If you travel throughout San Antonio, you will come across the Mission Trail. Along this trail, you will have the chance to step back into time and visit all five of San Antonio’s historical missions. Built by the Spanish during the colonial period, they stand as a reminder of San Antonio’s cultural heritage. Among the five missions, one stands out, Mission San Jose y San Miguel de Aguayo.

The building of the mission began in the early 1700’s. San Antonio was a small community in the middle of the wilderness. The mission was the vision of a sixty-three year old priest, Friar Antonio Margil. It would take fourteen years to complete the constructing of San Jose. Native Americans helped the Franciscan friars build the mission. As they worked on the buildings, they would also build mounds of dirt next to the walls for support. Once construction had ended, the earth was removed and the beautiful mission was unveiled.

On the grounds of the mission, you can visit the quarters of the people who lived there. Most of the quarters housed Native Americans. They would spend most of their time inside of the mission except for when they were farming. The construction of the church began in 1758 and would take twenty-four years to complete. Inside of the church, you can find a winding, spiral staircase that was hand-craved from an oak tree. You will also see the hand-carved Rose Window, which took almost five years to make.

Mission San Jose was officially closed in 1824. Throughout the years, the church was used to house troops and conduct religious ceremonies. The mission soon fell into disrepair. Damage was caused by the soldiers. The dome and roof collapsed in 1868. The large bell tower fell down in 1928. It would seem that the once beautiful and productive mission would soon be nothing but rubble. In 1932, the San Antonio Conservation Society began a campaign to restore the missions. In 1941, San Jose became a state historical park and would be run by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department until 1983. In 1983, the Missions became part of the National Parks Service. The church is still being used today for religious services and weddings.