

# Best of San Juan

## PEOPLE'S CHOICE HORSESHOE AWARDS 2007 HISTORY AND OUTDOORS



### Outdoor Life Bests...

#### TRAIL

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#### San Juan Creek Trail

The San Juan Creek Trail is the backbone of San Juan Capistrano's 40-mile trail system and as diverse as the city itself. You can catch the trail as far east as Casper's Park off Ortega Highway, or pick it up behind Cook Park off Calle Arroyo. From there, you can take the trail all the way to Doheny Beach. The route's hard-packed dirt or asphalt all the way, so you can hike or bike.

Silver Horseshoe

#### Flag on the Hill Trail

A grassroots favorite, Flag on the Hill is a destination as much as a trail. The American flag flies on the hillside visible east of the San Diego Freeway, facing the Capistrano Valley. You can reach the Flag on the Hill from the trails off Camino las Ramblas or Cerro Rebal.

See the city's trail map online at [www.sanjuancapistrano.org](http://www.sanjuancapistrano.org) > Community > City Trails

### PARK FOR KIDS

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#### Cook's Park

Cook's Park stretches along Calle Arroyo, split by Avenida La Novia. On the east side are soccer, baseball and soccer fields with a small tot lot. To the west are basketball courts and a larger play area. There's a nice parking lot on the west, too.

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#### Stonehill Park (Dana Point)

OK, so it's not in San Juan, but our neighbors to the south created an impressive children's playground that's worth a little travel. You can reach it off Stonehill between Camino Capistrano and Del Obispo Street, or take the San Juan Creek Trail down.

See the city's parks at [www.sanjuancapistrano.org](http://www.sanjuancapistrano.org) > Departments & Services > Community Services > Parks and Facilities

### STABLES

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#### Ortega Equestrian Center

27252 Calle Arroyo, 949.661.3130

As the only stable in town where you can still rent a horse for a trail ride, Kathy and John Holman's Ortega Equestrian Center keeps the equine in our equestrian town. At the western end of Calle Arroyo, the center is home to the community-active 4-H Rangers youth group, the city's first horseshoe recycling program, and has even hosted TV's *Real Housewives of Orange County* for a ride.

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#### Sycamore Trails Stables

26282 Oso Road, 949.661.1755, [www.sycamoretrails.com](http://www.sycamoretrails.com)

Ron Hanson's Sycamore Trails Stables center at the north end of town has always enjoyed a reputation as a well-run establishment, and Hanson's well known for his donations and involvement in community efforts, too.

### PICNIC SPOT

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#### Cook's Park

Cook's Park is one of the few spots in town that offers barbecues and picnic tables, but check with the city or get there early—the Calle Arroyo park often fills up on weekends, as there are playgrounds and open fields to play on.

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#### Historic Town Center

There are no barbecues, but the area located off El Camino Real is a great spot for a sack-lunch picnics in the center of town. Picnickers will find a couple of tables under a mature shade tree, and it's walking distance from the Mission.

See information about the city's parks at [www.sanjuancapistrano.org](http://www.sanjuancapistrano.org) > Departments & Services > Community Services > Parks and Facilities

### EXAMPLE OF "PRESERVING THE PAST TO PROTECT THE FUTURE"

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#### Mission San Juan Capistrano

26801 Ortega Hwy., 949.234.1300, [www.missionsjc.com](http://www.missionsjc.com)

The Mission's come a long way since the days of the plastic cow in the front courtyard, and its ongoing preservation efforts are admirable. To date the Mission Preservation Society continues in-depth plans to keep the Jewel shining and often holds fund-raising events to execute projects. See [www.missionsjc.com](http://www.missionsjc.com) > Help Preserve the Mission to find out more.

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#### San Juan Capistrano Historical Society

Former President Tony Forster used to call the Historical Society the best in the country, and new President Tom Ostensen is keeping that drive going. The society's O'Neill Museum is home to an incredible Capistrano photo archive, the restored Leck House is beautiful and the society's continuing its work of creating a historical village in the Historic Los Rios District. See [www.sjhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.sjhistoricalsociety.com).

### History and Heritage Bests...

#### PLACE TO TAKE CHILDREN

##### Zoomars Petting Zoo

31791 Los Rios St., 949.831.6550, [www.zoomars.com](http://www.zoomars.com)

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A Capistrano favorite created by Gil Jones and his family, which now is continued and improved by new owners Carolyn and Omar Gonzalez. Zoomars is home to hundreds of animals that visitors can feed and pet: There are goats, emus, llamas, donkeys, alpacas, sheep, geese, ducks, guinea pigs and a bunny patch. The Gonzalezes, owners of Omar's Exotic Birds in Lake Forest, want the zoo to be a place where fun and learning go along like birds of a feather. It's become a popular place for children's parties, too, and also offers summer camps.



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##### Mission San Juan Capistrano

26801 Ortega Hwy., 949.234.1300, [www.missionsjc.com](http://www.missionsjc.com)

California students in fourth grade have to go to the Mission, but they enjoy it when in Capistrano. A big reason: Curiosity carts, which introduce visitors to history-related replica artifacts used at the Mission during its early days, held on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. The carts allow hands-on learning with items such as spurs, horseshoes, candles, pottery shards, branding irons and items used by Juaneño Indians. The carts are the creation of Ron Bauer, who helps teach the Mission Matters education program.

#### HISTORICAL SPOT

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##### Mission San Juan Capistrano

26801 Ortega Hwy., 949.234.1300, [www.missionsjc.com](http://www.missionsjc.com)

Every Mission has a nickname, but Mission San Juan Capistrano earned the right to be referred to as the "Jewel of the Missions." Founded in 1776, there's no question Capistrano wouldn't be the special place it is today without the Mission in its heart. See [www.missionsjc.com](http://www.missionsjc.com) to discover more.

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##### Los Rios District

At the right time of day, walking through the Historic Los Rios District is a stroll back in time. Some of the structures there go back to the community's founding, and much of it remains untouched by time. Los Rios is also home to Silver Horseshoe winner Ramos House Café, the Historical Society's O'Neill Museum, Zoomars Petting Zoo and the Tea House on Los Rios.

#### CAPISTRANO TRADITION

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##### Swallows Day Parade

Celebrating its golden anniversary this year, you'd never guess this event—one of the largest non-motorized parades in the country—started as a school carnival. Mark your calendars for March 29 this year.

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##### Christmas in San Juan Capistrano

The city might call it a Holiday Tree Lighting, but it falls in December and they light a big green tree. It's less than a decade old, but Capistrano's Christmas in the park, which features a show from the California Conservancy of the Arts that would make Andy Williams envious, has quickly become a favored tradition.

#### PLACE TO TAKE OUT OF TOWNERS

Golden Horseshoe

##### Mission San Juan Capistrano

It's the reason we're on the map, and there's a reason it's the third-highest visitor destination in Orange County. Adding the recorded audio tour last year caused the prices to creep up a bit, but at \$9 for adults, it's still a bargain. And remember, on Wednesdays, Capistrano residents with a valid photo ID may pay for one adult admission and bring in a guest for free.

Silver Horseshoe

##### Camino Real Playhouse

31776 El Camino Real, 949.489.8082, [www.caminoarealplayhouse.org](http://www.caminoarealplayhouse.org)

Who needs a movie theater in town? With the Camino Real Playhouse, you barely need cable. Throughout the course of the season, the theater offers dramas, comedies and a couple of annual favorites: the 1890s Western Melodrama in Swallows season, when the audience is encouraged to cheer the hero and boo the villain, and the annual Shakespeare Under Stars, aka Capo Shakes.