

California Road trip with American Sky – San Diego



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Kick back & relax in San Diego

The final stop on our California road trip was a week, yes, a whole week, in San Diego.

After many miles of driving and just a few nights here and there along the way, the chance to unpack and stay put for a week was very inviting.

We chose well with San Diego, such a vibrant city and with so much to offer the visitor that it is hard to remember that the plan was ... to relax!

After much deliberation, we chose the **Catamaran Resort and Spa** situated on beautiful Mission Bay. Here we had the best of both worlds, the magnificent Pacific Beach area was just a step away with long sandy beaches and huge waves, attracting surfers from across the world. A bustling boardwalk lined with bars, eateries and music seemed to be busy whatever time of day or night with joggers, walkers, cyclists, skaters; you name it, the Americans embrace all types of mobility!

The Catamaran resort fronts Mission Bay which, when we visited, was a much quieter beach location surrounding a sheltered bay with calm waters. The hotel was super friendly and has a tropical atmosphere with a waterfall in the lobby and surrounded by exotic gardens, complete with a variety of parrots and chattering birds. The stylish hotel restaurant 'Oceana Coastal Kitchen' serves imaginative cuisine and we enjoyed dinner on a couple of nights, sitting almost on the beach, overlooking the bay. A further hotel attraction is the 'Bahia Belle' a 74 foot, 3 storey Mississippi style sternwheeler that ferries guests across the bay as night falls, complete with on board cocktail bar and nightclub.



First on our list of San Diego attractions was the **USS Midway**, a de-commissioned aircraft carrier that looms high from her berth in San Diego Harbour and hosts thousands of visitors each day. Known as a 'living city at sea' you will need plenty of time to explore this enormous ship. There are up to 29 different aircraft to admire on board the ship, plus you can peek into the cramped crew living quarters, the hospital wing and galley, not forgetting the ships jail. Take time to wander around at your own pace but be prepared for a tight squeeze through corridors and doorways. The on-board video 'Voices of Midway' is well worth watching, and I would advise taking the audio tour, as there is so much history to absorb. In order to see the bridge, you need to join a tour and I suggest doing this early on as they book up quickly.

San Diego Zoo has a worldwide reputation for its proactive breeding programme and protection of species. The park area is vast and ideally requires at least a day to enjoy all the exhibits and, of course, the animals. My tip is to take the bus tour of the grounds as soon as you arrive. This is a great way to get your bearings and from the top deck of the bus you can see into many of the animal enclosures. Then just take your time to stroll around and learn about the zoo's commitment to saving some of the worlds most endangered species.



We spent a morning exploring the area north of the city known as La Jolla where there are stylish boutiques and galleries and some great restaurants. The Grande Colonial hotel in La Jolla has bags of style and elegance and is home to the award winning **Nine-Ten Restaurant**. Their imaginative menu is paired with superb wines from an extensive cellar and if you can't decide from the menu you can put yourself at the 'Mercy of the Chef' and indulge in a gastronomic adventure.



If Mexican food is your thing, then head off to 'Old Town' where you will find authentic Mexican Cantinas such as the **Cafe Coyote**. As you sip your margaritas you can watch the ladies who make fresh handmade flour tortillas at an astonishing speed.

Another day and another beautiful area of the city that is a must see – the very stylish Coronado Island. Get there by ferry from San Diego harbour, or take the scenic drive over the soaring bridge, but slow down as you arrive as the speed limit is just 25 mph. Cycling is a great way to see the island and check out the beautiful beaches and historic down town area and you will find plenty of bike hire outlets.

Last, but not least, was a memorable whale watching trip with **Hornblower Cruises**. Their ships are very comfortable with good seating inside and out and a great little bar on board serving hot drinks and snacks. There are whales and dolphin around the coastline of southern California for most of the year but we had hit on the time when these magnificent creatures were migrating north towards Alaska, some with youngsters in tow. Our trip did not disappoint

and we were joined by a lively pod of juveniles who seemed to be just hanging about and were as curious in us, as we were with them. We had some great photo opportunities and as always, it was a real privilege to see these animals in the wild.



I have yet to meet anyone who didn't enjoy San Diego, and now I know why. As part of a road trip or as a holiday destination, the city does not disappoint. Even with a week at our disposal we didn't manage to see everything, so we shall be back!

More information

Visit San Diego

If you are tempted to a California road trip, or a holiday to San Diego, our partner **American Sky** has some varied itineraries.

Norwegian Air have incredibly good fares into Oakland (San Francisco) and Los Angeles – for more information visit www.norwegian.com and [read my report](#).