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SAN ANTONIO

Things to Do in San Antonio

San Antonio is a bustling Texas metropolis that embraces its more than 300 years of history, diverse heritage, and gorgeous natural beauty. Explore Spanish missions built in the early 18th century, cruise the famous San Antonio River Walk, cheer on one of the best basketball teams in the world, and more. These are just a few of the many experiences you can have when you visit San Antonio. In fact, there is so much to do in the Alamo City that it may be a challenge to figure out what to do first. Check out our list of some of the top things to do in San Antonio to get your next adventure in this historic city started.



Go on a River Walk Cruise

If you are looking for one of the most quintessential San Antonio experiences, look no further than a cruise down the world-famous River Walk. Hop aboard an open-air passenger boat and float through downtown San Antonio, where you are sure to see people relaxing on the patios of charming restaurants or simply strolling along the side of the river. The excursion, offered by GO RIO San Antonio River Cruises, takes you past a few of the River Walk's attractions, such as the open-air Arneson River Theatre and the Shops at Rivercenter. Along the way, the boat's captain will point out many of the important buildings and places, offering a bit of a historical perspective to help you get the most out of your journey. Insider Tip: Learn more about San Antonio's Black Heritage on a Black History River Cruise hosted by the San Antonio African American Community Archive & Museum (SAAACAM).

Of course, a cruise is just one of many things to do on the River Walk. Although you may be familiar with the section that winds its way through downtown San Antonio, there is much more to discover. In fact, the San Antonio River Walk runs 15 continuous miles from the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park through downtown to Brackenridge Park. Not only that, but there are several kayak and canoe access points on the section south of downtown, providing yet another way to travel to many of the most interesting places in the Alamo City.



Remember the Alamo

Think of San Antonio and the first thing that probably comes to your mind is the Alamo, and for good reason. It was the site of one of the most pivotal battles of the Texas War of Independence and has been memorialized in numerous books, paintings, songs, and movies starring such Hollywood actors as John Wayne and Billy Bob Thornton.

Today, the Alamo stands in the heart of downtown San Antonio. Step inside its walls and see numerous exhibits that recount the history of the battle, the revolution in Texas, and the Alamo's original layout when it was a mission. The grounds include the historic church and living quarters, as well as a garden area and a gift shop.

The Alamo is a true Texas historic landmark and one of the essential things to do in San Antonio. To preserve the Alamo's historic site, this area has undergone a vital transformation. The new museum houses the priceless Alamo collection of British rock star Phil Collins, including hundreds of documents, artifacts, weapons and more.



Tour Missions National Historical Park

Though it may be the most popular, the Alamo is not the only Spanish mission in San Antonio. In fact, there are four others, all located south along the San Antonio River. These four missions (Concepcion, San Jose, San Juan, and Espada) make up San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, which along with the Alamo was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Each mission has a unique look and layout of its own, with the main chapels all featuring stunning examples of the Spanish colonial style of architecture.

The outer walls and foundations of some of the original structures still stand at each of the missions, all of which are accompanied by displays that provide a glimpse of what it was like to live in each place. A few other structures remain as well, such as the 270-year-old aqueduct at Mission Espada and the historic grist mill at Mission San Jose.

Access to San Antonio Missions National Historical Park is free. To get from one mission to another, you can either drive on the well-marked streets or hike or bike on the Missions Hiking Trail. If you do go on foot, you should know that the missions are a few miles from each other, so bring some water and be ready for a workout. While touring the area, you may hear the sounds of mass. That is because, despite being over 300 years old, each chapel is an active Catholic parish. History lives in San Antonio, and nowhere is that more tangible than at San Antonio's missions.



Explore the Theme Park Capital of Texas©

And now for a little adrenaline. San Antonio doesn't just have one theme park; it has enough of them to earn the prestigious title of "Theme Park Capital of Texas." Perhaps, its most popular offering is Six Flags Fiesta Texas, which sits in a former quarry on the north side of town. Here, you'll find DC superheroes, record-setting coasters, family rides, and enough live entertainment to fill out an entire day. Over at SeaWorld San Antonio, the coasters come with marine-life encounters like the famous orca show. In the heat of summer, we recommend checking out Aquatica San Antonio, which has all the water slides and splash pads you'll need to stay cool.

One of the most unique amusement parks in San Antonio has to be Morgan's Wonderland, which is explicitly designed around accessibility. Fun for everyone, but especially for kids between 2 and 12, Morgan's has rides that find that perfect balance between exciting and, well, too exciting. The neighboring water park, Morgan's Inspiration Island, takes the same approach but with an aquatic spin.

Then there's the iconic Schlitterbahn Waterpark & Resort, which is just a short drive up the interstate in nearby New Braunfels. They have river rides where you tube down winding canals, water coasters, and shallow play areas for the little ones. With so many amusement parks for all ages, it's hard to go wrong taking the family to San Antonio.

Get a Taste of San Antonio's Culinary Heritage

After you make sure you have your toothbrush, you need to make sure you're packing an appetite. Food is as central to the San Antonio identity as anything else, with just as much history. Three centuries of culinary heritage handed down and—in some cases—transformed.

To start the morning, you can't go wrong with breakfast tacos and pan dulce still warm from the oven. Spend the afternoon at Historic Market Square, where shopping and eating are one and the same. You'll want to save some room for a visit to Pearl, a historic district with a new coat of paint that's collected many chefs doing new things with old recipes. Then, of course, there's the classic recommendation of finding a table beside the River Walk to enjoy a peaceful meal while people-watching. To be honest, you could build out an entire weekend in San Antonio just around the food.