

YAHOO!

TRAVEL

Yes, There's a Beach. But When the San Diego Sun Sets That's When the Excitement Begins

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Ah, Thursday night — the only truly social night of the week. It's the night when babysitters are booked, friends convene, and drinks are imbibed. There are no family obligations to fulfill, no amateurish weekend crowds to elbow through — and the possibilities are endless. The night starts after work and ends whenever you want. In any city. All over the world.

This week, we're presenting the perfect Thursday night in San Diego

With its perfect weather, sprawling Balboa Park, world-famous megazoo, pristine beaches, and all the roads that take you on scenic drives, San Diego is a fine place to experience nature and enjoy the great outdoors. But if you prefer Painkillers and Pale Ales to pandas and parasailing, the city has you covered, too.

A growing cocktail scene has joined the craft beers San Diego is known for pouring. Plus, this is one of the most relaxed cities for happy hour, which starts early at many establishments where you don't have to sit at the bar to enjoy the deals. And with picturesque waterfront retreat La Jolla just 20 minutes away from both downtown and the cool Balboa Park-fronting neighborhoods, bouncing around for a fun Thursday night is easy.



*Sunset over Pacific Beach in San Diego.
(Photo: [Nathan Rupert/Flickr](#))*

3 p.m.



Staying at the Grande Colonial in La Jolla will give you plenty of options. (Courtesy: Grande Colonial)

Seaside La Jolla is one of the most pleasant places to walk in San Diego. Staying at the [Grande Colonial](#), a charming inn that dates back to 1913, puts you in the middle of all the action. The hotel, long rumored to be haunted, gives this family-friendly area some much-needed mystery, but you're just a block uphill from the Children's Pool Beach (also a favorite of adults) and its seals. You're also steps from fancy boutique shops, often packed gelato parlors, and sometimes bizarre modern art galleries. But most important, the proximity to great happy hours makes a Thursday evening crawl ideal.



For happy hour: the spicy ahi poke at Roppongi. (Courtesy: Roppongi)

At [Karl Strauss Brewing Company](#), happy hour, with \$4 pints and flights, starts at 3 p.m. And if you wait around until 6, cask beers are just \$4 until the brewery runs out. At the Grande

Colonial’s [Nine-Ten restaurant](#), where 2014 San Diego Chef of the Year Jason Knibb leads a kitchen that’s racked up the accolades, the 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. happy hour means \$5 wines and lamb meatballs. At Japanese fusion spot [Roppongi](#), where happy hour starts at 4 p.m., you can sample half-price Asian tapas like the nicely spicy ahi poke and thin-sliced steak you cook yourself on a Japanese hot rock while indulging in refreshing specialty cocktails like a watermelon agua fresca with El Jimador tequila. *Top Chef* alum Brian Malarkey’s [Herringbone](#) has Oyster Hour from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., with the chef’s choice of \$1 shucked oysters and locally brewed beer specials like \$5 Ballast Point Sculpin IPA.

7 p.m.



(Courtesy: Ballast Point Brewing Company)

Want lots more beer with your dinner? Head to [Ballast Point’s](#) downtown outpost in Little Italy, where you can eat beer-steamed mussels and pretzel bites with beer cheese as you try pint after

pint. The Pale Ale is what put Ballast Point on the map, of course, and the citrusy Wahoo brew is a fine choice in a city known for its endless summer.

9 p.m.

Bankers Hill has you covered for hip American food and cocktails.

(Courtesy: Bankers Hill Bar + Restaurant)



For serious cocktails paired with modern comfort food, head to [Bankers Hill Bar + Restaurant](#), in a long-established but still on-the-rise Balboa Park-adjacent area. Like Woodberry Kitchen in Baltimore, Buttermilk Channel in Brooklyn, and Michael’s Genuine Food & Drink in Miami, this is a hipster-friendly restaurant that serves all-over-the-map American food. In the case of Bankers Hill, this means cilantro-marinated baby octopus and chipotle-glazed meatloaf. And the eye-catching bar at Bankers Hill is the biggest stunner in an industrial-chic, high-ceilinged space that also features a green wall with living plants on the patio. Potent nightcaps at Bankers Hill include the Talent Scout with Elijah Craig 12-year bourbon, Combier orange liqueur, and Angostura bitters. Or just linger and get your fruity tiki fix with a Painkiller because, again, summer doesn’t seem to end in San Diego.