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# An Air Force Wedding

## San Antonio, 3 Days

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** One motivation for this trip was to see the wedding of some good friends. However, the real reason was to spend one last weekend in Texas with people who are soon moving away, to Phoenix and Utah and elsewhere. Good food, good drinks and good times (and some hot friggin' weather) were the mark of the weekend, and while there weren't any crazy adventures had or epic stories made, it's still a memory of Texas I'll have forever.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - San Antonio

**DAY NOTE:** The group started off the day with a late breakfast at the Egg & I - it's true that everything in Texas is bigger, from the urban sprawl to the portion sizes. Couldn't decide what to get, so Lacey and I split a raspberry pancake and an omelette. Great decision. We drank: Hazelnut coffee. Delish.

Later that day saw us at Tomatillo's for Caleb's semi-formal rehearsal dinner. It took place in a huge, high-ceilinged brick room in Tomatillo's, and guests had a buffet of taco fixings. And queso. Oh, the queso. Oppressive Texas heat and humidity were kept at bay with big fans and lots of air conditioning. We drank: Margaritas and Coronas with lime. Perfect.

After the dinner we quickly drove home in the jeep (skirts billowing and hair flying) to change and meet some friends for a Robert Earl Keen concert at Floore's. Robert was tearing up the stage, and the crowd was loving it. One especially smitten audience member was a 3 year old daughter of one of the band members who played the drums for us after the encore. It was about as adorable as you can get. We drank: Coors Lights. Appropriate.

Unwilling for the night to be over after the concert, we ended up at the Flying Saucer, telling stories about Caleb and getting excited for the dancing and outfits for the wedding. The girls had dresses we were excited to wear, the boys had special "party shirts" planned. I was excited. We drank: Spaten.



### The Egg & I

Breakfast and lunch



### Tomatillo's Cafe y Cantina

A restaurant with heritage



### Floore's Country Store

True Texas honky-tonk since 1945



### Flying Saucer

Beer-focused bar that also has food

the 97 deg, heat and humidity were making some of us less-than-happy campers. And man, was Orange Cup just what the doctor ordered. I think it's Texas' answer to PinkBerry.

Home to shower and curl hair and put on makeup, then to Trinity Baptist church for the ceremony. It was gorgeous. The reception was at the Sheraton Gunter in Downtown San Antonio. Bacon wrapped chicken. Crab cakes. Chardonnay. Yummmm. There were people there too. Spent a lot of time on the dance floor: Watched the guys goof around in their party shirts. Danced with a little girl. Got jealous of her flat shoes. Drank a beer. Danced some more. Ate wedding cake. Danced some more.

Finally, after the band had packed it up and the guests had started to filter home, we decided to wind down at Waxy O'Connor's on the riverwalk. About 8 of us crammed into a corner booth with our pints and told stories and complained about our feet and had insightful conversations that were fuzzy the next morning. I walked home barefoot, and it was glorious.



### Twin Sisters Bakery & Cafe

Funky little cafe



### Orange Cup

All-natural yogurt -- plus the cone of silence



### Sheraton Gunter Hotel San Antonio

Historic Hotel Downtown



### River Walk

Shopping, dining and nightlife on historic River Walk



### Waxy O'Connor's

Irish pub with lots of TVs

## Day 3

**DAY NOTE:** Sunday was sleep-off-the-wedding day. Lunch at some family friends' house and then an early afternoon flight back to the Bay Area. Sad to leave everyone, but happy to be heading towards some more bearable weather.

## Day 2 - San Antonio

**DAY NOTE:** We slept in, then met Lacey's parents and company for breakfast at the Twin sister's cafe. Homey, small, but with a solid menu (nothing is bad). Some creepy pictures of twins may be staring at you while you eat, but pay them no mind. They can't help it.

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### contact:

tel: 210-366-9000

<http://www.theeggandirestaurants.com/index.html>

### location:

Blanco Rd. & I-410  
San Antonio TX 78216

### hours:

Open till 2p

## 1 The Egg & I

**DESCRIPTION:** Known for their generous portions, top-notch coffee, fresh ingredients, and friendly staff, the Egg & I is always a solid choice for breakfast and lunch. As you might expect, eggs are the centerpiece of the menu. They have five variations of eggs benedict, seven types of omelet, six pancake-based creations, and four French toast dishes. With new twists on traditional items (Greek frittata, raspberry multi-grain pancakes, chicken apple walnut salad) as well as plenty of non-egg items, everyone in the family can pack on a few pounds at a bargain price. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of the Egg & I

### contact:

tel: 210 824-3005

fax: Fax: () -

<http://www.tomatillos.com/>

### location:

3210 Broadway  
San Antonio TX 78209

### hours:

Sun-Thu 11am-10pm Fri-Sat  
11am-11pm

## 2 Tomatillo's Cafe y Cantina

**DESCRIPTION:** This Mexican eatery may seem ordinary on paper, but once you experience it, you'll be yearning for an empty seat at the bar for days afterwards. The music is low-level pop and classic Latino tracks that set the stage for a pleasant mood. Known for its happy-hour crowd, Tomatillo's makes sure that appetizers are served in large portions. The all-white-meat chicken quesadillas are a crunchy, caramelized treat. All of the sauces are made from scratch and are available for purchase. The margaritas are famous and don't disappoint. Spinach enchiladas and the veggie burritos are a solid vegetarian option. Appetizers and main dishes are impressive in size. Try a half-rack ribs plate and watch the meat fall from the bone. The Tejas platter comes loaded with surf-and-turf fajitas bursting with authentic flavors.



citysearch

**contact:**

tel: 210-695-8827

fax: 210-695-5125

<http://www.liveatfloores.com/>

**location:**

14464 Old Bandera Rd.

Helotes TX 78023

**3 Floore's Country Store**

**DESCRIPTION:** John T. Floore's Country Store is famous for its live country music, and rightfully so. For 60 years it has been showcasing some of the finest country music acts, from names we all know to up-and-coming acts, including Willie Nelson, Bob Wills, Ernest Tubb, Patsy Cline, Hank Williams, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Jerry Lee Lewis and Merle Haggard. Floore's has its own official Texas Historical Marker, and it is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With an indoor and outdoor stage, a cafe with a menu full of Texas home cooking and a friendly, if somewhat boisterous, crowd, Floore's is an authentic Texas experience not to be missed. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Floore's Country Store

**contact:**

tel: 210-647-PINT

<http://www.beerknurd.com/stores/sanantonio>

**location:**

11255 Huebner Rd

San Antonio TX 78230

**hours:**

Mon-Wed: 11am-1am

Thu-Sat: 11am-2am Sun:

12pm-12am

**4 Flying Saucer**

**DESCRIPTION:** Flying Saucer is a huge, laid-back bar and restaurant that's ideal for casual get-togethers with friends. With indoor and outdoor seating options (perfect for enjoying a cold beer on a warm summer night), groups of all sizes can find a spot to lounge. The beer selection here is extensive, including everything from local microbrews to European ales and ciders. The food is a notch above standard pub grub, with plenty of burger, pizza, and sandwich options. Big wooden picnic tables inside and out, a friendly staff and slightly saucy wall decorations all contribute to the friendly, low-key atmosphere. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Flying Saucer

# Day 2 - San Antonio

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### contact:

tel: 210 822 2265

fax: +1 210 829 0159

<http://hotx.com/twinsister/>

### location:

6322 North New Braunfels Avenue  
San Antonio TX 78209

### hours:

M-Sa 7a-9p; Su 9a-2p

## 1 Twin Sisters Bakery & Cafe

**DESCRIPTION:** This is a funky little spot in the middle of the stereotypically conservative Alamo Heights neighborhood. It serves breakfast and dinner, but is most popular for lunch. The soup-and-sandwich-type lunch menu and daily specials have a decidedly healthy, and sometimes vegetarian, bent. Don't miss the iced herbal tea, the spinach salad or the turkey burger. The dinner specials are also worth a try, especially the grilled empanadas with ground beef and onions and the potato stir-fry, blended with seasoned spinach and fresh tomatoes. If you have a sweet tooth, a warm snickerdoodle cookie is the way to go. Twin Sisters draws a crowd early, so plan to wait for a table. © wcities.com



wcities

### contact:

tel: 210-558-7477

<http://www.myorangecup.com/>

### location:

15900 La Cantera Pkwy  
San Antonio TX 78256

### hours:

M-Th 10a-10p F-Sa 10a-11p  
Su 12p-8p

## 2 Orange Cup

**DESCRIPTION:** Riding the frozen yogurt craze initiated by PinkBerry and the like, Orange Cup sells all-natural yogurt in stylish surroundings. With a few basic, tangy base yogurts (natural, acai, and zum) and more extras than you can shake a spoon at, Orange Cup lets you customize your frozen treat pretty much any way you'd like. They also print out the nutritional profile of your dessert (grams of sugar, fat, and carbs) so you can see just how healthy, or not, your choices are. Orange Cup stores feature futuristic interiors and the "cone of silence" -- a plastic cone that hangs above your booth and acts as a personal speaker system if you'd rather listen to your ipod than the techno that normally pulsates from the speakers. The store itself is shaped like a dish of yogurt; look up to see the swirls in the ceiling. The perfect treat for a hot



Photo courtesy of (nutmeg)

Texas afternoon, Orange Cup is as refreshing as a dip in the Guadalupe river. © NileGuide

**contact:**

tel: +1 210 227 3241  
fax: +1 210 227 3299  
<http://www.gunterhotel.com/>

**location:**

205 East Houston  
San Antonio TX 78205

### 3 Sheraton Gunter Hotel San Antonio

**DESCRIPTION:** This historic hotel is located downtown, directly across from the restored Majestic Theatre, which is home to the San Antonio Symphony. There isn't a more beautiful or more regal hotel lobby in all the city. If you select another hotel to stay in, at the very least drop in to see the finely detailed carved mahogany columns, the luxurious carpets and the antique light fixtures in the lobby. The guest rooms are just as lovely, although they vary a bit in size—a charming illustration of the hotel's age. © wcities.com



Hotels.com

**contact:**

tel: (210) 227 4262  
fax: +1 210 212 7602  
<http://thesanantonioriverwalk.com>

**location:**

454 Losoya  
San Antonio TX 78205

### 4 River Walk

**DESCRIPTION:** The River Walk is a must-see for any traveler to San Antonio. The River Walk was conceived in 1929. Downtown had serious flooding problems, and a 27-year-old UT architecture graduate named Robert H. Hugman suggested that the city turn the San Antonio River into an asset rather than a hindrance. Hugman's brainchild has since become the essence of the city. Stairways down to the River Walk can be found on street level throughout downtown. Walk down anywhere you like, and wander and explore the great shops, galleries, restaurants and sights. To get the full story on the history of the River Walk, take the Rio San Antonio river barge cruise for a 45-minute narrated tour. It is well worth the price. For the romantically inclined, there are also dining cruises for two. It's a sight you don't see just anywhere: a couple eating at a finely appointed candle-lit table on a small, flat boat floating down the river. Service is great because the waiter is never more than a few feet away. © NileGuide



wcities

**contact:**

tel: 210-229-9299  
<http://waxyoconnors.com/>

**location:**

234 Riverwalk  
San Antonio TX 78205

### 5 Waxy O'Connor's

**DESCRIPTION:** Waxy O'Connor's is located on the ground floor of the 100-year-old San Antonio Loan and Trust Building in the heart of San Antonio's River Walk. The pub and its interior were actually designed and built in Ireland, then shipped to Texas. With indoor and outdoor seating options, live Irish music and friendly staff, Waxy's is a no-frills joint where you can enjoy a pint with your mates. With several big-screen TVs available, the bar is a great place to watch major sporting events. And they don't just offer the standard sports; you can watch everything from soccer to Formula 1 racing to Nascar at this boisterous pub. © NileGuide



"Photo courtesy of Waxy O'Connors

# Day 3

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# San Antonio Snapshot

## Local Info

San Antonio is a vibrant city that is growing rapidly. The heart of the city's tourism business beats along the River Walk and in the downtown area. Densely packed with hotels, attractions, restaurants and bars, a visitor could conceivably spend their entire trip right here. The area bustles with activity nearly every night of the week and almost all year long, with locals and tourists alike enjoying mouth-watering cuisine at Boudro's or Paesano's River Walk, singing their hearts out at Howl at the Moon, or dancing the night away at Polly Esther's. Not your average tourist trap, the River Walk entices many locals to brave the crowds and enjoy their city.

## King William/Southtown

If San Antonio gets funky, this is where it happens. Once primarily residential and neglected, the area has seen a resurgence of interest and an infusion of capital. Urban professionals are snatching up historical homes and refurbishing them, entrepreneurs are launching hip new businesses, and the locals are taking notice. Wander just a few blocks from downtown and discover Espuma Tea & Coffee Emporium and Rosario's. If you can, check out the area during a First Friday celebration. This community-wide celebration held the first Friday of each month draws crowds from all over the city for art openings, theater productions, dining and shopping.

## Alamo Heights

One of the original suburbs of San Antonio, Alamo Heights harbors some of the city's finest dining establishments and upscale shopping opportunities. And with good reason, as a huge portion of the city's wealth resides in this neighborhood. For dinner, locals flock to Paloma Blanca or Cappy's. Beer and pool preside at the Broadway 50/50. For a gift for that special someone, you can't go wrong at Sloan-Hall. At Twin Sisters, pull up a chair and get your daily dose of neighborhood gossip over breakfast or lunch.

## Monte Vista/Olmos Park

Neighboring Alamo Heights, this area is home to some of the most exquisite mansions in the city. At the very least it is worth driving through just to gawk. You

will find some wonderful neighborhood secrets, such as the thick chocolate shakes at Olmos Pharmacy or superb take-out at WD Deli.

## North East/North Central

Shopping centers, housing developments and highways are popping up all over North East and North Central San Antonio as many new residents move in, both from out of town and from within the city's more central neighborhoods. This kind of rapid growth seems to require predictability, as is evidenced in the plethora of restaurant and shopping chains. If you want to shop at Old Navy, use the phone book. Otherwise, be a rebel and shop at a place like James Avery Craftsman. Likewise with dining, enjoy the down home cooking at Casey's Bar-B-Q.

## Northwest/Medical Center

The medical industry is big business in San Antonio, so this area continues to grow at a steady pace. Sort of a hodgepodge of strip shopping centers, restaurants, residences and office complexes, the atmosphere of the neighborhood seems a bit disjointed. Still, you can find great dining at Jacala Mexican Restaurant, Texas Land & Cattle Steak House and Bob's Smokehouse. Shopping is somewhat limited to chain stores. For a fun night out in this part of town, you can't beat the Fox & Hound English Pub & Grille.

## Far Northwest

When big money folks are tired of paying city taxes, they flee outside the city limits. Locals that feel the need to escape the city head out this way to dine at Rudy's BBQ and then dance the night away at Leon Springs Dance Hall. The next day, shop at all the antique stores in Boerne or spend the day at Six Flags Fiesta Texas or Sea World.

©

## History

What began as a small settlement of missionaries, priests and Native Americans has swelled into a metropolis of nearly one million citizens of varying ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds.

Native Americans originally occupied this area. Many lived along the stream that is now known as the San Antonio River, some

as early as 9000 BCE. In the late 17th Century, Spanish settlers migrated north from what is now Mexico to settle along the banks of the stream, claimed the area for themselves, and Christianized the peaceful tribes inhabiting it. As decades passed, the Spanish colonists dominated the area agriculturally, spiritually and culturally. In 1718, Mission San Antonio de Valero was established along the river; the chapel and its grounds would later be known as the Alamo. Over the next few years, the Spanish culture and the Catholic faith would come to play an integral role in the settlement's development.

In 1821, Mexico won its independence from Spain and held its claim to northern territories, including land that included San Antonio, with the aid of U.S. settlers who had entered the area while it was under Spain's rule. Tension slowly arose between the American settlers and the Mexican government, particularly over the issue of slavery. In 1833, that tension flared into all-out disdain following General Santa Anna's declaration of himself as president. The settlers refused to acknowledge his authority, trounced him in a confrontation, and braced for the backlash. Retribution was harsh. Led by Santa Anna himself, thousands of Mexican soldiers marched into the territory and confronted a ragtag band of only 188 rebellious Texans barricaded within the Alamo. The battle that ensued resulted in the deaths of over 1000 Mexicans and all of the Texan rebels, and numerous myths and legends that are still debated by historians today.

Ultimately, Texas won its independence from Mexico, and San Antonio became a part of the Republic of Texas. An influx of European immigrants followed the Mexican-American War. San Antonio's inherent Tex-Mex style blended with the new European influences to create a vibrant, growing community. However, the city's isolation from the remainder of the state helped preserve its reputation as a rowdy, rebellious place and resulted in the gradual decline in new residents. The reputation diminished only after the arrival of the railroad and the construction of Fort Sam Houston.

Progress ensued, the population grew, and the city prospered. Over the following decades, the city witnessed the confluence

## San Antonio Snapshot continued

of wealth in neighborhoods like King William, Monte Vista and Alamo Heights. Downtown developed into the city's business center with the construction of the Tower Life building and Joske's department store. And, thanks to the brilliance of a local architect and the support of business leaders, the River Walk and all its beauty was created out of a seedy, run-down flood zone running through downtown.

Several industries became quite dominant in the economy. Here you will find five US military bases, including one of the Air Force's largest training academies; for years they have influenced the cultural climate and have contributed to the city's growth. The University of Texas Health Science Center, along with several other top medical entities, has made the city a leader in that industry. San Antonio's designation as one of the top tourist destinations has sparked phenomenal growth in the city's tourism and convention business, and has led to the expansion of the convention center downtown. In recent years, telecommunications has come to play a vital role in San Antonio's economy, as Southwestern Bell Telephone continues to relocate large divisions of its business to the city.

©

### Hotel Insights

San Antonio has many different options when it comes to where to stay. The bulk of the hotels are located in the Downtown, River Walk and Loop areas, with some other choices outside the city.

#### Downtown/King William/South Town

A few steps off the river, you will find many downtown hotels. All keep you within the River Walk area; they are only a short walk from the river, shopping, dining and entertainment yet are far enough removed to provide a welcome respite from the noise. The historic Menger, the Emily Morgan Ramada, and the Holiday Inn Crockett hotels, all on Alamo Plaza, are actually next door to the Alamo and a stone's throw away from the Rivercenter Mall. The Gunter Hotel, with its magnificent lobby and intriguing history, is a wonderful choice, especially if you plan to enjoy the Symphony or a theatrical performance at the restored Majestic Theater across the street. The Marriott Plaza Hotel, with its

breath-taking courtyard and award-winning restaurant, hosts many illustrious visitors, as does the smaller Fairmount Inn a few blocks away. As far as moderate hotels go, downtown offers several properties, including Hampton Inn, La Quinta and the Sumner Suites.

Should bed-and-breakfasts be more to your liking, visit the Arbor Inn and Suites tucked away behind the Plaza Hotel.

#### River Walk

The River Walk is so popular with tourists, conventioners and celebratory locals that rooms book far in advance. While there are many hotel properties downtown, there are a limited few with actual river frontage. All are by far luxury hotels, with prices to match, but the novelty of having the River Walk outside your door and the proximity to the plethora of shops, restaurants and entertainment along the river are well worth the expense. The Hyatt Regency is in the heart of it all; it provides a great short cut to the Alamo through its lobby. La Mansion del Rio provides a little peace and quiet on the river within its historic walls. The newest kid on the block, The Westin River Walk, offers its distinct luxury toward the southern end of the entertainment strip. Other River Walk options include the Marriott Rivercenter, the Marriott Riverwalk, the Hilton Palacio del Rio and the Homewood Suites.

#### The Loop/North Central

Interstate Highway Loop 410 is dotted with numerous moderate and inexpensive hotel options. Anchored by the Airport Hilton and the Embassy Suites, the Loop offers many well-known chains including La Quinta, Holiday Inn Select and Courtyard by Marriott. Expect the usual clean rooms and limited amenities here but marvel at the accommodating price structure. You can usually snag a good deal since the area hotels rely on luring guests away from River Walk properties with their cheaper prices. If the Loop properties are full, simply travel up Highway 281 or Interstate 10 to find more locations.

#### Resorts/Six Flags

Further out from the city's center are two of the most acclaimed resorts in the state. The Hyatt Hill Country Resort, nestled in the hills near Sea World, offers guests a luxurious stay with thoughtful amenities, exquisite dining and a challenging golf course. Further north near Six Flags Fiesta

Texas, the Westin La Cantera Resort likewise offers a luxurious escape from the city and a challenging golf course that also happens to be home of the Texas Open, a stop on the Professional Golf Association Tour.

©

### Restaurants Insights

San Antonians love to eat, and it shows in both its fine restaurants and its casual cafes. Whether you enjoy perfectly grilled steaks, tender barbecue, tasteful vegetarian fare or perfectly prepared sushi, you will find whatever your taste buds crave. Of course, San Antonio is most famous for its Tex-Mex cuisine; no visit to the city could be considered complete without at least one dinner involving enchiladas or tamales, and one breakfast of chorizo and egg tacos.

#### Downtown

More culinary surprises await you just a few steps up from the River Walk. Wander just a few blocks from the river and you will discover Schilo's, serving German fare and Twin Sisters, offering delicious salads, soups and vegetarian dishes. Le Reve Cuisine specializes in contemporary French cuisine, while the classic American dishes at Bolivar Cafe are sure to please.

#### The River Walk

The huge numbers of visitors to the River Walk have to eat somewhere. Some of the restaurants are excellent, some are merely good, but all of them are sure to be crowded. One of the most popular is Boudro's – A Texas Bistro. With a prime location in the heart of the River Walk, an unparalleled menu featuring Blackened Prime Rib, Ancho Shrimp, fresh fish and Prickly Pear Margaritas, it is a dining must for locals, tourists and many visiting celebrities.

Another favorite among locals and visitors alike is Paesano's River Walk, serving up delicious Italian cuisine. Don't expect to find generic spaghetti or lasagna on the menu, though, as their specialties include Shrimp Paesano's (a garlic and Parmesan shrimp dish) and a huge salad with artichoke hearts and hearts of palm. Other fine choices include County Line and Hard Rock Café for barbecue and classic American fare. For Tex-Mex, try Rio Rio Cantina, Casa Rio, The Original

## San Antonio Snapshot continued

Mexican Restaurant, La Paloma or Zuni Grill. Michelin's will please the stomachs of those in the mood for Italian food.

The many hotels located on the River Walk also boast some fine restaurants. Save for a few exceptions, the restaurants on the river are independently-owned. Should you not be a very adventurous diner, there are a few chain restaurants, such as the Olive Garden, located in the Rivercenter Mall.

### Alamo Heights

Originally a suburb of San Antonio, Alamo Heights now finds itself located in the heart of the city. A decidedly upper-middle class area, it boasts some of the best dining and drinking options. Start your evening at Cappycino's on Broadway with drinks and appetizers, or end it there with coffee and dessert. One of the city's only smoke-free bars, Cappycino's menu is so extensive it comes in a multi-page booklet form. From here you can move on to dinner at the bar's sister restaurant, Cappy's, right next door and enjoy fresh seafood, perfectly prepared steaks and inventive chicken dishes. Be sure you don't miss their chocolate cake—it's a closely guarded recipe from Cappy's mother and is the best in town.

There are many other prime choices for both lunch and dinner in Alamo Heights. Paloma Blanca on Broadway offers some of the city's best Tex-Mex and margaritas, as does La Fonda on New Braunfels. For hamburgers, pizza and salad, nothing beats E Z's Brick Oven And Grill at either their original location on New Braunfels or their newest addition in the Quarry Market. For creative sandwiches, the best tea and Sunday brunch, be sure to visit Madhatter's Tea on Avenue B near the Witte Museum.

Several spots in this neighborhood combine great dining with a great bar. To see and be seen, try Café Soleil on Broadway. Their contemporary menu is a big draw for sophisticated diners, while their bar draws a mixed crowd of young and old, all attracted equally to the live music, the Internet-linked computers and the pool tables.

### The Loop/North Central

Circling the city, Interstate Loop 410 is lined with many fine restaurants. For excellent Chinese cuisine, try Formosa Garden, located on the access road between the Nacogdoches and Broadway exits. Its diverse menu includes everything from Szechwan Chicken and Lemon

Chicken to Beef with Broccoli and Sweet& Sour Pork, all reasonably priced and perfectly prepared. For fun Cajun food, visit Acadiana Café on the Far West side of town between the Culebra and Marbach exits. Just about everything comes with hush puppies here, and there is always the option to "blacken" everything, be it fish, chicken or shrimp.

Should your tastes range more toward traditional fare, you might try Aldino or Tex's Grill and Sports Bar in the Airport Hilton, where you should definitely try the red beans with venison sausage. Several restaurant chains are located around The Loop as well.

One of the city's Italian cuisine treasures is hidden on Brookhollow just off of the highway. Fratelli's offers the usual Italian dishes such as lasagna and fettuccine alfredo in huge portions at reasonable prices. While the quality is not necessarily remarkable, it is always consistently satisfying.

### Outside the City

San Antonio offers many more wonderful dining options off the beaten path. Try Bolo's Grill, located in the Omni Hotel on IH-10 at Wurzbach. Offering exquisite game, beef and chicken entrees in an elegant atmosphere, Bolo's is an excellent choice for a celebration or a night on the town. Enjoy elegant Italian cuisine at La Scala or Razmiko's, romantic dining at The Grey Moss Inn or Crumpets, more Tex-Mex at Los Barrios or La Fogata, or great burgers at Tycoon Flats or Chris Madrid's. ©

### Nightlife Insights

San Antonio is a niche marketer's playground. The citizenry boasts a broad range of interests, and there never seems to be an overwhelming crowd at anything except perhaps the most popular Fiesta events. Whether your tastes are sophisticated and refined or run more toward the casual and relaxed, you're liable to have a great time in this city.

### Music

Music lovers will revel in the variety of live music available almost every night of the week in San Antonio. From jazz and symphonic music to Tejano and rock'n roll, music exudes from bars, restaurants

and concert halls across the city. The San Antonio Symphony performance season includes both traditional scores and pops performances, often with vocal accompaniment by popular artists like James Taylor and Willie Nelson. Jim Cullen's Jazz Band holds court at The Landing on the River Walk, and Arjon's is the hotspot for Tejano, cumbia and salsa music. Bars like The White Rabbit, The Laboratory Brewing Company, Stonewerks, and Crabby Jack's host rock and pop bands, while Cibolo Creek Country Club, Gruene Hall and Far West are the best choices for live country music.

### Theater

There are several theatrical venues whose productions run the gamut of genres. For national acts, The Broadway Bank Theatrical Series hosts numerous touring productions in the historical Majestic Theater and, occasionally, the Municipal Auditorium. Recent performances include Grease, Chicago, Rent, Phantom of the Opera and Cabaret. Outstanding local productions grace the stages at the Josephine Street Theater and Steven Stoli's Playhouse, with recent performances including Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Steel Magnolias. To enjoy great local talent and dinner, check out the Harlequin Dinner Theater at Fort Sam Houston. Guadalupe Theater and Jump-Start Theater typically produce more avant guard and cultural works.

Not to be left out, children can enjoy productions designed just for them at theaters such as Steven Stoli's Backyard Theater for Kids and the Magik Children's Theater.

### Art

Art of all genres and media abound at the many museums and galleries in San Antonio. From cutting-edge contemporary works to more traditional pieces, you will admire the depth of this city's talent pool. Be sure to visit the McNay Art Museum and the San Antonio Museum of Art to marvel at their impressive collections as well as the touring exhibits they host. As far as galleries go, some of the best include Blue Star Arts Complex, ArtPace, One9Zero6, Cletus Gallery, and Wallace-Musket Gallery. To catch the work of budding artists, visit Say Si, which displays student work in its gallery. Many restaurants and coffeehouses

## San Antonio Snapshot continued

also display the works of local artists; pay a visit to Rosario's, WD Deli or Espuma Coffee and Tea Emporium to enjoy the delicacies and the view.

### Cinema

As with any major city, San Antonio offers more movie theaters than you could count. While there's at least one in every part of town, a few that stand out among the crowd. If you're staying downtown, the cinema in River Center Mall is a great choice for first run releases and is within walking distance of many of the hotels.

The fairly new cinema at the Alamo Quarry Market offers first-run features with shows as late as midnight. If not for a movie, stop in just to see the enormous quarry-inspired movable mechanical display in the lobby. For arthouse films, your only option is the Crossroads Theater. Finally, for larger-than-life films, check out the IMAX Theater adjacent to River Center Mall downtown. A perennial favorite is *Alamo—Price of Freedom*, which tells the story of the battle of the Alamo; it's a great film to catch before visiting the cradle of Texas liberty.

### Dance

Whether you want to get down with your bad self or simply prefer to watch, San Antonio's dance offerings fit the bill. If you like to dance the night away, be sure to check out The Bonham. Located downtown, this is perhaps the best dance club the city has to offer. Predominantly a gay bar during the week, the weekends and Wednesday night "straight nights" draw a very mixed crowd. Huge dance floors, a pounding sound system and the requisite disco lighting make for a fun, dance-'til-you-drop evening. The place really doesn't start hopping until after 10pm. Three multi-format entertainment complexes—The Atrium, Park Place and Sunset Station—offer several different dance floors with different genres of dance music, all under one roof. A great concept if you can't decide between hip-hop and country.

For those who prefer to watch the professionals, there are several dance companies that perform regularly, including the San Antonio Dance Umbrella and Urban 15. The city also hosts many touring companies during the year, quite a few performing culturally significant movements.

### Festivals

San Antonio is an amazing city comprised of many different cultures. And the people here like a good party. Combine the two traits and you have more cultural festivals and events than you can imagine. San Antonio's biggest party, Fiesta, is a 10-day long celebration of the city's history and culture; it is held every year in April. Comprised of parades, debutante balls, street parties, concerts, sporting events and more, you are guaranteed to find something for everybody. So significant is this festival that the city practically shuts down on the last Friday afternoon so that everyone can attend the Battle of Flowers parade that winds through downtown. Other popular events include Jazz's Alive, Juneteenth, Cinco de Mayo and St. Sophia's Greek Funstival.

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### Things to Do Insights

You could spend years in this city and still not experience everything it has to offer. In fact, many of the locals have never seen some of the most popular attractions. So take your pick, and have fun!

**Institute of Texan Cultures** Expect to spend a full day visiting these sites, as there is plenty to see. Begin your excursion at the Institute of Texan Cultures. Operated by the University of Texas, the Institute houses fascinating exhibits from each of the cultures that settled in Texas and helped to make the state the wonderful place it is today. Next, pay a visit to the Alamo. The cradle of Texas liberty, the Alamo stands as a shrine to the rag-tag band of Texans who battled against General Santa Anna's massive army in Texas' battle for independence from Mexico. After the Alamo, wander down to La Villita Historic Arts Village. Originally the home sites of Canary Islanders who immigrated to the area, La Villita is now a series of shops, restaurants and plazas. Stop into La Villita Museum or the Village Gallery.

**Spanish Governor's Palace** Winding your way westward from La Villita, stop in at the Spanish Governor's Palace. The restored building is the former home of the first governor of the area when Texas was a Spanish colony. Furnished in period pieces, the site is a fascinating glimpse into how the elite lived in that era. Then continue on to Market Square. Plan to explore the

shops and pick up all the souvenirs you can carry. The largest Mexican market outside of Mexico, the Square's stores are filled with beautiful terra-cotta pieces, leather goods, embroidered clothing and more. Once you've exhausted your financial reserve and have more packages than you can carry, enjoy dinner at either Mi Tierra Café or the Pico de Gallo.

**Hertzberg Museum** From the Institute of Texan Cultures, venture over to HemisFair Park, which is just a few steps awa. Or wander over to Alamo Plaza where you can enjoy the Texas Adventure. Here holographic images of the heroes of the Alamo tell the tale of the battle complete with lighting and sound effects. Finally, drop in at Ripley's Believe It Or Not! and the Plaza Theater of Wax. Housing a wonderful collection of oddities and wax mannequins, kids of all ages will find something that fascinates them, something that makes them think, and something that is sure to make them queasy. Drop into Twin Sisters Bakery & Cafe-Downtown for a quick bite to eat in this district.

**McNay Art Museum** You could easily spend a day or two wandering among all the traditional and contemporary art spaces in this city and still not see everything. If you have a limited time frame, begin your artistic adventure at the McNay Art Museum. Formerly the private residence of Marion Koogler McNay, the museum displays permanent exhibits that include sculpture, photography, and paintings as well as many traveling exhibits. From here, stop into the Boardwalk Bistro for lunch, then visit the San Antonio Museum of Art. Once home to the Lone Star Brewery, the building is now filled with the museum's impressive collections of sculpture and paintings. You can often catch traveling exhibits here for a small fee above the admission cost. The Southtown section of San Antonio is home to a myriad of the finest commercial galleries in the city. The pieces at the Blue Star Arts Complex are contained within a huge warehouse. The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center is located nearby. In addition to the interesting homemade crafts, there is a regular schedule of events that take place here.

**River Walk** Stroll along the River Walk. You'll see the Southwest Craft Center at the north end and the Arneson River Theatre at the South end. You may want to stop into the Rivercenter Mall, which also has many

## San Antonio Snapshot continued

dining options. From here pay a visit to the St. Anthony Hotel. Boasting one of the most elegant lobbies in the city, the staff at the hotel is used to visitors wandering through. Your last stop is the Gunter Hotel, another of the most beautiful lobbies. Elegantly restored, the mahogany wood and pristine marble are breath-taking.

As with any city that hosts thousands of visitors annually, there are many commercial tour operators who effectively condense the city's attractions into various tour packages.

**Boat Tours** Rio San Antonio Cruises( +1 210 244 5700/ <http://www.riosanantonio.com/>) Daisy Tours( +1 210 225 8600/ <http://www.daisytours.com>)

**Segway Tours** Segcity Tours( +1 210 224 0773/ <http://www.segcity.com/>)

**Bike Tours** San Antonio Bicycle Tours(+1 210 599 1387)

**Bus Tours** Tornado Tours Incorporated( +1 210 662 6356/ [www.tornadotoursinc.com/](http://www.tornadotoursinc.com/)) Autobuses Adame Tours( +1 210 271 9559) Daisy Tours( +1 210 225 8600/ <http://www.daisytours.com/>) Ok Tours(+1 210 222 8880/ <http://www.oktours.com/>)

## Travel Tips

### Getting there

#### Air

San Antonio International Airport(SAT)+1 210 207 3450<http://www.ci.sat.tx.us/aviation.com>

SAT is located eight miles from downtown and services the following airlines:

American Airline(+1 800 433 7300/ <http://www.aa.com>) Continental(+1 800 525 0280/ <http://www.continental.com>) Delta(+1 800 221 1212/ <http://www.delta.com>) Mexicana(+1 800 531 7921/ <http://www.mexicana.com>) Northwest(+1 800 225 2525/ <http://www.nwa.com>) Southwest(+1 800 435 9792/ <http://www.iflyswa.com>) United(+1 800 241 6522/ <http://www.ual.com>) US Airways(+1 800 428 4322/ <http://www.usairways.com>)

### From the Airport

Shuttle: Airport shuttle service via SATRANS(+1 800 868 7707/ <http://www.saairport.com>) enjoys strong marks

for price and reliability. One-way fares cost USD9, and round trip tickets USD16. Shuttles exit the airport about every ten minutes. Hours: 7a-1a daily.

**Taxi:** Taxis swarm the outside perimeter of the airport and are a smart option if time matters. Most rides to downtown take 15 minutes. The average fare ranges between USD15-USD18. Some of the more prominent taxi companies include:

San Antonio Taxis Inc:(+1 210 444-2222) Executive Airport and Taxi Service(+1 210 824 1037) Yellow Checker Cab(+1 210 226 4242)

**Public Transit:** If maintaining a strict budget tops the priority list opt for a bus into San Antonio through VIA Metropolitan Transit(+1 210 362 2020/<http://www.viainfo.net>). For only USD.75 it's a true bargain. The lone catch, however, is that bus rides can take up to an hour for certain downtown locations.

**Car Rental:** Advantage(+1 877 5500/ <http://www.arac.com>) Alamo(+1 800 327 9633/ <http://www.alamo.com>) Avis(+1 800 831 2847/ <http://www.avis.com>) Budget(+1 800 527 0700/ <http://www.budget.com>) Dollar(+1 800 4000/ <http://www.dollar.com>) Enterprise(+1 800 325 8007/ <http://www.enterprise.com>) Hertz(+1 800 654 3131/ <http://www.hertz.com>) National(+1 227 7368/ <http://www.nationalcar.com>) Thrifty(+1 800 367 2277/ <http://www.thrifty.com>)

### Train

Amtrak(+1 800 872 7245/ <http://www.amtrak.com>) chugs into San Antonio's train station at 224 Hoefgen Street four days a week. The Sunset Limited accesses San Antonio from Los Angeles, Tucson, New Orleans and Florida every Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. While the Texas Eagle approaches downtown from Chicago, Dallas, and Saint Louis every Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

### Bus

Greyhound(+1 800 231 2222/ <http://www.greyhound.com>) zips into San Antonio's downtown station at 500 North Saint Mary Street on a daily basis from all points north, south, east and west.

### Car

San Antonio's cobweb of Interstate highways lends it easy accessibility.

Interstate 10 dips into the city in a northeast/west direction making it the main route from Houston. Interstate 37 approaches from a southeast direction out of Corpus Christie. And Interstate 35 steers into the city from a north/south direction.

## Getting Around

### Public Transit

VIA Metropolitan Transit(+1 210 362 2020/ <http://www.viainfo.net>) provides 106 bus routes throughout downtown and the surrounding suburbs. All of the major attractions are serviced including Six Flags, Sea World, The Alamo and River Walk. Fares range from USD.80 to USD1.60. Downtown's VIA Streetcars present an oh-Isn't-this-fancy alternative with its fleet of open-air, historic streetcar reproductions. Four lines(red, blue, purple, yellow) wind through downtown daily operating 7a-12:30a on weekdays and 9a-10:30p weekends. Rides cost 50-cents.

### Taxi

Metered taxi service is your quickest bet for getting around town. Taxis can be found at most hotels, otherwise call for they are difficult to hail. Two of the main companies include:

San Antonio Taxis(+1 210 444 2222) Yellow Checker Cab(+1 226 4242)

### Car

Driving through San Antonio is not recommended. A hellish maze of one-way streets plague downtown, confusing even lifelong residents. Even if you do manage to inch into town, parking is next to impossible. The city has seemingly been so busy'remembering the Alamo' that they've forgotten about parking. The police are ticket quick so don't even chance parking illegally.

### Bike

Bike routes are not a priority. To say San Antonio is bike friendly would be akin to saying great white sharks make for great pets. Save the bikes for the surrounding hills.

If you are traveling overseas, take the safety precaution of registering your trip at<https://travelregistration.state.gov> and for helpful, practical advice about traveling

## San Antonio Snapshot continued

technicalities and safety standards check  
out <http://travel.state.gov/>  
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### Fun Facts

**San Antonio**

**State:** Texas

**Country:** United States of America

### San Antonio by the Numbers:

Population: 1,144,646

Elevation: 710 feet

Average January Temperature: 62 degrees  
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Average July Temperature: 95 degrees F

Average Annual Rainfall: 27 inches

### Quick Facts:

Major Industries: Tourism, Military,  
Agriculture, Manufacturing  
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