



# San Diego Mission Basilica de Alcala

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## History

Mission San Diego de Alcala, California's first church, was founded on July 16, 1769 by Padre Junipero Serra, a Franciscan priest from Majorca, Spain. The Mission was first established on a hill overlooking the bay, that hill is now known as Presidio Hill. The mission was relocated to the present site in 1774 in order to be nearer the Indian Villages, a reliable source of water, and good land for farming.

The first of a chain of 21 missions which stretch northward along the coast of California, Mission San Diego became known as the Mother of the Missions. In 1775, the Mission was attacked by pagan Indians who destroyed it by burning the existing structures. Padre Luis Jayme, the pastor, was killed in this attack when he tried to calm the Indians. Padre Jayme became the first Christian martyr in California and is buried in the Mission Sanctuary.

Padre Serra returned to the gutted site in 1776 and began reconstruction of the church and Mission buildings. By 1780 most of the reconstruction of the Mission and its outbuildings was completed. The church and other buildings were arranged in a quadrangle around a patio. In 1813, the church was enlarged and the present church, rebuilt in 1931, mirrors it. Buttress wings were added during the 1813 enlargement to stabilize the facade in the event of an earthquake.

The year 1797 opened a chapter of prosperity for the San Diego Mission. Five hundred and sixty-five Indians received baptism, which brought the number of converts to 1405. The land area grew to 50,000 acres. Wheat, barley, corn, and beans were being harvested successfully. In the Mission's immediate vicinity were vineyards, orchards, and vegetable gardens. It is recorded that at this time the Mission owned 20,000 sheep, 10,000 cattle, and 1,250 horses.

The beginning of the end of the Mission System came in 1821 when Mexico gained its independence from Spain. During the Mexican Occupation of California, the Act of Secularization caused the Mission San Diego to be given over to Santiago Arguello.

During the period 1849-1855, the Mission was occupied by the U.S. Cavalry who used the mission as a fort to establish its presence after the Mexican American War. The soldiers made some temporary repairs to the decayed buildings in order to make them habitable. In 1862, 22 acres of the Mission lands were restored to the Church by order of President Abraham Lincoln.

The present Mission Church was named a minor basilica by Pope Paul VI in the bicentennial year of 1976. It serves today as an active parish for the Catholic community and as a cultural center for people of all faiths, who are most welcome to visit the Mission and relive the grandeur and excitement of 222 years.

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• Docent Tours for school children are offered Monday through Friday, September through May. The reservation line is open Monday through Thursday from 12:00 - 2:00 PM, Pacific Time, September through May at: 858.565.9077. Docent led tours cost \$20.00 per class, last approximately one hour and consist of a background study of mission history, a tour of the grounds, the church and the museum. Our docents are trained using primary source material.

• Professional Tour Companies may book tours by calling the mission at 619.283.7319.

• General Admission is \$ 3.00 per adult, \$ 2.00 for seniors, and \$1.00 for children 12 and under.

• A tote-a tape is available for \$ 1.50. Visitor Center Phone - 619-281-8449.

• Mass Schedule: Saturday 5:30 PM

Sunday	7:00 AM	Mass
	8:00 AM	Mass
	9:00 AM	Folk Music
	10:00 AM	Mass
	11:00 AM	Spanish
	12:00 Noon	Choir
	5:30 PM	Mass

Directions: From Interstate 8 proceed north on Mission Gorge Road. Turn left on Twain Avenue (becomes San Diego Mission Road) proceed to 10818 San Diego Mission Road.