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A Local's Guide to San Diego, aka the Ultimate Winter Getaway

The 11 best places for snacking, shopping, and sunset views.

by: ARCHANA RAM | SPONSORED | January 14, 2020 | 0 Comments

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We've partnered with Hilton to share a few local favorites for your next trip to San Diego, California—aka the perfect cold-weather getaway. Think: beachfront restaurants, laidback bakeries, one-of-a-kind shops, and more. For extra-comfy accommodations, check out one of Hilton's 37 locations throughout the city, from the Hilton San Diego Gaslamp Quarter in downtown to the Hilton Resort in Cape Rey Carlsbad Beach.



San Diego's easygoing attitude and pretty-much-always-perfect weather has made it a go-to vacation destination for decades, but its food scene hasn't always gotten the same love. That's changed in recent years with the city taking advantage of its plum location, which happens to be near farms, ranches, the ocean, and vineyards.

The result? An uptick in stylish, chef-driven restaurants that share a common thread of quality produce, local sourcing, and a commitment to fresh, fresh, fresh.



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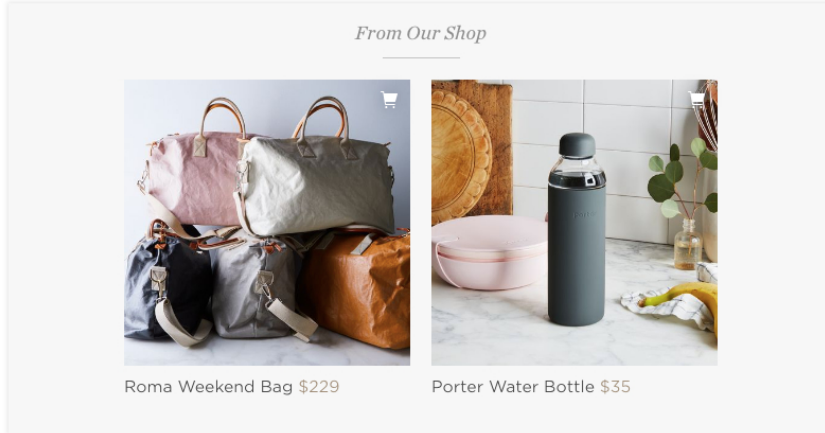
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produce, local sourcing, and a commitment to fresh, fresh, fresh.

The city has all the food, shopping, and idyllic landscapes you could ever need to fill a well-rounded getaway—whether you're in pursuit of tacos, mezcal, or palo santo-scented candles in hand-thrown stoneware.



San Diego's Best Restaurants, Bars, Shopping & More

1. Wayfarer Bread & Pastry

Owner Crystal White got her start working at San Francisco's Tartine and Proof Bakery in Los Angeles before opening Wayfarer in San Diego's polished beach neighborhood of Bird Rock, which is just south of La Jolla. White is well known for her sourdough loaves and croissants with fillings like strawberry and pistachio, but there are also sandwiches and weekly pizza nights that incorporate produce from San Diego's Chino Farms, a favorite of Alice Waters. You can caffeinate here, too—White called on Ironsmith Coffee Roasters in nearby Encinitas for the coffee and espresso menu.



PHOTO BY WAYFARER BREAD & PASTRY

2. TJ Oyster Bar

Seafood and Mexican eats are hallmarks of the city's food scene. The two come together at this bustling spot, with three locations in San Diego's South Bay. Smoked tuna, spicy shrimp, calamari, and other fresh catches are fixtures in their lineup of tacos, tostadas, tortas, and more. Check out their location at 4246 Bonita Road (only about 15 minutes from downtown) for a casual, counter-service meal.

3. Tribute Pizza

Creative but rooted in classic methods, Tribute's menu pays, well, tribute to famous styles, like Brooklyn slices and the white pie from Phoenix's Pizzeria Bianco. Every Thursday the kitchen pulls ingredients from the nearby North Park Farmers Market for #tributemarketmenu, a three-course menu made on the fly. Tribute's location in an old post office, with its high ceilings and industrial feel, make it a feast for the eyes, too. Pro tip: Order the Everything Bagel Breakfast Calzone during their weekend brunch.



PHOTO BY TRIBUTE PIZZA

4. Shop Good

With two locations in the city—in hipster North Park and the upscale One Paseo complex in Del Mar—this boutique is stocked with clean beauty essentials, from cleansers and scrubs to wellness products, and hosts events with celebrity makeup artists. The staff has a wealth of knowledge, so don't hesitate to ask them for recommendations.

5. Little Lion

A warm atmosphere, thoughtfully sourced California ingredients, and a location by the beach—this boîte of a restaurant run by three sisters proves that less is more. Their well-edited menu features a French lentil salad, poached eggs on sourdough, and a grass-fed burger, among other bistro plates. The space is small and doesn't take reservations, which means lines, especially on weekends. Fortunately, it's located on scenic Sunset Cliffs, so leave your name with the host, take a walk by the ocean, and they'll call you when it's mealtime.



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6. Hillcrest Farmers Market

The crowds at Little Italy Mercato may have you thinking that it's the top spot for fresh produce in San Diego, but the Sunday Hillcrest Market is the largest and oldest in the city, with more than 175 vendors and a local feel. Expect live music, plenty of samples, and an eclectic selection of prepared

vendors and a local feel. Expect live music, plenty of samples, and an eclectic selection of prepared foods, like samosas, tamales, and açai bowls.

7. Kindred

Vegan food meets punk decor at this trendy restaurant in South Park, a charming area filled with indie shops and eateries. Kindred turns out dinner daily, plus weekend brunch. You can expect creative plant-based plates like a Memphis BBQ jackfruit sandwich that mimics pulled pork and a vegan “charcuterie” board with cashew-Brazil nut pâté, peppered seitan, and pickled vegetables. The whole space is Instagram gold, especially the bar, where wine, cider, local craft beer, and cocktails—including a passion fruit-flavored punch bowl for two or more—are served at the marble counter.

8. Fort Oak

Choose from four seating areas—the bar, patio, dining room, or chef’s counter—for a hip, high-end meal that focuses on dishes made with open-fire methods, like grilled meats, roasted beet salad, and garlic-spiked prawns cooked over a hearth. Housed in a former Ford dealership, Fort Oak has retained some of its vehicular history, including a Ford logo and cocktails named after classic cars (the Fairlane, Mercury, etc.).



PHOTO BY FORT OAK SAN DIEGO

9. Death By Tequila

There are plenty of no-frills taquerias in town, but for a proper sit-down Mexican meal, head north to the surfer ‘hood of Encinitas. Here, *Top Chef* alum (and soon-to-be contestant on *Top Chef All-Stars*) Angelo Sosa has crafted a menu of modern, Baja-inspired cuisine. Dinner is divided into salsas and guacamoles, ceviches, salads, small plates, and tacos, including fish, barbacoa, and sweet potato mole. Don’t skip the cocktails, either. As the name suggests, DxBT prides itself on tequila (as well as mezcal), with nearly 50 varieties to choose from.

10. Norden Goods

The husband-and-wife team behind Norden Goods sells their handmade ceramics, textiles, candles, and bath products in a shared space with two other San Diego-bred retailers, Lone Flag and Univ, both of which specialize in menswear, denim, and shoes.



PHOTO BY NORDEN GOODS

11. James Coffee

Go classic with coffee or a cappuccino, or try one of their creative blended drinks, like espresso with condensed milk and nutmeg. This local chain now has multiple locations, but its Bankers Hill outpost is a favorite. Bonus: It's within walking distance to Balboa Park, San Diego's massive urban green space of museums, trails, and picnic-perfect lawns.

What are your favorite restaurants, bars, and shopping destinations in San Diego? Add them to this list in the comments below!

We're teaming up with [Hilton](#) to help you dream up your next vacation, starting with the destination: San Diego! When planning your trip, make sure to add these locals-approved spots to your eating and shopping itinerary, and don't forget to book the hotel. Our partner Hilton has very-comfy, amenities-filled locations all around San Diego—like the [Carté Hotel San Diego](#) in downtown, the [Hilton San Diego](#) in Mission Valley, and the [Hilton San Diego on Harbor Island](#).

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