

EMERALD CITY #S2

Cheryl's Guide to San José

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An occasional 'zine produced by Cheryl Morgan and available from her at cheryl@emcit.com or online at <http://www.emcit.com>

Introduction

Hello, and welcome to this special issue of *Emerald City*, also known as "Cheryl's Guide to San José". The purpose of this issue is to give people coming to the Worldcon some idea of what to expect in San José and some useful suggestions of things to do and places to eat.

To avoid excessive length and duplication of effort, I am going to make frequent references to material I have written for the IgoUgo travel web site. You can also find other material about San José on the site. Simply go to the home page (<http://www.igougo.com/>), enter "San Jose" in the box on the right where it says "search journals by destination", select the "San Jose, CA" from the list of possible cities, and you are there.

By the way, don't just read my stuff. Some of the other Guides are very good. I particularly recommend Gary Singh (guide name "gsingh") who is a San José native and knows the area rather better than I do.

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Getting There

Kevin's Guide

Kevin, being an incorrigible transit geek, has written a huge and almost exhaustive guide to getting to San José. You can find this on the con web site at http://www.conjose.org/Sanjose/transit_article.html.

Arriving at Diridon

One thing that Kevin didn't cover is getting from the railway station to the convention center and hotels. It isn't that hard, except that it is likely to be quite hot and therefore not good weather to be hauling cases. If you want to save money, it can be done.

The trouble is that there's a whole lot of construction going on at the station in preparation for an expansion to the Light Rail service (which will make getting to downtown ridiculously easy, but we can't delay the con for that). Coming out of the station it all looks a bit daunting. What you need to do is skirt to the right around the construction and then head directly away from the station until you are clear of the mess. You should then be able to look left and see the Shark Tank (a.k.a. San José Arena, a.k.a. the Compost, sorry Compaq, Center). You can't miss it, it is big. Walk toward that, and the main road you arrive at is Santa Clara Street. Turn right up there. In a few blocks you will cross over the Guadalupe River and pass under the freeway. For the De Anza just continue a couple of blocks more, and for the other hotels turn right onto Almaden Boulevard just past the freeway. The Fairmont is, unfortunately, the furthest away by this route and it may well be easier to continue up Santa Clara and turn right onto Market Street. Note that this is no use if you are in one of the out-of-downtown hotels such as the Wyndham and Airport Inn.

Getting Around

Walk, damnit!

At first sight from your hotel downtown San José looks like an urban wasteland with not a restaurant in sight. Fear not, there are plenty of places to eat, you just can't see them. Unless you have serious mobility problems, it is easy to walk to a lot of good restaurants.

The largest concentration of restaurants is in San Pedro Square, which is only about 5 minutes walk from the

convention center. The easiest route to follow is to head for the Fairmont and continue along Market until you hit Santa Clara. You'll pass the Museum of Art, the cathedral, San Fernando and Post Streets along the way. San Pedro Square is just to your left and across the road when you get the Santa Clara. There's a big sign; you can't miss it. Once you are familiar with the area you can probably work out quicker routes using side streets. Also check out the area's web site for details (<http://www.sanpedrosquare.com/>).

Alternatively, of course, you will stop off at the Market Street branch of House of Siam along the way. If you like Thai food you will not regret this.

If you are looking for something cheaper than a restaurant meal, the thing to do is head a couple of blocks up San Carlos, past the Hyatt, until you come to the entrance to San José University. Here, surprise, surprise, you can find a large selection of fast food eateries of all kinds.

By the way, the map on the con web site (<http://www.conjose.org/Sanjose/facilities.html>) is perhaps a little too abstract and a little too tight-focused for your needs. I quite like the one on the downtown parking web site (<http://www.sjdowntownparking.com/parkmap.htm>). It too is a bit abstract, but you can see a lot more of the downtown area.

Of course if you really don't like walking, there are four restaurants in the Fairmont and one each in the Hilton, Hyatt and Crowne Plaza. That should keep you fed in sufficient variety for most of the con.

Light Rail

For some of the places a bit further afield, the Light Rail system is an excellent option. It is very frequent

during the day, and continues to run all through the night, albeit at a reduced frequency. For more information see their web site (<http://www.vta.org/>).

Restaurants

Most of the restaurants mentioned here have appeared in my IgoUgo journals. I therefore won't go into any great detail here. More information is also occasionally available in the About San José section of the con web site (<http://www.conjose.org/Sanjose/restaurants.html>). The most useful thing you will get there is direct links to MapQuest.

There are vastly more restaurants in downtown San José than Kevin and I have managed to eat our way through, but at least this is a start. After all, you'll only be in town a week or so, and you can't even eat your way round all of the restaurants in San Pedro Square in that time.

One thing to note is that San José isn't used to having big events on at the weekend. Most of the conventions it hosts are business events and happen during the week. Not all of the downtown restaurants will be open throughout the weekend. They are probably expecting Labor Day to be dead, and many of them routinely do not open on Sunday lunchtime. If you are making plans to visit places, it might be wise to check whether they are open at the time you want to go.

Not being a vegetarian, I'm not best placed to recommend places to eat that are meat free. There is a Vietnamese restaurant that advertises itself as Vegan (see below), but otherwise your best bet is to check out places like House of Siam

and Shalimar where there are substantial amounts of vegetarian dishes on the menu.

Closures

One or two of the places mentioned on the con web site have closed since I did my initial survey of the area. A particular disaster is the loss of Mongo's, which was truly the finest Mongolian Barbecue restaurant I have eaten at, not to mention the only restaurant in town with a science fiction theme. Almost everyone on the committee loved this place.

The Shark & Rose, which was a nice little restaurant-cum-pub in San Pedro Square has also closed. Another restaurant has opened up in its place.

More construction is taking place in the Paseo de San Antonio, which runs alongside the Fairmont out to first and second streets. This work has blocked off access to Casa Castillo, a Mexican restaurant, and Double Rainbow, a rather excellent ice cream shop. The loss of the latter is another major blow because they do reasonably good smoothies and there is nowhere else in downtown to get something long, cold and refreshing.

Inca Gardens

If you don't try anything else adventurous during the con, do try to make time to visit San José's only Peruvian restaurant. I mean, how many Peruvian restaurants have you been to in your life? How many do you know of outside Peru?

Peruvian cuisine is, I think, not about to shake the world as some great new culinary fad. However, the food at Inca Gardens is very well cooked. What is

more, I never thought I would come away from a restaurant saying, "wow, those guys really know how to cook rice and potatoes". But they do. Try it. They also have a rather nice little Peruvian folk museum out back.

87 E. San Fernando St.

<http://www.incagardens.com/>

Full review on IgoUgo

House of Siam

Those of you who know me well will know that I absolutely love Thai food. And the best Thai restaurant I have found in the Bay Area is in downtown San José. In fact there are two of them, one on Market Street and one on Second Street. These guys are really good, and as you expect with Thais the décor is stunning as well.

151 South Second Street or 55 S. Market St.

Full review on IgoUgo

Old Spaghetti Factory

If you are not in the least bit adventurous about food, this well-known chain of Italian restaurants has a branch in San Pedro Square. You can eat here relatively cheaply, and you can rely on getting standard dishes like spaghetti and meatballs that you know and love. This place is probably a safe bet if you have a large group with varied tastes.

Tied House

I'll come back to this place again when I talk about beer, but Tied House (also in San Pedro Square) is a good quality American restaurant as well as a decent pub. You get all of the classic American

dishes such as buffalo wings, nachos, clam chowder, blackened catfish, jambalaya and burgers, and the portions are Huge. I've never managed to get through an entire meal at this place.

Also I can guarantee that these guys are open on Sunday lunchtime - I've eaten there then.

65 North San Pedro Street

<http://www.tiedhouse.com/>

Full review on IgoUgo

Peggy Sue's

Once upon a time there was this American tradition of Burger Bars. Then there was MacDonaldis, and thereafter the whole idea of a burger bar was tarnished. If you want to see what a burger bar should be like, go to Peggy Sue's in San Pedro Square. If we are lucky, their new branch in Park Avenue may be open in time for the convention. Good burgers, good shakes, and a fun atmosphere. Cheap too.

29 N. San Pedro Street

<http://peggysues.citysearch.com/>

Full review on IgoUgo

71 St. Peter

This is one of the more up market restaurants in San Pedro Square. The food is pretty good, especially their herb foccacia which is stunning, and their juses, which are really intense. However, you'll pay a bit more, and the portions will be smaller. Belgian beer lovers should note that they have Duvel, but have no idea how to pour it.

71 San Pedro St.

Full review on IgoUgo

Hawg's

You'll find Hawg's on Second Street in the same building as the Repertory Theatre. It is a seafood bar, and it is probably wise not to eat anything other than fish here, but they certainly know how to cook fish. They also seem to be open very late, which might be useful at times.

150 South Second Street

Full review on IgoUgo

Shalimar

The quality of Indian restaurants in Silicon Valley is improving rapidly as a result of the huge influx of programmers from India. Shalimar is very new - it only opened in April - and very good. They do all-you-can-eat lunch buffets for a mere \$9 and, unlike many such establishments, you don't have to hunt around in the curry sauce to find pieces of meat. Open on Sundays too. I expect this place to fill up with Brits homesick for traditional home cooking.

167 West San Fernando Street

Full review on IgoUgo

City Grill & Bar

I've not eaten in many of the hotel restaurants. However, we did manage to make it to the Hilton's restaurant after one committee meeting and we were seriously unimpressed. Possibly it was because we were a large group, but the service was poor and the food unimpressive.

Hilton hotel

Full review on IgoUgo

White Lotus

I've not eaten here, but it is a specialist Vegan restaurant and Gary Singh speaks very highly of it so I figured I should include it. It is cheap, and Gary says that they do miracles with imitation meat so you can drag your carnivore friends there and not have them starve. Of course I have not had the courage to try this on arch carnivore, Kevin. Maybe one day.

80 North Market St

See Gary Singh's "People Watching in Downtown San José" journal on IgoUgo

Beer

This section is primarily for the benefit of visiting Brits. I'm not a great expert on real ale myself, but I know that a lot of my compatriots can't survive without it so I'm doing my best to help them get through the con.

Britannia Arms

The most obvious place to find British style beer is the newly opened Britannia Arms on Santa Clara, between the De Anza and San Pedro Square. However, going here would be a mistake. This is part of a growing chain of "cute British" theme pubs that may once have had something in common with a real British pub but are now nothing of the sort. The Santa Clara Street "pub" might have a red telephone box outside, but inside the layout is identical to a traditional American bar and most of the beers on offer are American (and ghastly). The few British beers they have are mostly mass produced big brewery beers of

little better quality than the American stuff. Avoid this place.

Tied House

The Tied House in San Pedro Square brews its own beer (and the vats are on show to prove it). This is, of course, American beer, so you get stuff like ambers and wheat beers. However, various types of English-style beer may be on offer depending on what specialties they have going at the time. Their full list of beers lists both an ESB and an IPA, but I can't guarantee that either will be available.

They have an acceptable selection of malt whiskies too.

65 North San Pedro Street

<http://www.tiedhouse.com/>

Full review on IgoUgo

Trials

Unlike Britannia Arms, this place is the real thing, a genuine attempt to reproduce a British pub in the US. I have visited it and was impressed with their dedication to trying to get things right. The manager I spoke to was hugely apologetic about the awful things that the Food & Drug Administration forces them to do to the beer in order to be allowed to import it, but that aside they take care of it as best they can.

The web site gives a full list of what beers they have on offer. Not all of it is great, but it should keep most people happy. Of particular interest is a new line of English-style beers brewed in California under license from the Hampshire Brewery in Romsey. And, of course, they serve beer in proper pints, not the teeny little American things.

Trials offers traditional pub food as well: bangers & mash, scampi, shepherd's pie, the usual stuff. If this doesn't catch your fancy, try the German restaurant next door, which I'm told is quite good and will keep any carnivore very happy.

The only problem with Trials is that it is a few blocks away from downtown. The easiest way to get there is to take the Light Rail up First Street, get off at St. James', and walk the couple of blocks further up First Street to get to Trials.

265 North First Street

<http://www.trialspub.com/>

Full review on IgoUgo

Irish Pubs

There is one Irish pub in San Pedro Square and, I think, a second on the way. There is one on First Street just out the back of the Fairmont as well. More may have sprung up around downtown. You know what to expect. Sadly these places are the same the world over.

Mission Ale House

I was tempted to recommend this place as it has a large variety of American beers available, which should make it interesting for anyone wanting to sample the local Microbrews. However, Gary Singh says that at night the place is a cattle market and that they play heavy rock very loudly. Consequently it is probably a place to avoid in the evenings. Maybe try it at lunchtime.

Corner 3rd & Santa Clara

See Gary Singh's "People Watching in Downtown San José" journal on IgoUgo

Gordon Biersch

The West Coast's best-known microbrewery is Gordon Biersch. They are all over California and have reached out as far as Columbus and Memphis these days. They have a brewery/restaurant in San José that is well-loved by well-to-do Silicon Valley types. The beer is OK, the garlic fries are great (and a favorite of crowds at sports grounds all around the Bay Area). Check out whether they have live music before going and adjust plans according to your preference. I suspect that Tied House is better value.

33 East San Fernando Street

See Gary Singh's "People Watching in Downtown San José" journal on IgoUgo

Local Attractions

Winchester Mystery House

By far the best-known tourist attraction in San José is the Winchester Mystery House. Probably most of you know the story of how Mrs. Winchester inherited the rifle company's fortunes from her husband and was told by a medium that unless she kept on building her house, day and night, until she died, she would be haunted by the ghosts of those killed by her company's weapons. It makes a great tale, and certainly the house is kind of bizarre as a result.

However, if you are going to visit, pay the extra few bucks for the "Behind the scenes" tour, on which they explain that Mrs. Winchester was anything but a daffy old bat. The inventions she made, the technological innovations she introduced, and the cunning plans she had, such as using the house's strange

construction to spy on the servants and on visiting businessmen whom she was keeping waiting for meetings, are all much more interesting than the ghosts.

The Mystery House is a little way outside downtown and sadly not on any Light Rail lines. But every cab driver in San José will know where it is.

525 South Winchester Boulevard

<http://www.winchestermysteryhouse.com/>

Full Review in my "Halloween in California" journal on IgoUgo

The Tech

San José's science museum is conveniently located directly across the road from the Fairmont. Compared to other science museums I have seen, it is a little small and short of the really impressive exhibits (I mean, London has huge beam engines, a V2 rocket and a Babbage Engine). However, The Tech is crammed full of interactive exhibits. I'm sure you could easily spend the entire day there. And there is an IMAX theatre as well. Who needs child care, just dump the kids here for the day.

201 South Market Street

<http://www.thetech.org/>

Full review on IgoUgo

Rosicrucian Museum

Conspiracy theorists beware; San José is the world headquarters of the Rosicrucian Movement. You didn't know that, did you? And you would never have let Worldcon anywhere near the city if you had. We are all going to get brainwashed.

Well, maybe, but from what us locals can see the Rosicrucians are a pretty

harmless bunch as far as cultists go. They clearly had a lot of money at one time as they bought up a substantial area of prime downtown land and used it to build temples and the like where they could go worship Egyptian gods in peace and harmony. You can see those buildings, and more importantly visit their museum of Egyptian antiquities. It is not a patch on the British Museum, but it is apparently the largest such collection on the west coast of the US, so worth seeking out if you are into that sort of thing. Transport is needed.

1342 Naglee Avenue

Full Review in my "Halloween in California" journal on IgoUgo

Museum of Art

You don't often find me recommending museums of modern art, but San José's is free, has some really good stuff in it, and is right next door to the Fairmont so you can't miss it. If I ever get rich I am going to buy one of Dale Chihuly's magnificent tentacle-filled glass sculptures. (See, even an SF connection, you can just imagine those things swimming around a gas giant planet.)

110 South Market Street, San Jose

www.sjmusart.org

Full review on IgoUgo

Quilt Museum

Sexism time here. This is a museum that many women readers will love and most men readers will find excruciatingly boring. But San José does have the USA's oldest quilting museum. It is very small, and quite honestly probably not worth the \$4 admission fee. However, it is a good thing that such museums exist and I'm happy to pay to keep it going. One

warning, however. The museum mainly uses guest exhibitions, having little material of its own and even less space. Because of the Worldcon being at the start of September, the guest exhibition at the time will be one of images of horror and destruction. I have no idea what it will be like, but it is unlikely to be cheerful and uplifting.

110 Paseo de San Antonio

www.sjqmusem.org

Full review on IgoUgo

Bonfante Gardens

I've not been to this place, but Kevin has and he loves it so I wanted to include it. Personally I am allergic to theme parks - I have been known to get motion sickness just watching the rides. If you want that sort of thing, go to Great America, you won't be able to miss it and the Light Rail stops right outside. But Bonfante Gardens is much more theme than rides. It has a strong environmental and educational bias, and one of the major attractions is the collection of "circus trees" - trees which have been trained to grow in the most amazing shapes.

The park is in Gilroy quite a way south of San José so you need a car to get there, but it is well worth while, especially if you have kids with inquiring minds.

3050 Hecker Pass Hwy, Gilroy

<http://www.bonfantegardens.com/>

Children's Discovery Museum

While your older kids have been dumped at The Tech, the little ones can be taken to roam around the Discovery Museum. It isn't as big as The Tech, but it is full of all sorts of fun stuff. You may find yourself succumbing to one or two

of the interactive exhibits. Don't worry, everyone has to grow old, but no one has to grow up. Their "Alice's Wonderland" exhibition should be open by now, so I need to go back.

180 Woz Way

<http://www.cdm.org/>

Full review on IgoUgo

Lou's Living Donut Museum

Yes, believe it or not, San José does have a donut museum. It is conveniently located very close to the Children's Discovery Museum. They make their own donuts on site, and will even give you a tour of the kitchens. How can you miss it?

387 Delmas St.

Adobe & Fallon Houses

Out the back of San Pedro Square are a number of preserved historical buildings dating from the early days of the city. If you are interested in California history, this is a good place to go.

Full review on IgoUgo

NASA Ames

OK, so this isn't quite Houston or Cape Canaveral, but the Bay Area does have its own functional NASA base, and many NASA missions are directed from here. They just don't let us shoot off rockets, that's all. Sadly the current security panics have resulted in all tours of the base being cancelled until further notice. However, the visitor's center is open from 8:00am to 4:30pm on work days. (Presumably they will be closed on Labor Day).

The Light Rail service to Mountain View goes right past the base, but you are probably better off driving there as the area is not pedestrian friendly.

<http://www.arc.nasa.gov/>

Beyond San José

San Francisco

There is so much to say about San Francisco as a tourist destination that I don't know where to start. I have done one IgoUgo journal about the city, and I may manage to get another one online before the convention. And of course vast amounts have been written about the city by other people. It is a real shame that the commuter rail service from San José to San Francisco won't be running at the weekend, but if you are staying in the area for a while do try to spend some time up in the more famous bit of the Bay Area. Just remember to take a coat. It will be at least 10F colder, quite probably a lot more, up there.

Santa Cruz & Monterey

So where are all those golden California surfer boys? They are down the coast in Santa Cruz. If you are looking for all the fun of the seaside, Santa Cruz has it. And it is possibly the most laid back place in the world, man.

<http://www.beachboardwalk.com/>

A little further south takes you to Monterey, which is a much more sedate tourist attraction. For the literary and historically minded, you can visit Steinbeck's Cannery Row. Those more interested in wildlife can visit the

world's biggest aquarium and see the world's cutest animal, the sea otter.

<http://www.gomonterey.com/>

<http://www.canneryrow.com/>

<http://www.mbayaq.org/>

Muir Woods

So if it is California there must be redwood trees, right? Well, no, because most of them have long since been chopped down, and the really big forests are a couple of days drive north. But there is a small area of natural redwood forest at Muir Woods just north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Kevin took me there the first time I visited California and I was just stunned at how big even these relatively little redwoods were. It is gorgeous, and you can stop off and admire that bridge along the way.

<http://www.nps.gov/muwo/>

Wine Country

The main wine producing areas of California are in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys north of the Bay Area. You need to plan a complete day to get this far and have enough time to look around. Kevin got taken there on a work outing and recommends the Niebaum-Coppola Winery (<http://www.niebaum-coppola.com/>), which is owned by Francis Ford Coppola. As well as the wine, you can see displays of props from many of Coppola's movies.

If you don't have time to get all that way north, there are a lot of vineyards in the Santa Cruz mountains much closer to San José. You can get a list of them from this web site:

http://www.wines.com/santa_cruz_mountains/index.html. You will need a

good map because the mountain roads are narrow and twisty and not well signed.

For Rail Geeks

I couldn't finish this guide without mention of Kevin's favorite tourist activity: trains. I have no opinion on this, as the Great Western Railway never ran services in California, but Kevin thinks that there is a lot of good stuff around. He says:

The Niles Canyon Railway runs a weekend excursion railroad (1st and 3rd Sundays, so there will be service on September 1st) over a stretch of the original transcontinental railway line through Niles Canyon in Fremont-Sunol.

Sunol Depot, 6 Kilkare Road, Sunol

<http://www.ncry.org/home.htm>

Out in the delta lands beyond Fairfield is the Western Railway Museum, operating over a couple of miles of restored Sacramento Northern interurban trackage. (The SN once operated electric trains from San Francisco, over the Bay Bridge to Oakland, through the Berkeley hills through a tunnel, up to Sacramento, and on to Chico, a run of over 150 miles, making it the longest interurban railroad in America.)

<http://www.wrm.org/>

Finally, the Roaring Camp & Big Trees Railroad in Felton is a narrow-gauge excursion line and an affiliated standard-gauge line that runs down to Santa Cruz. The RC&BT takes you through another set of redwood forests, and is a nice day out.

<http://www.roaringcamp.com/>

If you want to go further afield, Sacramento is home to the California State Railroad Museum, the largest railroad museum in the USA

(presumably depending on how you measure it); adjacent to Old Sacramento, the CSRM is a great place for a railroad enthusiast and a fine day trip. If staying in the Bay Area, you need not drive to Sacramento - you can take the Amtrak Capitol (eight round trips daily between San Jose/Oakland/Sacramento) and make a day trip of it, for the train station in Sacramento is right next to the Museum.

<http://www.csrnf.org/>

<http://www.amtrakcapitols.com/>

And if you are going all the way to Sacramento, check out my journal about Old Sacramento on IgoUgo - there's a lot more there than just trains.

Footnote

And that, I think is that. It is an entirely inadequate guide to San José and its environs because there is far too much good stuff here for me to cover in a little fanzine like this. Nevertheless I hope it has proved useful and that it helps you enjoy your time in San José a little more.

For those of you not familiar with *Emerald City*, this has been yet another little publication from Cheryl Morgan, with assistance from resident inspiration and travel geek, Kevin Standlee, and superstar proof reader, Anne Murphy (who won't get to see this before the initial version goes on line but will hopefully find all my silly mistakes before the convention happens). If you pick this up at the Worldcon, look out for the current issue of the 'zine, #84, and for the other ConJosé special issue (#S3), which is devoted to SF&F novels set in the Bay Area. And for the full set

of back issues, see the web site at <http://www.emcit.com/>.

Ciao,

Love 'n' hugs,

Cheryl