

The Best Places to Photograph in San Antonio



Alamo

San Antonio offers abundant and diverse photographic opportunities. During your visit you can photograph 18th century Spanish missions, preserved historical sites, the River Walk, an Audubon Center, botanical gardens, and the zoo.

You'll definitely like the opportunity to photograph historic places. Through the efforts of the San Antonio Conservation Society, historic buildings and homes have been saved and given new life and uses. San Antonio, as one of the oldest cities in Texas, has examples of virtually every architectural style that has been used since its founding in 1718.

Choosing the best places to photograph in San Antonio is a difficult task. It's like asking, "Who is your favorite child?" It is challenging, choosing the best places to photograph, but I narrowed it down to these gems.

The five Spanish Missions: San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo); Missions Concepción; San José; San Juan Capistrano; and Espada are the crown jewels of San Antonio. In July 2015, the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated the five San Antonio colonial missions as world-heritage sites. They are the Twenty-Third World Heritage Sites in the United States, and the only site in Texas.

Mission San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo) is about a 10 minute walk from the convention's hotel. Site of the 1836 battle during the Texas revolution, the Alamo Chapel and Long Barracks are the only remaining structures from Mission San Antonio de Valero. Interior photos are prohibited, but are allowed at the four other Missions.

The four remaining Spanish Missions are out of walking distance from the hotel, but are easily accessible by car or public transportation. They comprise the San Antonio Missions National Historic Park.

Mission Concepción, 807 Mission Road, is located around three miles from the Wyndham. It's believed to be the only unreconstructed Spanish Colonial Era Church in the United States. Its unique features are the twin bell towers and crossing dome.

Mission San José, at 6539 San José Drive, is a short two-mile drive from Mission Concepción. This is a fully-restored mission complex with its vast space enclosed by rebuilt perimeter walls. If you walk past the north wall, you'll find a reconstructed compact, acequia-powered grist mill.

Mission San Juan Capistrano, 9101 Graf Road, is about four miles from Mission San José. A single bell espadaña graces the top of this mission.

By Brian Duchin

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River Walk entrance from LaVitta

Mission Espada, 10040 Espada Road, is about two miles from Mission San Juan Capistrano. Its distinctive features are the chapel's three-bell espadaña and the chapel doorway.

One of the most visited and popular San Antonio sites is the **River Walk (Paseo del Rio)**. It's an ideal location to photograph architecture, a winding river, parades and people. The city has expanded the River Walk to include the museum and mission reaches, but the best photographic opportunities are in the 2-1/2 mile downtown section. It's easily accessible from the convention's hotel. The winding riverbank sidewalks are ideal for picturesque photo walks. The River Walk features an outdoor theater, pedestrian-arched bridges over the river, and sidewalk cafes shaded by cypresses, willows, and oaks.

La Villita, located two blocks south of the Alamo, is a historic arts village which traces its roots to the mid-eighteenth century. It can also be reached from the River Walk at the bleachers, across from the Arneson River Amphitheatre. The Cos House is the only remaining structure from the Spanish era. Be sure to see The Little Church of La Villita which is a non-denomination church built in 1879. It's a popular venue for weddings.

The **San Antonio Central Library**, 600 Soledad Street, features strong, but simple geometric forms and an "enchilada red" exterior. As a bonus, Dale Chihuly's brightly-colored "Fiesta Tower" glass sculpture hangs in the atrium. The library is about a four-block walk north from the Wyndham hotel.

San Fernando Cathedral, located less than

a 10 minute walk south from the convention's hotel, is the city's oldest continuously functioning church. Its cornerstone was laid in 1738, with construction completed by the Canary Island and Mexican Army settlers in 1755.



Rose window

Mission Espada



The Spanish Governor's Palace, located approximately two blocks north of San Fernando Cathedral, was headquarters for the captain of the San Antonio de Bexar Presidio. It's the only remaining 18th-century Spanish Colonial house in San Antonio.

The King William Area, which is about two miles from the Wyndham, is a designated historic district of impressive homes built after the Civil War. They were designed in the Greek Revival,

Victorian, and Italianate styles. The main street into the King William neighborhood has sidewalks which will allow you to stroll this fashionable residential neighborhood. All of the homes are private residences, except the Norton-Polk Mathis house (Villa Finale) and the Steves Homestead. Villa Finale and the Steves Homestead are museums open to the public.

South of downtown, about 15 miles from the convention's hotel, is the 1200-acre **Mitchell Lake Audubon Center**. The Audubon center is home to 300 bird, 120 plant and 19 mammal species. September usually brings the migration of hummingbirds as they fly south to their winter homes in Mexico.

If you head north from downtown, you'll discover **JBSA-Fort Sam Houston** which is the oldest military base in San Antonio. Known locally as "Fort Sam," its history dates back 170 years. Over 900 historic buildings are at "Fort Sam" including 384 Post housing units. Former occupants of the officers' homes include former President Dwight Eisenhower, General Arthur Mac Arthur, Jr., and General John J. Pershing. The oldest structure on base is the Quadrangle and its famous four-sided clock tower.

Leaving the Wyndham Hotel and driving North on Broadway you will find the 30-acre **San Antonio Botanical Gardens** located at 555 Funston. The entrance is through the Sullivan Carriage house, a 19th-century home that was dismantled by stonemasons at its original downtown site in 1985 and reassembled stone by stone. The restoration took ten years. The Botanical Gardens include a native trail which displays

Tower Life Building





Arneson River Theatre

diverse plants from three ecological Texas regions, formal gardens that are changed seasonally, and pioneer architecture. The dramatic glass towers of the Lucile Halsell provide greenhouse space for a variety of desert and tropical plants. There is a bird-watch blind structure with slit openings.

Another area of interest off Broadway is the **Japanese Tea Gardens**, located in Brackenridge

Park. Originally a limestone rock quarry, it was transformed into a lush, sunken-water gardens.

The **San Antonio Zoo** is a short distance from the Japanese Tea Gardens. It spans 56 acres and has over 9,000 animals. It houses one of the largest bird collections in the country.

San Antonio offers you a variety of opportunities, whether you enjoy street, architecture, night or nature photography. Take advantage of a pre-dawn walk to the Alamo when crowds are sparse, or enjoy a relaxing photo walk along the River Walk at night. These events you can only experience in the Alamo City.



Mission Concepcion



Mission San Jose