



ALONG THE SHORES OF THE PACIFIC

Our initial plan was to embark on a train that travelled along the Ocean. I have crossed the Atlantic to travel to Europe and the Indian Sub-continent, but never had the experience of moving along Pacific, and that too, on a train. The blue waters extending up to the horizon make the sunrise and sunset sights to remember, I was told.

Before boarding on the Amtrak's Coast Starlight, we had a few days to stay in San Diego, and we wanted to make best of that very opportunity. My husband and I had read about San Diego and its beautiful beaches, year-round sun, parks and many must-see places and things-to-do, and we

attractions. We decided to stroll around the area to see the historical architecture and to stop at the museums.

The Balboa Park Botanical Building has a lily pond and a lagoon in the foreground. There are also intricate lath structures, which also happen to be one of the largest of its kind in the world. The garden has 2100 species including cycads, ferns, orchids and other tropical plants, and palms. There are beautiful flowers hanging from the wooden fences, big bushes covering the lath structures of the garden, and colourful orchids planted at every corner.

The San Diego Museum of Art has

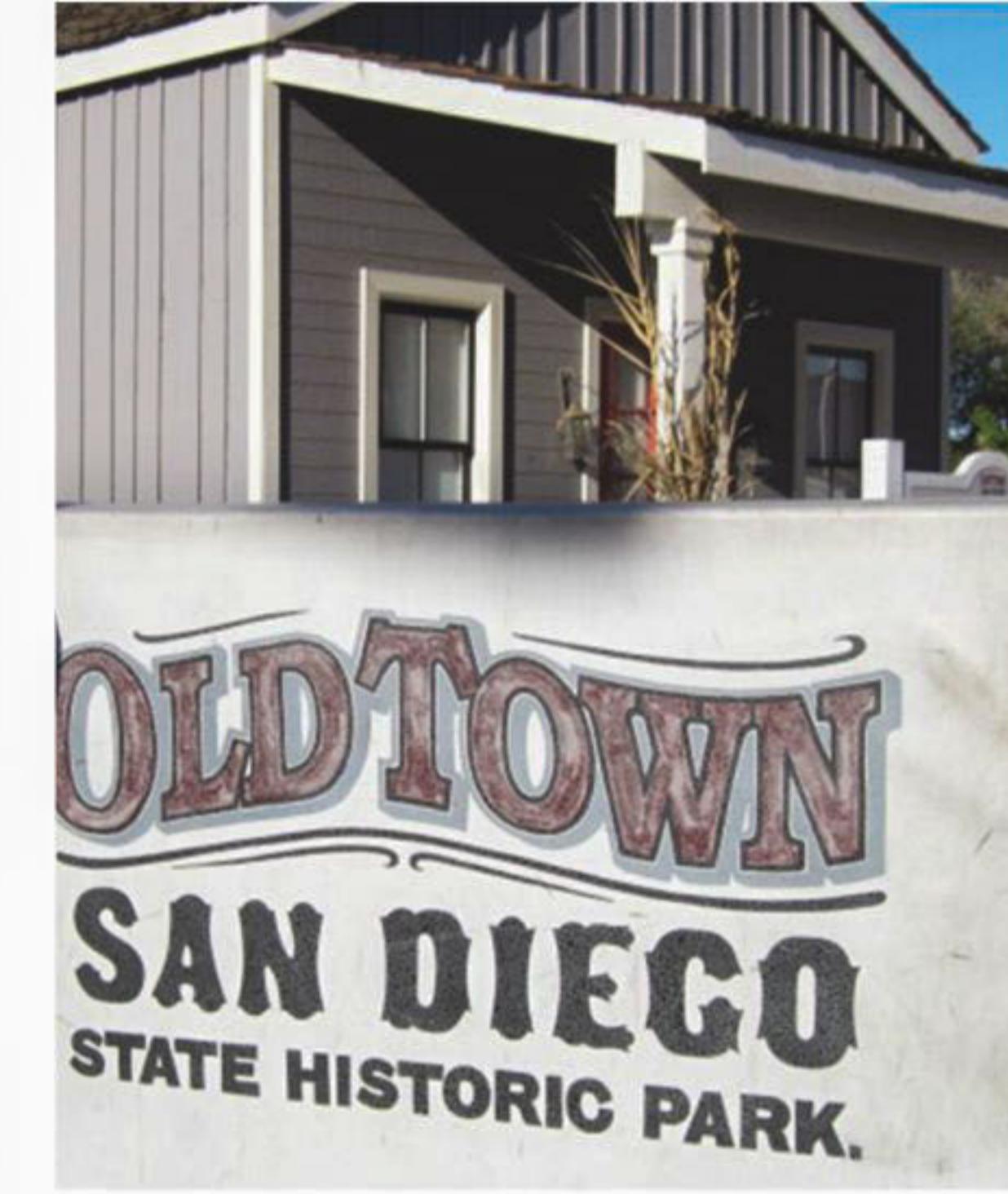
are 37 working studios where painters work and sell their artworks. We walked around the small shops and talked to the local painters and watched their demonstrations.

It would take more than a day to do proper justice to the Balboa Park only. We managed to cover as much as we could, but before we even realised, it was time to return to the hotel.

The next day, the weather was as bright and sunny as the day before and following breakfast at O'Hungry's Restaurant, we planned to walk around Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. The place is in the historic heart of San Diego, created in 1769 as

The next part of the trip was to travel along the shores of the Pacific by train. Amtrak has a Coast Starlight service which goes parallel along the coastline. The train journey starts from San Diego, California and we were boarding the train from there.

As I looked at the expansive mass of water through the glass window of the sightseeing lounge, I could not help but be awed. I readily realised why this is one of the best ways to experience the grandeur of the Pacific. The magnificent view of the blue sky moves along with the train and the glass ceiling dome of the lounge provided a view of the blue sky.



did not want to any of the special places worthy of a visit.

Pondering on the must-sees of the city, one that came up on top of most people's list is the famed Balboa Park - the nation's largest urban cultural park, located just minutes away from downtown San Diego, our temporary domicile.

The bus took us from Old Town San Diego straight to the Rose Garden at the Balboa Park. In and around the park, there are 15 museums, renowned performing art venues, beautiful gardens, a zoo and other

European Old Masters, Asian art, Americana art, and Modern and Contemporary paintings, and sculptures in its permanent collection. Another museum, which is just next to the Botanical building, is the Timken Museum of Art. The galleries of the museum have a wide ranging collection of European Old Master paintings, American paintings, and Russian icons.

Needless to say, both the Museum of Art and the Timken are frequented by those who share a passion for the arts.

At the Spanish Village Art Center, there

California's first settlement with only a mission and a fort. Old Town is now the place for food, folklore, shops, museums and fun.

Our plan was to head out for the Coronado Island (actually a peninsula) in the afternoon. It has white sandy beaches and a laid-back simplicity with beautiful view of the San Diego sky.

The Hotel Del Coronado is a grand 1888 hotel and offers a tour, which most love to take. Walking along the beaches, we found families playing on the sands and having a great time.

The Coast Starlight passes through Santa Barbara, San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento and Portland. And as we watched through the windows, the snow-covered peaks of the Cascade Range, the long stretches of Pacific Ocean, Mount Shasta, Klamath Falls, fertile valleys, and lush forests all came alive in front of our awed eyes. Along the Pacific Ocean by train is a long journey with an overnight stay on the train, which makes it more memorable. Hectic but a dream come true!

By Aeman T Rasul

Photo courtesy: Aeman T Rasul