



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## City of San Antonio Celebrates Fifth Anniversary of San Antonio Missions as UNESCO World Heritage Site with First-Time Virtual Festival



**PHOTO:** *Mission San Jose, the "Queen of the Missions" takes center stage during the 2020 World Heritage Festival as it celebrates its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.*

**SAN ANTONIO (August 19, 2020)** – All eyes will be on San Antonio's historic missions to celebrate a major milestone, and – for the first time – most of those eyes will watch through the screen of a computer or mobile device. This year, the City of San Antonio's annual World Heritage Festival is going virtual to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the San Antonio Missions' designation as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The 2020 World Heritage Festival begins Tuesday, September 8 and runs through Sunday, September 13.

The festival was established in 2016 to commemorate the anniversary of the World Heritage Site inscription in 2015. The festival provides an opportunity for residents

and visitors to celebrate San Antonio's unique history, heritage, and culture. This year, for the safety of the community in response to the current pandemic, events will transition to online-only or events that allow for proper social distancing. From online events including a trivia night for the community to learn more about the missions and a pre-recorded concert inside Mission San Jose Church, to outdoor experiences including a photo exhibit and a cycling/running/walking tour of the missions – there are still plenty of ways for the community to safely take part in this year's festival.

"This year's World Heritage Festival is special because we are not only celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Missions as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but this year is also the 300th anniversary of Mission San Jose, the Queen of the Missions," said District 3 Councilwoman Rebecca J. Viagran. "The World Heritage Festival, even as a virtual event, is an opportunity for us to come together and reflect on our unique history and heritage, and continue sharing traditions and our stories with younger generations."

San Antonio's five Spanish Colonial missions – San Jose, San Juan, Espada, Concepcion, and The Alamo – remain the first and only UNESCO World Heritage Site in Texas, and one of 24 in

the country. Mission San Jose, also known as the Queen of the Missions, celebrates its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and is the focus of several World Heritage Festival Events.

“Five years ago our community achieved World Heritage status, a community process that took over nine years. We continue to work with our residents and community to leverage this designation,” said Colleen Swain, Director of the World Heritage Office. “To celebrate this achievement, we are providing more activities this year that are free, while keeping our community safe through virtual event options.”

This year’s schedule of events includes (events are free unless otherwise noted):

**Tuesday, September 8 – Sunday, September 13, 2020**

**Virtual Tour de Las Misiones Bike Ride, Walk & Run**

This year’s Tour de las Misiones celebrates Mission San Jose’s 300th year! The event is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to visit and learn about the historic San Antonio Missions. This bike ride, walk and run can be completed by registered participants using the designated routes or by using their own routes to tour the Missions. Tours must be completed September 8-13, 2020. Participants are asked to observe health and safety recommendations and social distancing guidelines during their tours. Register online before September 3, 2020 to be guaranteed to receive a commemorative finisher’s medal, T-shirt, 2020 World Heritage Festival Fiesta Medal, runner’s bib, and keepsake passport to use while exploring the Missions. Registration fees range from \$25-\$35. Information is available at [www.worldheritagefestival.org](http://www.worldheritagefestival.org).

The tour is presented by the City of San Antonio’s World Heritage Office, Bexar County, the San Antonio River Authority, America’s Walking Club, South Texas Off Road Mountain Bikers, SATX Social Ride, and IAAPWEB.

**Tuesday, September 8, 2020**

**Exhibit Opening - “Bridging Cultures: Photography Exhibition of the Classical Gardens in Suzhou, China”**

*Open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily*

*Mission San Jose, 6701 San Jose Drive, 78214*

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Friendship City relationship between San Antonio and Suzhou, China, the two cities have partnered to present this outdoor photo exhibition on the grounds of Mission San Jose honoring the flourishing connections enjoyed by the citizens of the two cities. The Classical Gardens in Suzhou are, like the San Antonio Missions, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

This exhibit will remain on display through fall 2020, and is presented by the City of San Antonio, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, San Antonio Museum of Art and the Municipality of Suzhou.

**Wednesday, September 9, 2020**

**Virtual Master Class: Heritage Conservation of the San Antonio Missions**

*2-3 p.m.*

Enjoy and learn more about our treasures, the historic San Antonio Missions. The University of Texas at San Antonio presents a public lecture with featured UTSA professors, William Dupont and Dr. Angela Lombardi. Speakers will discuss their heritage conservation work on our UNESCO World Heritage San Antonio Missions. Q&A with speakers will follow their presentation. Join us for this opportunity to learn about the work being done to preserve our missions. Visit [www.worldheritagefestival.org](http://www.worldheritagefestival.org) for updates.

**Thursday, September 10, 2020**

**Virtual San Antonio Missions Trivia Night**

7:30 p.m.

Register on [Eventbrite](#)

Learn more about the San Antonio Missions and their rich and vibrant history with an evening of virtual trivia. The National Parks Conservation Association, Trivia for Us and program partners will lead this this fun and interactive evening event. Registration required to participate.

**Friday, September 11, 2020**

**Virtual Classical Concert: Celebrating Mission San Jose**

7 p.m.

WATCH: [YouTube](#) (@WorldHeritageSA) or [Facebook](#) (@worldheritagefestival)

To celebrate the Mission San Jose Tricentennial, the 2020 World Heritage Festival presents a magical virtual experience of classical music by Agarita Chamber Players. The performance, from the inside of the Mission San Jose Church, will open with a prayer by Father Rogelio Martinez, Pastor at Mission San Jose.

**Sunday, September 13, 2019**

**El Camino de San Antonio: Caring for Creation Outdoor Mass**

8 a.m.

*Mission San Jose, 6701 San Jose Drive, 78214*

Join Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSPS, in a celebration of the Season of Creation with an outdoor mass at Mission San Jose at 8 a.m. in celebration of the Mission's 300th anniversary. The theme of the event is "Jubilee for the Earth: New Rhythms, New Hope." Participants are asked to observe health and safety recommendations and social distancing guidelines.

Partners for the 2020 World Heritage Festival include: City of San Antonio, Bexar County, San Antonio River Authority, National Parks Conservation Association, The Alamo, National Park Service, Las Misiones, and Mission Heritage Partners.

For more information on the 2020 World Heritage Festival, visit [www.worldheritagefestival.org](http://www.worldheritagefestival.org).

**Pre-recorded interviews in English and Spanish, photos, and video footage are available for media [here](#).**

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