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# San Antonio in a Day

## San Antonio, 1 Day

### Table of contents:

- Guide Description 2
- Itinerary Overview 3
- Daily Itineraries 4
- San Antonio Snapshot 8

# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Here is a fabulous one-day San Antonio itinerary. It all starts with a Mexican lunch on the famous River Walk, followed by an afternoon of San Antonio history, and ending with a great Italian dinner on the River Walk. Drinks at two well-known watering holes to follow, if you have the energy!

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - San Antonio

**DAY NOTE:** This one-day itinerary starts around 11am with a 45 minute narrated tour of the San Antonio River aboard a Rio San Antonio cruise. Board the river barge across from the Hilton Palacio Del Rio Hotel and learn all about the San Antonio River and it's rich history. After your cruise, have an authentic Mexican meal at Casa Rio. Sit outside along the river if you can, and watch the barges go by. Walk up to street level and get ready to burn off that lunch. Walk west on Commerce St. to the San Fernando Cathedral and take a look inside the oldest cathedral in the US. Then head a few blocks further west to the Market Square, where you can find great Mexican imports and souvenirs of your brief stay in San Antonio. After the Market Square, walk east on Market St. and turn left on Alamo Street to get to San Antonio's star attraction, the Alamo. You can spend anywhere from 30-90 minutes at the Alamo depending on what you want to see. I would highly recommend watching the 20 minute video on the history of the Battle of the Alamo, at a minimum. Head south on Alamo Street now to La Villita Historic Arts Village. Visit the galleries and the Little Church of La Villita. Cross Alamo Street to HemisFair Park, home of the Tower of the Americas. This park is nice and if you want to get a bird's eye view of the city, go up to the observation deck at the top of the Tower and see all of San Antonio as the sun begins to set! Hopefully you worked up a great appetite for some of the best Italian food in San Antonio. Take the River Walk to Paesano's and enjoy a nice outdoor dinner. If you still have the energy, go for drinks at the VBar (inside the Hotel Valencia) or Dirty Nelly's Irish Pub. Now, cry that you are leaving so soon!

	<b>River Walk</b> Shopping, dining and nightlife on historic River Walk
	<b>Casa Rio Mexican Foods Restaurant</b> Classic Tex-Mex food on the River Walk
	<b>San Fernando Cathedral</b> The oldest active cathedral in Texas
	<b>Market Square</b> Largest Mexican market outside of Mexico
	<b>Alamo (The)</b> Historical shrine of Texas' independence
	<b>HemisFair Urban Park</b> Downtown park & playground

	<b>Tower of the Americas</b> 750-foot tower overlooking downtown San Antonio
	<b>Villita Historic Arts Village (La)</b> San Antonio's first neighborhood
	<b>Little Church (The)</b> This one is for the pious
	<b>Paesano's River Walk</b> Italian at its finest
	<b>Durty Nelly's Irish Pub</b> Irish pub on the River Walk

# Day 1 - San Antonio

## QUICK NOTE

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### contact:

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

### location:

454 Losoya  
San Antonio TX 78205

## 1 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



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### contact:

tel: 210 226 6718  
fax: +1 210 225 2216  
<http://casa-rio.com/>

### location:

430 East Commerce St  
San Antonio TX 78205

### hours:

Daily 11a-11p

## 2 Casa Rio Mexican Foods Restaurant

**DESCRIPTION:** Casa Rio was the first restaurant on the River Walk and is still a must if you have never eaten riverside. With colorful décor, inside and outside seating, and a prime location for people-watching, this restaurant is a favorite among both tourists and locals. Add potent, thirst-quenching margaritas, waitresses bustling about in Mexican sundresses, and Mexican favorites such as enchiladas and tamales, and you have the makings of the classic Tex-Mex dining experience. Because no



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reservations are taken and this is a hot spot, you may want to arrive a little early to avoid long lines. © wcities.com

**contact:**

tel: 210-227-1297  
fax: 210-271-0149  
<http://www.sfcathedral.org>

**location:**

115 Main Plaza  
San Antonio TX 78205

**hours:**

Daily 6am-7pm; gift shop  
Mon-Fri 9am-4:30pm, Sat  
until 5pm

**3 San Fernando Cathedral**

**DESCRIPTION:** The San Fernando Cathedral was founded in 1731 and is the oldest active cathedral in Texas. Fifteen families from the Canary Islands were the church's first members. They were a part of King Phillip's efforts to colonize the area and claim it for Spain before the French could gain a foothold in the region. Considered one of the most historically significant churches in the U.S., it has been visited by a number of dignitaries throughout its long history, including President Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1966 and Pope John Paul II in 1987. Located midway between the city center and the Market Square, the cathedral welcomes up to 5,000 people for weekend masses. © NileGuide



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**contact:**

tel: 210-207-8600  
fax: 210-207-4287  
<http://www.sanantonio.gov/marketsquare/default.aspx>

**location:**

514 West Commerce St.  
San Antonio TX 78207

**4 Market Square**

**DESCRIPTION:** A vibrant cultural and business center since the 1820s, Market Square is the scene of festivals and outdoor events year-round. Market Square is at its best in April, during the city-wide Fiesta celebration. The rest of the year visitors will find great Mexican restaurants, traditional Mexican handicrafts and an indoor shopping center where you are sure to find the perfect souvenir to commemorate your trip. Museo Alameda, which is affiliated with The Smithsonian, features exhibits of work by Latino artists. The square is located just west of the city center and walking distance from most downtown hotels. © NileGuide



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**contact:**

tel: (210) 225 1391  
fax: +1 210 229 1343  
<http://www.thealamo.org>

**location:**

300 Alamo Plaza  
San Antonio TX 78205

**hours:**

9a-5:30p Mon-Sat; 10a-5:30p  
Sun

**5 Alamo (The)**

**DESCRIPTION:** Originally the Mission San Antonio del Valero, the Alamo is by far the most famous historical site in Texas, playing a significant role in Texas' quest for independence from Mexico. Under the command of Col. William Travis, 189 Texan soldiers bravely defended this fort for 13 days before finally succumbing to Santa Anna's massive Mexican army in early 1836. The chapel and the Long Barrack are all that remain of the fort. Saved from civilian apathy by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, the mission is now a museum containing relics from the era. Texans take the Alamo very seriously. Silence, or at least a hushed tone of voice, is insisted upon both in the chapel and on the grounds. Narrated tours are available. Admission is free, but donations are encouraged. © wcities.com



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**contact:**  
tel: (210) 207 8572

**location:**  
200 South Alamo St  
San Antonio TX 78205

**hours:**  
Dawn-dusk daily.

## 6 HemisFair Urban Park

**DESCRIPTION:** Originally created as the grounds for the 1968 Worlds Fair, this park is a favorite of locals and visitors alike. Stroll through the park's 12 acres of fountains, pools, and beautifully landscaped grounds or cavort on the Downtown All Around Playground. Built entirely by volunteers, this playground features wooden play areas designed by kids, including a space tunnel and a castle— perfect for letting little imaginations run wild. Also located on the park grounds are the Institute of Texan Cultures and the Tower of the Americas. © wcities.com



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**contact:**  
tel: 210-207-8615  
<http://toweroftheamericas.com>

**location:**  
600 Hemisfair Park  
San Antonio TX 78205

**hours:**  
Sun-Thurs 10am-10pm; Fri-Sat 10-11pm

## 7 Tower of the Americas

**DESCRIPTION:** Built for the 1968 World's Fair, the 750-foot Tower of the Americas is now a multifaceted tourist attraction, with an upscale bar, two restaurants, an observation deck, and a movie theater. Instead of paying \$10.95 for a ticket to the observation deck at the top of the tower, you may want to apply that money toward lunch or dinner at the Chart House restaurant or drinks at the bar (the ride is free for restaurant and bar customers). The top of the tower slowly rotates for an ever-changing view. Check out the Tower of the Americas Plaza, at street level, during the summer. Every Friday night from 7 p.m. to midnight, there are live music performances, car shows, and other free events. © NileGuide



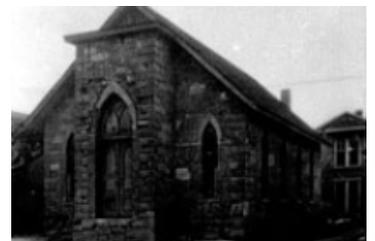
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**contact:**  
tel: 210-207-8610  
fax: 210-207-4390  
<http://www.lavillita.com>

**location:**  
South Alamo at Nueva  
San Antonio TX 78205

## 8 Villita Historic Arts Village (La)

**DESCRIPTION:** La Villita means "Little Village" and it is the original home of the first settlers of San Antonio. Today, people visit La Villita for its quaint cobblestone paths, art galleries, and history. It is located on the south bank of the San Antonio River and hosts many outdoor festivals and events with live music and dancing, especially in the springtime. Don't miss a weekend dance performance of Ballet Folklorico at The Arneson River Theater, an amphitheater in La Villita, with the stage located across the San Antonio River. The Little Church, built in 1879, features a gorgeous stained-glass cross along the back wall. It's now an active non-denominational church that is also available for weddings and other events. © NileGuide



Villita Historic Arts Village

**contact:**  
tel: (210) 226 3593  
<http://www.lavillita.com/church/>

**location:**  
418 Villita Street  
San Antonio TX 78205

## 9 Little Church (The)

**DESCRIPTION:** Established on March 2, 1879, this church forms an integral part of the history of La Villita. No particular denomination met here consistently, but it continues to exist, and is the favorite local wedding venue. The church also supports and hosts the Starving Artist Art Gallery's annual show. © wcities.com

**contact:**

tel: 210 227 2782  
fax: +1 210 212 5346  
<http://www.paesanosriverwalk.com>

**location:**

111 W Crocket St  
San Antonio TX 78205

**hours:**

11a-11p daily

**A Paesano's River Walk**

**DESCRIPTION:** This River Walk incarnation of a longtime San Antonio favorite relinquished its old Chianti bottle-kitsch decor for a soaring ceiling, lots of inscrutable contemporary art, and a more up-to-date menu. But the one thing the restaurant couldn't give up, at the risk of a local insurrection, was the signature shrimp Paesano's. The crispy crustaceans are as good as their devotees claim, as are the reasonably priced pizzas, including the one topped with grilled chicken, artichokes, basil pesto, and feta cheese. Other good values are the hearty southern Italian staples such as lasagna with meat sauce. Standouts among the pricier entrees include the grilled pork chops with potato gnocchi, as well as the veal Francesa. Locals tend to go to the newer -- and somewhat quieter -- Paesano's, across from the Quarry Golf Club, at 555 Basse Rd., Ste. 100 (tel. **210/828-5191**). © Frommer's



Paesano's River Walk

**contact:**

tel: 210 222 1400

**location:**

715 River Road  
San Antonio TX 78212

**hours:**

Mo to Su from 11:30 AM to  
02:00 AM

**B Durty Nelly's Irish Pub**

**DESCRIPTION:** When you think of San Antonio, you don't necessarily think of an Irish pub, now do you? Well, think again. Durty Nelly's, located on the River Walk on the river level of the Hilton hotel, is a rollicking good time. Pull up a chair, order a beer (or two, or ten) and sing along with the pianist. A versatile guy, the pianist takes requests and can play just about anything. Probably the most fun thing to do is munch on the peanuts and toss the shells on the floor. Yes, it is allowed! © wcities.com



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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/>)  
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## 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  
F

Average July Temperature: 95 degrees F

Average Annual Rainfall: 27 inches

### Quick Facts:

Major Industries: Tourism, Military,  
Agriculture, Manufacturing  
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