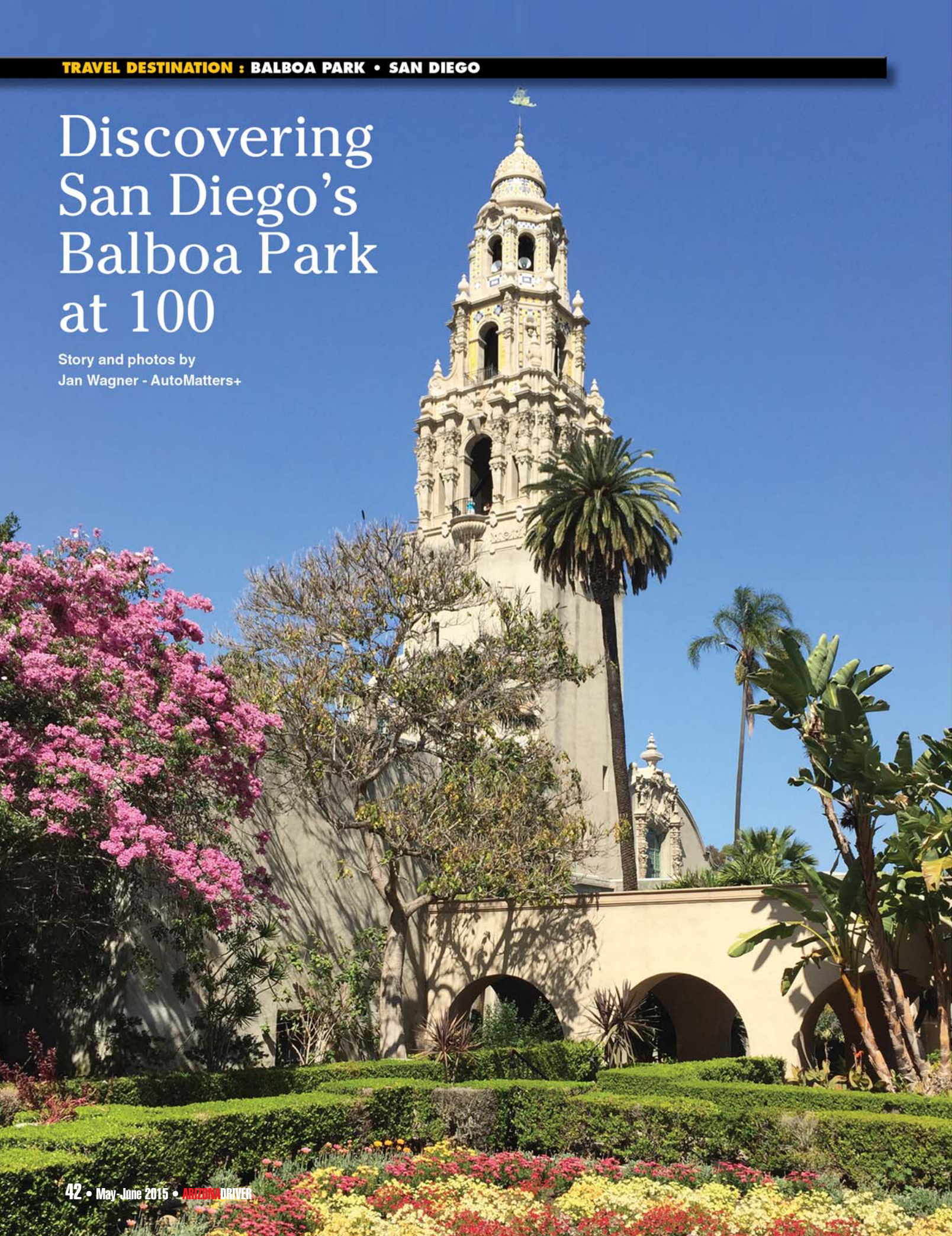


Discovering San Diego's Balboa Park at 100

Story and photos by
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Celebrating 100 years in 2015, Balboa Park is located just minutes from downtown San Diego. Within the park are 15 major museums, the renowned Old Globe theater, 1,200 acres of beautiful gardens, shopping, dining and the World Famous San Diego Zoo.

Balboa Park's 100th Celebration

The Panama California Exposition was held in San Diego from 1915-16 to commemorate the opening of the Panama Canal and to promote San Diego as both a port—"the first United States Port of Call in the Pacific"—and as a truly beautiful city.

That World's Fair and the California Pacific International Exposition, which followed in 1935, are responsible for much of the legacy of beauty and architecture found in today's Balboa Park. "Most of the arts organizations along Balboa Park's famous El Prado pedestrian walkway are housed in Spanish-Renaissance style buildings constructed for the 1915 Exposition," according to the Park's site, balboapark.org.

Balboa Park's 100-year anniversary celebration is already well underway.

STEAM Family Day

STEAM (for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) Family Day, in mid-March, was 2015's first major family-oriented event in the park. Presented by the Balboa Park Conservancy, it featured hands-on activities, crafts, demonstrations, special exhibitions and more.

Family Day activities included group butterfly releases from the Zoro Garden; puppet-making near the cherry blossoms in the Japanese Friendship Garden; live music, dance and sports demonstrations amid the "House of Pacific Relations" international cottages; a massive paper airplane build and launch, plus quadcopter aerial photography demonstrations at the San Diego Air & Space Museum; a giant, interactive, robotic giraffe in front of the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center; a fun and interactive Maker exhibit, courtesy of the San Diego History Center; a solar-powered train from the San Diego Model Railroad Museum; booths on the El Prado

(Left page) California Tower, open to the public for the first time since 1935. • (Right, top to bottom) 1915 Exposition Guide Book, at the San Diego Automotive Museum. • Butterfly release during STEAM Family Day. • STEAM Family Day, held in March.

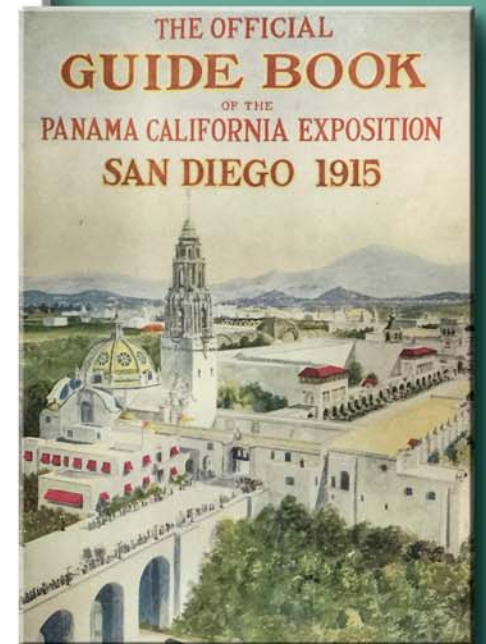
walkway; a Spreckels Organ Society concert featuring music for kids; hands-on art activities in the Spanish Village Art Center; and much more.

Garden Party of the Century

On Saturday, May 9, Balboa Park's "Garden Party of the Century" highlights one of the world's most interesting civic gardens. Enjoy flowers galore, master gardener demonstrations, floral artisans, the Marine Corps Commemorative Plant Exchange and Cabrillo Bridge March, a flower-filled Crofton Bug (a miniature Jeep-looking, early '60s-vintage vehicle from the San Diego Automotive Museum) and more. Entertainment will include organ pavilion concerts and the Youth Orchestra of the Californias.

Climb the California Tower

For the first time since it was closed to the public in 1935, you can take a guided tour up the California Tower at the San Diego Museum of Man. Climb the steep, shallow stairs of the metal spiral staircase to the public observation level and you will be rewarded with a bird's-eye view of Balboa Park and a panoramic, 360-degree view of San Diego. Keep a sharp lookout and you might spot a red-tailed hawk. Down below, on the roof of Balboa Park's



(Top to bottom) Bea Evenson Fountain on El Prado.
• “War Years” at the San Diego Automotive Museum.
• Trumpet flower blossoms at the Japanese Friendship Garden. • The Balboa Park Botanical Building.

internationally acclaimed Old Globe theater, you’ll see where they ‘hide’ The Grinch in-between Christmas seasons.

The tower’s carillon, originally installed in 1946, was upgraded to 100 chimes in the 60s. It plays pre-recorded, seasonal songs each day at noon.

Automotive Museum war exhibit

On exhibit at the San Diego Automotive Museum through June 26 is “Balboa Park, the War Years.” Using informative panels and a collection of vintage military vehicles, uniforms and other historical memorabilia, it chronicles important contributions made to the war effort by the San Diego region during World War II.

IMAX “Journey to Space”

The California Premiere of “Journey to Space” gives us an exciting look at the past, present and future of manned space exploration. Used to full advantage is the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center’s giant IMAX dome screen, with state-of-the-art digital technology that incorporates four Sony 4K resolution cinema-grade projectors and a 16,000-watt digital surround sound system. Together these convey a powerful sense of a space shuttle launch.

We learned that following the successful unmanned test flight of the Orion spacecraft, work is well underway to develop and refine the technology that will be required to send manned missions on the long, 34-million mile journey to Mars—and back again—in the not-too-distant future. San Diego may well play a role in that. (Another project in the works envisions taking settlers taking a one-way trip to Mars, where they will establish a permanent settlement on this new world. For more information, see the Mars One project at mars-one.com.)

For more information on park history, visit balboapark.org/info/history, and for more about centennial celebration festivities, visit celebratebalboapark.org. ■

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Award-winning **JAN WAGNER** has been writing professionally since 1979 and an avid photographer for as long as he could hold a camera. He was a television writer/producer in his native Alberta, before transferring to his current home in San Diego.

