

(destinations)



CELEBRATE FIESTA!

BY CHELLE ELLIS / PHOTOGRAPHY BY KENNY ELLIS

April is the month for fiesta, a celebration of heritage and independence honoring the city of San Antonio, Texas.

IF THE ABBREVIATED MARDI GRAS SEASON LEFT YOU wanting more, pick up the party in San Antonio this month. The Texas river city celebrates Fiesta the last ten days of April each year; part of this year's focus will be on the beloved and beleaguered Crescent City in the popular family-oriented event, "A Taste of New Orleans."

Spectators will gobble up a three-day sampling of New Orleans culture through food and jazz. Simultaneously, they will revel in their own history and culture.

Rich and diverse as the city itself, Fiesta San Antonio is a celebration of the region's combined heritage – Indian, Mexican and Anglo – while honoring

the memory of the heroes of The Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto, where on April 21, 1836, Texas gained its independence from Mexico.

Fiesta San Antonio started in 1891 as The Battle of the Flowers parade, when several women of the city decorated horse-drawn carriages and pelted each other with flower blossoms as they passed in front of the Alamo.

The parade became an annual event and grew into today's Fiesta, drawing 3.5 million people to enjoy more than 100 events and a parade with floats actually floating – down the San Antonio River as it winds through the city center.

A grand smorgasbord of attire, music and food

come together in a multi-cultural community celebration of history that makes pilgrimage to The Alamo.

Of course we all “Remember the Alamo” but San Antonio was home to Native Americans as well as Spanish explorers and missionaries long before the famous slogan was coined. In 1718, Father Antonio Olivares founded the city when he established Mission San Antonio de Valero, later known as The Alamo.

It was there in 1836 that 189 defenders held out against 4,000 Mexican troops for 13 days. The Alamo is today a shrine and museum offering a proud yet haunting view into the brave lives that helped form our nation.

It’s this reverence and historical importance that you feel in every aspect of the city from Fiesta San Antonio to Six Flags theme park, named for the six different flags that have flown over Texas. While The Alamo is the best known, it is but one of five 18th-century Spanish missions that laid the foundation for modern San Antonio.

Available for tour, these missions are a reminder of Spain’s attempt to extend its reach into the New World by converting Native Americans to Catholicism.

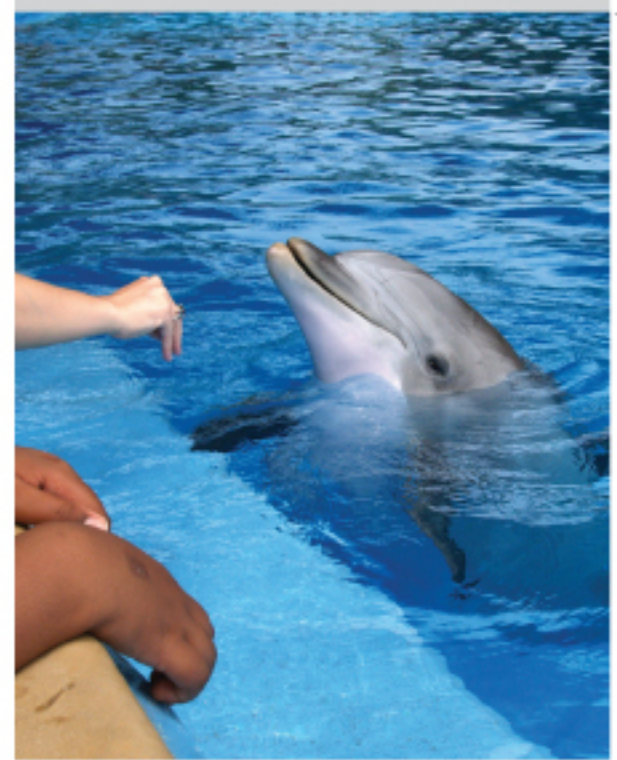
The jewel of San Antonio is its well known River Walk or Paseo del Rio. Subtropical trees and flowers lead to romantic sidewalk cafes, arched footbridges, charming boutiques and arts and crafts vendors set up along the San Antonio River.

While the River Walk is a promenading paradise for couples, the city also offers many attractions for families. Several theme parks are there, including Sea World. Museums like McNay Art Museum feature work of artists such as Van Gogh, Rodin, Cezanne, Picasso, Gauguin, Matisse and O’Keeffe.

Or just kick back and enjoy a chilly margarita and hot food at authentic Mexican restaurants like La Fogata (The Fire), whose patio is so relaxing you may never leave.

San Antonio remembers the bravery of her sons and rejoices in the fruits of those sacrifices that allow them to enjoy life and its varied melding cultures. Find that same appreciation as you stroll the city’s streets and walks.

Fiesta San Antonio occurs April 21-30. More information is at www.fiesta-sa.org or by calling 800.447.3372. ○



Attractions are plentiful in San Antonio. Historical sites as well as numerous theme parks guarantee a fun filled vacation for the whole family. (Above) Sea World. (Below) The Alamo.

