



# EL CAMINO DE SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS

Over 300 years ago Franciscan missionaries founded a mission along the banks of the San Antonio River. Soon four more were established further south, nestled along the river. Over the next seventy-five years, native people of this region worked with the missionaries transforming these frontier out-posts into self-sustaining Catholic communities. In 1731 new settlers from the Canary Islands arrived in San Antonio and established a small church that would become San Fernando Cathedral—the spiritual and physical center of San Antonio. Today, the four mission churches and the Cathedral still exist as active parishes that reflect a unique blending of cultures. We invite you to encounter these sacred spaces by learning their history, cherishing their stories, and experiencing their faith through El Camino de San Antonio Missions.

## Mission Concepción

Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña was completed in 1755 and is the oldest unrestored stone church in the United States. But unrestored does not mean unchanged. Originally it had colorful exterior decorations and numerous frescoes within the church, portions of which are still visible. The church is named in honor of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, another name for the Virgin Mary, Jesus' Mother. Inside you will see several images of the Virgin Mary.



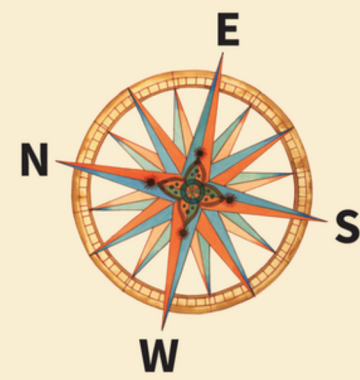
Mission Concepción

## Mission San Juan

Mission San Juan Capistrano moved from east Texas to San Antonio in 1731. It is the closest mission to the San Antonio River that provided all the missions with water for their crops through an innovative series of acequias or water canals built by the mission Indians. These acequias are still visible, and at Mission San Juan you can experience history as the fields are still watered by an acequia in existence since the eighteenth century.



Mission San Juan



San Fernando Cathedral

## San Fernando Cathedral

San Fernando Cathedral has been the center of life in San Antonio since the original church was built in 1750. The original church walls were incorporated into the current Cathedral. While not a mission, this church was closely connected to all the missions. As the oldest continuous functioning Cathedral in the United States, San Fernando represents the heart of San Antonio, past and present.



Mission San José

## Mission San José

Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo is over 300 years old. Known as the "Queen of the Missions," it is one of the most active parishes in South San Antonio. The beautiful architecture, sculptures, paintings, and mosaics were created to share the Catholic Faith and lift the minds of all who entered the Church from earthly things up to the beauty and grace of heaven.



Mission San Francisco de la Espada

## Mission San Francisco de la Espada

Mission San Francisco de la Espada is the smallest and oldest of the San Antonio missions having begun in East Texas in 1691 before moving to San Antonio in 1731. At its peak the mission was occupied by over 100 Indian converts who manufactured bricks, ran a ranch with 1000 head of cattle, and learned textile skills. Today many visitors come to the mission to pray before the crucifix containing the relic of Saint John Paul II.

