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San Jose California: culture, opera, theater, and film festivals galore

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Photo: San Jose Opera - La Traviata

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Thursday, March 8, 2012 - [Out and About San Francisco](#) by Sherrie Perkovich



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SAN FRANCISCO, March 8, 2012 – San Jose, California often gets overlooked in the Bay Area when it comes to culture. We instantly think of Silicon Valley and high tech, the birth of the dot-com, and the future of communication. What is not top-of-mind when thinking of San Jose are the numerous cultural activities that it has to offer.

San Jose was founded in 1777 as *El Pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe*, and like many of the cities along the West Coast, for years was primarily an agricultural town engaging in farming to support the Spanish missions and military. When California became a state in 1850, San Jose served as its first capital city. Massive expansion in the San Francisco Bay Area began during World War II and continued into the 1950s and 1960s. Shortly thereafter, the growth of the high tech community began, and it hasn't let up since.

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With the high tech expansion came the intellectual crowd. This was a far cry from its farming roots, and San Jose and the greater Bay Area became thirsty for culture, art and entertainment. As a result, downtown San Jose experienced a gentrification and revitalization much like other cities throughout the US. There is an old school charm apparent as you walk through the streets of downtown. Buildings are not allowed to exceed 27 stories in height. As a result, a vintage aura surrounds you. Many of the 19th century buildings in San Jose appear on the National Register of Historic Places.

A brilliant example of this vintage charm can be found at the California Theatre, current home to the San Jose Opera. The theatre was opened in 1927 as a motion picture house, and it continues today as one of the best-preserved examples of late 1920s theatres. One is instantly taken with its rich marble pillars, long red velvet curtains, and elegant, boldly-painted high ceilings decorated with impressive, glowing chandeliers.

The California Theatre is a brilliant home for the [San Jose Opera](#), and is a place where the 2012 Season of the Legends' talented performers can feel inspired by their surroundings. Unfortunately, you just missed *La Traviata*, performed with the grace, emotion, and talent you might expect in a larger city like Chicago or New York. What would opera be without a bit of tragedy? Or a lot, in the case of *La Traviata*. Don't be surprised to find your face wet with tears while fighting the urge to cry out loud. Luckily, you can still catch their final performance of *Faust*, running April 21 – May 6, 2012.

The Opera certainly isn't the only show in town, however. Currently the annual [Cinequest](#) film festival is going on through March 11. Passion and innovation are the underlying themes of this year's festival.

Cinequest provides a unique, emotional, and often powerful way to experience life through film over the nearly two-week long festival. The festival is certainly heavy on drama, but also includes lighter comedies and a romantic-tragic mix of movies from around the world. Films not to miss include *The Lady*, *Children of the Green Dragon*, *Faust* (silent film) and *The Deep Blue Sea*.

Plays and other performances can be seen at The San Jose Center for Performing Arts, The San Jose [Repertory Theatre](#) (or locally, just The Rep), and The San Jose [Stage Company](#) (locally, The Stage). The Theatre for the Performing Arts is home to San Jose Broadway and Ballet, where currently you can enjoy Broadway shows such as *Beauty and The Beast*, and coming soon, Tony Award winner *In The Heights*, as well as *Million Dollar Quartet* and *Mary Poppins*.

San Jose is also home to museums such as The San Jose Museum of Art and The Tech Museum of Innovation. If sports are your thing, San Jose is home to the NHL Sharks, MLS Earthquakes, the San Francisco Giants' single "A" baseball farm team, and the professional tennis tournament, the SAP Open, in February.

With so much to do, it's a good idea to stay at least the night, or even for a few nights. One of the ideal and unique places to stay while in San Jose is at the [Hayes Mansion](#). Once a lavish private estate, this remarkable, turn of the century hotel makes you feel as though you have stepped back through time. If you want to stay a bit closer to downtown, the [Fairmont](#), with its fabulously luxurious Lobby Lounge, is a perfect place to stay, walking distance from nearly everything.

Whether you are a Bay Area local, or just visiting Northern California, be sure to add San Jose to your list, and experience the beauty, culture and nostalgic qualities that San Jose has to offer.



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Disney's Princess Half Marathon Slideshow

Disney's Princess Half Marathon Weekend from Feb. 24-26 was a fairy tale tour around Walt Disney World in Florida. Follow along with photos from the half-marathon, kids' races and 5K. (Photos: Courtesy of runDisney)

36 Photos



Gaylord Resort National Harbor: Love is in the air during Valentine's Month

Columnist Sherrie Perkovich offers an insider's perspective of the very best San Francisco has to offer. Join her weekly to experience the best the City by the Bay has to offer - from parties to parks and everything in between.

Sherrie is a San Francisco local who fancies herself an extroverted fine dining, wine drinking, know-it-all. If it's happening in the San Francisco Bay Area, Sherrie is in on it. Follow her column for the widest range of Out and About San Francisco treats.

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the Smithereens

The Smithereens appeared at the Rams Head Live in Annapolis on January 13,

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Cotto vs. Margarito - Madison Square Gardens December 3, 2011

Miguel Cotto, of Puerto Rico, defeats Antonio Margarito, of Mexico, reacts after Cotto was declared the winner of the WBA world junior middleweight boxing title, Saturday, Dec. 3, 2011.

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Natchitoches Christmas Festival

Festival of Lights, Natchitoches, Louisiana

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