

# TRAVEL

THE INSIDE STORY FOR BUSINESS TRAVELLERS

## BUSINESS CITY GUIDE

### SAN DIEGO SILICON BEACH

It's up and coming, and giving San Fran a run for its money as a startup hub, says **Hannah Hudson**

Ask someone to name a Californian tech hub and they'll almost certainly say San Francisco. And it's understandable: the Bay Area and Silicon Valley have dominated the global innovation landscape for the last 40 years. Yet, change is afoot. For many entrepreneurs in San Francisco, the increasing cost of living, extreme competition for staff and lengthy commute times are starting to outweigh the benefits of being based there.

Enter San Diego. Five hundred miles south, on the border with Mexico, and with direct routes to and from London, the city is staking a claim to Silicon Valley's crown. Its innovation economy is booming: last year saw the launch of 477 startups, more than half of which were software companies. Other popular sectors are life sciences and aerospace, navigation and maritime. Innovation accounts for more than 400,000 jobs in the region and is worth an annual £42bn – representing a quarter of San Diego's GDP.

"People and businesses are coming to San Diego to make their mark and upgrade their lives," says Mark Cafferty, president and CEO at San Diego Regional EDC. "What makes us different from other tech hubs, like Silicon Valley, Seattle and New York, is the great quality of life we can offer alongside amazing opportunities for startups."

This is what the San Diego EDC had in mind when it launched its recent campaign, 'San Diego: Life. Changing'. "We polled people who knew the area and those two words kept coming back," says Cafferty.

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#### DID YOU KNOW...

- San Diego is the birthplace of California. The first European exploration of the West Coast was by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese navigator sailing for Spain, who landed in San Diego on 28 September, 1542.
- **The first person to drive over the landmark San Diego-Coronado bridge, which opened in 1969 connecting downtown San Diego with Coronado, was Ronald Reagan.**
- San Diego International Airport is the busiest single-runway major airport in the nation and the second in the world after Gatwick.
- **The Giant Dipper, a wooden rollercoaster at Belmont Park in Mission Beach, is the only rollercoaster in the USA to be on the National Register of Historic Places.**
- The University of California, San Diego's Geisel Library in La Jolla is home to the largest collection of original Dr Seuss manuscripts and other materials in the world.
- **La Jolla used to have an area of houses built strictly for small people, sometimes referred to as "the Munchkin houses" due to the fact that they were inhabited by some of the actors who played Munchkins in the *Wizard of Oz* film.**

#### INSIDE

The remote future of air traffic control

Meet hotelier Michael Bonsor

News and offers from British Airways





## HOW TO DO BUSINESS

There's very little that's formal about San Diego. It's rare to see someone in a suit and tie – for business meetings, shirts (no tie) are as smart as it gets. Don't be surprised if someone invites you to a casual meeting over tacos and beer in shorts and sandals, or even surfing (a literal 'board meeting') to talk things out on the water. Expect to cross the Mexican border at least once – San Diegans love to show off their favourite spots in Tijuana and will encourage you to embrace the impact of Mexican culture on the region. And make time to do something for yourself while you're there – while San Diego is very business-centric, it's important to understand the Californian lifestyle. Catch a baseball game and get talking to the person next to you. You never know who you might meet.

"Whether it's to do with the life sciences industry, the life-changing nature of your work, or the Californian lifestyle – we realised that's what made us stand out. As one San Diego transplant told us: 'Silicon Valley is where you go if you want to create an app. San Diego is where you come if you want to change the world.'"

And yet. One of the criticisms levelled against San Diego is its lack of 'big name' businesses compared with San Francisco. The city has yet to launch a Google or Facebook. Cafferty says this is in fact a positive: "Unlike San Francisco, you're not limited to one vertical company, or one industry that's looking to hire. Here we have a real breadth of tech jobs in sectors including software, clean-tech, cybersecurity and even beer. For young smart engineers and technicians, this is the place to be."

And there's no shortage of bright young things in San Diego. There are more than 80 universities in the area, including the largest engineering school in the state.

"There's a supportive spirit of innovation here," says entrepreneur Cody Russell. "Not only do all the universities have entrepreneurial fast-tracks or programmes, but a lot of schools also have incubators." Russell is founder of Tunnel Vision – a startup that combines VR with indoor skydiving to create visual and experiential freefalls. He and his co-founder pitched the idea for the company at one such incubator – the Zahn Innovation Centre.

"The team there thought it was viable, so they helped us to structure our business and build a prototype," he says. "It's what helped us get off the ground."

San Diego attracts a lot of talent from outside California. Neal Bloom launched Hired.com in San Diego in 2015 to help companies import the best talent from around the world. "We're like eHarmony for employment," he explains. "It's a no-brainer for talented people to want to be in San Diego. People visit on vacation

and dream of coming back to work here."

As a non-San Diego native himself, Bloom launched Startup San Diego when he moved to the area to help other first-time entrepreneurs network and access resources. In 2013, there were 200 attendees at the inaugural Startup Week event. This year, there were more than 4,000.

"San Diego's startup scene has exploded," he says. "What's getting us closer to the Silicon Valley model is our cross-industry collaborations. Medical tech has a need for cyber security, drones are no longer just used by the military... We're developing a reputation as a place where big industries can come together to learn from – not steal from – each other."

This theme of collaboration comes up a lot when you speak to the San Diego business community. Former Silicon Valley dot-commer Monique Williamson is well-placed to see it in action. She established DeskHub two years ago as a coworking destination for entrepreneurs, VCs, corporations, non-profits and social enterprises. "The exciting thing about San Diego is that there's room for everybody," she says. "There's a huge initiative to foster everyone's success."

DeskHub prides itself on its communal values. "People in San Diego are generous with their knowledge and are happy to



share it

– DeskHub is a microcosm of that," she says. "We're not just a place to plug in and get free internet and coffee. It's almost a mentorship programme – you have access to the people and resources you need to help grow your business."

This ethos of collaboration also extends across San Diego's borders. "California and Northern Baja are so intertwined, we consider ourselves the same economy in many ways," says Cafferty. "The ability to have great R&D work on this side of the border coupled with strong manufacturing skills in Mexico is a reason for people to come and invest here. Plus, Mexico graduates more technicians and engineers from their schools than we do, so it's a talented workforce, too."

"The border and San Diego's overall location are real strengths," he adds. "Where else could you surf at lunchtime, host a business meeting downtown in the afternoon, and enjoy beers and tacos in Tijuana by 7pm?"

### Bright thinking

Top: San Diego Public Library. Left: Cody Russell of Tunnel Vision



## LOCAL VIEWS

"You can get a free Park Ranger guided tour of Balboa Park every Tuesday and Sunday at 11am. It's great to learn the secrets of Balboa, especially when you're asked to look up for a 'surprise' at the end of the tour."

*Samantha Urban, CEO Urban Translations*

"The Torrey Pines Gliderport in La Jolla offers awesome paragliding from a cliff overlooking the ocean. You take off by running toward the edge and letting a gust of wind pick you up. You get some beautiful views of the beach and golf course while you're in the air."

*Zach Rattner, co-founder and CTO at Yembo*

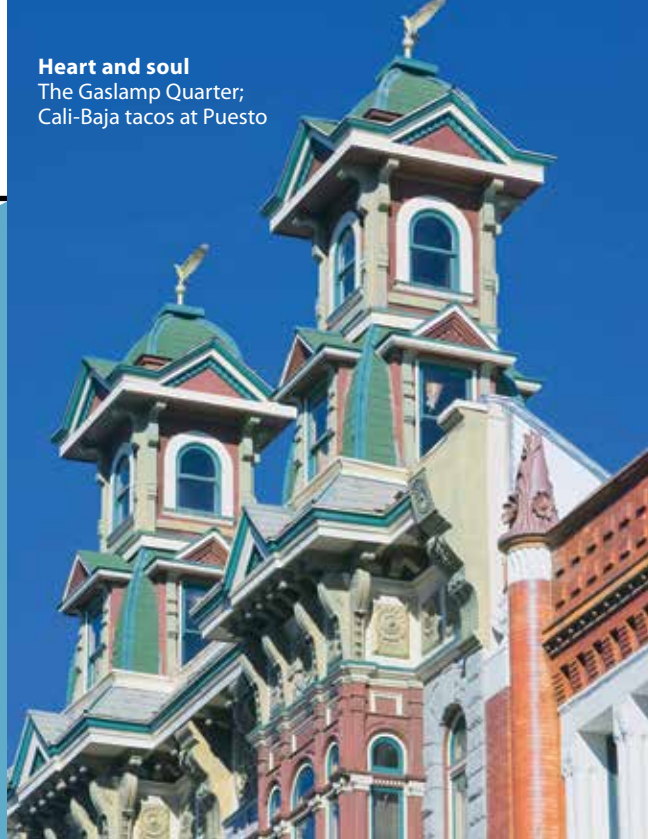
"Casa Guadalajara is one of my favourite restaurants in San Diego. It's in the Old Town, covered with bright artwork, and does the most fantastic enchiladas."

*Andrew Gazdecki, CEO at Bizness Apps*

"On a clear day, Cabrillo Lighthouse and Cabrillo National Cemetery offer unique views of the city and mountains. There's a hike down from the lighthouse, which takes you along a WWII service road. You can still see a few remnants of the artillery houses posted there. And don't miss the San Diego Comic Art Gallery at Liberty Station."

*Kelly Abbott, CEO of Great Jones Street*

**Heart and soul**  
The Gaslamp Quarter;  
Cali-Baja tacos at Puesto



## FOOD

You can find almost any food in San Diego, from organic, farm-fresh Californian fare, to rich, flavourful Mexican dishes. Can't decide between them? The region has developed its own specific type of cuisine – Cali-Baja – which combines the best of both. To sample it, visit **Puesto** for its *nopale* (sorbet and spicy shrimp tacos). Or try Trey Foshee's **Galaxy Taco** in upscale La Jolla. The décor is Day of the Dead inspired and the food is just as fun. For a brunchtime feast, locals swear by **Crack Shack** – a venue in Little Italy serving down-and-dirty chicken burgers with lashings of kimchi mayonnaise and chilli-smothered fries. And it wouldn't be a trip to San Diego without a craft beer. **The Stone Brewing Co** has more than 50 to choose from. The citrusy 'Tangerine Express' is refreshing on a hot day with a side of spicy bourbon quails' legs.

## OUT AND ABOUT

At Liberty Station, on the site of the former naval training centre, visit concept store **Moniker General** for soy candles, arty potted succulents and monochrome clothes, before mooching around the nearby **Liberty Public Market** for nibbles and foodie souvenirs. A 'brookie' is a brownie/cookie hybrid – and well worth a taste. (There's a branch of heart-pumping **SparkCycle** nearby, if you feel the urge to work off some calories.) For the ultimate people-watching opportunity, head to **The Pendry Hotel** for one of its legendary Sunday afternoon rooftop pool parties. Or visit California's first female-owned gin distillery, **You & Yours**, for a masterclass and tasting. To go further afield, book a guided day trip to Mexico with **Let's Go Clandestino** tours. Experience the street food and markets of Tijuana followed by the winelands of Ensenada. Crossing the border back to America on foot brings home just how connected the two countries are.



## HOW TO GET THERE

British Airways flies from London Heathrow to San Diego daily in around 11 hours. For the three-mile journey into the city centre, there are a number of public transport options available from the terminal building, or pick up a cab. Visit [ba.com/sandiego](http://ba.com/sandiego)

## WHERE TO STAY

**ALL THE HOTELS BELOW CAN BE BOOKED AT BA.COM\***

### MANCHESTER GRAND HYATT

This large resort property near downtown San Diego offers a spectacular waterfront setting, complete with shopping, dining and entertainment venues. By day, there's easy access to popular attractions, such as the famous San Diego Zoo, and nightlife activities abound in the Gaslamp District as the sun sets.

### THE LODGE TORREY PINES

Overlooking the Torrey Pines Golf Course with views of the Pacific Ocean, the AAA Five Diamond-rated resort exceeds expectations with world-class dining, a full service spa and unprecedented service. The generous guest rooms range in size from 500 square feet to more than 1,500 square feet, offering views of the golf course or the central courtyard.

### US GRANT

Built in 1910, the 270-room US Grant Hotel is known for its American luxury with a European twist. Rooms are bright and classically elegant, with crown moulding, crisp white linens, and all modern amenities. There's a 24-hour business centre and front desk, if jetlag is keeping you up.

### TOWER23 HOTEL

San Diego's only luxury, lifestyle hotel on the beach. TOWER23 derives its name from lifeguard tower 23 on Pacific Beach by the hotel. The exclusive resort of La Jolla is just north of here, while downtown San Diego, the airport, major business centres and popular attractions are just minutes away. ■