

Arts and Culture Bloom Year-Round in San Jose

SAN JOSE, CA – The San Jose arts scene is blossoming as never before—you can catch a Broadway-style musical, watch a first-rate opera cast with rising young stars, enjoy the premiere of a new American symphony, or visit acclaimed museums. The city's rich mix of performing arts and cultural attractions is pure Silicon Valley—marked by growth and innovation, with a nod to history.

The splendid California Theatre, beautifully restored and acoustically magnificent, is a prime example of San Jose's attitude toward the arts. The stylish 1927-movie palace was rescued by the city and reopened a few years ago. Now it's home to Opera San Jose, Symphony Silicon Valley, Cinequest Film Festival and other top events.

Much of the fun is free, like summer's Music in the Park, but even the most sophisticated entertainment—opera, symphony, and the theater—is affordable. Accessibility is no problem, since museums, clubs, galleries, and theaters are within walking distance of downtown hotels. And parking? Not to worry—there are abundant lots and on-street sites to choose from.

An Artful Downtown

Take a stroll downtown and you'll get the picture. Start on West San Carlos Street at the **Center for the Performing Arts** (cpa.sanjose.org). Outside, it's graced with a host of outdoor sculptures. Inside, the stage is home to the **American Musical Theatre of San Jose** (www.amtsj.org), America's oldest musical theater company west of the Mississippi and an outstanding showcase for the best of Broadway.

Just across the street is the **Children's Discovery Museum** (www.cdm.org), ranked by *Child Magazine* as one of the top ten children's museums in the nation, and a center for creative play and expression. Over on South Market Street you'll find the mango-colored **Tech Museum of Innovation** (www.thetech.org). Its vivid and innovative hands-on exhibits will make you a science convert even if you avoided the subject in school. Near the leafy Plaza de Cesar Chavez and imposing Cathedral Basilica de St. Joseph sits the **San Jose Museum of Art** (www.sjmusart.org). The old section of the building is a graceful, 1892 Richardson-Romanesque building that was once San Jose's post office. Gaze at some 1,400 works—20th-century American paintings, sculpture, and photographs. Or check out their innovative hands-on gallery activities, imagination stations, and reading galleries that make the artwork more engaging and accessible for both children and adults. A short drive away is the **Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum & Planetarium**, (www.egyptianmuseum.org) featuring the largest collections of Ancient Egyptian antiquities in the Western U.S.

Head west on W. Santa Clara Street and you'll see a building that is itself a work of art. The **HP Pavilion** (www.hpps.com) rises like a giant crystal bowl, with its sparkling glass entrance and skylight ceiling. Locals have dubbed it the Shark Tank (it's home to the National Hockey League's San Jose Sharks), but it also hosts other teams like the San Jose SaberCats and San Jose Stealth, plus A-list concerts, circuses, touring shows, and ice extravaganzas.

SoFA, So Good

It doesn't get cooler than San Jose's artsy South of First Area, aka **SoFA**, which centers around South First Street between San Carlos and East Reed Streets. You'll find everything from art galleries to cafes, clubs, and ultra lounges. Ultra lounges are the latest smokin' hot places where the hip and beautiful go to be seen, nibble from the late-night menu, and groove to the DJ's spins. Check out hotspots like the **Motif**, and watch the bartender twirl bottles and set the drinks on fire; or the **Agenda**, which morphed, from an old savings and loan building. Their VIP room is behind a bank vault door.

Just down First Street, flamboyant and colorful artworks splash across the walls of galleries like **MACLA/Movimiento De Arte y Cultura Latino Americana** (www.maclaarte.org), which merges the traditional with new art forms (like poetry slams), focusing on emerging artists. At the **San Jose Institute Of Contemporary Art** (www.sjica.org), the annual fall auction brings together the work of some 150 of the Bay Area's hottest artists. Textile art transcends cultural boundaries and encompasses traditional as well as contemporary forms—that's clear when you visit the **San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles** (www.sjqiltmuseum.org). It's a serious venue for all artists working with textiles.

The best time to check out new works at galleries like **Anno Domini** gallery (www.galleryad.com) and **Works/San Jose** (www.workssanjose.org) is during **South First Fridays** (www.southfirstfridays.com). The first Friday of every month, the galleries stay open late, sometimes serving up live music and beverages. It's emblematic of how the district is exploding. Brian Eder, co-owner of the Anno Domini gallery, says "In the SoFA, we feel like we can help create a scene and a culture, be a part of the momentum and innovation."

Spotlight on the Performing

The performing arts are where San Jose really shines. **Opera San Jose** (www.operasj.org), for example, doesn't import stars but creates them in its resident company. In 2008, Opera San Jose celebrates its 25th remarkable season; look for a host of special events to mark the occasion. And tickets remain affordable, with a season subscription to four operas starting at only \$220. On May 30, the company holds the second annual **Irene Dalis Awards Vocal Competition**. Last year's event drew entrants from across the nation and awarded outstanding singers \$42,000 in prize money.

The **San Jose Repertory Theatre** (www.sjrep.com), marks its 27th year as a company this year with a six-play season running September through July. Coming up for 2008: Tranced, Souvenir, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and All the Great Books (Abridged).

With some 40 dancers and a staff of 27, **Ballet San Jose** (www.balletsanjose.org) is the largest employer of artists in the entire South Bay. The company stages four grand productions each year, and since 2001, Ballet San Jose has added seven world premiere productions to its repertoire, plus two additional works choreographed by the late, great Michael Smuin.

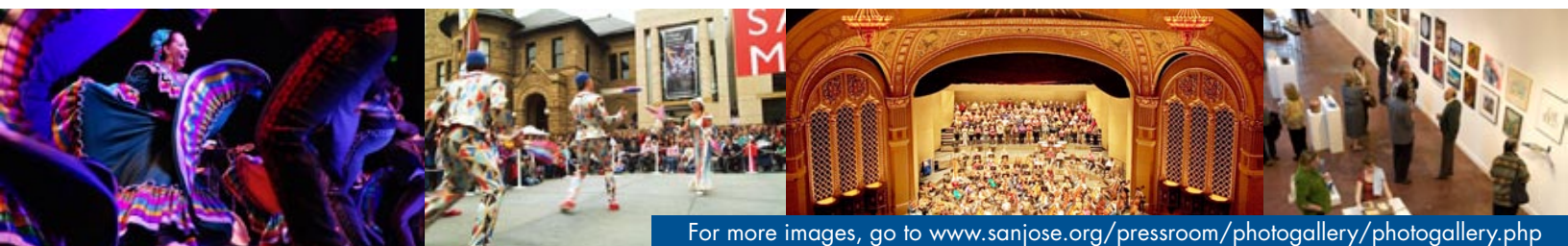
Want something more intimate and edgy? The **City Lights Theater Co.** (www.cltc.org) dubs itself "living theatre for thinking people" and presents both progressive and traditional programs in a 108-seat theater. Through its New Play Readers Series, the Company actively develops new pieces, some of which are produced during the regular season. For more of that off-Broadway feel, check out the **San Jose Stage Co.** (www.sanjose-stage.com), presenting five plays by contemporary playwrights every season.

Based in the Mexican Heritage Plaza, **Teatro Visión** (www.teatrovision.org) upholds the traditions of Chicano theater, staging new pieces by leading Latino playwrights, developing new works, and offering performances in English or Spanish with projected translation (like the super titles seen at the opera).

From long-established groups like the **American Musical Theatre of San Jose** to fast-growing companies like Teatro Visión, the breadth and scope of creativity here shows how this town encourages the arts to bloom.

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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