
Travel Guide

San José

In the heart of Silicon Valley

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 02 Quick view | 05 Top 10 sights | 11 Hotel recommendations |
| 02 USA | 07 Shopping in San José | 12 Crew Tip |
| 03 Travel etiquette | 08 Restaurants | |
| 04 Health | 09 Nightlife | |
| 04 Phone calls & Internet | 10 Calendar of events | |





Quick view

San José – a brief overview

With a population of almost a million, San José is the largest city in the Bay Area, ahead of its famous sister San Francisco. Up until the 1960s, the region in Santa Clara Valley subsisted largely from fruit farming, but under the name 'Silicon Valley' it became renowned as the hub of the American electronic and computer industry. This is where major companies in the industry like Apple, Google, and Adobe have their headquarters. The research centres in Stanford, Palo Alto and Menlo Park have also contributed their part to the legend of the valley.

Until now, South Bay hasn't been well known as a travel destination, although it certainly has its appeal.

The cities of San José and Santa Clara are shaped by the wealth brought by the IT industry. They have top-class art and technology museums, pristine inner city areas and parks, and a highly efficient infrastructure. The hills that rise around them are home to wineries and golf courses. The Santa Cruz Mountains offer challenges for climbers and other outdoor sports enthusiasts, for instance in Castle Rock State Park, or provide a unique experience of nature in places like Henry Coe State Park, the home of mountain lions and badgers.



USA

General Information

Country overview

From its vast plains, snow-covered mountains, deep forests and strange rock formations, to soaring skyscrapers and a thunderous cultural scene, the USA is a collage of extremes. Nothing can prepare you for your first glimpse of Manhattan's unforgettable skyline, your first ride in a yellow cab, the ubiquitous hamburger joints, yawning expanses of prairie, the sweet strains of New Orleans jazz, or the neon-lit excesses of Las Vegas.

Marvel at the thunderous spectacle of Niagara Falls in northern New York, or seek an antidote to urban chaos amidst the flat farmland of the Midwest. Then there are the black hills of South Dakota, the dramatic mountain and ocean landscape of California's Pacific Coast Highway and the world-famous Grand Canyon.

Geography

Covering a large part of the North American continent, the USA shares borders with Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. The country has coasts on the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans, the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. The State of Alaska, in the northwest corner of the US, is not part of the continental US; it is separated from the rest of the USA by Canada. Similarly, Hawaii is not part of the "lower 48" states; it lies in the central Pacific Ocean.

The country's dependent territories are offshore and have distinct geographies of their own; the majority are islands.

The third-largest country in the world (after the Russian Federation and Canada), the USA has an enormous diversity of geographical features, including mountains, plains, and coastal zones. Though there are many cities that are densely populated with more manmade features than natural ones, there are also vast rural areas that are far more sparsely populated. The climate ranges from subtropical to arctic, with a corresponding breadth of flora and fauna.

General knowledge

Key facts

Population: 319 millions (estimate 2018)

Capital: Washington, DC.

Language

English, with significant Spanish-speaking minorities.

Currency

US Dollar (USD; symbol \$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of \$100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1, though the \$2 bill is rare and is not in high circulation. Coins are in denominations of \$1, and 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 cents.

Electricity

120 volts AC, 60Hz. Plugs have two flat pins with or without a third round grounding pin.

Public holidays

Listed below are the public holidays for the period January 2020 to December 2021.

Note

States can recognize other days as state holidays that are not federal holidays.

2020

New Year's Day: 1 January 2020
Martin Luther King Day: 20 January 2020
President's Day: 17 February 2020
Memorial Day: 25 May 2020
Independence Day: 3 and 4 July 2020
Labor Day: 7 September 2020
Columbus Day: 12 October 2020
Veterans Day: 11 November 2020
Thanksgiving Day: 26 November 2020
Christmas: 25 December 2020

2021

New Year's Day: 1 January 2021
Martin Luther King Day: 18 January 2021
President's Day: 15 February 2021
Memorial Day: 31 May 2021
Independence Day: 4 and 5 July 2021
Labor Day: 6 September 2021
Columbus Day: 11 October 2021
Veterans Day: 11 November 2021
Thanksgiving Day: 25 November 2021
Christmas: 25 December 2021

All information subject to change.

**Travel etiquette**
How to fit in**Social Conventions**

Americans are renowned for their openness and friendliness to visitors. The wide variety of national origins and the USA's relatively short history has resulted in numerous cultural and traditional customs living alongside each other. In large cities, people of the same ethnic background often live within defined communities.

Shaking hands is the usual form of greeting in formal situations and in business meetings. As long as the fundamental rules of courtesy are observed, there need be no fear of offending anyone of any background.

Gifts are appreciated if one is invited to a private home.

As a rule, dress is casual. High-end restaurants, hotels and clubs may require more formal attire.

Smoking is increasingly unpopular in the US; it is essential to ask permission before lighting up. Smoking is not allowed on city transport and restricted or forbidden in public buildings in most states. There will be a posted notice where no smoking is requested. An increasing number of states (including California and New York) have banned smoking altogether in bars, restaurants and many public places.



Health Health

Main emergency number: 911

Food & Drink

Food in the US is safe to eat, and the conditions under which food is prepared and served are regulated by city, state, and federal health and hygiene agencies. In many jurisdictions, it is mandatory for restaurants to have a certificate of health or hygiene, as well as the current grade they have been assigned, posted visibly.

Although America is famous for its fast food and obesity rates, the local and fresh food movement is very popular in many areas, especially cities, making it easy to eat healthy. A variety of options also makes it easy for people with special dietary needs to find food that suits them, whether their needs are due to health reasons or to religious requirements.

Tap water is considered safe to drink in the US and is often offered in restaurants before bottled water. Bottled water is available throughout the country, however, both in restaurants and shops, for those who prefer not to drink tap water.

Other Risks

The US is generally considered a safe destination for world visitors. Occasional outbreaks of disease, such as West Nile Virus (a mosquito-borne illness), H1N1 and the plague have occurred in recent years, however. Frequent hand-washing and general practices of good hygiene are encouraged to protect oneself against all types of illness. There have been rare cases of rabies, but special precautions are not necessary.

Another concern with regard to safety is the ubiquity of firearms, which remains a contentious issue in the United States. Terrorism also poses a small risk, although city, state, and federal agencies have stringent anti-terrorism practices in place.



Phone calls & Internet Phone calls & Internet

Telephone/Mobile Telephone

Dialing Code: +1

Telephone

Public telephones have become a rarity, but can still be found here and there. They take coins, telephone cards and credit cards. If you are planning to make regular use of public phones, it's best to purchase a prepaid calling card from one of the many U.S. providers.

Mobile Telephone

Not all European cell phones work on the American network, since it requires a tri-

band or quad-band device. Full network coverage is not always assured outside densely populated areas. Roaming charges are high here, so it is often cheaper to buy a SIM card from a U.S. provider. Low-cost prepaid SIM cards for making calls inside the country can be ordered online before you travel.

Internet

Free Internet access via Wi-Fi is possible in many busy tourist spots. When using unencrypted public Wi-Fi networks, it is not advisable to enter passwords, credit card details or banking credentials. We recommend using VPN app or security software to check Wi-Fi hotspots.



Top 10 sights Top 10 sights in San José

Mountain Winery

There are some wonderful vineyards to be found between San José and the Pacific Coast, mostly near Saratoga. The Mountain Winery is one of them. Winegrower Paul Masson, who was born and learned his craft in Burgundy, France, enjoyed great success with his still and sparkling wines until the first earthquake of 1906 struck; then when the Prohibition came along, it almost ruined the vineyard. It was not until the 1940s that the winery's fortunes improved under a new proprietor. The main building today houses a first-class restaurant with a magnificent view. A visit is especially worthwhile in the summer, when the winery hosts concerts, some featuring international artists (for the current program, visit the Mountain Winery website).

14831 Pierce Road
95070 Saratoga
USA
Tel: +1 408 741 2822

Open (for wine tastings):
Thu 1200–1700
Fri, Sat, Sun 1200–1800

www.mountainwinery.com/

Children's Discovery Museum

This interactive museum is aimed largely at families with small children. It allows visitors to become artistically involved or to explore the fascinating world of giant bubbles. There is a role-play market, and outside there is a full-size mammoth skeleton, a museum garden, and plenty of opportunities to play, including for children under four.

180 Woz Way
95110 San José
USA
Tel: +1 408 298 5437

Opening times:
Tue–Sat 10am–5pm
Sun 12pm–5pm

www.cdm.org

Winchester Mystery House

Construction work on the Villa of Sarah Winchester, heiress to the fortune of the renowned guns manufacturer, continued uninterrupted for 40 years. The house ultimately consisted of 160 rooms, 13 bathrooms and six kitchens, as well as a labyrinth of stairs and doors leading nowhere. Theories abound over the reasons for Winchester's building mania. One of them is that she feared being haunted in her sleep by the ghosts of those shot by Winchester guns – so every night she retired to a different room so they couldn't find her. Guided tours will take you through the house and park.

525 South Winchester Boulevard
95128 San José
USA

Opening times:
Daily 9am–5pm

Tel: +1 408 247 2101

www.winchestermysteryhouse.com

Rosicrucian Park

The Park of the Rosicrucian order was conceived in 1927 and takes up the area of an entire city block in the Rose Garden district. It includes the charming Peace Garden and labyrinth, a research library, a planetarium and the Egyptian Museum. Its extensive exhibition of Egyptian artefacts includes objects from the ancient Egyptian, Islamic, Assyrian and Babylonian periods. The same building houses the Alchemy Exhibit.

1660 Park Avenue
95191 San José
USA
Tel: +1 408 947 3635

Opening times:
Egyptian Museum:
Wed–Fri 9am–5pm
Sat–Sun 10am–6pm

www.rosicrucianpark.org

Computer History Museum

The museum of computer technology lies around 20 minutes by car north of San José in Mountain View, at the heart of Silicon Valley. Displayed in chronological order are exhibits from various areas of IT, including data storage, the evolution of the Internet and computer games, and self-driving cars. The demo labs show the forebears of the PC and its applications: the IBM 1401 and the PDP-1 from 1959 with the legendary *SpaceWar!* game.

1401 North Shoreline Boulevard
94043 Mountain View
USA
Tel: +1 650 810 1010

Opening times:
Wed, Thu, Sat, Sun 10am–5pm
Fri 10am–9pm

www.computerhistory.org

Lick Observatory

You will need to allow at least an hour to drive the 40 kilometres from San José up to the summit of Mount Hamilton, as the last stretch of road is steep and winding. But it is worth the effort, because the view of the hills and valleys is spectacular. Access to the observatory itself is limited to scientists, but the Great Lick Refractor (telescope) is open for public viewing.

7281 Mount Hamilton Road
95140 Mount Hamilton
USA

Opening times:
Thu–Sun 12pm–5pm

www.ucolick.org/main/visit/info.html

Peralta Adobe – Fallon House Historic Site

An adobe is a mud-brick construction as was common in the Middle East, South America or California. The Luis María Peralta adobe from 1797, located today alongside San Pedro Market, is the last remaining building of the old town of El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe. The interior has been reconstructed as it originally once was. The house is open for viewing, as is Fallon House, a Victorian-style mayor's villa from 1858, which stands across the street.

175 West Saint John Street
95112 San José
USA
Tel: +1 408 287 2290

Opening times:
Mon–Fri 12pm–5pm
Sat, Sun 11am–5pm
(times may vary depending on special functions)

historysanjose.org/wp/plan-your-visit/pe
ralta...

San José Museum of Art

Originally built as a post office in 1892, this building and the new wing built in 1991 now house the art museum. The collection of 2,400 works focuses on post-1980 paintings, sculptures, prints and photographs of the West Coast. The revolving exhibitions usually display contemporary art.

110 South Market Street
95110 San José
USA
Tel: +1 408 271 6840

Opening times:
Tue–Sun 11am–5pm

sjmusart.org

San José Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)

This energetic art space in San José's arts and entertainment district South First Area (SoFA) is a meeting place and exhibition space in one. It has three galleries exhibiting paintings, films and performances by contemporary artists. Visitors are offered information and interpretation guides for their stroll through the exhibitions. Entry is free, and original artworks are available for purchase.

560 South First Street
95113 San José
USA
Tel: +1 408 283 8155

Opening times:
Tue–Fri 10am–5pm
Sat, Sun 12pm–5pm
Every first Friday of the month: 10am–
10pm

sjica.org

Mount Hermon Canopy Tours (treetop tours)

In the wonderful Redwood forests about 10 kilometres outside Santa Cruz, you can whoosh through the treetops along zip rails of up to 400 metres in length and 20 metres in height or go on venturous walks in the gigantic sequoia trees on wooden sky bridges. Only in guided tours for people aged ten and over. Advance booking via the website or by phone is required.

17 Conference Drive
95018 Felton
USA
Tel: +1 831 430 4357

Opening times:
Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri 9am–5pm
Sat, Sun 9am–6pm

mounthermonadventures.com/adventur
es



Shopping in San José

Key Areas

There is a range of interesting fashion boutiques in the historic district around South First Street, East San Fernando Street and East Santa Clara Street. The shops in the numerous museums offer valuable and unusual items. In the SoFA (South First Area) district there are many galleries which offer works mostly by artists from the region, and along Paseo de San Antonio there are a number of quaint little shops. The San José Market Center on Coleman Avenue is always worth a detour, because you can find quirky gifts and delicacies. If you love taking a stroll along a pleasant shopping street, you should consider an outing to Los Gatos – you can amble along attractive Santa Cruz Avenue and window-shop.

Markets

A number of farmers' markets take place in and around San José, including Blossom Hill Market (Santa Teresa Boulevard, corner of Highway 85/87, Sundays 9am–1.30pm), the Downtown San José Farmers' Market (1 North San Pedro Street, Fridays 10am–2pm), and the East Santa Clara St. Farmers' Market (North 14th Street, Wednesdays 4pm–8pm). Some markets only take place in summer. More information is available on the website of the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association (pcfm.org).

Shopping Centres

There are a number of elegant, large shopping malls in San José. The Santana Row Mall (377 Santana Row, santanarow.com) is one of the most luxurious. You can buy clothing and accessories in almost every price category here, and it houses a number of spa and beauty salons. There is also a hotel, some apartments, and a range of cafés and restaurants. The Westfield Valley Fair right next door (2855 Stevens Creek Boulevard, westfield.com) is a mall for sophisticated tastes, with almost 200 businesses including fashion stores and exclusive boutiques, as well as elegant restaurants.



Restaurants

Restaurants in San José

From 3-star restaurants to quaint snack bars, there is ample opportunity to eat out in and around San José. There are restaurants offering typical cuisine from all around the world and of course the typical fusion style of California cuisine. If you simply want to be inspired by what's on offer, start off, for instance, at SoFA Market, a gourmet temple with over 10 food venues and delicatessens, or at San Pedro Square, where you will also find a whole array of good restaurants.

Manresa

This elegant venue, located about 15 kilometres south of downtown San José on the road to Santa Cruz, was awarded three Michelin stars in 2016. Every evening, chef David Kinch conjures up a surprise menu. You only discover what delights it holds once you are seated at the table. Kinch is regarded as a representative of the farm-to-table ethic, the art of transforming regional ingredients into exquisite meals.

320 Village Lane
95030 Los Gatos
USA

Price: Expensive

Chez TJ

Chef Jarad Gallagher serves modern French cuisine in a Victorian-style villa in Mountain View. Every day, there are two degustation menus, one with 7 and one with 14 courses. The complementing wines are mostly sourced from small wineries in the region.

938 Villa Street
94041 Mountain View
USA

Price: Expensive

Vung Tau

For over 30 years now, Vung Tau has been one of the top addresses for Vietnamese food in San José. With its ingenious room layout, you can always enjoy quiet dining, even though the venue seats over 150. Lunchtime sees mostly business people, evenings mostly families. The proprietors also operate other Vung Tau restaurants in Milpitas and Newark, as well as the exquisite Tamarine in Palo Alto.

535 East Santa Clara Avenue
95112 San José
USA

Price: Moderate

Smoking Pig BBQ

The scent of smoke leads the way to this extraordinarily good grill restaurant. They serve tender, juicy grilled meat with tasty side dishes here. The delicious meals and friendly service even reaped praise in the Guide Michelin.

1144 North 4th Street
95112 San José
USA

Price: Moderate

Psycho Donuts

In this quirky café in downtown San José, all sorts of possible and impossible things are made into donuts. Not just sweet things, but also pizza, tacos, and sushi are served as Spare Tire donuts or Mello Submarines by the service staff, who are dressed as psychiatric nurses. There is a second outlet in downtown Campbell.

288 South Second Street
95113 San José
USA

Price: Cheap



Nightlife Nightlife in San José

People from all over the world work in Silicon Valley, and every nation seems to have brought its own party and drinking habits with it. You will find pubs, cantinas, sake bars and 'Bierhauses', along with wine bars where you can try local wines. Best is if you start the evening either at San Pedro Square, where you will find a range of good restaurants and quiet bars, or around South First Street, in the area known as SoFA (South First Area). This is where the trendy, young folk get together in clubs and bars to go dancing and partying. A particular favourite are the South First Fridays, held every first Friday of the month, when the entire district opens its bars, pubs and galleries to entertain the night revellers with concerts, performances and exhibitions.

Agenda Lounge

This lounge club is an institution in the SoFA district. There is a restaurant on the ground floor, and above is the club. Every evening there is dancing to a diverse range of music. They play everything from reggae and jazz to hip-hop and salsa.

399 South First Street
95113 San José
USA

Hedley Club

This bar in the Hotel de Anza serves first-class cocktails and wines, as well as fine, Mediterranean-style entrées. Jazz concerts are often held in its comfortable art déco interior.

233 West Santa Clara Street
95113 San José
USA

SP2 Communal Bar + Restaurant

This bar-restaurant stands a little hidden away near San Pedro Square Market. This is where hipsters meet for a top-class, bistro-cuisine snack and a cocktail at the bar. The venue is a particular favourite when the weather is fine, as it has a comfortably furnished patio.

72 North Almaden Avenue
95110 San José
USA

California Theatre

This elegant film palace dating from the late 1920s seats over 1,000 guests. It has been beautifully renovated and now serves as a magnificent concert and function hall with modern sound and stage equipment. This is the headquarters of the San José opera and the Silicon Valley symphony orchestra.

345 South First Street
95113 San José
USA

Studio 8

This is one of the biggest nightclubs in the Bay Area, able to host 1,500 patrons. Celebrities and DJs who can also be seen in Los Angeles or Las Vegas perform here. If the hustle and bustle in the club is too much, you can hire a VIP cabana, a small, separate area only for invited guests.

8 South First Street
95113 San José
USA



Calendar of events Calendar of events

Cinequest Film Festival

Combining cinematic arts with pioneering technology, this independent film festival hosts screenwriting competitions, technology forums, artistic workshops, among others. About 100,000 visitors and 700 guests from all over the world are expected to attend.

March 3 - 15, 2020

Venues: California Theater among others

FanimeCon

With approximately 25,000 visitors, the FanimeCon is one of the big anime conventions of the USA. It celebrates Japanese pop art with costume competitions, games and film screenings.

May 22 - 25, 2020

Venue: San José Convention Center

SubZero

The organisers of the monthly "South First Friday" art spectacle will once again be offering this Indie street festival in the SoFA district. In the evening, the road between San Carlos and Reed Street will become a stage for musicians and

actors.

June 2020

Venue: South First Street, between San Carlos and Reed Street

San José 4th of July Fireworks Celebration

A large parade takes place at the Alameda in the Rose Garden District. In the evening, the Rotary Club hosts the spectacular fireworks show on the Discovery Meadow behind the Children's Museum.

July 4, 2020

Venue: Discovery Meadow, Woz Way

Santa Clara Art & Wine Festival

This small art and wine festival takes place in the Santa Clara Park, just 10km south of San José city. Winemakers, as well as small breweries in the region, use this festival to promote their products. There is an entertainment program suitable for the whole family.

September 2020

Venue: Santa Clara Central Park



Hotel recommendations Hotels in San José

Most hotels in San José tailor their services to business people. Almost all of them offer fast Wi-Fi Internet access, conference rooms, and other conveniences such as dry cleaning of suits and a shoeshine service. But of course the prices are to match. However, they frequently offer special rates at the weekend.

Fairmont Hotel

This hotel in the Fairmont luxury hotel chain is ideally located on the Plaza César Chávez. With over 800 rooms and suites, it offers every comfort you can imagine, and the hotel restaurant Fountain fulfils discerning wishes. They also host conferences and receptions.

170 South Market Street
95113 San José
USA

Category: Expensive

Hotel de Anza

This boutique hotel marries classical art déco elegance with modern comfort. Completely renovated in 2015, the rooms and hotel furnishings present themselves in fresh splendour. From the hotel, it is only a few minutes' walk to the SAP Center and the San José Convention Center, as well as many restaurants and shopping facilities.

233 West Santa Clara Street
95113 San José
USA

Category: Expensive

The Westin San José

This charming traditional hotel is located in an elegantly renovated building in the style of 1920s Spanish Revival Renaissance. The luxurious rooms of varying sizes have all been lovingly fitted out. A nice extra is that guests can borrow sporting

gear to go jogging or to work out in the hotel's fitness room.

302 South Market Street
95113 San José
USA

Category: Moderate

Wyndham Garden Hotel

This 195-room hotel is conveniently located close to the airport and highways 101 and 880. The two-storey buildings are arranged around a large courtyard on park-like grounds. There is an outdoor pool and a putting green available for guests.

1355 North 4th Street
95112 San José
USA

Category: Moderate

Motel 6 San José Airport

This simple motel lies in direct proximity to the airport and Karina light-rail station. You can get to downtown San José, the Convention Center and Santa Clara from here. Free parking is available for guests.

2081 North 1st Street
95131 San José
USA

Category: Cheap



Crew Tip My San José

The *Vegetarian House*, a stone's throw away from the Tech Museum of Innovation and the San José State University, offers vegetarians, vegans and everyone else who would simply like to try it the opportunity to tuck into a tasty meal even if it doesn't include a steak or a burger. Asian, Arabian, European or fusion fare – there's something here to suit every palate. And with a bit of luck, you might even catch one of the guests taking up the owner's invitation to sit down at the grand piano and play his favorite song.



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