

Get in the Game in San Jose

SAN JOSE, CA — Recently, the mavens at MostLivable.org ranked San Jose among the Top 10 Most Livable Large Cities. A big part of what makes this city so livable is San Jose's vibrant sports and recreation scene. The city is blessed with abundant parks, open spaces, and trails. And you can get into anything from track cycling to rock climbing or the hottest new bowling lanes. For spectators who love their professional sports, San Jose is emerging as a Bay Area powerhouse.

Fun in the Great Outdoors (or even Indoors)

Not long ago, CNN.com reported that San Jose was ranked as the 8th best fitness walking city in the nation. It's easy to see why, since the weather's great (mean temperature, 70°), and the terrain is made for walkers. In the heart of the valley, there's **Kelley Park**—the jewel of the city's parks. Its 176 acres include the **Japanese Friendship Garden** (an oasis of ponds, paths, and immaculately tended greenery).

When your kids need a little fresh air, a few tot-friendly rides, and some face time with adorable domesticated and exotic critters, then it's time to visit Kelley Park's **Happy Hollow Park and Zoo** (www.happyhollowparkandzoo.org). This compact gem caters to families with toddlers and was voted "Best Place to See Animals" by Bay Area Parent three years in a row. But even much-loved friends occasionally need a makeover, so Happy Hollow will close in July 2008 to begin an extensive refurbishing and updating process. When it reopens in spring 2009, it will boast new rides, shops, a restaurant, and zoo exhibits.

Almaden Lake Park is the South Bay's only beachfront swim area, but that's not all it offers. With wind surfing, paddle boating, picnicking, bocce, and volleyball, it's bookended by **Guadalupe Park Trail** at the northern end and **Los Alamitos Creek Trail** at the southern end—so you can add hiking to that list, too. But these are short in comparison to one of the longest trail systems in San Jose, **Coyote Creek Trail's** 18 miles for jogging and biking.

Why is the name "Almaden" so common in San Jose? Because just south lies tiny New Almaden, whose historic legacy includes North America's largest mercury mining operation, named for the giant Almaden mine of Spain. With California's gold rush came an immense need for mercury to separate gold; the mines at New Almaden produced over one million flasks of "quicksilver" before closing. Learn about New Almaden's heyday at the 1854 Casa Grande mansion, former hotel and mine super's casa—now the **New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum**; or take a stroll through Almaden Quicksilver County Park in early spring to see spectacular wildflowers among remnants of the mining era.

One of San Jose's newest parks is also one of the coolest: **Calabazas BMX Park**, where the undulating landscape is carved into a BMXer's dream: chutes and berms high enough to let two-wheelers grab some extreme air. It's the Bay Area's largest city-funded BMX park and a model for other cities.

And if you like to ride fast, **Hellyer Park** boasts a full sized outdoor velodrome, a banked 333-meter oval bicycle track that's one of only six on the entire west coast. You can rent a bike and ride the track every Saturday morning, or just watch the sleek racers. The track recently finished major renovations, with beautiful results; go to www.ridethetrack.com for details.

Want more choices? Santa Clara County Parks (www.parkhere.org) offers plenty of options in 28 parks covering 45,000 acres, ranging from bird-filled bay wetlands to the grand redwoods of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

But if indoor sports are your thing, then sneak a peek at 300 San Jose (www.3hundred.com), one of the edgiest bowling alleys you'll ever see, with cool mood lighting and an amazing menu to go along with the billiards and bowling. Or check out nearby **Strike Cupertino** (www.bowlatstrike.com/venue/?venue=Cupertino) it's a way cool bowling alley (the lanes, pins, and balls glow in the dark) with a high-end arcade and sports bar. You can climb a wall right downtown at **Touchstone Climbing and Fitness San Jose** (www.touchstoneclimbing.com), the Bay Area's premier climbing gym that focuses on bouldering.

Team Spirit

Lure the family away from the TV to a live sporting event and you're in for a pleasant surprise. San Jose is home to a roster of high level annual sporting events, from the Amgen Tour of California to the SAP Open—one of the oldest men's professional tennis tournaments in the country and the biggest West Coast stop on the worldwide ATP circuit. And San Jose boasts some of the region's most successful pro teams, including the **San Jose SaberCats** (www.sanjosesabercats.com), who just won their third arena football league championship. Along with the 'cats, the **NHL Sharks** (sharks.nhl.com) play in the "Shark Tank," downtown's HP Pavilion, which just completed a \$16.5 million renovation. The Pavilion is also home turf for the NLL professional lacrosse team, San Jose Stealth (www.sjstealth.com).

If it's an old-fashioned, outdoor stadium experience you crave, take 'em out to the ball game at Municipal Stadium near Kelley Park, where the minor league **San Jose Giants** (www.sjgiants.com) play. Since starting in 1988, these 2007 California League Champions have won more games than any team in the league. And, down the left field line, the barbeque area called Turkey Mike's hits a home run, too.

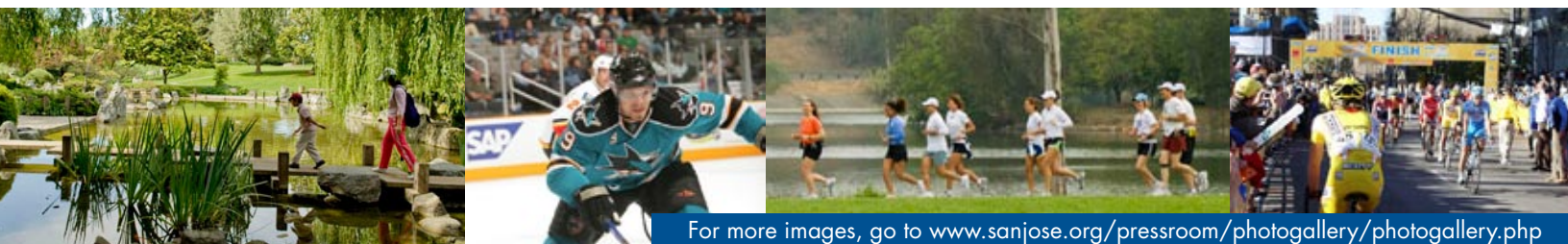
The sports scene is poised to get even more exciting. Neighboring Santa Clara is in talks over a proposal from the San Francisco 49ers football team to relocate to the city of Santa Clara (just 6 miles from San Jose). And the Oakland A's has submitted a plan to the city of Fremont to possibly relocate and build a fan-friendly venue, centered around a mixed-use baseball village.

Further lifting San Jose's profile as a pro sports town: Major League Soccer is coming back to San Jose in 2008, with the return of the **San Jose Earthquakes** (<http://web.mlsnet.com/t110/>); the city is checking into options for developing a pro soccer stadium. For the 2008 and 2009 seasons, the Earthquakes will be playing in Buck Shaw Stadium at Santa Clara University.

So unplug the video game, get off the couch, and be a sport. Whether you wanna get interactive or cheer from the sidelines, there's no better place than San Jose to get in the game.

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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