

Chapter 1

County at a Glance

SUN DRENCHED AND OCEAN COOLED, San Diego is one of the most popular counties in the U.S., a mix of suburban, rural and metropolitan life that has turned countless visitors into permanent residents.

The county is bordered on the south by Mexico, on the north by Riverside County and Orange County, home of Disneyland, on the east by Imperial County and on the west by the Pacific.

There are two San Diegos. The first is the county, population 2,813,833, and within the county, the City of San Diego, population 1,223,400.

The county is rectangular in shape and, measured at its approximate center, runs roughly 73 miles from east to west and 58 miles north to south. In land, San Diego County covers 4,255 square miles, about half the size of Israel (7,984 sq. mi.) and Massachusetts (8,257 sq. mi.), twice the size of Delaware (2,057 sq. mi.), and a little over three times the size of Rhode Island (1,214 sq. mi.). Among the states, its closest approximation is Connecticut, 5,009 sq. mi.

Size, however, misleads. Over 90 percent of the residents live in towns and cities within 20 miles of the coast. As you move inland, the temperature rises, the terrain steepens and both combine to discourage development.

Much of central and east San Diego County has been left in ranches, Indian reservations and parks.

Weather

The air is dry, the summer mornings along the coast cool and often overcast (a condition called the June gloom), the afternoons and evenings hot but rarely humid, except in September when ocean evaporation puts more water into the air.

In an average year, 10 inches of rain fall in downtown San Diego, a scarcity which suggests that this is not the place for lawns. Nonetheless, many slightly burnt, they decorate the countryside. As for other parts of the county, Alpine gets an average of 17 inches of rain per year, Oceanside 11 and Poway 13.