of the resort's lobby, Bay Terrace and some restaurants, adding contemporary touches, outdoor

seating and more, all while showcasing the resort's breathtaking panoramic views of the bay and the San Diego skyline.

Just across the towering Coronado Bridge is a different setting entirely: San Diego's historic Gaslamp Quarter is a hub for shopping, entertainment and nightlife in the city. The Omni San Diego Hotel puts guests right in the heart of the action, directly across from the convention center and connected to the famed Petco Park, with 511 guest rooms



SUMMER IN SAN DIEGO

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and suites, and an outdoor terrace with fireplace, heated pool and Jacuzzi (omnihotels.com). North of downtown is the affluent beachside neighborhood of La Jolla, where the intimate, three-story Estancia La Jolla Hotel and Spa combines the charm of a Spanish hacienda with the luxury of a AAA four-diamond hotel (estancialajolla.com).

DINE

Set on Coronado's main thoroughfare, Leroy's Kitchen & Lounge brings urban cool and modern cuisine to the island's village (leroykitchenandlounge.com). The restaurant is appointed with rustic decor and a long bar with chalkboards featuring what's on tap and flat-screens playing the game. The eclectic, rotating menu offers small plates to enjoy with a local craft brew or inventive cocktail. The bleu pepper chips, a playful and refined take on nachos, are a nice way to prime your palate for more fresh, farm-to-table ingredients that populate the menu. As with many coastal kitchens, seafood has its place in the entrees, but meat lovers will enjoy

Leroy's Kitchen & Lounge's Brandt Beef burger



the Brandt Beef burger, adorned with house pickles and bacon jam, served with truffle fries, house-made pomegranate ketchup and scallion aioli. Leave room for the famous Naughty Ding Dong (you just have to try it to understand).

Head to George's for the scene and to be seen. The stylish restaurant on the main level showcases ocean views through large windows, but grab a coveted seat upstairs on the terrace (heated on cooler evenings) to enjoy expansive views, a seafood-centric menu and tropical cocktails (georgesatthecove.com). The lower level at George's is another dining experience completely, offering a chef's tasting menu, seasonal a la carte menu and the exclusive Table Three experience, available by reservation. Reservations at any part of the restaurant are highly recommended, with some guests booking as far as a month prior during the summer months.

With the proximity of the border, it's tough to avoid (or resist) the famous Mexican restaurants of San Diego. A local favorite with multiple locations, including one downtown, is Lolita's, serving up all the staples,



COURTESY OF BRETT SHOAF

Cycling in Pacific Beach

including tacos, chimichangas, tortas and more (lolitamexicanfood.com). If you happen to be in the Mission Bay area and hunger strikes, try Taco Surf near the beach, where you'll find flavorful Mexican dishes highlighting a San Diego classic: the fish taco (tacosurftacoshop.com).

PLAY

Not only does San Diego boast a spectrum of backdrops—from the urban downtown district to the culturally rich neighborhood of Little Italy to the hipster hot spots of North Park—but with 70 miles of coastline and year-round temperate weather, possibilities for play are endless.

Prime surfing for all levels can be found in this wavy haven. If you're just getting your sea legs, Coronado's mellow waters offer the perfect classroom for novices. Gnarly Neal and Stingray Steve lead lessons and camps at Executive Surfing Club, where individuals and groups venture to the beach to learn the basics, and then head out on the water to shred—or at least have some fun (executivesurfingclub.com). Advanced surfers can scope out spots in Pacific Beach or La Jolla; just be mindful of the locals.

Although kayaking and snorkeling are common on the coast, La Jolla Underwater Park and Ecological Reserve's sea caves and a marine protected area are rich

with sea life. Hike Bike Kayak rents out kayaks, bikes, snorkel gear, surfboards and stand-up paddleboards, in addition to providing small group kayak tours that take people alongside the sea caves, or even inside the caves when the tide is high enough (hikebikekayak.com). Kayakers will see kelp forests, and sea lions and seals sunbathing or often swimming alongside them while tour guides spout off interesting information about the environment and inhabitants—just be prepared with a swimsuit and change of clothes, or take advantage of loaner wetsuits.

Back on land, don't miss the opportunity to explore San Diego by bicycle. Mission Bay provides 20 miles of paved paths near the shoreline, and rental shops such as Ray's Rentals offers the perfect vehicles to soak in the sunshine and ocean breeze (rays-rentals.com). Cruise the parks or traverse the boardwalk, adjacent to the beach and a colorful collection of beach homes, bars and restaurants. La Jolla is just a six-mile ride away, where you'll find one of the two Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego locations (mcase.org). The bike rack out front provides premier parking while visitors peruse the Edwards Sculpture Garden or a rotating exhibit (catch the science fiction-inspired "Approximately Infinite Universe" through Sept. 1).