

Black's Beach is hidden at the base of the Torrey Pines Preserve.



CALIFORNIA

IS A LAND OF VARIED LANDSCAPES, WOVEN TOGETHER with a rich history and colorful mythology. California was—and to this day remains—the destination of restless adventurers in search of fame, fortune or their slice of paradise. And while most consider Los Angeles to represent the heart of metropolitan California, there is a place 120 miles to the south that has 3 million area-residents—all of whom consider themselves to be in paradise on Earth. Beautiful, sunny San Diego.

Spanish renaissance architecture in Balboa Park.



Balboa Park contains cultural attractions unlike most parks which are mostly free of buildings and favor recreational fields.

Somehow, despite its relatively large and diverse population, San Diego feels like a tropical oasis. Part of the reason for this is that San Diego is more a chain of small, defined communities than an expansive, sprawling urban center. As a result, visitors could spend a lifetime exploring the nuances of each unique community—and indeed, that's exactly how many people come to live in San Diego. It is all too easy for vacationers to fall under the spell of San Diego's clear blue skies, rolling hills, sandy beaches, breathtaking ocean views and distinctively Southern California laid-back lifestyle. But don't be fooled by the relaxed vibe. San Diego packs in plenty of hustle and bustle.

OLDIES BUT GOODIES

WHEN YOU ARRIVE IN SAN DIEGO, there is a standard itinerary that every visitor should consider. The word *standard* by no means implies that these places are mundane. Though they are major tourist attractions, they have still managed to encompass the essence of that San Diego vibe. Places like Balboa Park, the San Diego Zoo, Seaport Village and Sea World are engrained in the local culture and need to be experienced to get the full flavor of San Diego.

Balboa Park is a 1200-acre masterpiece of public space, overlooking the Pacific Ocean and downtown San Diego. As far as parks go, this takes a back seat to none; it rivals

New York's capacious Central Park and San Francisco's elaborate Golden Gate Park. In fact, Balboa Park was ranked one of the world's best by the Project for Public Spaces in 2004, and is home to several world-class museums, including the San Diego Museum of Art, the Museum of Photographic Arts, the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center, Timken Museum of Art and the world-renowned San Diego Zoo.

Seaport Village, located downtown in the San Diego harbor, offers visitors countless restaurants, high-rise hotels and miles of sidewalks perfect for biking or Rollerblading. The legendary aircraft carrier U.S.S. Midway is anchored here too and is worth a tour.



The Dolphin show at Sea World San Diego

And then there's Sea World, one of the most famous amusement parks in the world. Even the locals flock to Sea World for a little puerile rejuvenation. They go to catch a glimpse of the ever-popular Shamu Show or to get up close and personal with dolphins, sharks, bat rays, starfish, sea lions, penguins and more. Cirque du Soleil also has a permanent water show that runs several times a day—complete with jet skis and breathtaking high diving action.

BEAUTIFUL BEACHES

WITH THE MAJOR ATTRACTIONS OUT of the way, it's time to talk about the real reason why you came to San Diego: the endless miles of beautiful beaches and stunning

surf. San Diego is the #1 Spring Break and summer destination for hundreds of thousands of college students, sunbathers and surf enthusiasts, and their annual migration to the beach is a sight to behold. The more popular beaches swell up in the summer months with stringy bikinis and enough exposed skin to keep your eyes occupied for hours, if not days.

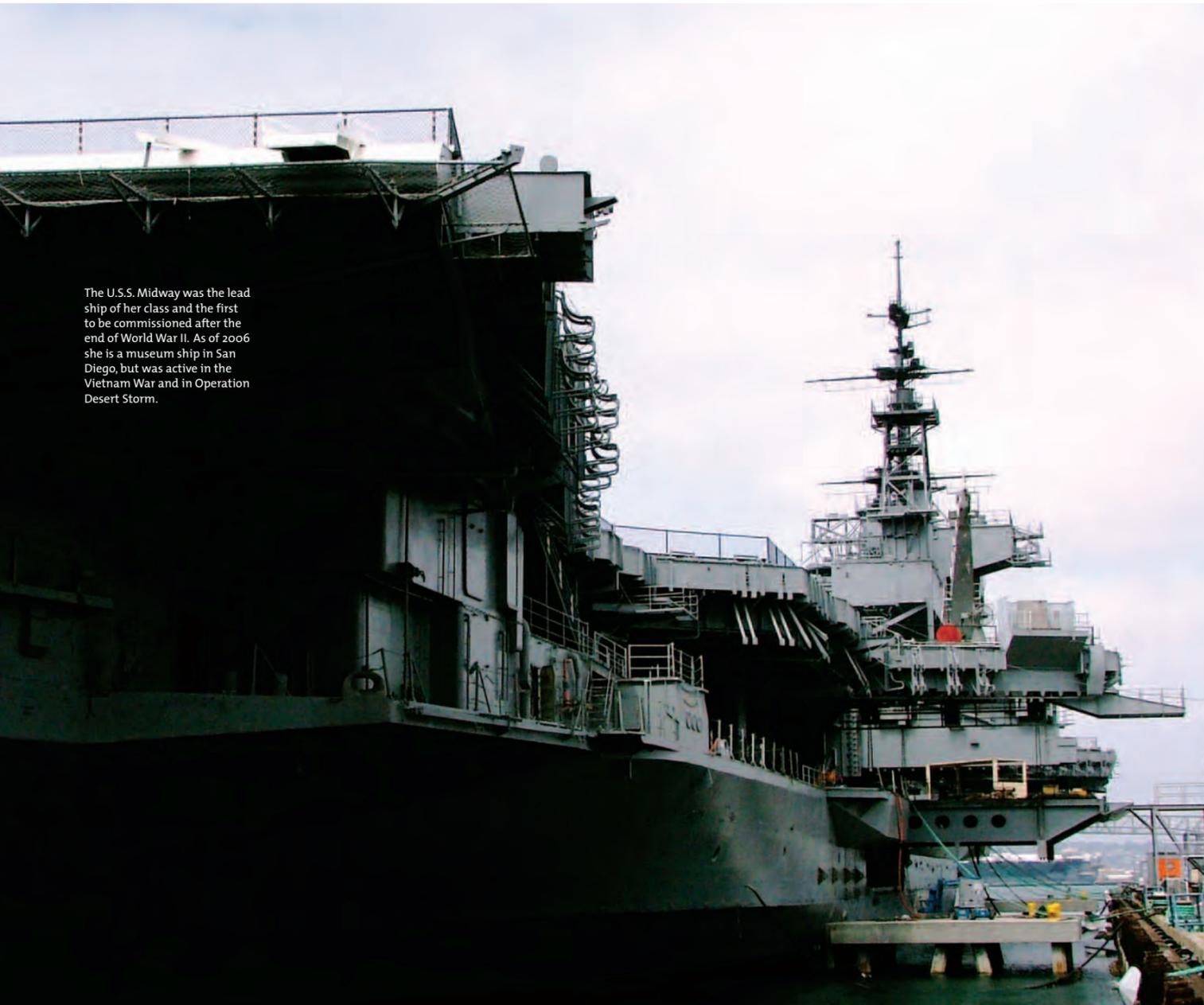
The most popular beaches are Mission Beach and the adjacent Pacific Beach. Mission Beach extends for over two miles and offers access to volleyball nets, barbeque grills, picnic tables and bonfire pits for the ultimate beach party experience. Toward the north end of Mission Beach, past Belmont Park—one of the oldest amusement parks in operation in America—is the slightly rougher Pacific

Beach, which locals call PB. That's not to say that PB isn't family-friendly, but you're more likely to get hit in the head with a football or bump into a gang of celebratory co-eds. Needless to say, PB is where the proverbial, and literal, party is. And at the center of it all is Lahaina's bar located directly on the boardwalk. It's the perfect place to grab a drink, do some people watching and enjoy a stunning sunset. Every night when the sun dips below the ocean's horizon line the crowds erupt in applause.

To the south is the more bohemian Ocean Beach where the air is often thick with the pungent scent of patchouli. Be sure to take a walk on the Ocean Beach Pier, the longest pier on the west coast. The perspective of



Rides at Belmont Park include the Giant Dipper, a roller coaster that opened in 1925, teacups, and an artificial wave pool.



The U.S.S. Midway was the lead ship of her class and the first to be commissioned after the end of World War II. As of 2006 she is a museum ship in San Diego, but was active in the Vietnam War and in Operation Desert Storm.



Night dining at a seaside restaurant on the San Diego City Harbor.

standing on top of the thunderous waves as they roll into shore is definitely thrilling. While you're in OB, as the locals call it, don't pass up a beer and the best burger in town, served up at Hodad's. And for the best Mexican food and margarita go to Ortega's Tamaleria. It's so good they had to open two restaurants within a few blocks of each other. Their specialty is fresh tamales, but their deep-fried fish tacos are unbeatable and the ceviche is divine.

DANCING, DRINKING AND DINING
IF YOU CAN TEAR YOURSELF AWAY FROM THE beach scene to hit the clubs, you'll be rewarded with a rich and lively party scene that is sure to please any preference. If you're looking for the most exclusive club filled with the best-dressed professionals in town, look no further than On Broadway in the heart of downtown San Diego. The massive multi-level club, built in a former bank building, is decorated with the original bank

vaults and stately Greek columns. Head over to Martini Ranch for an upscale party experience minus the club scene. Whether you're a traditionalist or an experimentalist, you're sure to find the perfect cocktail to elevate your spirits. For a more casual bar experience that still satisfies the desire to get your party on, drop by PB Bar & Grill in Pacific Beach. Consistently voted the best pick-up spot in town, PB Bar & Grill is located a block away from the beach.

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In the mood for some good music? If you're into the indie rock scene, the Casbah is the place to be. Located near the airport, the Casbah is a small, edgy club that has helped usher bands the likes of Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins and Alanis Morissette to stardom. Or for a truly authentic jazz club you have to check out Dizzy's downtown. The late-night jazz jam on Friday is so intoxicating that you won't even notice the small club doesn't serve alcohol.

Speaking of jazz clubs, take a jaunt up to the Hillcrest area near Balboa Park for some late-night fun at Bourbon Street. The neighborhood piano/jazz bar will whisk you away to New Orleans with its Southern Gothic musical style. San Diego is known for being one of the friendliest cities on the west coast, so no matter what you choose to do during your stay, you're guaranteed to find your own personal slice of paradise. ♡