

# HSS/PSA 2012 Guide to San Diego

August 16, 2012

The conference this year is November 15–17, 2012 in beautiful San Diego. Known for its beaches, fantastic weather, bustling downtown, proximity to Mexico, and beer and fish tacos, San Diego is the eighth largest city in the US. Because of its size, we make no attempt to describe it in general here. Plenty of online guides can do that, e.g., [www.visitsandiego.com](http://www.visitsandiego.com) and [www.discoverisd.com](http://www.discoverisd.com). Here we aspire only to give some brief notes containing event-specific information and a few dining recommendations.

The conference venue is the at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina. The hotel is located on Harbor Island across from downtown. “Island” is here a name, not a description. The Island is a small man-made peninsula jutting into gorgeous San Diego Bay. From the hotel there are spectacular views of downtown and also the Bay.

## 1 Getting From the Airport to Hotel

Due to the proximity of the hotel to the airport, one looking at a map may be tempted to simply walk from the airport to the hotel. We don’t advise this. It is certainly possible. However, with major construction at Terminal 2, parking lots and runways to walk around, and a few large roads to cross, we predict that the walk would be longer and more confusing than you would expect. The Sheraton operates a free van that picks up people outside the two terminals (more or less directly out front the main exits). We recommend waiting for this shuttle.



Figure 1: Downtown Skyline from North Island

## 2 Eating on Harbor Island

Harbor Island contains two hotels, the Sheraton, where we're staying, and the Hilton. If looking for dining options an easy walk from the conference, this venue means that one is restricted to one of the (many) hotel dining options or one of the three other restaurants on the Island:

- *Island Prime/C Level*, 880 Harbor Island Dr San Diego, CA 92101, (619) 298-6802, [www.islandprime.com](http://www.islandprime.com)
- *The Boathouse*, 2040 Harbor Island Dr San Diego, CA 92101, (619) 291-8011, [www.boathouserestaurant.com](http://www.boathouserestaurant.com)
- *Tomham's Lighthouse*, 2150 Harbor Island Dr San Diego, CA 92101, (619) 291-9110, [www.tomhamslighthouse.com](http://www.tomhamslighthouse.com)

All three restaurants have amazing views, nice sea breezes, lights from downtown and the marinas, but some, e.g., Island Prime, are over-priced. But given the proximity to the conference, be advised to make reservations when possible. On the western end of the island there are also some delis and often foodtrucks, including:

- *Island Deli*, 955 Harbor Island Dr Ste 200 San Diego, CA 92101
- *Papanani's Deli*, 1450 Harbor Island Dr #104 San Diego, CA 92101

## 3 Escape from Harbor Island

Given the limited options on Harbor Island, many will wish to leave the area for dining or other things to do. San Diego boasts many diverse and interesting neighborhoods, ranging from Little Italy, the Spanish-style Old Town, the downtown Gaslamp Quarter, to the more hip Pacific Beach, Hillcrest, University Heights and North Park areas, among many others. For full descriptions of these and other areas please see an online guide. All of these areas are worth seeing, and many have good or even excellent places to eat.

To get to these spots, you have essentially five options:

- Shuttle. The Sheraton will run two 49-seat shuttles on a loop around San Diego on two or three of the nights.
- Taxi. The three shuttle destinations, and most of the others considered here, are only a 3-5 mile trip; therefore not too expensive.
- Water Taxi. Some companies run water taxis back and forth from Harbor Island to various points on San Diego Bay. One can take a boat from the Sheraton's pier to downtown or Coronado Island, for instance, at a rate of about \$7 each way. See, e.g., <http://www.sdfo.com/sdhe/taxi.htm>

- Rental Car. Given the proximity to the airport, one is extremely close to all the rental car agencies. Many are right there at the entrance to Harbor Island. If ones comfortable driving in the city, renting a car is an option worth considering.
- Walk. The walk to the closest areas of interest, e.g, Little Italy, Seaport Village, is a couple of miles. This is probably not the greatest option for most people.

Once downtown, then others options become available, e.g., local buses, the San Diego Trolley, the local train the Coaster, and Amtrak. At the time of writing, the hotel plans to operate two shuttle buses on routes to Little Italy, Old Town and the Gaslamp Quarter. Hence our guide will focus especially on these areas.

## 4 Eating in the Gaslamp/Downtown Area

While the Gaslamp is equipped with more choices than Harbor Island, it is the canonical tourist locale, with the predictably lower odds of culinary success that that entails. Nonetheless, there are some good places.

### 4.1 Quicker/lighter

- *The Cheese Shop*, 627 4th Ave. San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 232-2303. Good deli/sandwiches, especially the grilled cheese sandwich selections.
- *The Kebab Shop*, 630 9th Avenue (at Market) San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 525-0055. Excellent, and a very good falafel too.
- *Salad Style*, 807 F Street San Diego, CA 92101 619-255-6731
- *Pokez*, 947 E Street San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 702-7160, [www.pokezsd.com](http://www.pokezsd.com). Run by punk rockers, great vegetarian and Mexican.

### 4.2 Full service

- *BICE Ristorante*, 425 Island Avenue, San Diego 619 239 2423 [bicesandiego.com](http://bicesandiego.com). Traditional and contemporary ingredient-centric Italian.
- *Currant Restaurant*, 140 W. Broadway, San Diego 619-702-6309. A restaurant that is about being a classic brasserie (as opposed to a restaurant that just is a classic brasserie). If you want checkered tiles, absinthe cocktails, and steak frites, this is your place. [currantrestaurant.com](http://currantrestaurant.com).
- *Blue Point Coastal Cuisine*, 565 Fifth Avenue, San Diego (619) 233-6623 [www.cohnrestaurants.com/menu-restaurants/blue-point/](http://www.cohnrestaurants.com/menu-restaurants/blue-point/)
- *Blue Water Seafood Market and Grill*, 3667 India St., San Diego, CA 92103 (619) 497-0914 <http://www.bluewater.sandiegan.com/> Not especially innovative, but solid performer for extremely fresh seafood.

- *Mint Downtown Thai*, 732 4th Avenue, San Diego 619-546-8424, mints-dthai.com
- *Rama Thai*, 327 4th Avenue San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 501-8424, ramarestaurant.com
- *Celadon Thai Kitchen*, 3671 5th Avenue San Diego, CA 92103 (619) 297-8424, celadonrestaurant.com
- *Nobu San Diego* 207 Fifth Ave, San Diego 619.814.4124, noburestaurants.com. The San Diego outpost of Nobu Matsuhisa's now far-flung sexy sushi empire.
- *Taka* 555 5th Ave (between Island Ave & Market St) San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 338-0555 www.takasushi.com Excellent sushi, but waits can be long; reservations recommended.
- *Cafe 21*, two locations. 750 5th Avenue San Diego (619) 795-0721 and 2736 Adams Avenue San Diego (619) 640-2121. Really interesting menu; Azerbaijani roots; great brunch
- *Cafe Chloe* 721 Ninth Ave #1, San Diego CA 92101 619.232.3242 www.cafechloe.com. Great little cafe; excellent coffee, lavender lemonade, happy hour, brunch; classic bistro preparations; can be somewhat precious, but generally delicious and arguably one of the best.

## 5 Eating in Old Town

A state historic park, Old Town is a collection of adobe buildings, streets and a park that dates back to 1820. Today it features many historically preserved buildings as well as many recreations of such buildings. The park and surrounding streets are a mostly pedestrian-friendly area stuffed (in the park and out) with Mexican restaurants. There are too many Mexican restaurants here to contemplate reviewing. Some are very good cheap eats – handmade tortillas with every imaginable filling –, some are fine dining, and some are tourist traps. You can try to sort the wheat from the chaff by going to urbanspoon, yelp or any of the standard internet sources. Because it features a Tequila Museum and a staggering selection of tequilas, we'll only highlight

- *El Agave*. www.elagave.com/ 2304 San Diego Ave, 619-220-0692

## 6 Eating in Little Italy

Originally a mostly Italian fishing neighborhood, Little Italy is a northwest section of downtown a few blocks away from the Embarcadero. It is now stuffed with Italian restaurants, design stores and galleries. You can find an extremely satisfying lunch here, as well as many good options for dinner. Because there

are so many Italian options and the LOC have gone to such a small sample, we'll leave it to you to pick the best. We'll simply note that

- *Davanti Enoteca* 1655 India Street San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 237-9606
- *Indigo Grill*, 1536 India St, 619-234-6802, huge portions
- *Bencotto*, 750 W. First St, 619-450-4786
- *Buon Appetito*, 1609 India Street San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 238-9880; especially good

among others, get good reviews, and that

- *Filippi's Pizza Groto*, 1747 India Street San Diego, CA 92101 619-232-5094

has a somewhat legendary status. One place the LOC can enthusiastically and justifiably recommend is

- *Extraordinary Desserts* 1430 Union Street San Diego, 92101 619 294 7001 and 2929 Fifth Avenue San Diego, 92103 619 294 2132, [www.extraordinarydesserts.com](http://www.extraordinarydesserts.com). If you have a sweet tooth, check out the fabulous creations of this French-trained, San-Diego-born pastry cook. The location near Balboa Park often has a long line that can be intimidating; but it tends to move at a decent clip. It typically has at least 30 dessert selections on any given day, most of which are amazing.

## 7 Eating in the North Park Vicinity

If you're willing to get a taxi, you will have the option of going to Hillcrest, North Park and University Heights. While Hillcrest used to be the best area for dining, North Park and University Heights have lately emerged as better from a culinary standpoint. Here we can recommend:

- *Kensington Grill* 4055 Adams Avenue, [www.kensingtongrill.com](http://www.kensingtongrill.com). Decor is a bit corporate, but the food is really good.
- *The Linkery* 3794 30th St (at North Park Way) San Diego CA 619 255 8778, [www.thelinkery.com](http://www.thelinkery.com). Arguably one of the best farm to table places in the city (and many other cities); unusually strong beer list, grass-fed everything.
- *El Take it Easy*, 3926 30th St (at University Ave) San Diego CA 619 291 1859, [eltakeiteasy.com](http://eltakeiteasy.com). New place from same folks who brought you The Linkery; concentrating on local ingredients, where local includes a healthy dose of Baja California.
- *Farmhouse Cafe*, 2121 Adams Avenue San Diego, CA 92116 (619) 269 9662. One of our all time favorite San Diego restaurants. Solid, unpretentious, ingredient-driven cooking.

- *Urban Solace* 3823 30th Street San Diego, CA 92104 (619) 295-6464, [www.urbansolace.net/](http://www.urbansolace.net/)
- *Jayne's Gatropub* 4677 30th Street (at Adams Avenue) San Diego, CA 92116 619.563.1011, [jaynesgastropub.wordpress.com](http://jaynesgastropub.wordpress.com). Good but tiny.
- *Saffron Thai Chicken* 3731-B India St San Diego, CA 92103 619 574-7737, [www.saffronsandiego.com/](http://www.saffronsandiego.com/)
- *Blind Lady Ale House* 3416 Adams Ave. San Diego, Calif 619-255-2491, [blindlady.blogspot.com](http://blindlady.blogspot.com), A legendary selection of craft beers, also serves some excellent pizzas.
- *Lefty's Chicago Style Pizza*, location 1: 3448 30th Street 619.295.1720 location 2: 4030 Goldfinch 619.299.4030 [leftyspizza.com](http://leftyspizza.com). A little slice of Chicago in the heart of San Diego.
- *Bleu Boheme*, 4090 Adams Avenue San Diego, CA 92116 (619) 255-4167, [bleuboheme.com](http://bleuboheme.com), excellent selection of mussels
- *Ritual Tavern*, 4095 30th Street, San Diego, CA 92104 619 283 1720, [www.ritualtavern.com](http://www.ritualtavern.com), Contemporary gastropub cuisine; they make their own condiments and have a great drink selection.
- *Cucina Urbana*, good Italian, requires reservation
- *Il Postina*, 3959 30th Street, (619) 325-0809
- *Burger Lounge*, many locations, 1608 India Street San Diego, 4116 Adams Avenue, and 528 5th Avenue
- *Alchemy*, 1503 30th Street, tapas and lots of veggy
- *Smoking Goat*, 3408 30th Street, (619) 955-5295
- *Sea Rocket*, 3382 30th Street San Diego, (619) 255-7049, sustainable seafood
- *Rancho's*, good for cheap lunch
- *Sipz*, good for cheap lunch

## 8 San Diego Beer and Bars

There are of course many good bars downtown. Since people's tastes differ so widely, we'll refrain from making any specific recommendations. Here we just wish to draw your attention to the many delicious beers made here. Over the past decade or so, there has been a kind of arms race of craft breweries developing and competing. The result is heaven for beer lovers.

King of all the breweries is *Stone Brewing Co*, whose main brewery in Escondido is a mecca worth the 40 minute pilgrimage. *Ballast Point* (especially its

*Sculpin*, a must-have for IPA lovers), *Iron Fist*, *Mission*, *Hess*, *Lightning*, *Green Flash*, *Lost Abbey*, *Alesmith*, and *Port Brewing* are all noteworthy as well.

The recent article

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/27/travel/san-diegos-thriving-craft-beer-scene.html>

describes many of the places you can sample these drinks. Some of these breweries are located downtown and have tasting bars, e.g., *Mission* on the corner of 14th and L.

Here are some bars where you might sample these beers or other drinks:

- *Blind Lady Ale House* 3416 Adams Ave. San Diego, Calif 619-255-2491, [blindlady.blogspot.com](http://blindlady.blogspot.com), A legendary selection of craft beers, also serves some excellent pizzas, one of the best
- *Tiger! Tiger!* 3025 El Cajon Boulevard San Diego, CA 92104 (619) 487-0401, [tigertigertavern.com](http://tigertigertavern.com), great tavern
- *URBN Coal Fired Pizza*, 3085 University Ave, [urbnnorthpark.com](http://urbnnorthpark.com), craft pizza, craft beer
- *Hamilton's Tavern*. 1521 30th St. • San Diego, CA 92102, (619)-238-5460, one of the best in SD
- *Toronado*, 4026 30th St, San Diego CA 92104, [www.toronadosd.com](http://www.toronadosd.com), ditto
- *El Dorado*, 030 Broadway San Diego, right downtown
- *Princess*, 1665 India Street, British style pub
- *Shakespeare*, 3701 India Street, British style pub
- *Aero Club*, 3365 India Street , good whiskey menu
- *Starlight Lounge*, 3175 India St, trendy
- *Small Bar*, 4628 Park Boulevard, hip
- *Seven Grand*, 3054 University Ave, speakeasy attitude, mounted animal heads, and over-priced cocktails
- *Lancer's*, *Alibi*, and *Nunu's*, good cheap dive bars
- *Noble Experiment*, 777 G St (between 7th Ave & California St), secret door inside a bar (*Neighborhood*) in Little Italy, speakeasy atmosphere

## 9 The Fish Taco

Imagine fish and chips wrapped in a soft Mexican tortilla and then filled with a variety of veggies in a salsa or other Mexican sauce. Sound disgusting? Not to a San Diegan. While in San Diego, you will find fish tacos offered in fast food restaurants and on menus when fine dining. Whole fast food chains are devoted to the fish taco – *Rubio's* and *Wahoo's* are especially good. The fish tacos will range in price from \$0.99 to \$18.00, from gourmet to fast food, from healthy to unhealthy (the deep fried variety), and from cod to mahi-mahi or even abalone filled. If you've never had one before, we recommend trying one (or more).

Where is the 99 cent fish taco? It's a great taco, and it's here:

- *El Zarape*, two locations, 4642 Park Boulevard San Diego (original hole in the wall, still good) and 3201 Adams Avenue San Diego (fancier version), [elzarape.menutoeat.com](http://elzarape.menutoeat.com), open until 2am.

## 10 Things to Do

If you have an extra day or half day, San Diego offers many excellent possibilities for fun.

- Balboa Park. Balboa Park is the cultural center of San Diego. Built largely for the 1915 World Expo, it is a downtown city park featuring sixteen museums, more than a dozen gardens, a few theaters, a miniature railroad, international cottages, a massive outdoor organ, and the world famous San Diego Zoo. Go to <http://www.balboapark.org/> for more. For fine dining, the Park has The Prado (619.557.9441), set in the gardens of Balboa Park in the House of Hospitality.
- San Diego Zoo. With over 880 species of animal in mostly new and modern settings, the zoo is arguably the best one in North America. It is only 3 miles away from the conference hotel, so it is only a short cab ride away. Do not confuse with the San Diego Wild Animal Park, which is also worthwhile, but much further away in Escondido (about a 45 minute drive).
- Coronado Island. A pleasant way to spend the day is to take the ferry from downtown to Coronado Island. The ferry ride is cheap, pretty and short (15 minutes). It is caught at Broadway Pier, just south of the historic ship Star of India. Once on the Island, rent a bike and tour the downtown, beaches, and so on, possibly stopping for a drink at the famous Hotel del Coronado.
- Old Town. Mentioned above, this historic plaza has, in addition to many Mexican restaurants, stores with cool trinkets, garden items, small museums, historical tours, and even theater. The Trolley and Coaster stop here too, so it's easy to get to from downtown.



- Maritime Museum, [www.sdmaritime.org](http://www.sdmaritime.org). Located within sight of Harbor Island, the museum is a collection of historic boats to board and tour, ranging from the massive steam ferry Berkeley to the 1863 sailing ship Star of India.
- Outdoor activities. Assuming the weather is nice, San Diego makes it very easy to enjoy the outdoors. Beaches are everywhere, and one can easily rent stand up paddle boards, kayaks, and surfboards almost anywhere near the beach. Probably the closest fun beaches are Ocean Beach, Mission Beach, Coronado, and Pacific Beach. Slightly north, Mission Bay provides a calm introduction to many watery sports. Much further to the north, La Jolla Cove is exceptionally good for kayaking, snorkling and seeing seals, dolphin, and more; Encinitas and Swami's stand out for surfing. Hiking is also great here, from the coastal trails in lagoons to major desert hikes. Anza Borrego Desert, for instance, is approximately 1.5 hrs drive from downtown.
- For Kids. All of the above, but also:
  - Seaworld, just a few miles north of the Hotel
  - Legoland, Carlsbad, about a half hour drive from the Hotel
  - Wild Animal Park, Escondido. Especially nice in Nov, this is a (mostly pretty) 40-50 minute drive. It features animals in a more "safari-park" type of setting than the Zoo.
  - The New Children's Museum, located right downtown
  - Birch Aquarium at Scripps, La Jolla

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