

CALIFORNIA

50 Activities

San Diego

A Family Activity Guide

Coastal mornings • Clever play • Animal days • Room to change plans

FREE SAMPLE · PAGE NUMBERS REFER TO THE FULL GUIDE

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03 **Zoos, Gardens & Nature** — 8 activities — 20
Animal days, living gardens and quiet wetlands

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05 **Family Entertainment** — 7 activities — 33
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The Classic San Diego Weekend, The Nature Day, Rainy-Day San Diego

> Ages marked “best for” are recommendations. Prices show the stated basis; parking and special programs may cost extra. Open the venue links before you go.

Before you buy child tickets

Budget examples use standard admission. Check these lower-cost options before paying for children.

Zoo and Safari Park: the ticket pages may offer lower-priced online tickets for select dates, bought in advance. Compare that calendar with your travel dates before paying the standard Any Day price our budgets use. Zoo ticket options ↗

City and County of San Diego residents: Fleet and the Nat are free on the first Tuesday, Air & Space on the second Tuesday and Model Railroad on the second Thursday; some months are excluded. Films and special exhibitions may cost extra; bring photo ID with your address. Resident free days ↗

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START HERE · CHOOSE YOUR FIRST DAY

Where do we even start?

First morning, everyone up early, and San Diego has a zoo, a park full of museums and a whole coastline. You don't need all of it. Pick one plan by time and budget, adjust for your youngest, and let the rest wait. Plans are on pages 52–54.

A lower-cost outdoor day → Nature Day · p. 53
Start with Cabrillo's lighthouse and views. $60 example: one car's admission plus a picnic allowance; fuel and any Shelter Island metered parking are extra. Half a day or younger children? Omit the rocks and make the playground optional.

An indoor day → Science & trains · p. 54
Begin at Fleet; add Model Railroad after lunch only if energy holds. $169.80 example for Fleet and food, before parking; the second museum adds $60. Kid City suits ages five and under. Transfers are outdoors.

A first-visit weekend → Zoo & Balboa Park · p. 52
Best for roughly ages 5–12 with two days available. $388 example includes standard tickets, Zoo parking and food. Choose a shorter plan if that cost or walking does not fit.

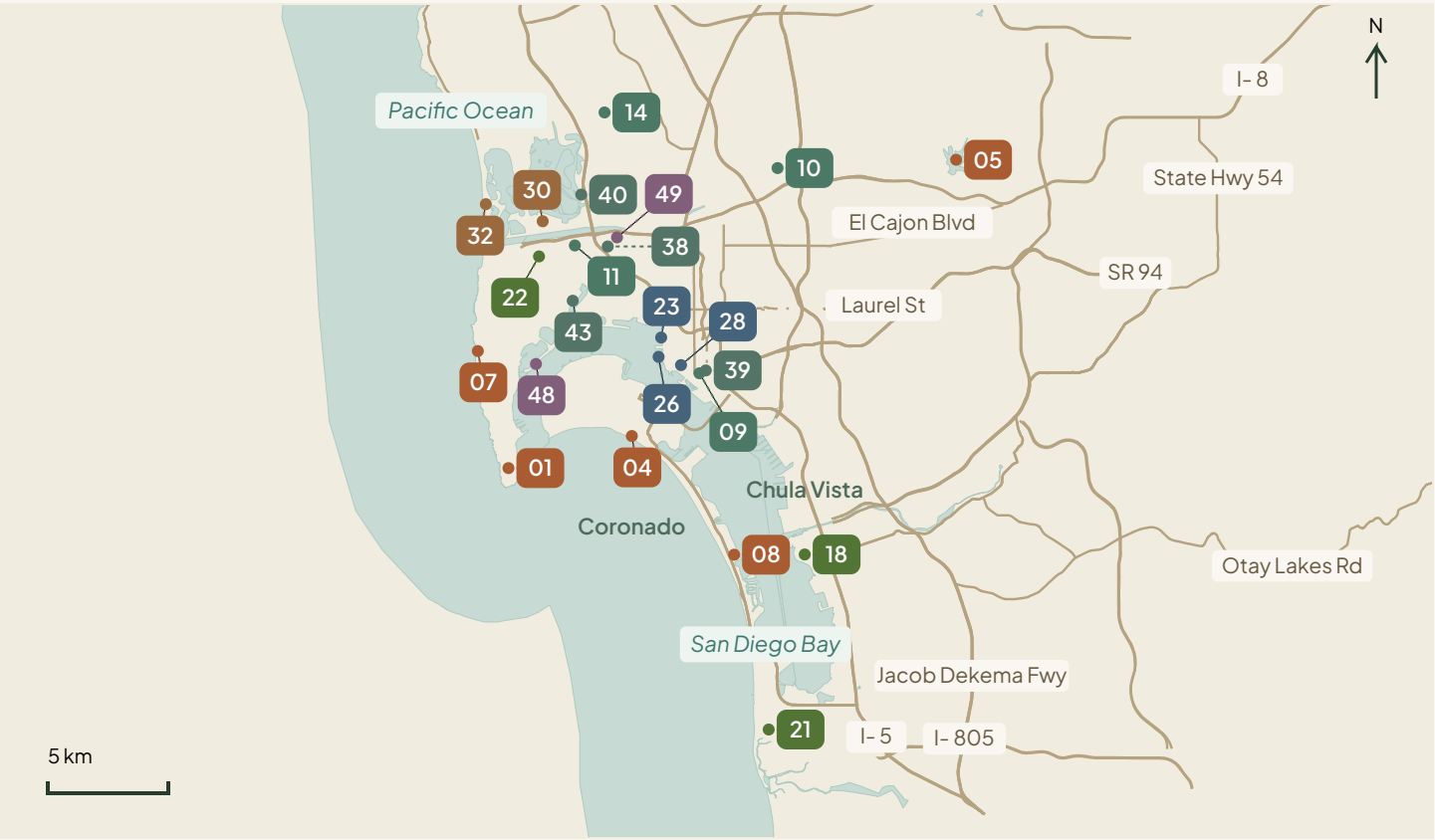
Before you go: pick one main stop, open the arrival links on your plan, and save this PDF. Museum and weekend budgets use two adults and children ages five and nine; your total may differ. Check the lower-cost ticket options on page 2.



Kit
EDITOR, KIDPATHS

Coast & city

Numbers identify outings below. Dots mark locations; dotted lines connect displaced number labels. Tap a name or page number to read the outing.



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01 • FEATURED VENUE • SECTION 01

Cabrillo National Monument

Best for 4–12 | Point Loma | **$20 per private car**

4.8 · 12,833 reviews

Check whether low tide falls inside Cabrillo's park hours before leaving, and use it to set the order of your visit. Without a suitable tide, plan for the lighthouse, harbor views and a Junior Ranger booklet instead. The $20 vehicle pass covers everyone in one private car and remains valid for seven days.

The upper monument and rocky shore are different outings. Save the coast for steady feet, shoes with grip and a child willing to watch where they step. The lighthouse living quarters are part of a normal visit; climbing the tower requires a special open day.

Insider Tips

- Family budget: $20 admission for one private car; bring lunch and water.
- Tidepool target: about 0.7 feet or lower, before the coastal area closes at 4:30.
- No useful low tide? Keep the upper-park visit and save the rocks for another day.

ADDRESS 1800 Cabrillo Memorial Drive, San Diego, CA 92106 **HOURS** Daily 9–5; coast 4:30; holiday closures **PRICE** $20 per private car

WEBSITE Current venue details ↗



02

La Jolla Shores

Best for 3–12 · La Jolla · **Free beach entry** · 4.7 · 4,452 reviews

Choose the Shores when your family wants to build, dig, and play before making any commitment to the ocean. This sandy beach has a playground, showers, and restrooms, making it a more practical sand-first day than a cliffside viewpoint; swimming still depends on conditions and each child's abilities.

> ***Pro tip:*** The adjacent ecological reserve is a look-and-leave place: don't collect shells or other objects from it. Make a photograph or a drawing the take-home souvenir instead.

Allow 2–3 hours · Daylight visit; check ocean conditions
8200 Camino del Oro, La Jolla, CA 92037 ↗

Current venue details ↗



03

Mission Trails Regional Park

Best for 4–12 · Mission Gorge · **Free trails** · 4.8 · 819 reviews

Begin with the visitor center and a walk through Mission Trails' rugged landscape. Use the exhibits to introduce the plants and landforms you'll look for outside, then choose a short out-and-back that suits your family. You can explore from the visitor center without making a summit the goal.

> ***Pro tip:*** The visitor-center theater isn't always open, so don't count on an indoor film break. Use the exhibits as the indoor part and keep the walk short in heat.

Start with 60–90 minutes · Visitor center daily 9–5; holiday closures
One Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Diego, CA 92119 ↗

Current venue details ↗

AN OUTDOOR DAY ON POINT LOMA

Your plan, at a glance

Start on Point Loma and stay there. Check Cabrillo's low tide, coastal access and holiday closures before leaving. These times assume the tidepool visit fits late morning; reverse the upper-park and shore stops if the actual tide calls for it.

ITINERARY 02

The Nature Day

A lighthouse morning, a tide-dependent shore, and an easy harbor finish.

Make it fit: Skip the shore if your children are not comfortable on uneven rocks. Short version: upper-park lighthouse and views, with the playground optional.

9:00	**Cabrillo visitor center**	Collect a Junior Ranger booklet and ask about coastal access. Begin with the harbor view if the tide is not ready yet.
9:45	**Old Point Loma Lighthouse**	Explore the lighthouse living quarters and surrounding views. Tower climbing is a special-event opportunity, so it is not part of this plan.
10:45	**Tidepools, only when conditions fit**	Aim for a tide around 0.7 feet or lower. Skip the rocks if access is closed, waves are rough or footing feels wrong.
12:00	**Packed lunch and a break**	Finish the Junior Ranger activity at your child's pace. Eat before leaving Point Loma's monument area. Pack out all your trash.
	---- Drive to Shelter Island Park South: allow 25–30 minutes including arrival and parking; traffic can add time.	
1:30	**Shelter Island Park South**	Use the south playground at 1732 Shelter Island Drive. Follow the waterfront for a short walk, then stop when the children are done.

Arrive: Cabrillo parking · 1800 Cabrillo Memorial Drive. Start at the Visitor Center lot. Drive to coastal Lot 1 only if access and tide fit; parking is limited. Save the tide details before entering the coast's cell-service gap.

Food & toilets: Bring lunch and water; there are no restaurants or designated picnic areas. Use the Visitor Center restrooms before the coast; two accessible single-stall rooms have changing tables. Shelter Island details.

One private car: $20 Cabrillo admission. Add a $40 picnic-and-snack allowance = $60 planning budget before fuel and any Shelter Island metered parking. Admission remains $20 even when the tidepool stop is skipped.

Change of plan: No suitable tide? Keep the lighthouse and views, then head to Shelter Island earlier. If rain or wind makes the coast unpleasant, use the Rainy-Day plan instead; do not treat high surf as a sightseeing bonus.

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FREE SAMPLE · SAN DIEGO FAMILY ACTIVITY GUIDE

One day is planned. The rest of your San Diego trip is in the full guide.

When this plan is done and someone asks what is next, the full San Diego guide has every outing, map and day plan in one place, ready on your phone.

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OUTINGS	DAY PLANS	MAPS	PAGES

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