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**United by the Border: Explore San Diego and Baja’s Binational Spirit**

Pristine beaches and vibrant neighborhoods make San Diego the ultimate beach city, but its relationship and proximity to Baja California, Mexico, makes San Diego a unique destination unlike any other in the U.S., where art, architecture, cuisine and more build cultural bridges on both sides of the border.

At less than 20 miles from downtown San Diego, the busiest border crossing in the world connects the city with Tijuana, Rosarito, Ensenada and Guadalupe Valley, a cluster of cities known for their rich artistic and culinary offerings. Here, a continuous exchange of ideas, flavors and traditions shape San Diego’s cultural, historic and culinary identity. San Diego welcomes visitors from around the world to experience this binational spirit first hand.

**Food and Cerveza**

* San Diego sits at the intersection to two culinary styles: California cuisine, distinguished for its devotion to fresh local ingredients, and Mexico’s Baja Med cuisine, a food revolution that began in Tijuana and is gaining worldwide recognition for combining traditional Mexican ingredients with those of the Mediterranean. Embracing local culture over trends, San Diego’s top chefs and restaurateurs created a seafood and produce-centric cuisine that blends cooking techniques from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. The resulting “[**Cali-Baja**](https://www.sandiego.org/campaigns/good-stuff/cali-baja.aspx)” culinary style offers a wealth of exciting gastronomic experiences one can only find in the San Diego-Tijuana region.
* Visitors can have a taste of Mexico through San Diego’s numerous taco offerings. For authentic street tacos, visitors need look no further than [**Salud**](http://saludsd.com/), a former food truck located in Barrio Logan, San Diego's oldest Mexican-American neighborhood, where locals line up for a taste of carne asada, carnitas and fish tacos.
* Cali-Baja flavors influence all levels of cuisine. Restaurants such as [**Puesto**](https://www.sandiego.org/members/restaurants/puesto.aspx) in Seaport Village and La Jolla, [**King & Queen Cantina**](https://kingandqueencantina.com/) in Little Italy and [**Blind Burro**](https://www.theblindburro.com/) in Downtown's Gaslamp Quarter serve up fundamental Baja ingredients such as lobster, chicharrón (pork rinds) and cotija cheese, while [**Coasterra**](https://www.cohnrestaurants.com/coasterra), a waterfront restaurant on Harbor Island boasting impressive views of downtown San Diego, focuses on modern Mexican dishes like the macha adobo branzino served with chorizo, Yukon gold potatoes, asparagus, guajillo and crab compound butter.
* San Diego is America’s capital of craft beer, so it’s no surprise that the border influences the region’s brews as well. It’s not uncommon for breweries to collaborate with brew masters from south of the border to create special beers; for example, San Diego’s [**Stone Brewing Co.**](http://www.stonebrewing.com/) and Tijuana’s [**Cerveceria Insurgente**](http://cervezainsurgente.com/)joined forces tocreate the award winningXocoveza, a seasonal mocha stout distinctive for its Mexican chocolate flavors. Also, as salute to Tijuana breweries, San Diego’s [**Belching Beaver**](http://belchinbeaver.com/), with locations in North Park and Vista, crafted a horchata imperial stout with hints of vanilla, rice malt and cinnamon for a taste of the traditional Mexican agua fresca.

**Art and Cultura**

* Designated a National Historic Landmark, [**Chicano Park**](https://www.sandiego.org/articles/parks-gardens/chicano-park.aspx)in Barrio Logan reflects San Diego’s Mexican-American cultural, artistic and sociopolitical spirit. In 1970, after learning that land designated for a community park was to be used for a California Highway Patrol station, residents united to halt construction. Today, that community park is home to the world’s largest collection of Chicano murals, where visitors can gaze at more than 80 colorful artworks depicting the community’s struggles through representation of Aztec divinities, legends and religious images. The neighborhood is also home to art galleries showcasing the works of artists from both sides of the border.
* Hidden within the nation’s largest urban cultural park, the [**Centro Cultural de La Raza**](http://centroculturaldelaraza.com/) in Balboa Park is a Chicano community cultural center that functions as a space to encourage artistic and cultural exchange in the San Diego-Tijuana region. Exhibits, workshops, musical performances, art installations and film screenings can be enjoyed throughout the year.
* Considered the “birthplace” of California, [**Old Town San Diego**](http://www.oldtownsandiego.org/) tells the story of life from the early Mexican-American period of 1821-1872 through 12 acres of museums, historical sites, colorful shops and authentic Mexican restaurants. Special events such as “Dia de los Muertos” celebrated in early November highlight San Diego’s Mexican heritage with food, music, dances and art exhibitions.
* Born in Tijuana, Mexico, [**Marcos Ramirez ERRE**](http://marcosramirezerre.com/) immigrated to the United States and eventually became a visual arts artist who has participated in lectures and exhibitions across Mexico, United States, Canada, Europe and Latin America. His works focus on peace, justice and liberty, portraying issues affecting the San Diego and Tijuana border. ERRE’s exhibitions have been shown in local street galleries, museums and colleges. His mural “IN CHAINS” is currently displayed in La Jolla Village as part of [**The Murals of La Jolla**](http://www.muralsoflajolla.com/) collection.

**Crossing the Border**

* One of San Diego’s unique features is how easily visitors to the city can travel across the border, allowing travelers to visit two destinations in one vacation. Tour companies offer set and customized one-day culinary and cultural tours to Tijuana, Rosarito, Ensenada or Guadalupe Valley. Tours options include direct pick-up and return to San Diego hotels.
* San Diego’s [**Trolley**](https://www.sdmts.com/schedules-real-time-maps-and-routes/trolley), a light-rail system, offers another option for travelers seeking to experience Tijuana. The 45-minute ride on the Imperial blue line travels through downtown San Diego to San Ysidro where the Mexican border is easy to cross on foot. Once in Tijuana public transportation, taxis and Uber are available to explore the city.
* The only binational airport bridge in the U.S., the [**Cross Border Xpress**](https://www.crossborderxpress.com/) (CBX) is a unique pedestrian bridge connecting the Tijuana International Airport (TIJ), a 24-hour airport that offers flights to more than 30 destinations in Mexico, with a new facility in San Diego. The CBX offers convenient parking, passenger amenities, retails services and guest waiting areas.

# Travel Tips

* Visitors who plan to cross the border must have a valid passport and a tourist card (FMM). The cost as of January 2021 is $595 pesos, about $30 U.S. dollars, but guest crossing by land planning to stay seven days or less can obtain the FMM at no charge. The tourist card can be obtained at the Mexican consulate in the United States or at any office of the National Institute of Immigration in Mexico and may be issued for up to 180 days per person including children.
* When crossing back into San Diego, U.S. citizens are required to show a passport or U.S. passport card and/or Trusted Traveler Program card (NEXUS, SENTRI, Global Entry or FAST), and resident aliens must possess a green card. Voter’s registration card, military ID, driver’s license and social security cards are not considered valid forms of citizenship identification.
* Citizens of other countries must carry a valid passport with a valid I-94 or multiple entry visa or visa waiver to re-enter the United States; verify details with the Mexican Consulate and U.S. Travel Association before traveling.
* Guests who plan to take their own car across the border must purchase Mexican auto insurance, since most U.S. policies are not valid south of the border, and may be required to pay a surcharge depending on the destination. Insurance can be obtained online before the trip or through insurance agencies located on both sides of the border.

Happiness is calling in San Diego. For more information on San Diego’s offerings, including exciting vacation packages and valuable coupons for attractions, restaurants and more, visit the San Diego Tourism Authority’s website at [www.sandiego.org](http://www.sandiego.org).

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