

# The New York Times

# Travel

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2000

## WHAT'S DOING IN

# San Diego

By MARTHA STEVENSON OLSON

San Diego's downtown has been promised a renaissance for decades, and despite a financing mixup that has stopped construction of a downtown park for the Padres baseball team, revitalization seems well under way.

An expansion that will double the size of the busy convention center is scheduled to be finished next September, new hotels and restaurants in the historic Gaslamp District and east are opening, and construction cranes maneuver in areas previously neglected. The sunny climate, attractions like SeaWorld and the San Diego Zoo, and the abiding beauty of the Pacific Ocean, San Diego Harbor and Mission Bay continue to lure record numbers of tourists.

Once regarded as a conservative Navy port, San Diego has evolved into a remarkably international city. Of course, there is the pervasive influence of Mexico, with Tijuana 17 miles south, and an increasingly integrated Latino population that has helped define San Diego all along. The last quarter-century has brought immigrants from Somalia, Iraq, Kosovo, Colombia, Brazil, China, South Korea, the Philippines, Samoa, Vietnam and Laos.

An influx of high-tech companies has brought intellectual capital as well as the cold, hard kind, with a corresponding rise in cultural endowments; the La Jolla Playhouse and the Old Globe Theater each have recently received \$5 million gifts, from, respectively, Joan and Irwin Jacobs and Harvey P. White, the two men co-founders of Qualcomm. Although the cultural scene mostly reflects popular taste — several home-grown musicals, including "Tommy," "Jane Eyre" and "The Full Monty" have gone on to Broadway — San Diego also has its cutting-edge moments, for example inSITE 2000, art installations and performances set around the border with Mexico.

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## By the Bay



Robert Burroughs for The New York Times

The San Diego Museum of Art.

The winter season brings migrating gray whales and a parade of lighted boats.

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## Events

San Diego celebrates the season with the Parade of Lights, when ships are illuminated from stem to stern for a tour of San Diego Bay on Dec. 10 and 17. Viewing is free along the harborfront, though perches like the Berkeley, a ferry belonging to the San Diego Maritime Museum, (619) 234-9153, will offer dinner and drinks; [www.sdparadeoflights.org](http://www.sdparadeoflights.org); (858) 488-0501.

On Dec. 13 Las Posadas, a reenactment of Mary and Joseph's search for shelter, will circle around Old Town, San Diego's earliest Spanish settlement, about four miles north of downtown. Visitors, many with lighted candles, join the free procession, with choral events at stops along the way. The procession begins at 6:30 p.m. from Temple Beth Israel in Heritage Park; those needing a parking spot should arrive early. (619) 220-5422.

The Old Globe Theater in Balboa Park has brought back its popular "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" through Dec. 31. Tickets: \$37 to \$42, children half that; (619) 239-2255.

The annual Nations of San Diego International Dance Festival will take place at the lovely old Spreckels Theater downtown from Jan. 12 to 21, when 14 companies will represent 12 cultures; performances are at 2 and 8 p.m., with a marketplace featuring the food and art of ethnic groups before each one. Tickets \$15 and \$25; (619) 239-9255.

"Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People," a traveling

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exhibition of 70 oil paintings and every one of his 322 Saturday Evening Post covers, will be at the San Diego Museum of Art in Balboa Park through Dec. 31; (619) 232-7931; tickets \$12 weekdays, \$14 weekends. Also at Balboa Park, at the Museum of Photographic Arts through Jan. 21, is a portrait show, "The Model Wife," including portraits by Alfred Stieglitz of Georgia O'Keeffe and by Edward Weston of his wife, Charis. Tickets, \$6; (619) 238-7559.

For something completely different, sample inSITE 2000's installations, performances and film and video presentations, most of them free, around Tijuana and San Diego through February; (619) 544-1482. Projects range from an installation in a bird blind in the Tijuana River Estuary Reserve to Carlos Amoraes performing as his alter ego, a wrestler named Amoraes. One- and two-day tours to sites are scheduled Jan. 20 and 21 and Feb. 23 and 24, with prices ranging from \$25 to \$160.

The San Diego Opera season at the Civic Theater, 202 C Street, begins with Mozart's "Magic Flute" Jan. 20 to 31, followed by Gounod's "Faust," Feb. 17 to 28; tickets \$33 to \$124; (619) 232-7636.

The San Diego Symphony's winter schedule includes works by Bach, Haydn and Handel from Jan. 12 to 14, Johnny Mathis concerts Feb. 2 and 3, and "Romeo and Juliet" as interpreted by Prokofiev and Bernstein Feb. 9 and 10; 750 B Street; (619) 235-0804; tickets \$15 to \$70.

San Diego Art + Sol, with information about art and cultural events, can be reached at (800) 270-9283 or at [www.sandiegoartandsol.com](http://www.sandiegoartandsol.com).