

hotspots

THE Scotland Dance Film Festival finale in Edinburgh next Saturday will be a celebration of the 80s. Flashdance and Xanadu will get those shoulder pads grooving. See www.edinburghsparkles.com.

SANTA will be waiting at the end of the line to greet passengers from the Dartmouth Steam Railway on the two weekends leading up to Christmas. The Santa Steam Special features drinks, mince pies and lollipops.



SPECTACLE: Killer whales at SeaWorld are a real treat



RELAXING: La Jolla



BUSTLING: The Gaslamp Quarter spans 16 blocks



PACK AND GO

Bags packed but nowhere to go? Snap up a last-minute bargain...

£500

GAMBIA (14nts, h/b, 3*)
Dec 7, Manchester, £499
www.icelolly.com

GOA (7nts, h/b, 2*)
Dec 2, Gatwick, £453
www.onthebeach.com

NILE CRUISE (7nts, f/b, 4*)
Nov 28, Gatwick, £420
www.cosmos.co.uk
or call 0871 423 8401

CYPRUS (7nts, f/b, 3*)
Nov 20, East Midlands, £403
www.jet2holidays.com

£400

CYPRUS (7nts, a/i, 4*)
Nov 27, Gatwick, £369
www.thomson.co.uk
or call 0871 231 5595

MADEIRA (7nts, b/b, 5*)
Nov 18, Manchester, £345
www.firstchoice.co.uk
or call 0871 200 7799

FUERTEVENTURA (7nts, a/i, 5*)
Dec 7, Manchester, £379
www.thomson.co.uk

TURKEY (14nts, a/i, 5*)
Dec 13, Gatwick, £356
www.icelolly.com

£300

MOROCCO (7nts, a/i, 4*)
Dec 9, Gatwick, £259
www.icelolly.com

TUNISIA (7nts, h/b, 5*)
Nov 27, Gatwick, £240
www.onthebeach.co.uk

COSTA BLANCA (3nt, h/b, 4*)
Nov 29, Birmingham, £201
www.cosmos.co.uk

COSTA BRAVA (7nts, h/b, 3*)
Nov 20, Leeds/Bradford, £257
www.jet2holidays.com

£200

TENERIFE (7nts, s/c, 4*)
Dec 7, Manchester, £159
www.icelolly.com

BERLIN (3nts, b/b, 4*)
Jan 6, Liverpool, £120
www.easyJet.com/holidays

MALTA (7nts, b/b, 4*)
Dec 8, Gatwick, £149
www.easyJet.com/holidays

ALGARVE (3nts, b/b, 3*)
Dec 12, Manchester, £145
www.cosmos.co.uk

SAN DIEGO

mode of transport helps you see sights you never would otherwise – and it's a fun way to travel.

San Diego is extremely casual. Most of the locals wear shorts, T-shirts and flip-flops, even in restaurants. The locals were friendly and as soon as they heard an English accent – well, my North Eastern drawl – they were over like a shot to chat and tell us about their Uncle Jim, who lives in Manchester – “Do you know him?”

Californians are very proud of their beers and there are dozens of micro-breweries all over San Diego, so we visited some with Brew Hop tours.

We were escorted around the different venues by a beer expert called Summer.

She let us try lagers and stouts from all of the breweries we visited – and I loved them all. They brew

them up to 12 per cent proof, so don't expect to be doing too much after a couple of pints.

What Summer doesn't know about beer isn't worth knowing, so ask as many questions as you want.

As far as restaurants go, you're spoiled for choice. Being on the coast, San Diego enjoys some of the freshest seafood available and has some rather fine restaurants. Blue Point Coastal Cuisine was a favourite.

The ambience was just right and the waiters were extremely knowledgeable about the menu.

Downtown you have to visit Extraordinary Desserts, a small cafe with the most amazing cakes in the world. And

another restaurant worth visiting is 1500 Ocean at the Hotel del Coronado.

The building itself is worth a visit. Erected 120 years ago, it has become a bit of a city institution. The



BOAT-FUL: Head to the harbour

restaurant was romantic and, after our meal, we sat with a bottle of wine and watched the sun set over the Pacific.

Before leaving, we fitted in a two-day stay a short drive up the coast in the little town of La Jolla, which is pronounced “La Hoya”.

The area is affluent and a bit of a tourist trap but very down to earth. It was a great place to chill out and unwind from our busy time in downtown San Diego.

We stayed at the Estancia La Jolla, which has elegant rooms and a fantastic outdoor bar. Guests can enjoy a round of golf on the Torrey Pines Golf Course.

Admittedly, we didn't do much in La Jolla except relax.

It has great beaches, smart restaurants and there are plenty of bars to visit, so there wasn't much incentive to do anything else. One

restaurant deserves a particular mention.

It is the Nine-Ten, which holds a prestigious ‘Extraordinary to Perfection’ rating from restaurant review provider zagat.com.

A meal there set us back £30 per head but it was worth every penny to round off our final night in south California.

The worst bit about San Diego – and the whole of the region – is that there was so much still left to do, even after a couple of weeks.

Our difficulty now is deciding when is the soonest we can return.

FACTFILE British Airways offers return flights to San Diego from Heathrow seven days a week. Fares begin at £625pp, including taxes.

Paradise Point and Spa room rates start from around £100 per night.

The Omni offers rooms from around £150 per night. The Estancia La Jolla rates start from £100 per night.

For more information about the region, go to www.sandiego.org

TRAVEL TIPS

- **THE San Diego Go Car Tour** is a great way to see the city and fun for all the family.
- **VISIT Kansas City BBQ** restaurant in West Harbor Drive for a drink or a bite to eat – it's where the famous piano scene in *Top Gun* was filmed.
- **DISNEYWORLD** and Universal Studios in Los Angeles are just over an hour's drive away from San Diego. Be sure to pay them a visit to spot your favourite cartoon character or movie star.

Relax in style at Welsh country hotel, see P39