

# 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do



## In San Diego With Your Children

**A Free eBook Provided By:**  
**Montessori American School**

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## 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

*The secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of a flaming imagination.*

*Maria Montessori*

At [Montessori American School](http://www.MontessoriAmericanSchool.com), we understand the importance of inspiring children to create, discover, have fun, and learn from their environment throughout the education process. In every activity that they do, children are continually learning and absorbing their environment. As a parent, you have the wonderful opportunity to share these everyday learning experiences with your children, by finding activities that you can do together, when your child is not at school.

San Diego, California and the surrounding areas are virtually a playground for families! With beautiful weather year round, a gorgeous coastline, and a booming metropolis, there is never a shortage of fun things to do with the whole family. Most people are aware of famous attractions, such as Sea World and the San Diego Zoo, which families from all around the world travel to! However, we wanted to highlight some suggestions of other, slightly lesser known, fun things to do with your kids in San Diego, that are a wonderful experience for local families and visitors alike!

In this eBook, we have compiled a list of some of our favorite activities for parents to do with their children in San Diego and surrounding areas. These are gathered from ideas provided by current parents of children who attend our Montessori school, as well as some of the popular destinations that provide an amazing experience for you and your children!

Help me do it by myself



## 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

### Table of Contents

<b>1: Make a Bonfire on the Beach</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2: Visit the Point Loma Tide Pools</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3: Spend the Day in Julian</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4: Bundle-up and Go on a Whale-Watching Tour</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5: Visit The New Children's Museum</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6: Take a Hike!...or Relax on the Lake</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7: Rent Bicycles and Explore Coronado</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8: Discover the U.S.S. Midway</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>9: Stop and Smell the Roses</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>10: Spend the Day in Balboa Park</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>11: Take an Old Town Trolley or SEAL Tour</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>12: Visit the San Diego Maritime Museum</b>	<b>16</b>



# 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

## 1: Make a Bonfire on the Beach

Some of the best things in life are free! One of such things is the experience of spending quality time with your children, while gathered around a bonfire on the beach. A beach bonfire in a fire ring is a time-honored tradition in California. It's the perfect setting, as the sun goes down over a gorgeous California beach evening.

Imagine roasting marshmallows, telling stories, and playing music, while listening to the waves crashing onto the shore. Children love the opportunity to run and play in the sand, while adults can relax around the fire, enjoying the company of friends and family.

Bonfires can also be a wonderful learning experience for your children. You can use this opportunity to teach them the proper techniques of how to build a fire. Talk about the history of fire, how it formed human civilization, and how important it is in survival skills.




If someone in your family is musically inclined, this is a wonderful time to break out the guitar, harmonica, or bongo drum, and make music as you sit around the fire. Encourage creativity by having your children help make up songs to sing, or bring song sheets with the words to some campfire favorites.



### What are the rules for beach fires?

Fires are permitted only in fire containers provided by the [City](#) or in personal barbecues elevated off the ground. Coals must be removed or deposited in hot coal containers. Fire pits are usually large cement rings in the sand, where you are permitted to build your very own bonfire. Some beaches provide fire pits free, first come-first serve. You bring the wood with you for the fire.

The best beaches in the San Diego area, which allow bonfires, are:

-  [Coronado Beach](#)
-  [La Jolla Shores](#)
-  [Mission Beach](#)

*Fun activities and quality family time is a wonderful way to create an environment of growth and enrichment for you and your child. At Montessori American School, we feel that this enriching and encouraging environment should be part of early education as well. Montessori American School is a Private Preschool and Kindergarten serving Bonita, Chula Vista, Coronado, Eastlake and San Diego, CA. For more information, visit [www.montessoriamerican.com](http://www.montessoriamerican.com) or call (619) 422-1220.*



# 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

## 2: Visit the Point Loma Tide Pools and See the Cabrillo Monument

*The role of education is to interest the child profoundly in an external activity to which he will give all of his potential.*

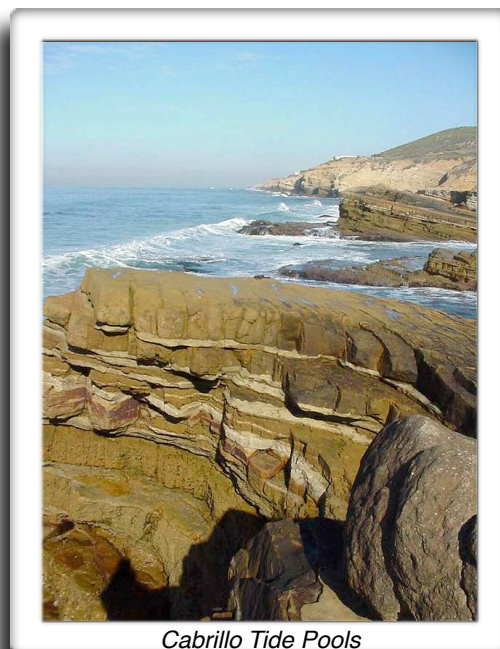
*Maria Montessori*

A wonderful experience for you and your children, is to visit the beautiful tide pools and [Cabrillo Monument at Point Loma](#). The Point Loma Tide Pools, also known as [Cabrillo Tide Pools](#), are located at the tip of Point Loma. This is just south of scenic [Sunset Cliffs Natural Park](#). The tide pools face west, near the Point Loma Lighthouse. On a clear day, you can see the Los Coronado Islands and sail boats on the water!

On the western side of Point Loma lies the rocky inter-tidal zone, a window into the ocean ecosystem that lies along San Diego's coast. During low tide, pools form along this shore in rocky depressions. If you look closely, you may see an array of sea life, such as:

- ▲ Flowery sea anemones
- ▲ An elusive octopus
- ▲ Spongy deadman's fingers
- ▲ Starfish
- ▲ Sea cucumber
- ▲ Crabs
- ▲ Sea urchins

...and a myriad of other sea creatures!



*Cabrillo Tide Pools*




*Cabrillo Monument*

These tide pools are the most extensive in San Diego County. Because of their protected status, they are some of the best tide pools in California. This has made them a popular destination for class room field trips, or memorable family experiences! Docents are available on site to give tours and answer questions, so this can be a wonderful learning experience for your child.

While you are at the tide pools, you should also check out the [Cabrillo Monument](#). Learn about Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the 16th century explorer that the park is named for.

## 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

**Other activities you will have the opportunity to experience, include:**

 **Hiking:** A two-mile Bayside Trail provides beautiful views of San Diego Bay and the city, taking you through one of the last remaining remnants of coastal sage scrub habitat in the world.





*Old Point Loma Lighthouse*

*(Courtesy of Flickr User Loco Steve)*



*Point Loma Tide Pools*


 **Visiting the Lighthouse:** The Old Point Loma Lighthouse is one of the original eight lighthouses on the West Coast. It's been restored to reflect what life was like in the 1800s. Interactive exhibits tell the story of the Lighthouses of Point Loma.

 **Military History:** In a historic radio station building, an exhibit called "They Stood the Watch" presents the military history of Fort Rosecrans.



*Photo Courtesy of Flickr User Ken Lund*



 **Whale Watching:** From Dec.- Feb., you can experience the annual migration of the Pacific Gray Whale as these majestic mammals pass by the park.



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## 3: Spend the Day in Julian

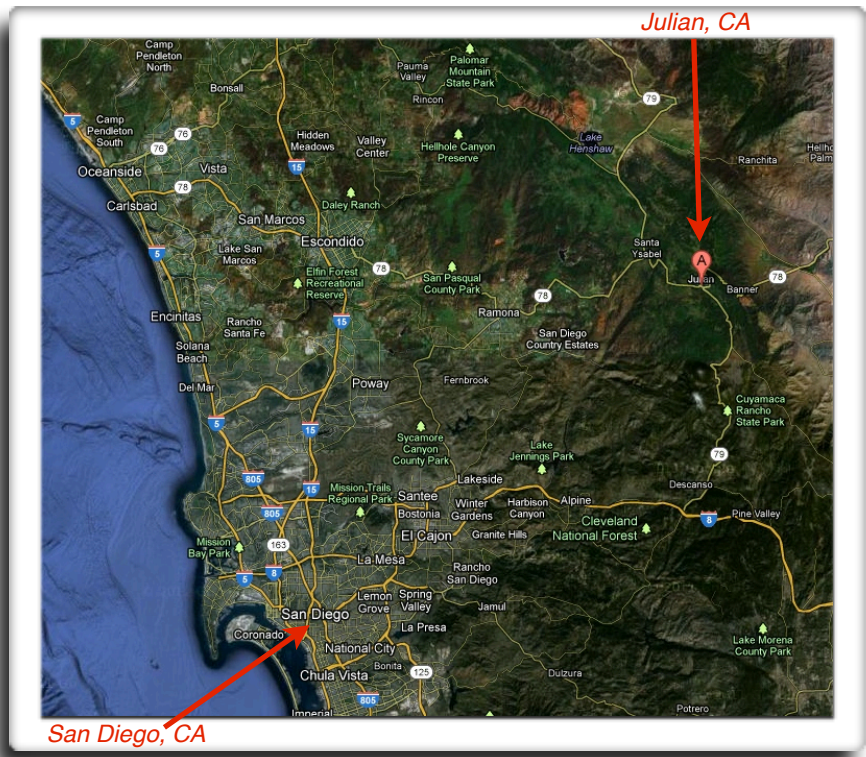
Julian is a historic gold mining town about an hour east of San Diego. It is famous for delicious apples, and is the premier mountain retreat in the county. Julian is also unique because it has four seasons.

- ▲ If you go in the **Spring**, you'll enjoy the blossoming of a myriad of flowers, including beautiful daffodils.
- ▲ The **Summer** months are perfect for hiking and star gazing.
- ▲ In the **Fall**, you'll be surrounded by the beautiful changing leaves, amazing fall colors. You will also have the opportunity to go apple picking. However, you don't need to go in the Fall to enjoy the delicious apples. Julian is famous for having apples and superb, homemade apple pie that you can enjoy year round!
- ▲ **Winter** brings light snowfalls and bright, crisp, days that remind you of a Christmas postcard.

Before you take the family to Julian, you should pick up a free map at the [Chamber of Commerce](#) for a self-guided walking tour of the area's historic sites.

### History of Julian

The town was named Julian, in honor of Mike Julian, a displaced Confederate Veteran who was there in 1869 when cattleman Fred Coleman found the first flecks of gold in a creek. It was San Diego County's first and only gold rush. Mike Julian was later elected San Diego County Assessor. Rumor has it that Julian almost became San Diego's county seat.



The gold rush was short-lived, nearly over within a decade. But the pioneers stayed and began farming the rich land. While many crops were planted, Julian proved to be a fine place to grow apples. Apples continue to be produced in Julian. Their sweet, fresh flavor lures thousands to the mountains each fall. You will find fruit stands overflowing with crisp fruit, homemade cider, apple pie, and other delicacies.

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### 4: Bundle-up and Go on a Whale-Watching Tour



*Our aim is not to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core.*

*Maria Montessori*

San Diego Whale Watch is a year round whale watching tour, that will take you and your family out to sea, and allows you to enjoy the wide open ocean, marine birds, sea lions, seals, dolphins and of course... whales!!!!

The opportunity to see these majestic creatures in their natural habitat is an amazing experience that you and your children will never forget.

**On these tours, various types of whales can be seen year-round:**

**December through April** – See a glimpse of the amazing 10,000 mile annual migration of the Pacific gray whale from Alaska to Mexico. Gray whales are 30 to 50 feet in length and weigh up to 40 tons! They leave their summer feeding grounds in the Bering Sea and make the trek south to the isolated lagoons of Baja to give birth to their calves. In San Diego, you are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to see both south and north bound migration all the way through April. There have even been sightings as close as 1/2 mile from the bay!

**May through November** – During this time, you will experience the migration of the Great Blue Whales and Mighty Finback Whales. The Blue Whale is the largest animal that exists on the earth!! They range from 90 to over 100 feet in length, and weigh over 200 tons! The Finback Whale is second only to the blue whale in size and weight, and is the fastest of the great whales. It may be cruising by in bursts of speed of up to 23 mph (37 km/hr). (It's been called the "greyhound of the sea"). You may also experience sightings of the Minke, Pilot, and Sperm whales. All of these amazing whales are generally found 5 to 9 miles off shore feeding on local banks.

[San Diego Whale Watch](#) is located just around the corner from the Sea World theme park.

*Photo Credits (clockwise starting from top): Gray Whale Diving by Lou Romig, Gray Whale showing flippers by Lou Morig, Gray Whale Snout by Ryan Harvey.*






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### 5: Visit The New Children's Museum

The Children's Museum fosters an environment of creativity, education, and fun! It is an interactive experience that both you and your child can enjoy. The New Children's Museum in San Diego is "a dynamic new model of a museum that celebrates children and the arts". ([www.thinkplaycreate.org](http://www.thinkplaycreate.org))




This destination combines elements from all of the following:

-  Art museum
-  Children's museum
-  Community center

The [New Children's Museum](#) has an ever changing array of new exhibits to experience, which combine thought provoking art with education and fun. It features:



**Galleries** – The Galleries in the museum display the works of various artists, around the theme of the current exhibit. The goal of exhibits is to provide a visually stimulating display, which also provokes thought and inspires education around the topic at hand. One of the exhibits that is currently on display (February 2012), is entitled "Trash". In this exhibition, the mission is to raise awareness about the production of waste in the United States (the average American produces 4.5 pounds of trash every day) The goal is to change how we see trash, and begin changing perspectives by asking more questions, such as:

-  How do we decide what is trash?
-  How does your trash impact the lives of others?
-  How can we imagine new possibilities, and a new future for our trash?

**Studios** – The Museum has studio spaces that allow kids to roll up their sleeves and create their own artwork with a wide variety of recycled and sustainable materials. These include: paint, clay, paper, wood, found objects and more. The studios are facilitated by trained artists, and each project uses an artwork or process in the exhibition as inspiration.

**If your child is inspired by art, or you would like them to have more exposure to the world of art, consider [Art Appreciation](#) or other [educational enrichment classes](#) that are now available at Montessori American School!**

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### 6: Take a Hike!...or Relax on the Lake

Hiking can be a wonderful opportunity to bond with your children, while also incorporating exercise and a close up experience with nature. A great place to go hiking with kids in the San Diego area is the [Otay Lakes County Park](#).

The park provides a beautiful view of Otay Lake and the surrounding hills. It is a 78-acre park, and has long been a favorite in the South Bay. Otay Lakes Park provides some beautiful hiking trails that are suitable for young children. In addition to the trails, the whole family can have fun enjoying the:

- ▲ Playground
- ▲ Horseshoe courts
- ▲ Lawn area
- ▲ Native plant/demonstration garden



#### Relax on the Lake!

For a couple of hours of fun and relaxation after hiking and playing in the park, you may want to rent a boat, and just enjoy some time on the water of Lake Otay.

Lower Otay Lake is an artificial lake in San Diego County, California, flanked by Otay County Open Space Preserve and Chula Vista.

Rental rowboats, motorboats, and kayaks are available, for fishing and recreational

boating, Wednesday, Saturday, and Sundays, all year.

Private boaters are also welcome, and just pay a small launch ramp usage fee. Canoes, kayaks and float tubes are permitted for free. However, no swimming is allowed.



# 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

## 7: Rent Bicycles and Explore Coronado

A wonderful way to combine exercise, quality time, and beautiful sightseeing is to rent bicycles and spend the day exploring the beautiful island of Coronado. Coronado is situated just across the Big Bay from downtown San Diego. The island is most known for two famous structures:



[The historic Hotel del Coronado](#)



The distinctive San Diego-Coronado Bridge

However, in addition to visiting these destinations, simply exploring the unique, quaint island community of Coronado will provide you and your children an amazing experience.

Coronado (Spanish for “the crowned one”) has been dubbed as “The Crown City”, and its beach is ranked as one of the top ten beaches in the US. The coastline offers gentle surf and sparkling sand beaches (due to the mineral Mica), which entices visitors from around the world. Along with the gorgeous beaches, the island offers a charming small-town quaintness, featuring elegant gardens, old-world mansions, and unique shopping experiences. Many of the restaurants also have spectacular ocean views!

### Getting there

The journey to Coronado can also be a fun experience! Take the Coronado Ferry from downtown San Diego, and experience a nostalgic 15-minute ride across the bay. The ferry departs from two San Diego locations; Broadway Pier and the Convention Center. Once across you arrive at the Coronado Ferry Landing, you'll have the opportunity to explore a waterfront marketplace full of over 25 unique shops, art galleries and restaurants, with beautiful views of San Diego's downtown skyline.

### Getting Around

One of the best ways to explore Coronado is on bicycle. Once you arrive on the island, there are many bike rental places to choose from. Here are just a few:

Bikes & Beyond  
1201 1st St  
Coronado, CA 92118  
(619) 435-7180

Holland's Bicycles  
977 Orange Ave  
Coronado, CA 92118  
(619) 435-3153

Cruiser King  
957 Orange Ave  
Coronado, CA 92118  
(619) 522-6967

Little Sam's Island & Beach Fun  
1343 Orange Ave  
Coronado, CA 92118  
(619) 435-4068

*Background photo is the Hotel Del Coronado (Courtesy of Flickr User Anosmia)*

Learn more by visiting [www.MontessoriAmerican.com](http://www.MontessoriAmerican.com) or by calling (619) 422-1220.  
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## 8: Discover the U.S.S. Midway

*"The things he sees are not just remembered; they form a part of his soul."*

*Maria Montessori*

The USS Midway Museum will be a truly unforgettable adventure for you and your children. You will have the opportunity to imagine what it was like to experience life at sea aboard one of America's longest-serving aircraft carriers.

In the [USS Midway Museum](#), you enter a floating city at sea and walk in the footsteps of 225,000 Midway sailors who served our country. The museum boasts more than 60 exhibits throughout the aircraft carrier ship. Some of these include:

- ▲ The crew's sleeping quarters
- ▲ A massive galley
- ▲ Engine room
- ▲ The ship's jail
- ▲ Officer's country
- ▲ Post office
- ▲ Machine shops
- ▲ Pilots' ready rooms
- ▲ ...and many more!



You'll also get to see the primary flight control and the bridge high in the island over the flight deck.

The carrier also features 25 meticulously restored aircraft on display – from World War II to Operation Desert Storm.

Admission to the museum includes a self-guided audio tour through 60 exhibits, and is narrated by Midway sailors who lived or worked on Midway. You will have the opportunity to be guided by the narration of a sailor who was aboard in 1945, or maybe one who served during Operation Desert Storm. You can hear the viewpoint of head cook, who was responsible for 13,500 meals a day. Or listen to stories from a sailor who spent some time in Midway's jail.

A day at the [USS Midway Museum](#) will provide an interactive, educational experience for your child, that he or she will remember for a lifetime!

**Your child's early education should also be an interactive and memorable experience. Learn how Montessori can help to provide this type of educational environment for your child. Call (619) 422-1220 or visit [www.MontessoriAmerican.com](http://www.MontessoriAmerican.com).**



## 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

### 9: Stop and Smell the Roses in the “Children’s Garden” at the San Diego Botanic

*“The child should live in an environment of beauty.”*

*Maria Montessori*

Give your child the opportunity to connect with nature, as you explore this interactive garden at the [San Diego Botanic. The Children’s Garden](#) is designed for preschool age children, and features a dinosaur garden, a playhouse, topiary, and miniature garden railroad.

Throughout the year, the Garden features a variety of activities and programs for children, that will provide an enriching, fun, and educational experience as they explore the beautiful gardens. Children ages 1-6 will enjoy the “Seeds of Wonder” area of the Gardens. Here, there are ongoing programs which are free with admission or membership. These include:

#### **Tuesdays**

Toddler Tales and Tunes  
(recommended for ages 1 – 4)

2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th  
Tuesday, 10:30 am — 11:00

*Your child can play in the garden and pot plants to take home. Pre-school stories and songs are offered on the patio of the Ecke Building from 10 – 10:30 am.*

#### **Wednesdays**

Garden Arts and Crafts  
10:00 – 11:30 am

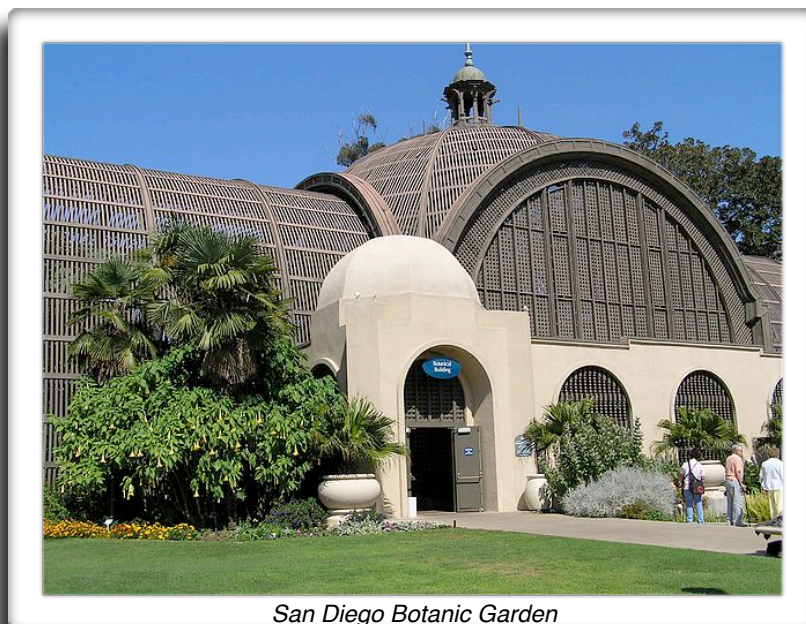
*Children may participate in a variety of arts and crafts. There will also be plant potting and other fun activities.*

#### **Thursdays**

Trains, Paints, and Plants (recommended for ages 1 – 6)  
10:00 – 11:00 am

*Your child can watch the motorman-engineer, James, run his special trains. He will also answer all your train questions. A nature-related craft, and plant potting will be offered.*

The [San Diego Botanic Garden](#) is located at 230 Quail Gardens Drive, Encinitas, CA 92024. The main Garden number is 760-436-3036.



*San Diego Botanic Garden*



# 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

## 10: Spend the Day in Balboa Park

If you are looking for something that's an unforgettable, enjoyable experience for you and your children, but won't break the bank...plan a day at Balboa Park on "Residents Free Tuesdays"! Park organizations in San Diego offer residents a free admission on a rotating basis on the first four Tuesdays of the month, as a public service. The free admission is offered to San Diego City & County residents (with ID), active military & their dependents.

[Balboa Park](#) is filled with Attractions, Museums, Performing Arts, Hiking Trails, Gardens, Educational Exhibits, and much more.

Below is the monthly schedule for the various parks:

### First Tuesday

Reuben H. Fleet Science Center  
Centro Cultural de la Raza  
San Diego Model Railroad Museum  
San Diego Natural History Museum\*\*  
(See special information at bottom)

### Second Tuesday

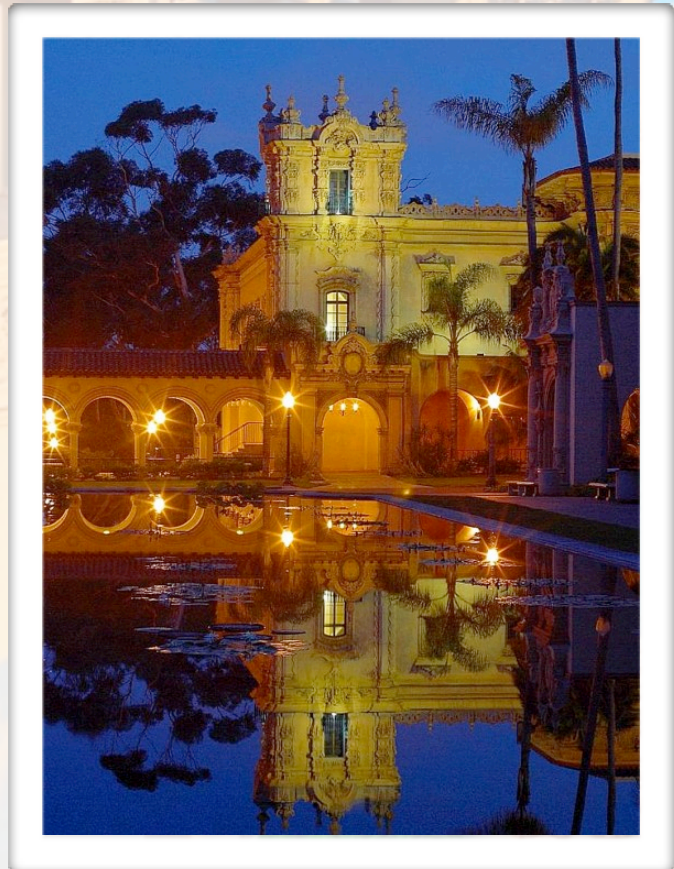
Museum of Photographic Arts  
San Diego History Center  
Veterans' Museum and Memorial Center

### Third Tuesday

San Diego Art Institute  
Mingei International Museum  
San Diego Museum of Art  
San Diego Museum of Man  
Japanese Friendship Garden

### Fourth Tuesday

San Diego Air & Space Museum\*\*  
(See Special Information at bottom)  
San Diego Automotive Museum (last admission 3:45pm)  
San Diego Hall of Champions  
SELECT House of Pacific Relations International Cottages



While you are at Balboa Park, make sure you also visit the wonderful Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater. This is a 234 seat, indoor theater that puts on amazing puppet shows on a large stage, which appeal to people of all ages.



# 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

## 11: Take an Old Town Trolley or SEAL Tour

Even if you're a local in San Diego, you will be amazed at all of the new things you can learn about the city by taking a tour. This is also a fun experience for your child, and a great way for them to gain some first hand knowledge about California's second largest city. There are two tours we recommend, which are both fun experiences for the whole family.

### Old Town Trolley Tour

For more than 20 years, [Old Town Trolley Tours](#) has been famous for providing sightseeing tours that highlight the beautiful city of San Diego. Although the Old Town Trolley is a great way to get to your destination, avoiding costly parking and city driving, it also is sort of a destination in itself. Passengers on the trolley get to experience a comprehensive tour, fully narrated by expert tour conductors. This is something the tours refers to as "Transportainment", a delightful combination of transportation and entertainment.

While aboard the trolley, you'll get to explore the scenic coastal landscape, and will learn why San Diego is called "America's Finest City." The tour has more than 100 points of interest, and 11 stops. You can start your San Diego tour at any of the stops, as trolleys arrive and depart approximately every 30 minutes at all 11 stops.

Consider getting off at the famous Seaport Village stop, which features a huge array of entertainment, shopping, and dining. From the Seaport Village, you can also take the SEAL tour, making for a day of fun and exploration throughout the city!

### SEAL Tour

This tour takes you through the amazing city of San Diego...by both land AND sea! The [SEAL tour](#) is actually a boat with wheels, which takes you on a 90-minute, fully narrated tour. The tour departs from Seaport Village, at the Star of India at the Maritime Museum.

On the SEAL tour, you will wind your way through picturesque San Diego streets...then, will SPLASH down down for a cruise through the waters of San Diego Harbor! The vehicles are considered "amphibious", and are specially designed and built to navigate on sea and land. The vehicle is driven by experienced captains, who are Coast Guard approved and meet all passenger vehicle and department of transportation requirements. So, you and your children can sit back and relax, knowing that you are safe and in capable hands.



San Diego Seal Tour

Courtesy of Flickr User VagueOnTheHow



## 12 Fun & Creative Things To Do In San Diego With Your Children

### 12: Visit the San Diego Maritime Museum (Star of India)

If you take our advice and try out a SEAL tour, you will be boarding at the tour at the [San Diego Maritime Museum](#). Although it may be too much to squeeze in a visit to the museum, and take the SEAL tour in the same day, the Maritime Museum is definitely worth coming back for!

This museum has one of the world's finest collections of historic ships, including the world's oldest active ship, called the "Star of India". Although you won't be setting sail on the Star of India, the museum has a schooner called the "Californian", which can take you and your children sailing on San Diego Bay, or on weekend adventure sails to Catalina.

Maritime Museum was founded in 1948 by a group of local historians and maritime enthusiasts who acquired the sailing ship, Star of India, in 1927. The beautiful vessel is now fully restored, and is maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers and skilled craftsmen. The Star of India is sailed at least once a year.

In addition to the Star of India, the museum also has some other wonderful exhibits, including:

- ▲ The 1898 steam ferry called "Berkeley"
- ▲ The 1904 steam yacht, "Medea"
- ▲ The 1914 ship, "Pilot"
- ▲ The state's official tall ship Californian -a replica of a mid 19th century revenue cutter
- ▲ The H.M.S Surprise – a magnificent replica of an 18th century Royal Navy frigate featured in the award winning film "Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World."

*"The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences."*

*Maria Montessori*

We hope that this eBook has provided you with some new ideas for fun, creative, and educational activities to do with your children in San Diego! At Montessori American School, we understand the importance of intertwining experiences with education, and providing an enriching environment that is conducive for the learning and advancement of a child.

**For more information about [Montessori](#), contact [Montessori American School](#), a Private Preschool and Kindergarten serving Bonita, Chula Vista, Eastlake and San Diego, CA since 1988.**

*Background photo of Maritime Museum of San Diego courtesy of Flickr User lori05871*

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