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San José History

About San José

Founded on November 29, 1777, as El Pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe, San José was California's first civilian settlement. San José was also the site of the first state capital. With the booming tech industry in the 1990s, San José earned its moniker as the Capital of Silicon Valley. With more than one million residents, San José is the largest city in Northern California and the 10th largest city in the United States.

- View the [City Fact Sheet brochure](#).

San José Historic Sites

The City is home to several buildings and destinations with rich historical importance.

Alviso Historic District

The Alviso Historic District, encompassing nine acres and a number of historic structures, is on the National Register of Historic Places. Alviso was first settled in the 18th century and, at one time, was the boating and shipping port of San José, when steamboats traveled regularly to and from San Francisco. The city was consolidated with the City of San José in 1968.

Cathedral Basilica of St. Joseph

The [Cathedral Basilica of St. Joseph](#), a Roman Catholic church in Downtown San José, was originally built in 1803. The original adobe structure was damaged by earthquakes in 1818 and 1822.

Circle of Palms Plaza

A group of palm trees encircling the California State Seal makes up the site of California's first state capitol (1849–1851). The Circle of Palms Plaza is located on Market Street near Plaza de César Chávez Park in Downtown San José.

Downtown Historic Buildings

The old Bank of America Building is one of the oldest buildings in San José. It was constructed in 1925 and was formerly the San José branch of the Bank of Italy. Designated a San José historical landmark, it is located at 12 South 1st Street. Downtown buildings on the National Register of Historic Places include:

- Building at 27-29 Fountain Alley
- De Anza Hotel
- Hotel Montgomery
- Hotel Sainte Claire

Hayes Mansion

The [Hayes Mansion](#), listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a Spanish Colonial Revival-style manor was purchased by the City of San José during the 1990s and has been meticulously renovated and transformed into a luxurious hotel, conference center, resort, and spa.

New Almaden Mine

The [New Almaden](#) quicksilver mine is located in the Santa Teresa Hills just south of San José and is part of Almaden Quicksilver County Park. At one time, it was the most productive mercury mine in the United States.

San José City Hall

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San José, CA 95113
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408 294-9337 TTY
Directions



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The City of San José is committed to open and honest government and strives to consistently meet the community's expectations by providing excellent service, in a positive and timely manner, and in the full view of the public.

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