

San Jose: More than Microchips

SAN JOSE, CA — It's a sunny Friday afternoon and the Downtown Farmer's Market at San Pedro Square is packed. Shaded by sycamore trees and bright red and blue awnings over the stalls, shoppers roam amongst fruit and flower vendors, sampling bites of bright green Mutsu apples and baby bananas. The scent of freshly made crepes wafts throughout.

Later in the day, San Pedro Square hums with life again, as a young, hip crowd throngs the sidewalk tables of this restaurant row. Some then move on to the gloriously restored California Theatre, passing through a soaring lobby filled with frescoes and glowing chandeliers, for an evening of world-class opera in season. Others may walk a few blocks to the galleries of SoFA (South of First Area) for the live music of South First Fridays, and many more walk to the HP Pavilion to watch the San Jose Sharks or a headliner concert.

There's a new energy to San Jose these days—the sense of something big underway beyond technology news—lots of growth, a swinging arts scene, trendy nightlife and shopping, and an awesome array of recreation. It's the kind of buzz that happens when a town has the wind at its back, and the combined momentum of growth and innovation apart from its Silicon Valley heritage.

With a population of nearly one million, San Jose is the third largest city in the state and the largest in northern California, yet there's still a small town charm about this place.

About a 45-minute drive south of San Francisco and an hour northeast of Monterey, the capitol of Silicon Valley is edged by oak-dotted hills and set in a wide valley that was once blanketed with orchards. Basking in the sun (300 days of sunshine annually), it's both clean and safe—for six years in a row San Jose was crowned the nation's safest big city. And MostLivable.org ranked this town among the Top 10 Most Livable Large Cities in a recent survey. San Jose's amazing diversity (more than 40 languages are spoken here) is mirrored in the many flavors of its shops, restaurants, and festivals—from the San Jose Jazz Festival to Cinco de Mayo.

The town's roots go deep: founded in 1777, it's the oldest civil settlement in California and the site of the first state capitol. Now, San Jose is the nation's tenth largest city and its skyline is burgeoning, dotted with handsome hotels, one of America's premier city hall buildings (a gleaming Richard Meier design), a raft of new residential high-rises—with still more towers going up. The museums are nationally recognized and the strong economy supports everything from opera, symphony, and traveling Broadway shows, to championship sports teams.

And recently, CNN.com reported that San Jose was ranked as the 8th best fitness walking city in the nation. It's easy to see why: the weather's great (mean temperature, 70°), and the cityscape is made for walkers, dotted with colorful *paseos* and sheltered alleys. And the glories of nature are never far—you can walk for miles in the green corridors of the Coyote Creek or Los Gatos Creek trail systems or choose between urban and mountain parks of the 45,000-acre Santa Clara County Parks system.

Whether you're here for a weekend or a week, there's plenty to do, from The Tech Museum to Great America, plus shopping, dining, world-class golfing and festival hopping. Within a 15- to 45-minute drive, you can be hiking in redwoods or strolling the charming towns of Saratoga, Los Gatos, or Palo Alto. Or on a daytrip, you can be roaming gleaming beaches, wineries, or other fun attractions in Santa Cruz or Monterey.

Visit for a weekend or a week—you'll find today's San Jose is an exciting, young city, not set in its ways but still changing and growing.

Getting Here, Getting Around

It's all easy to access, thanks to a handy airport just 3 miles (and five minutes) from downtown San Jose. Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC) is one of the most convenient and accessible airports in the whole Bay Area, and the gateway to Silicon Valley boasts 13 airlines and 182 daily departures (including 11 new flights added in spring 2007).

It's a breeze to get here and to get around: drive down on any of three interstate highways (I-280, I-880, I-680), zip around on several expressways, or hop on Caltrain (commuter rail between San Francisco and Gilroy) or Amtrak (the Sacramento to San Jose Capitol Corridor and the LA to Seattle Coast Starlight). The sleek white cars of the light rail system, run by Valley Transit Authority (VTA), link downtown to businesses and attractions throughout Santa Clara County.

Fun in the Sun

Wave goodbye to boredom at Great America, a 100-acre theme park with the new 355,000-gallon GREAT BARRIER REEF™ wave pool inside Boomerang Bay. Located in neighboring Santa Clara, Great America offers the most thrill rides in Northern California. If getting wet and wild is your goal, you can also visit Raging Waters San Jose, Northern California's largest water park, with 23 acres and millions of gallons of family fun.

There's more haunting fun at the 160-room Winchester Mystery House, the spooky Victorian mansion created by the Winchester Rifle heiress. What amazes people most about the house -- besides its quirky history and bizarre features like the "Stairs to Ceiling" -- is the craftsmanship in the details, from inlaid parquet floors to a spider web-patterned Tiffany window. Join a Flashlight Tour, and you'll walk through the mansion in the dark, with nothing but the beam of the flashlight, the moonlight, and your imagination.

One great natural getaway sits just minutes from downtown San Jose—rugged, 720-acre Alum Rock Park. Hop on a bike, saddle up for some horseback riding, or enjoy a picnic or a scenic hike through San Jose's first and largest park. There are miles of trails for jogging and bike riding at both Coyote Creek County Park and Guadalupe River Park and Gardens (plus an award-winning rose garden at Guadalupe park).

One of the newest parks is also one of the most unique: Calabazas BMX Park, where the chutes and *berms* let young stunt cyclists grab some pretty extreme air. It's the Bay Area's largest city-funded BMX park and so cutting-edge that San Jose has been asked by other communities for tips on how to design such a course. But if you just want to kick back and relax with the family, take a Sunday morning stroll through Kelley Park—the grande dame of the city's parks. Its 176 acres include the Japanese Friendship Garden, the History Park, and Happy Hollow Park and Zoo.

Voted "Best Place to See Animals" by Bay Area Parent three years in a row, Happy Hollow is a small gem that caters to little tots. The biggest news: Happy Hollow is about to be transformed with new rides, shops, a restaurant, and zoo exhibits (set for completion by 2009).

Sizzling Shopping and Dining

It's Sunday afternoon, and a mariachi band in silver-studded *charro* outfits is serenading shoppers—just another of the surprises you find at the San Jose Flea Market. Opened in 1960 with only 20 sellers, today it covers 120 acres and is the largest open-air flea market in America (don't miss the profusion on Produce Row). With the flavors and hues of a Mexican *mercado* (market) and the bargains of a garage sale, it's one of the best shows in town.

San Jose is said to boast the largest population of Vietnamese-Americans of any U.S. city, and you can sample the spicy flavors of this culture at some 200 stores in a unique Vietnamese business area along Story Road near Senter Road. Nearby, a new Vietnam Town Mall is emerging near the planned Vietnamese Heritage Gardens.

One of the most intriguing shopping areas is Japantown, along Jackson Street centered at 4th Street. It's one of three remaining Japantown's in the U.S. The restaurants offer plenty of choices, from sushi to Korean BBQ, the shops are unique and its farmers market is bountiful. One mainstay: Nichi Bei Bussan, here since 1902, sells lovely kimonos (even sizes for babies), futons, and sandals.

From May to the second Friday in December, The Downtown Farmer's Market at San Pedro Square is hopping on Fridays from 10-2. Besides an array of colorful fruit and vegetables, you can buy gifts or nosh on walk-around treats from crepes to Indian delicacies like *samosas*.

Just 3 miles from the city center, Santana Row has so much energy and high-end fashion, it has been called "Silicon Valley's answer to Rodeo Drive". True, the Row attracts a young, hip crowd, but actually, the Row has broader appeal, with some 70 shops, dozens of restaurants, spas, and a chic hotel, blended with luxury residences. There's a really broad mix of retailers on the Row; luxury shops like Gucci and Ferragamo, plus more affordable ones (Crate & Barrel, Chico's). European clothing retailer H&M opens its first South Bay location here soon.

Don't miss the wide choices at Oak Ridge Mall, Westfield Shopping Town Oakridge, Westgate Mall, Eastridge Mall, Valley Fair in Santa Clara, or Gilroy Premium Outlets to the south. A short drive can bring you to the Pruneyard in Campbell, the outlets of the Great Mall in nearby Milpitas, or the leafy streets of Los Gatos.

San Jose's dining scene just keeps getting hotter. Foodies from the South Bay to the Peninsula, who once thought they had to travel to San Francisco for superior dining, now have an amazing array of choices right here.

Downtown boasts everything from the innovative cuisine of Arcadia Modern American Steakhouse, helmed by food legend Michael Mina, to the inexpensive yet excellent comfort food of the Sonoma Chicken Coop and the new, multinational San Pedro Square Bistro & Wine Bar. And for those on a budget, the humble burrito is elevated to an art form at local faves like La Victoria, where their special orange sauce will start a fiesta in your mouth. Also downtown, wine lovers can learn as they taste at The Perfect Finish or The San Jose Wine Center, part of J. Lohr's downtown

San Jose winery. In Santana Row, a new Louisiana-style restaurant debuts early next year, joining a world of other restaurants, from Amber India to Yankee Pier. And nearby towns like Campbell, Los Gatos, and Saratoga offer more dining options.

Nightlife and the Lively Arts

San Jose has it all, from plays to ballet, opera, and symphony. The first-rate entertainment is just as innovative as the high tech companies nearby. Yet ticket prices are a screaming bargain compared to other cities. Plenty of convenient parking means theatergoers avoid the parking hassles so aggravating in other cities. And the highlights of the dining and arts scene are packed into a walkable cluster, making exploration, or an evening out, easy.

Looming above the scene is the “big blue box” housing San Jose Repertory Theatre, a professional regional company that attracts acclaimed directors and actors, including Lucy Liu, Holly Hunter, and Lynne Redgrave. Celebrating its 27th year, the Rep is the only theater of its kind to offer a Creative Playshop subscription series where children improvise plays based on the theme of the main stage production their parents attend.

The American Musical Theatre of San Jose offers musical touring shows, as well as original productions. Nearby there’s the more intimate stages of the City Lights Theater, San Jose Stage Company, The Improv Comedy Club and ComedySportz.

The glittering California Theatre is a symbol of the city’s commitment to its history and the arts. Dark since the 1970s, the California reopened in 2004, restored to its 1927 elegance. Now it is the home to Opera San José, Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley, Symphony Silicon Valley, Cinequest Film Festival, and many touring companies.

“It is a joy to see how my hometown has blossomed into a thriving arts scene,” says Irene Dalis, General Director of Opera San José. And her company is blossoming, too. In 2008, it celebrates its 25th season. Opera here is amazingly accessible: a season subscription to all four operas starts at only \$220.

Ballet San Jose is the second largest company in the state and puts on four top-notch, lavish main stage productions annually. But it is also very family-friendly; two shows always have shortened versions created for very young children, with tickets for children costing as little as \$16. And the Symphony Silicon Valley, now in its fifth season, is stronger than ever, with an expanded season that recently included a world premiere—Woody Guthrie’s *This Land Is Your Land*. Other venues like the Center for the Performing Arts, the Civic Auditorium, Montgomery Theater and HP Pavilion showcase everything from Broadway musicals to A-list concerts.

Fun Museums and Fine Art

In San Jose’s History Park, look for the town’s newest museum: The Museum of the Boat People, exploring the culture and history of the Vietnamese community. The institution is a tribute to San Jose’s Vietnamese population, the largest outside Vietnam.

Downtown, the Tech Museum of Innovation is home to the ultimate immersive movie experience and Northern California’s only domed IMAX screen. Its themed galleries explore the fun side of innovation, the Internet, the human body, and exploration—so Silicon Valley.

In the giant, purple Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose—ranked by *Child Magazine* as one of the top ten children’s museums in the nation—kids explore how things work in two floors of interactive fun in exhibit areas with names like the Secrets of Circles and WaterWays. And on just about any Saturday, and you’re likely to see kids in party hats—it’s the latest extremely cool place to hold a birthday party.

The high tech of old Egypt—giant sphinxes, a garden, and a temple—is on display at Rosicrucian Park, home to Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum & Planetarium. This is the West Coast’s largest collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts and home to mummy exhibits and a replicated tomb.

Anchoring the fine arts scene, the San Jose Museum of Art, open daily except Mondays, showcases a range of the newest frontiers of art; see it all on a museum tour, included in the price of admission.

The South of First Arts Area (SoFA) ripples with nightlife, from the Agenda Lounge, with its multi-level dance floor, to the Elixir Ultralounge in South First Billiards. Just down First Street, vivid colors splash across the walls of galleries like MACLA (Movimiento De Arte Y Cultura Latino Americana). And there are astonishing contemporary tapestries at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles, and cutting-edge works at the San Jose Institute Of Contemporary Art and Anno Domini. “There’s just an excitement now that didn’t exist before,” notes Brian Eder, who opened his Anno Domini gallery here a couple years ago.

More change is ahead. One of the top urban designers in America—Ken Kay of Ken Kay Associates, who redesigned San Francisco’s Maiden Lane—will help transform First Street. Over the new two years, a facelift will add a gateway, broaden the sidewalks for more outdoor dining and art programs, and add artistic elements.

The Sporting Life

Sports help bring a sense of pride and spirit to a city, and San Jose boasts some of the region's most successful pro teams: the Arena Football League's San Jose SaberCats; the National Hockey League's San Jose Sharks; the National Lacrosse League's San Jose Stealth. They all play at the HP Pavilion, which just completed a \$16.5 million renovation.

These aren't old-school kind of teams; they're hip, irreverent, and forward-looking, which kind of describes the fans they draw. And they're good—in a recent story on the San Jose SaberCats' third league championship, the *New York Times* called them "the most successful Arena Football League franchise this decade".

More big news—as of 2008, the San Jose Earthquakes are back; the city is looking into ways to develop a pro soccer stadium. Santa Clara is reviewing a proposal from the San Francisco 49ers management to relocate to the city of Santa Clara (just 6 miles from San Jose). The Oakland A's are currently in discussions with the nearby city of Fremont to possibly relocate. And San Jose is home to a roster of major league sporting events, such as the Amgen Tour of California.

A Focus on Growth and Innovation

Even winning teams don't rest on their laurels, and San Jose continues its focus on growth and innovation. Out at the Mineta airport, the sleek new North Concourse is rising steadily. It's the first phase of a \$1.5 billion project that will cover three years; by 2010, travelers will zoom through an entirely new terminal complex, with state-of-the-art baggage systems and high-tech airport operations systems. The plan for new concessions aims to emphasize local flavors over run-of-the-mill chain stuff, so visitors may just want to pop into the airport for a meal even if they don't have a flight scheduled.

The airport is so easy that most days, you can grab a cab within five minutes of leaving baggage claim and then it's just another few minutes' ride to downtown.

The airport is a key link to the world's leading center for innovation and technology. Downtown boasts more than 100 software companies, and citywide there are 6,600 technology companies. The city's redevelopment agency helps San Jose maintain its lead, investing more than \$19 million in business incubators (the Software Business Cluster, the Environmental Business Cluster, the U.S. Market Access Center, and San Jose BioCenter). And in 2006, it created the Edenvale Emerging Technologies Fund to support biotechnology and emerging technology companies.

A Re-energized Downtown

Downtown is lively and livable, home to everyone from those dubbed the "Young Digerati" (tech-savvy singles and couples) to empty nesters. Significant redevelopment investments (some \$1.7 billion) have helped spark renewed interest in urban living.

New housing and amenities brought residents back to the city's core, says Harry Mavrogenes, Executive Director of the San Jose Redevelopment Agency. "Once we put parks, museums, arts, transit and the Arena in place, it made downtown an appealing place to live again." They helped save San Jose's history, too, preserving buildings like the California Theatre, Hotel Montgomery, and others. New corporate neighbors also invigorate the scene—BEA Systems, Accenture, Acer, and Xactly Corporation are just some of the companies expanding or relocating to the downtown.

Where downtown meets the San Jose State University campus, the soaring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library (another Redevelopment Agency Project) is another site of innovation. A unique city and university partnership, it's the nation's first such co-managed library. The equivalent of a small town population (7,500) visits daily, drawn by assets like the world's largest Steinbeck archive (the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies) and the Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies.

Understanding their importance in an increasingly technological world, San Joseans value reading and libraries. Local libraries logged more than 7.6 million visits during fiscal year 2006/2007—more than the combined home game attendance for the San Francisco Giants and Oakland A's during the 2006 season (5.1 million). And since voters passed a \$212 million library bond measure in 2000, the improvements are already visible. The newest libraries are cool community gathering places. At the new Edenvale Branch, you'll find an Internet café, community living room with a fireplace, technology center, teen area, and free programs from Tai Chi to author visits.

Hotels that Keep You Plugged in—or Let You Relax

Lodging choices are better than ever, ranging from the cozy boutique to the grand and gigantic; choose the bustle and excitement of downtown, a relaxing site in the suburbs, a handy airport location or something in between.

When it opened in 1911, the Hotel Montgomery was downtown San Jose's only first class hotel. It was almost lost to the wrecker's ball, but heroic efforts saved it. Now, at almost 100, the Renaissance Revival hotel is more exciting than ever, with Burberry chairs and leather wall coverings and in-room iPod docking stations.

The Montgomery is just one of many hip lodgings in the heart of downtown, a short walk from restaurants, museums and the arts. Wireless and high-speed access in so many hotels means that you never have to really unplug—unless you want to.

But why not unwind? There are great ways for both vacation and business travelers to relax. Choose the historic and artfully restored Hotel Sainte Claire or Hotel De Anza with its remodeled Hedley Club Lounge, featuring live jazz. Or try the Hotel Valencia, with its Ayoma Spa and a rooftop bar (fittingly, you can get a 'Martinis and manicures' package). On a grander scale, stay at the AAA Four Diamond Award- winning Fairmont San Jose and relax beside a rooftop pool edged by waving palms.

Stay connected to the San Jose McEnery Convention Center at the San Jose Marriott, which beckons with sumptuous pillow-top beds and in-room 27" flat-screen TVs. Also linked to the Convention Center, the Hilton San Jose hotel boasts signature Sweet Dreams beds and the fab City Grill.

Beyond downtown, choices range from the elegant Dolce Hayes Mansion to the handy airport locale of the Doubletree Hotel San Jose. For more information and a complete list of San Jose's 35 hotels, visit www.sanjose.org.

Whether you're unwinding on a weekend or weeklong vacation, or staying over for business, the new energy of San Jose will have you buzzing to your friends and family about all there is to see beyond high tech corporations. From family attractions and trendy nightlife to world-class shopping, arts and recreation, San Jose offers something for everyone looking for a good time.

About The San Jose Convention & Visitors Bureau (SJCVB)

The San Jose Convention & Visitors Bureau (SJCVB) mission is to enhance the image and economic well being of San Jose by marketing San Jose as a globally recognized destination. The SJCVB offers visitors, meeting planners, and tour operators, a range of services to ensure a successful event and fun visit to San Jose. For a copy of the Official Visitors Guide, please contact the SJCVB at 1.800.SAN.JOSE (1.800.726.5673) or visit <http://www.sanjose.org>.



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