

8 Musical Musts for San Antonio

San Antonio plays host to a wide range of music venues and genres. From the classical music of the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra, to numerous Tejano, rock, and jazz bands, to strolling mariachis, the city has something for every musical taste. Listed here are some of the most interesting.

BY CHERIE YURCO

1 Musical Mélange San Antonio has long been a cultural melting pot, and its cultural organizations work hard to preserve ethnic traditions, especially musical ones. The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center promotes the arts and culture of Chicano, Latino, and Native American peoples. At its annual Tejano Conjunto Festival in mid May, there are numerous performers, as well as instructional workshops. The Carver Community Cultural Center has a long history of supporting San Antonio's African-American community.



2 Best of Mariachi San Antonio is known for its five missions—Concepción, San José, San Juan, Espada, and of course, the Alamo. Both Concepción and San José have mariachi mass on Sundays—a truly uplifting and unique experience. San Antonio's eight-day Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza, held in the fall, features 1,000 mariachi musicians, playing the best mariachi music in the world.

3 Texas Cultures The Institute of Texas Cultures Celebrates the shared Texan heritage, including displays of diverse instruments brought to Texas by immigrants. In June, the Institute's Texas Folklife Festival brings together Texas ethnic groups to celebrate and share music and traditions. All proceeds are given back to cultural organizations so that the customs continue to stay alive.



Balcones Heights Jazz Festival

4 Jazz Galore From October 2011 to October 2012, San Antonio is hosting a Year of Jazz, celebrating jazz in the city and the 10th Anniversary of Trinity University radio station KRTU's jazz format. Each month during the Year of Jazz there's one special jazz event. (Visit www.yearofjazz.org for more information.) These events are in addition to San Antonio's annual Summer Art & Jazz Festival in June, Balcones Heights Jazz Festival held in July, and Jazz'SAlive in September.

5 Accordions Abound When European immigrants brought their accordions to the New World, the instrument was gradually incorporated into Mexican genres. One of the best places to experience this music is San Antonio. In early October, the International Accordion Festival draws accordion performers of the highest caliber, along with numerous educational workshops to the city. In all, about 160 ensembles perform more than 39 styles of music.



River Walk at Arneson River Theater

6 Down by the River The San Antonio River's unique River Walk weaves through the center of the city and is host to strolling mariachis, live outdoor performances, numerous live music venues, and even carolers and musicians performing on barges at Christmastime, when it is lit with more than 1.4 million lights.

7 Live Music Night Spots Among interesting live music venues

is Carmens de la Calle Café, a cozy tapas bar that features live jazz, flamenco, and world music. If you are looking for historic and unique, Olmos Bharmacy and Soda Fountain features jams, open mikes, and live music, and The Cove is a combination music venue, restaurant, laundromat, and carwash. Or take a 45-minute drive to Gruene (pronounced green), Texas. Built in 1878, Gruene Hall is the oldest continually running dance hall in Texas, and many greats have graced its stage, from George Strait to The Fabulous Thunderbirds. It features live music seven days a week.



Gruene Hall

8 Vintage Venues One thing you'll notice during a visit to San Antonio is the care the city has taken to preserve and repurpose older buildings rather than replace them. The city's Majestic Theater, built in 1929, is one of the finest atmospheric theaters ever built. Located in San Antonio's first neighborhood, La Villita, is the Arneson River Theater. Built in 1939, its grass-lined rows of 13 seats are separated from the stage by the San Antonio river, making for perfect views and superb acoustics. Carved out of a limestone quarry in the 1930s, the Sunken Garden Theater in Brackenridge Park is another unique outdoor venue.



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