

DESTINATION REPORT

YOUR TRAVEL SPECIALIST



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Customer satisfaction is job #1 for me and I work tirelessly to ensure my customers receive the best service, the most up-to-date information, and the greatest value for their travel expenditures.

YOUR TRAVEL SNAPSHOT: Destinations included in this guide

San Francisco, CA

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DESTINATION GUIDE

San Francisco, CA



INTRODUCTION

San Francisco, California, is a world-class destination, a favorite of international travelers and domestic tourists alike. An unmatched spectrum of dining experiences, first-class cultural events, exceptional scenery and a pleasant climate combine for an enjoyable visit. Tourism is its prime industry, and the city has a thriving convention business that keeps its hotels and restaurants busy throughout the year.

You'll find San Francisco one of the world's most scenic cities—the Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars, Chinatown, pastel Victorian houses, steep hills, extraordinary restaurants and, of course, earthquakes and fog. See the white-capped waters of San Francisco Bay, eat crab cakes along Fisherman's Wharf, attend a game with one of the Bay Area teams—the 49ers or the Giants. The roller-coaster landscape of hilly streets, the diverse population and the spectacular setting on San Francisco Bay charm visitors from all over the world.

MUST SEE OR DO

Sights—The Golden Gate Bridge; a cable-car ride over Nob Hill; Golden Gate Park; Fisherman's Wharf; a ferry ride to Sausalito; the postcard row of Victorian homes at Alamo Square; gourmet goods at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market in the Ferry Building; Lombard Street, the crookedest street in the U.S.

Museums—The Asian Art Museum; the Legion of Honor; the de Young Museum; the Cable Car Museum; San Francisco Art Institute; Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD); Seymour Pioneer Museum; the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

Memorable Meals—Vegetarian lunch at Greens; dim sum at Ton Kiang; sushi at Ozumo; dinner, dancing and great city views at Top of the Mark; Irish coffee at the historic Buena Vista Cafe while watching the sun set.

Late Night—Cocktails and film noir at Lone Palm; *Beach Blanket Babylon* at Club Fugazi; dancing at Harry Denton's Starlight Room atop the Sir Francis Drake Hotel.

Walks—Hiking across the Golden Gate Bridge; strolling anywhere along the 10-mi/15-km coastline from the Embarcadero through the Golden Gate Promenade (in the Presidio); shopping around Union Square; exploring the smaller streets and alleys of Chinatown; climbing the garden-lined stairway to Coit Tower.

Especially for Kids—Aquarium of the Bay and watching the sea lions at Pier 39; hands-on science fun at the Exploratorium; a plethora of kid-friendly attractions at the Children's Creativity Museum, at the Rooftop at Yerba Buena Gardens; paddleboats on Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park; the living roof at the California Academy of Sciences; a nature trek along the Presidio's ecology trail; the San Francisco Zoo; The Walt Disney Family Museum.

GEOGRAPHY

Perched on the northern tip of a peninsula, San Francisco is surrounded on three sides by water: to the west by the Pacific Ocean; to the east by San Francisco Bay, with Berkeley and Oakland on the other side (across the East Bay); and to the north by the narrow mouth of the Bay, spanned by the Golden Gate Bridge, which stretches to Marin County.

More than 50 hills stud "the City" (as San Franciscans call it), accounting for the bounty of breathtaking views. These hills break up and isolate otherwise contiguous communities. It's a city of neighborhoods, each with its own distinct character and attractions. Some of the most visited are Union Square, the Financial District, SoMa (the area south of Market Street), the Embarcadero, Chinatown, North Beach and Fisherman's Wharf, all clustered in the northeast corner of town.

Other neighborhoods well worth visiting are Japantown, the Mission, the Castro, the Marina, Pacific Heights, Nob Hill, the inner and outer Richmond and Sunset districts, and Haight-Ashbury, which adjoins the eastern tip of Golden Gate Park. The park itself stretches westward to the Pacific Ocean, dividing two large residential neighborhoods, Richmond to the north and Sunset to the south.

HISTORY

The San Francisco Bay Area was originally inhabited by the Miwok and Ohlone people about 10,000 years ago. However, after Spanish explorers arrived in 1775, the Native Americans were almost wiped out by disease and mistreatment. The Spanish established an army base at the Presidio and the Mision San Francisco de Asis (more commonly known as Mission Dolores). The Spanish themselves were pushed out in 1846 when U.S. forces captured San Francisco during the Mexican-American War, and a small outpost founded by Mormon priest Sam Brannan became an official part of the U.S.

Just two years later, a sawmill owner named James Marshall discovered gold around the American River (a little more than 100 mi/160 km from San Francisco). Brannan publicized the discovery, setting off the largest peacetime migration in U.S. history. The population leaped from 500 to 50,000 in one year, as people from all over the world rushed to the area in search of riches. A few years later in 1858, just as the gold rush was waning, the Comstock Lode of silver was discovered.

In the following decades, the city grew from a collection of tents to a world-class metropolis where the new gold and railroad barons could enjoy the finer things in life. San Francisco also became known for its many brothels, saloons and opium dens. The city developed in size and importance as a shipping port and military garrison. Abandoned fortifications can still be explored along the coastline, and tourist destinations line some of the old piers.

In April 1906, an immense earthquake struck, and one result was a fire that raged for three days. Some 400 people were killed, and half of San Francisco was destroyed. The city rebuilt itself quickly—much of the renowned architecture you see today dates from that era. City leaders, however, thwarted plans to rebuild the red-light district.

In 1915, the Panama-Pacific Exposition was held in the Marina District. The Palace of Fine Arts was built for it. During that same year, San Francisco's city hall was rebuilt.

San Francisco was a major staging area for troops during World War II, and its burgeoning shipbuilding industry attracted a diverse mix of people. As an international port linked to distant cultures, and as a destination for a multitude of Americans with various backgrounds, San Francisco became known for its liberal leanings and a tolerance for differences.

During the 1950s, the Beat Generation writers—Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and others—congregated in San Francisco, creating a subculture of poets and writers in the North Beach neighborhood. Their music was jazz. When North Beach rents went up in the 1960s, many bohemians moved to the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood; out of that grew the hippie movement and a steady stream of literary and musical innovation. The city's tradition of diversity continued in the 1970s and 1980s as the Castro district became a mecca for gays and lesbians from all over the world.

Despite another major earthquake in 1989, San Francisco's economy has prospered. Another "gold rush" erupted in the 1990s with the technology boom. San Francisco and neighboring Silicon Valley became a hotbed of dot-com innovation. Renovations at City Hall, the development of the area South of Market (or SoMa), the construction of the main library and other expenditures reflect those indulgent times. Today, San Francisco is still fueling the digital revolution and leads the way in green technologies.

POTPOURRI

Denim jeans were invented in San Francisco by German immigrant Levi Strauss. The miners, who went there for the gold rush, needed strong but comfortable pants.

The song "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" was written by a gay couple—George Cory and Douglass Cross—in Brooklyn, New York, in 1953. Tony Bennett first recorded it in 1962 as the B-side for "Once Upon a Time."

Filbert Street between Hyde and Leavenworth (in Russian Hill) is reportedly the steepest street in San Francisco at an angle of 31.5 degrees. As for the city's most crooked street, it's actually not the legendary Lombard Street, but

rather Vermont Avenue, between 20th and 22nd streets in Potrero Hill.

The Beatles' last concert was performed on 29 August 1966 at Candlestick Park, the sports arena standing along the Bay Shore between the city and the airport.

Local legend says fortune cookies were first served in the U.S. at the Golden Gate Park's Japanese Tea Garden in the early 1900s by a landscape designer named Baron Makoto Hagiwara. You can see how they are made and enjoy them fresh from the Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory in Chinatown just off Ross Alley.

Bison have lived in Golden Gate Park since 1892, when the park used to be a free-range zoo. Although elk, bear and goats are no longer residents, the bison can still be seen grazing in the Bison Paddock near Spreckles Lake.

In 1901, San Francisco outlawed further burials in town because of a lack of space. All bodies were shipped to the city of Colma, just south of San Francisco. Fans of the macabre, by the way, enjoy pointing out that, in Colma, which was incorporated as a necropolis in the 1920s, dead residents outnumber those still living by a margin of more than 1,000 to one.

The Golden Gate Bridge was originally painted "International Orange" as a temporary primer before it got that color permanently.

LOCATION

The Port of San Francisco opened its new cruise terminal in September 2014. Situated on the city's famed Embarcadero, Terminal 27 totals 88,000 sq ft/8,180 sq m on two levels. Redevelopment of the pier had been in the works since 2007.

The new terminal comes with an overhead gangway for boarding passengers along the Pier 27 apron and shoreside power infrastructure to permit docked ships to shut down their onboard engines. A 3-acre/1-hectare triangular paved area between Pier 27 and Pier 29 has been developed as a ground transportation and provisioning area. The existing terminal at Pier 35, at the intersection of North Point Street and the Embarcadero, will continue as a secondary terminal when there is more than one cruise ship in port.

Pier 39, the popular waterfront shopping area, is just a few blocks west, and just beyond that is Fisherman's Wharf. To the east lie Embarcadero Center and Market Street. Both are connected by the historical streetcars (Muni's F-line) running along the Embarcadero, and there are paid parking lots and meters nearby.
<http://sfport.com/index.aspx?page=2509>.

Have your camera ready when your ship sails under the Golden Gate Bridge, and past Alcatraz (the famed penitentiary) and Angel Island (once the detention center for Chinese immigrants). The bridge farther ahead is the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. From the cruise terminal you can see two of San Francisco's architectural landmarks, the Coit Tower and the Transamerica Pyramid.

A California Welcome Center is located on the upper level of Pier 39, where you'll find a pleasant staff, plenty of information and free maps. Internet access is also available. Open daily 9 am-7 pm, with extended hours in the summer. Phone 415-981-1280. <http://www.visitcalifornia.com/California-Welcome-Centers/San-Francisco>.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

Typical excursions may take you on a tour of the city's sights or on a motorized cable car (lots of fun for large groups), a ferry ride to Alcatraz, the Golden Gate Bridge, a tour of Fisherman's Wharf, shopping in Union Square, a walk through North Beach and more.

Farther excursions take you through the majestic redwood forests of Muir Woods, wine tasting in the Napa or Sonoma valleys, relaxing in scenic Carmel, dramatic coastal views of Big Sur or sightseeing in Yosemite. Check with your travel agent for more information.

SIGHTSEEING

San Francisco offers a combination of scenic beauty, artistic accomplishments and brash character that is unmatched in the U.S. It's one of our favorite cities in the world.

Start by viewing the Golden Gate Bridge and Golden Gate Park and walking down one of the most crooked streets in the world (Lombard). Explore some art museums and one of the world's most innovative, hands-on science museums. Stop by one of the country's few fortune-cookie factories, too.

As you're walking around downtown San Francisco, don't forget to look up: You'll find extraordinary architectural detail on the upper levels of buildings, above the storefronts. Some fine examples of Victorian architecture are the often-photographed Painted Ladies, the row houses lining Alamo Square that have been seen in many a movie and TV show.

With the reclamation of the Presidio from the military and the Embarcadero from the freeway, it's theoretically possible to walk or bike the entire 10-mi/15-km stretch of U-shaped shoreline that hugs the northern tip of San Francisco. But don't attempt to do it all at once—break it up into separate sections or you'll exhaust yourself. Besides, there's just too much to see on the way.

The whole waterfront area underwent a complete structural renaissance after the massive Loma Prieta earthquake that tore up the Bay Area in 1989. It led to the the construction of AT&T Park, the Giants' stadium.

What makes San Francisco even more appealing is that it's the nucleus of the larger Bay Area, whose many sights and activities augment San Francisco's beauty and culture. Among the choices are the giant redwoods of Muir Woods, the charming bayside city of Sausalito (with its slew of art galleries and inviting cafes), and the collegiate atmospheres of Palo Alto (Stanford) and Berkeley (University of California, Berkeley). Strolling along the northernmost stretch of Berkeley's lively Telegraph Avenue—lined with ethnic eateries, eclectic shops, used-book stores, record outlets, and colorful street stalls selling handmade jewelry and tie-dyed T-shirts—makes for a memorable day of browsing.

A CityPASS is useful if you plan on visiting multiple points of interest such as museums and other attractions. The pass (US\$86 adults, US\$64 children ages 5-11) is good for nine days, starting the first day you use it, and is valid for four major city attractions: California Academy of Sciences, Blue & Gold Fleet Bay Cruise, Aquarium of the Bay or the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and either the Exploratorium or the Fine Arts Museums, which consist of both the de Young Museum and the Legion of Honor. (CityPASS holders wishing to visit both Fine Arts Museums must do so on the same day.) Other perks include shopping discounts and additional admission discounts, as well as unlimited use of Muni buses and street cars—including cable cars—for seven days. If you purchase a CityPASS from Alcatraz Cruises, you can substitute an Alcatraz Island Tour in place of the Blue & Gold Fleet Bay Cruise. Be sure to set aside about two-and-a-half hours for the Alcatraz tour. <http://www.citypass.com/san-francisco>.

HISTORIC SITES

Alcatraz Island

This complex of buildings on an island in San Francisco Bay has served time as a federal prison (famous inmates included Al Capone and George "Machine Gun" Kelly), a military fort, a meeting site for Native American activists and even a location for several motion pictures. It now draws hundreds of visitors daily, partly because of a fascination with criminals, partly because of popular depictions in movies and partly because the ferry ride to the island is wonderfully scenic and refreshing. The island falls under the authority of the National Park Service, which can provide historical and environmental information. Several of Alcatraz's historic gardens have been restored and are open for tours. <http://www.alcatrazgardens.org>.

Memorable—if a bit creepy—is the more engaging, and slightly more expensive, Night Tour of Alcatraz. The tour includes a personally narrated boat ride, sunset over the Golden Gate Bridge and a longer, more extensive tour of the island. Alcatraz Cruises also offers a unique half-day trip to Alcatraz and Angel Island, which includes an hour-long narrated tram tour of Angel Island. Allow five-and-a-half hours for the combined island tours. <http://www.alcatrazcruises.com>.

Call ahead, book online or stop by the ticket counter at Pier 33 to make reservations. Summer is by far the busiest season for Alcatraz tours, so book early—weeks, even months in advance, if possible. The weather can be unpredictable, so be prepared for wind, cold and rain. Keep in mind that Alcatraz Island is closed to visitors on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, and Alcatraz Cruises does not operate on Thanksgiving Day. Day tours depart approximately every 30 minutes 9:10 am-4:25 pm, with an early-bird tour at 8:45 am. Docent-led garden tours Friday and Sunday at 9:30 am. Night tours are depart Thursday-Monday at 5:55 and 6:30 pm and last approximately two-and-a-half hours. Plan to arrive 20 minutes prior to departure time. Day tours with audio: US\$30 adults, US\$28.25 seniors, US\$18.25 children ages 5-11, free for children younger than 5. Night tours: US\$37 adults, US\$36 children ages 12-17, US\$34.25 seniors, US\$18.25 children younger than age 12. Day tour special family rate (two adults with two children) US\$90.25. Discounts for groups of more than 15 people. Alcatraz Island, San Francisco. Phone 415-981-7625. <http://www.nps.gov/alcatraz>.

Beach Chalet

At the far western end of Golden Gate Park is the Beach Chalet, a renovated, 19th-century Spanish colonial building that houses both the Golden Gate Park Visitors' Center and an independently owned bar and restaurant. The striking murals inside the Visitors' Center, which were painted by Lucien Labaudt, depict San Francisco in the 1930s. They were commissioned as part of the government-led Works Progress Administration (WPA), which gave jobs to unemployed artists during the Great Depression. The restaurant and microbrewery upstairs offer good beer, overpriced food and an unobstructed view of the ocean. There's free parking between the chalet and the beach. Monday-Friday 9 am-11 pm, Saturday 8 am-midnight, Sunday 8 am-10 pm. 1000 Great Highway (at Ocean Beach), San Francisco. Phone 415-386-8439. <http://www.beachchalet.com>.

Cable Cars

San Francisco's cable cars, which started running in 1873, are a National Historic Landmark. They're a form of inexpensive entertainment as well as transportation—the conductors are real showmen, especially in their turnarounds at the ends of the lines.

Cable cars, which are part of the San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni), travel three routes. From the corner of Powell and Market streets, you can catch either the Powell-Mason line or the Powell-Hyde line. The first will take you over Nob Hill to the heart of Fisherman's Wharf and close to Pier 39 and the ferries to Alcatraz. The Powell-Hyde line travels over Nob Hill and Russian Hill, past Lombard (one of the most crooked streets in the world), ending up at Ghirardelli Square on the western end of Fisherman's Wharf. The California Street line runs from the Embarcadero at Market Street through the Financial District and Chinatown over Nob Hill to Van Ness Avenue. <http://www.sfmta.com>.

You can catch the cars at any stop. Tickets are sold at the turnarounds or by conductors along the way. Muni passports can also be used on the cable cars, but no transfers are accepted. Be aware that there's often a wait to board a cable car at the end of the line—catch them one stop from the end of the line if you don't want to wait. Conductors can make change for up to US\$20. The 37 cable cars operate 6 am-12:30 am, every six to 15 minutes or so. One-way cable-car tickets are US\$6; day passes are US\$15; free for children younger than 5. Three-day passes are US\$23 and seven-day passes are US\$29. Seven-day cable car and Muni rides are included in the CityPass. Phone 415-701-3000. <http://www.streetcar.org>.

Chapel of the Great Commission

The Chapel of the Great Commission belongs to the University's Pacific School of Religion. Not very far from campus in downtown Berkeley, it contains one of the largest stained-glass windows in the world. If you're in the area, it is worth a visit for the hilltop view. Services are regularly held with heavy student attendance. 1798 Scenic Ave. (at Le Conte), Berkeley. Phone 510-849-8200. <http://www.psr.edu>.

Coit Tower

Perched atop Telegraph Hill, this 210-ft/65-m art-deco landmark affords an excellent view of the city, even from the base of the tower. This structure, which some say resembles an upright fire-hose nozzle, was built in 1933 to honor city firefighters at the behest of Lillie Hitchcock Coit, widow of a wealthy financier and philanthropist. Inside at ground level are wonderful murals of city life and industry painted during the Depression era by WPA artists. Monday 9 am-6 pm, Tuesday-Friday 9 am-9 pm, Saturday 9 am-5 pm. Free to see the tower, but US\$7 adults,

US\$5 seniors and children ages 12-17, US\$2 children ages 5-11 to take a cramped elevator to the top. The small parking lot is often backed up, especially on weekends; take Muni Bus 39 or take the stairs up from the end of Greenwich Street from the west. 1 Telegraph Hill Blvd. (at the top of Lombard Street; take Muni Bus 39 or, from the west, take the stairs up from the end of Greenwich Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-249-0995. <http://sfrecpark.org/destination/telegraph-hill-pioneer-park/coit-tower>.

Crookedest Street in the U.S.

Lombard Street has claimed this title since it was laid out in the 1920s. However, purists argue that Vermont Street between 20th and 22nd streets in Potrero Hill is more crooked. And while Vermont Street may have nicer views, it lacks the formal gardens and the familiar postcard feel of Lombard. The hairpin turns of Lombard between Hyde Street and Leavenworth descend a very steep slope faced with brick and flowers that make the street itself as spectacular as the view it provides of the city and the Bay. There are eight turns, or nine, or maybe 10, depending on who's counting.

We think it's more fun and leisurely to walk rather than drive down so you can stop and smell the flowers. However, it can be exciting to drive down slowly, though in summer, you may find yourself in a long line of cars waiting to do the same. The best view and photos of the street are from the base looking up. Be careful of street traffic, though, and be aware that people live in the adjacent homes. Lombard Street (between Hyde and Leavenworth), San Francisco.

Fisherman's Wharf

Fisherman's Wharf gets its name from the late 1800s when Italian fishermen arrived in San Francisco by boat to take advantage of the growing customer base created by the gold rush. It is now one of the most-visited tourist attractions in all of California. As commercial as the wharf is, it can still make for a fun time. We recommend seeing it when you explore Pier 39 and the rest of the waterfront area or on your way to the ferry to Alcatraz. Fortify yourself with clam chowder in a warm sourdough-bread bowl from a food stand; it's a decidedly less expensive (and more authentic) way to fill up along the waterfront. You can stop in Ghirardelli Square to satisfy your sweet tooth, too. Two fun ways to get there include taking the Powell-Mason cable car over the hills from Market and Powell or taking a vintage streetcar along the Embarcadero on the F Line. Open daily year-round, but vendor hours vary. Jefferson Street (at the Embarcadero), San Francisco. Phone 415-674-7503. <http://www.fishermanswharf.org>.

Fort Point National Historic Site

This Civil War-era fort, now a National Historic Site, sits below the south end of the Golden Gate Bridge. It was constructed 1853-61 to guard the Bay, but it never saw battle. You might say that, like some other military expenditures, its two primary purposes were political and economic. It does offer grand views of the Bay and a great perspective from below the famous bridge. A memorable scene from the Hitchcock film *Vertigo* was filmed there. Make reservations early for pier crabbing March-October Saturday 10 am-noon, and monthly candlelight tours Saturday evening November-February (it begins taking reservations 1 September). Thursday-Tuesday 10 am-5 pm. Free. Marine Drive (at the south anchorage of the Golden Gate Bridge), San Francisco. Phone 415-556-1693. <http://www.nps.gov/fopo>.

Golden Gate Bridge

Naysayers once insisted this bridge "couldn't be built." In defiance, it opened in 1937 to become the most photographed man-made structure in the world. Its distinctive International Orange (the name of the paint color) spans 1 mi/2 km between San Francisco and the Marin Headlands, conveniently linking the city (via U.S. Highway 101) to the rest of northern California. The suspension-bridge design permits a sway of 27 ft/8 m at midspan. A pedestrian sidewalk provides one of the most dramatic and beautiful views anywhere in the city, provided the fog doesn't obstruct the view. For those inclined to go farther, there are plenty of options, including the Marin Headlands, where you can see spectacular views of San Francisco.

Try to walk the bridge on a sunny day, and dress warmly regardless of the weather—it can be very windy on the bridge even on sunny summer days. Pedestrians and bicyclists can use the east sidewalk of the bridge only from sunrise to sunset (5 am-6:30 pm, until 9 pm May-October). To get there, take a cable car from Union Square, then Muni Bus 28. Access to the bridge is free for pedestrians and bicyclists, US\$6 toll for southbound vehicles (into San Francisco), free for northbound vehicles (leaving San Francisco). The toll system has gone all electronic and is more complicated for visitors. If driving a rental car, ask your rental agency about the Golden Gate Bridge

toll. If driving your own vehicle, a toll invoice will be mailed to you. More information is available on the website. Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco. Phone 415-486-8655. <http://www.goldengatebridge.org>.

Mission Dolores

The mission—the city's oldest building—was founded in 1776 by Father Junipero Serra as Mission San Francisco de Asis—the sixth of 21 missions established in California. The historic cemetery contains graves from the mid-1800s, including the unmarked graves of more than 5,000 Native Americans. The adjacent gardens have also been restored with native plants from 1791. The rose garden was a donation from the Golden Gate Rose Society. The mission is still used as a place of worship with Masses daily; some services are held in Spanish. May-October daily 9 am-4:30 pm, November-April 9 am-noon. Docent tours are available by reservation only for groups of 10 or more. Make reservations four to six weeks in advance. Suggested donations US\$5 adults, US\$3 seniors and children. A 40-minute audio tour is available for US\$5. Free parking on Saturday and Sunday only; enter on the east side of Church Street between 16th and 17th streets. 3321 16th St. (at Dolores Street; take the Fillmore 22 bus, the J Church Muni, or BART to 16th and Mission), San Francisco. Phone 415-621-8203. <http://www.missiondolores.org>.

Palace of Fine Arts

Originally constructed of temporary papier-mache for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition and later reinforced, the Palace of Fine Arts is a rather nice spot to while away some time. Greenery and calm abound, and the Greek- and Roman-inspired rotunda and columns are especially beautiful towering above their reflections in the water. You may wish to stay for an evening play or concert in its 1,000-seat theater. 3301 Lyon St. (on the east edge of the Presidio, west of the Marina), San Francisco. Phone 415-563-6504. <http://www.palaceoffinearts.org>.

Pier 39

One of the most visited attractions in the state since it opened in 1978, Pier 39 is a collection of nearly 100 one-of-a-kind shops, about a dozen restaurants and numerous sea lions, who make their home at the K-Dock of the West Marina. (Their barking can't be missed.) The Aquarium of the Bay also occupies the kids, as does the San Francisco Carousel. Custom-made in Sernaglia, Treviso, in Italy, the two-story carousel features unique marine animals and stylized depictions of famous San Francisco landmarks (US\$3 per ride). On weekends, street performers often entertain visitors along this waterfront and on a small stage located on the pier. The California Welcome Center, in Suite B-12 on the pier's second level, offers tourist information, itinerary planning, discounts to local attractions, car rentals and tour bookings. Daily 10 am-9 pm. Beach Street at The Embarcadero (just east of Fisherman's Wharf; take Muni's F-Line street car or bus 8X, 8BX, 39 or 47), San Francisco. Phone 415-705-5500. <http://www.pier39.com>.

Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium

The two floors of this kitschy, pop-culture emporium include galleries depicting strange people, weird animals, tribal artifacts, and the wacky art and history of the man who collected it all, Robert Ripley. Fun for kids, but overpriced for adults. Sunday-Thursday 10 am-10 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-11 pm. 175 Jefferson St., San Francisco. Phone 415-202-9850. <http://www.ripleys.com/sanfrancisco>.

San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge

This massive, gray, double-deck span, stretching more than 8 mi/13 km across the Bay to Oakland, would be a major sight in any other city, but it's often overlooked in favor of the neighboring Golden Gate Bridge. The thousands of vehicles that use it daily to cross between San Francisco and Oakland or Sacramento (via Interstate 80) don't ignore it, though. It's best viewed from the Embarcadero waterfront or from the Ferry Building Pier at the foot of Market Street. At midspan, the bridge passes through Yerba Buena Island and provides access to Treasure Island.

Because of damage from the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, sections of the Bay Bridge were recently retrofitted for earthquake safety. The old parts of the bridge continue to be dismantled. A new bicycle and pedestrian path will be completed in 2015. When the path is completed, pedestrians and bicyclists will be able to travel across the bridge for the first time. Traffic traveling eastbound on the bridge can be congested during commuter hours. Auto toll is US\$6 Monday-Friday 5-10 am and 3-7 pm, US\$5 Saturday and Sunday, US\$4 all other times. Toll is only collected from westbound vehicles—those entering San Francisco from the East Bay. Vehicles carrying three or

more individuals qualify for the carpool lane. Watch out for Fast Pass-only lanes, as there are no agents available in those lanes to take your toll fee. These lanes are reserved for people who have purchased monthly prepaid passes. San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, San Francisco. Phone 415-486-8655. <http://baybridgeinfo.org>.

Sather Tower

Commonly referred to as the Campanile, Sather Tower is the most visible and popular landmark on the university's campus. At 307 ft/93 m tall, it's the third tallest bell-and-clock-tower in the world and was completed in 1914. Visitors are able to climb up 38 steps to the observation deck and get a breathtaking look at the surrounding San Francisco Bay area. Time your visit to hear the carillon: the bells play at 7:50 am, noon and 6 pm, with a longer concert on Sunday at 2 pm. Monday-Friday 10 am-3:45 pm, Saturday 10 am-4:45 pm, Sunday 10 am-1:30 pm and 3-4:45 pm. US\$3 adults. University Avenue, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley. <http://visitors.berkeley.edu/camp>.

University of California at Berkeley

UC Berkeley is the town's biggest attraction, dominating 1,232 acres/499 hectares on the San Francisco Bay and an additional 178 acres/72 hectares downtown. It was founded in 1868 and is one of the country's most prestigious universities. The campus is studded with redwood trees and makes for delightful strolling. Among the sites of interest to visitors are the botanical garden, Sather Tower, the Earth Sciences building and the University Art Museum. There is no public parking at the university, and nearby parking is limited by meters. It's best to take public transportation to the college campus; take BART to the Downtown Berkeley station. The visitor services office is open Monday-Friday 8:30 am-4:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday at Sather Tower. Public tours are offered Monday-Saturday at 10 am (with an additional 1 pm tour in April) and on Sunday at 1 pm. 101 Sproul Hall, U.C. Berkeley Campus, Visitor Services, Berkeley. Phone 510-642-5215. <http://visitors.berkeley.edu>.

MUSEUMS

Asian Art Museum

Located in a 1917 beaux arts-style building that once housed the main branch of the city's library, this museum offers one of the most extensive collections of Asian art in the U.S. Its 33 galleries display paintings, jades, bronzes and ceramics from cultures throughout Asia, with examples from all of the major historical and stylistic periods. The museum's core holdings were donated by Olympic impresario and collector Avery Brundage in the 1960s, and the collection has grown larger since. The building shows off the art to great effect. If hunger pangs strike during your art tour, head over to the first-floor Cafe Asia, where you can munch away on pan-Asian delights either indoors or on the patio. Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm. US\$15 adults. 200 Larkin St. (at Civic Center Plaza, between Fulton and McCallister streets; take BART/Muni to Civic Center), San Francisco. Phone 415-581-3500. <http://www.asianart.org>.

Beat Museum

This museum has existed in various permutations around the city, including some time in a large traveling bus. Now, the beatniks have landed a permanent home on Broadway. Photographs, letters, personal items and ephemera from Beat-era legends such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Charles Bukowski are on display in this small and slightly haphazardly arranged museum. Books by and about the Beat generation, as well as T-shirts, DVDs and souvenirs are on sale. It sometimes hosts spoken word, film and poetry events. Daily 10 am-7 pm. US\$8 adults. 540 Broadway, San Francisco. Phone 415-399-9626. Toll-free 800-537-6822. <http://www.kerouac.com>.

Berkeley Art Museum

Situated on the University of California at Berkeley's beautiful campus, the University Art Museum has a massive collection of more than 14,000 objects. Some highlights include Albert Bierstadt, Jay DeFeo and Jackson Pollock. The collection is heavily focused in early American paintings, California and Bay Area art and mid-20th-century paintings.

The University Art Museum's Pacific Film Archive (PFA) has a 200-seat auditorium that shows selections from its collection of more than 5,000 movies, many avant-garde and experimental, as well as copies of Soviet silent movies and perhaps the largest collection of Japanese movies outside Japan. Wednesday-Sunday 11 am-5 pm,

select Fridays until 9 pm. US\$10 adults; US\$7 students, seniors and children ages 13-17; free for Berkeley students and children age 12 and younger. Free the first Thursday of every month. 2626 Bancroft Way (between College and Telegraph), Berkeley. Phone 510-642-0808. <http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu>.

Cable Car Museum

You've ridden the cable cars—now see the fascinating inner workings of the cable car system. Upstairs, the museum details the history of San Francisco's cable cars with photographs and mechanical displays. In the basement, live cables and wheels power three city lines in the Washington-Mason powerhouse. A workshop gives you a peek at how cable cars are repaired. You can even take a cable car to the museum; the Powell-Hyde and Powell-Mason lines stop there. Daily 10 am-6 pm April-September, 10 am-5 pm October-March. Admission is free. 1201 Mason St., San Francisco. Phone 415-474-1887. <http://www.cablecarmuseum.org>.

California Academy of Sciences

Following a major renovation that involved 10 years of planning, the California Academy of Sciences reopened to the public as one of the city's most impressive—and colossal—museums. With a focus on how life on Earth developed and the initiative to sustain it, the 412,000-sq-ft/38,276-sq-m structure houses a planetarium, an aquarium and a natural history museum. Highlights include more than 40,000 live animals, various digital media productions, a solar canopy and a 2.5-acre/1-hectare living roof comprising California wildlife and greenery. Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-5 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm. US\$34.95 adults. 55 Music Concourse Drive (in Golden Gate Park), San Francisco. Phone 415-379-8000. <http://www.calacademy.org>.

Children's Creativity Museum

Originally called Zeum, this downtown arts complex and hands-on, interactive museum for children is located at the Rooftop at Yerba Buena Gardens, across a catwalk from the Metreon. Offering a diverse schedule of cross-cultural, visual- and performing-arts programs, it overlooks an outdoor play space, complete with a giant slide, where kids can romp. Nearby, also on the rooftop, are an ice-skating rink and a bowling alley. Wednesday-Sunday 10 am-4 pm. US\$12 general admission. 221 Fourth St. (at Howard Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-820-3320. <http://www.creativity.org>.

Contemporary Jewish Museum

The Daniel Libeskind exterior is a conversation starter. The inside is a 63,000-sq-ft/5,853-sq-m space that celebrates Jewish culture, history and art. A permanent gallery highlights Storyworks, an oral history collection. It also hosts two small traveling exhibits at a time. Open Friday-Tuesday 11 am-5 pm, Thursday 1-8 pm, closed Wednesday and major holidays. US\$12 adults. 736 Mission St. (between Third and Fourth streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-655-7800. <http://www.thecjm.org>.

de Young Museum

This museum (part of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco) draws visitors with its 25,000-piece collection of American art and works from indigenous peoples in Africa, Oceania and the Americas. The dramatic architecture incorporates a striking copper facade and an observation tower that rises 144 ft/45 m above the treetops of Golden Gate Park. Some contemporary art is displayed, and a sculpture garden is adjacent to the on-site cafe, which serves delicious seasonal fare. Do visit the ninth floor of the tower for a breathtaking 360-degree view. Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-5:15 pm. US\$10 adults. 50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive, San Francisco. Phone 415-750-3600. <http://deyoung.famsf.org>.

Exploratorium

Originally founded in 1969, the Exploratorium relocated to its new Embarcadero home in April 2013. Three times larger than its original space, it features displays on such subjects as human behavior and the science of sharing, as well as large outdoor exhibits and artworks. The museum's science, art and human-perception experiences have earned it a reputation as one of the world's most innovative museums with some of the best interactive exhibits for kids of all ages. Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm. US\$29 adults. Pier 15 (The Embarcadero at Green Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-528-4444. <http://www.exploratorium.edu>.

Legion of Honor

Located in Lincoln Park (Richmond District), this museum (part of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco) is a neoclassical masterpiece modeled after the *Palais de la Legion d'Honneur* in Paris. Its handsome collection includes fine Dutch, French and American paintings, as well as Rodin bronzes. An early cast of *The Thinker* is in front. The view of the city from outside the museum is delightful. Special exhibitions are frequently shown, and reservations for them are recommended on weekends.

Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-5:15 pm. US\$10 adults. 100 34th Ave. (in Lincoln Park), San Francisco. Phone 415-750-3600. <http://legionofhonor.famsf.org>.

Musee Mecanique

The mechanical museum of San Francisco features delightful, antique penny-arcade machines and mechanically operated musical instruments—everything from a coin-operated piano to a gypsy fortune-teller known as "Laffing Sal." The private collection consists of more than 300 items from around the world. Some even came from Playland, the late and great San Francisco amusement park. Put in your quarters, and enjoy the action or have your fortune told. Rest assured, you'll find plenty of change machines. Monday-Friday 10 am-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-8 pm. Free, except for those quarters. Pier 45, Fisherman's Wharf (Shed A, at the end of Taylor Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-346-2000. <http://www.museemecanique.org>.

Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD)

This recently renovated museum features traveling exhibits of artifacts, art, photography and mixed media of African art. Permanent exhibits include an interactive space exploring music, adornments and culinary tradition of the African diaspora, as well as the *Celebration Circle*, a video presenting the languages, costumes, music, foods and beliefs of the African diaspora. The space is small, but shows can have a big impact, depending on what's being exhibited. Open Wednesday-Saturday 11 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm; closed major holidays. US\$10 adults, US\$5 seniors and students, free for children age 12 and younger. 685 Mission St. (between Annie and Third streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-358-7200. <http://www.moadsf.org>.

San Francisco Art Institute

There are three galleries at the Art Institute. The Diego Rivera Gallery (open daily 9 am-5 pm) showcases student work, although the real draw to this European-style building is a fabulous fresco mural that Diego Rivera painted in 1931. There are also some terrific views from the patio. The Walter and McBean Galleries (open Tuesday 11 am-7 pm, Wednesday-Saturday 11 am-6 pm) exhibit contemporary works from emerging artists and experimental art from established creators. The Swell Gallery (open Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm) is a graduate student-run venue located on the second floor of the Graduate Center at 2565 Third St. Free. 800 Chestnut St. (between Jones and Leavenworth streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-749-4579. <http://www.sfai.edu>.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)

The physical museum is closed until May 2016 while renovations double the amount of gallery space. The expansion will include a new, 10-story gallery space. In the meantime, you can view exhibits at sites throughout the city as well as at the Artists Gallery at Fort Mason (2 Marina Blvd, Bldg A, Fort Mason Center; open Tuesday-Saturday 10:30 am-5 pm). The SFMoMA museum store also remains open (51 Yerba Buena Lane). See the website for details and current locations. Free. 151 Third St. (between Mission and Howard streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-441-4777. <http://www.sfmoma.org>.

The GLBT History Museum

The first GLBT museum in the U.S. celebrates 100 years of San Francisco's queer past. Though not worth a special trip, the tiny exhibit space—run by the GLBT Historical Society—can be an educational stop when visiting the Castro district. Check the website for lectures, talks, film and other events. Monday and Wednesday-Saturday 11 am-7 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm, closed Tuesday. US\$5 adults, US\$4 California students with ID; free the first Wednesday of every month. 4127 18th St. (between Castro and Collingswood streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-621-1107. <http://www.glbthistory.org/museum>.

The Society of California Pioneers Museum & Library

A view of California's past is displayed at the Society of California Pioneers' building in the Presidio. The museum's collection dates from the gold-rush era, with artifacts that include paintings, prints, drawings, photographs and artifacts. Wednesday-Friday 10 am-5 pm. Free with a suggested donation of US\$5. 101 Montgomery St., Suite 150 (at Folsom), San Francisco. Phone 415-957-1849. <http://www.californiapioneers.org>.

Walt Disney Family Museum

This museum celebrates the inventiveness of the man behind some of the world's most popular animated characters, movies and tourist destinations. The self-guided tour winds through 10 galleries that trace Disney's life from his early years in the Midwest. Some of the most dramatic parts of his life are depicted in Gallery 2, which focuses on his struggles after his arrival in California and his eventual creation of Mickey Mouse. To maintain an even flow of traffic through the museum, all admission tickets are timed. To secure a 10 am entry time, tickets should be purchased well in advance; they're available online up to 60 days in advance. Wednesday-Monday 10 am-6 pm. US\$20 adults, US\$15 students and seniors, US\$12 children ages 6-17, free for children younger than 6. Special exhibit ticket prices vary. 104 Montgomery St. (in the Presidio), San Francisco. Phone 415-345-6800. <http://www.waltdisney.org>.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Located in the Yerba Buena Gardens, the center presents a variety of temporary exhibitions focusing on local and international contemporary and emerging artists. There are seven to 10 temporary exhibits per year showing works that ride the fine line between visual art and pop culture. Its innovative shows are often accompanied by film, video and performance programs. Thursday-Saturday noon-8 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm. US\$10 adults; US\$8 seniors, students, teachers, employees of nonprofit organizations and with a public transportation pass; free for children age 5 and younger. US\$2 discount when galleries are only partially open. Free on the first Tuesday of the month. 701 Mission St. (at Third Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-978-2700. <http://www.ybca.org>.

NATURE

Twin Peaks

Expansive views that sweep from the Pacific Ocean to the Berkeley Hills reward visitors who make their way up Twin Peaks Boulevard. These adjacent peaks, the second-highest hills in the city after Mount Davidson, are approximately 920 ft/285 m above sea level and offer unbeatable 360-degree views of the Bay Area. Snapping a few choice shots from the drive-in observation area is a must for any first-time visitor. At night, the twinkling lights below offer an unforgettably romantic backdrop. Be sure to take a jacket because it can get windy. A hike up Twin Peaks may yield sightings of rabbits and coyotes. Most visitors drive to the north peak parking lot or take bus No. 37. Daily sunrise-sunset. 501 Twin Peaks Blvd., San Francisco. Phone 415-831-6331. <http://sfrecpark.org/destination/twin-peaks>.

NEIGHBORHOODS & DISTRICTS

Castro District

The heart of San Francisco's gay community, the Castro has a lively array of shops, restaurants and bars that freely and theatrically celebrate LGBT life. The most interesting portion of the Castro is bordered by 17th and 20th streets and includes Collingwood, Castro and Hartford streets. There are a few novelty stores and coffee shops on Market Street where it crosses Castro Street.

On Castro Street, you'll find the historic Castro Theatre, a regal movie palace built in 1922 and featuring international movie festivals, experimental works and even silent classics accompanied by live music on the Wurlitzer organ. To get to the area, take one of Muni's vintage streetcars on the F line and get off at the end of the line at 17th and Market. Phone 415-834-5067. <http://mycastro.com>.

Chinatown

Take a cultural journey into one of the largest Chinese communities outside of Asia. Start at the green-and-ocher gateway (a gift from Taiwan) at Grant Avenue and Bush Street for a tour of herbalists, souvenir shops, restaurants and jewelry dealers. The narrow, crowded streets and alleys of the 24-square-block area are best explored on foot (parking is difficult). Shops open as early as 9:30 am and close around 9 pm. Most of the restaurants on the main drag are not very good, so venture off the beaten path for culinary delights. <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com>.

Haight-Ashbury

The cradle of the 1960s hippie movement, this area (also referred to as "The Haight") has since gone through many transformations. It's now full of boutiques and restaurants, but it still displays a proud countercultural edge, with a plethora of used-clothing stores, record outlets and bohemian cafes. Traces of the drug culture are also still evident. Be prepared to encounter the pierced, the tattooed and the long-haired—and a lot of gawking tourists. Haight Street (at Ashbury Street; just east of Golden Gate Park), San Francisco.

Hayes Valley

This area was one of the few that benefited from the 1989 earthquake, which cleared a freeway that formerly passed through the neighborhood. Now it's a hipster area with trendy fashion boutiques, galleries featuring local artists, happening nightspots and crowded eateries. Although its borders are a bit hazy, the main thoroughfare of the area is Hayes Street from about Laguna to Franklin streets. Most shops open around 11 am and close when the local restaurants get crowded (around 7 pm). <http://www.hayesvalleyshop.com>.

Japantown

Also called Nihon Machi (and often referred to by locals as J-Town), Japantown is home to the city's large Japanese community. More indoors than out, the area offers everything from movies to traditional Noh theater to Japanese baths and massage. Surrounding the 5-acre/2-hectare Japan Center shopping area is a collection of cultural sites, restaurants, teahouses, shops and theaters. Look for the five-tiered peace pagoda located at the center's plaza. The heart of Japantown is between Post and Geary streets and Laguna and Fillmore streets. Phone 415-567-4573. <http://www.sfjapantown.org>.

Marina District/Cow Hollow

In a city known for its countercultural leanings, the Marina's unabashedly upscale atmosphere stands out. The shops are high end, the restaurants trendy and the bars packed with well-heeled revelers—especially on Friday and Saturday nights. Don't miss prime Golden Gate Bridge photo ops from Marina Boulevard. Stroll down bustling Union and Chestnut streets, then head north toward the Bay for some of the city's most picturesque views. Parking is nearly impossible there, especially on Friday and Saturday nights, so it's best to take public transportation or a cab. Bordered by The Presidio and the Palace of Fine Arts, Crissy Field, Marina Green and Fort Mason, north of Chestnut.

Mission District

This historically Hispanic area has seen quite a bit of change, becoming a vibrant enclave of shops, bars, taquerias, chic restaurants and the like. Keep your eye open for the numerous murals in the neighborhood, and don't miss the block-long Balmy Alley (<http://www.balmyalley.com>), home to the finest collection of outdoor murals in the city; it runs from 24th Street to 25th Street between Treat Avenue and Harrison Street. Precita Eyes runs guided tours of the murals most Saturdays and Sundays for US\$15 adults, US\$10 seniors and students, US\$6 children ages 12-17, US\$3 children younger than 12. For schedules, visit <http://www.precitaeyes.org>. Mission and 24th streets radiate a south-of-the-border attitude, and Valencia Street leans more to the young and hip: It's peppered with bars, cafes, bookstores and vintage-clothing shops. Start your tour of the area at Mission Dolores (16th and Dolores streets) and stroll down Valencia Street to 24th Street. <http://www.sfmission.com>.

Noe Valley

This sunny little neighborhood, usually shielded by the Bay Area's fog, is a favorite brunch destination for city residents. Tiny cafes and bustling restaurants dot Church Street and the 24th Street shopping corridor, also home to a bevy of boutiques and gourmet shops hawking everything from baked goods to wine. Expect to see oodles of dogs, as well as parents pushing strollers. Start at the intersection of Church and 24th streets and amble the length of 24th Street to Castro Street, or head down Church Street for a quieter stroll. <http://www.noevalley.com>.

North Beach

Sometimes called the city's "Little Italy," this neighborhood is home to a number of small boutiques, old-world Italian restaurants and the famed City Lights bookstore—Allen Ginsberg's original publisher. Eat spaghetti over checkered tablecloths, enjoy some freshly brewed coffee or just sit in Washington Square Park and watch the world go by. Venture off the main drags of Columbus Avenue and Broadway to find more unexpected shops and views, especially on Grant Avenue. Parents with young children in tow may wish to avoid the stretch of Broadway east of Columbus Avenue, which is packed with strip clubs. Other travelers, however, should consider visiting after dark, when vintage neon signs alight, and the street takes on the seedy and exciting aura of red-light districts long gone. North Beach is bound by Jackson Square, Chinatown, Russian Hill, Telegraph Hill and Fisherman's Wharf. <http://www.northbeachchamber.com>.

Pacific Heights/Upper Fillmore Street

This posh neighborhood is best known for the attractive array of upscale boutiques, cafes and restaurants concentrated along Fillmore Street (between Washington and Pine streets). Fashionistas frequent the area to browse high-end boutiques and hunt down designer bargains at the trendy secondhand shops. Beauty junkies delight in the many day spas, cosmetics stores and salons that pepper neighborhood streets. Start your visit at Fillmore and California streets and walk in either direction for an informal tour of Victorian mansions and fabulous views of the bay and the Golden Gate Bridge. The neighborhood is bound by Bush Street and Presidio Avenue, Union Street and Van Ness Avenue. Phone 415-567-5999. <http://www.fillmoreshop.com>.

Richmond/Sunset

These primarily residential neighborhoods lie on the city's western side and flank Golden Gate Park, with Sunset extending from the park's southern border and Richmond fanning out from the park's northern edge. With their often overcast skies and overall lack of cultural institutions, these neighborhoods may be overlooked by city visitors, but fans of authentic Asian cuisine will find them worth a visit. Both neighborhoods offer a multitude of noodle houses, Chinese bakeries, Korean barbecue restaurants and sushi joints, as well as some more unusual offerings, including Russian, Tibetan and Burmese cuisine. In recent years, the heavily Asian stretch of Inner Richmond's Clement Street that lies between Arguello and Park Presidio boulevards has developed a reputation as San Francisco's "authentic" Chinatown.

Start your tour of Richmond at Second Avenue and Clement Street, where shops are teeming with inexpensive clothing and housewares, and the dim sum is plentiful. In Sunset, start at the intersection of Ninth Avenue and Irving Street to explore the hip boutiques and casual restaurants in the area. Phone 415-831-0461.

South of Market/SoMa

This neighborhood was once also called Multimedia Gulch and was said to have more Web-design and multimedia firms per square foot/meter than anywhere else on Earth. This may still be true, but an assorted mix of businesses, museums and residents also populates this evolving district, and it's become a mecca for foodies with its explosion of restaurants that now inhabit the area.

SoMa has a plethora of attractions for visitors, such as SFMoMA, Yerba Buena Gardens, the Metreon and the Children's Creativity Museum, as well as hip bars and clubs and high-class hotels. The expanded Moscone Convention Center (<http://www.moscone.com>) is located on Howard Street (between Third and Fourth streets). Start exploring at Yerba Buena Gardens, at Third and Mission streets. For nightlife, many bars and nightclubs are clustered around the intersection of Folsom and Ninth streets.

Union Square

Union Square is actually the square patch of park bordered by Powell, Post, Stockton and Geary streets. However, the neighborhood is the main retail and cultural center of San Francisco. The most happening day is Saturday, when shoppers elbow their way through Macy's and surrounding boutiques. Most shops are open until around 8 pm. High-end galleries are strategically located in surrounding streets. The most enjoyable way to get there is to take the Mason and Hyde cable car, which ends at Powell and Market streets. There's not much action after dark, so it's best to travel to other parts of the city for nightlife. Parking there can be difficult and expensive, so it's best to take public transportation. <http://www.visitunionsquaresf.com>.

PARKS & GARDENS

Angel Island State Park

The largest island in San Francisco Bay, Angel Island has over the years been host to the Miwok people, Spanish explorers, Russian hunters, English sailors and Mexican ranchers. It has been a quarantine station, an immigration hub, a Civil War encampment, a prisoner-of-war camp during World War II, and even a Nike missile sight. Now it's home to hundreds of far-from-timid seabirds. Visitors enjoy its well-developed picnic area, historical buildings, primitive campgrounds and walking trails with terrific views of the city.

Mountain-bike rentals, tram tours and the small deli-style Cove Cafe are available on the island. Wear layers, because parts of the island are always cool, whereas other areas are warmer than San Francisco.

Be sure to visit the renovated United States Immigration Station, a museum that documents Angel Island's former status as the "Ellis Island of the West Coast." Museum open Wednesday-Sunday 11 am-3 or 4 pm. Self-guided tours US\$5 adults, docent-led tours US\$7 adults. Phone 415-435-5537. <http://www.aiisf.org>.

Daily 8 am-sunset. 1416 Ninth St., San Francisco. Phone 916-653-6995.
http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=468.

Berkeley Rose Garden

On the way up to Tilden Park, you'll find that the Berkeley Rose Garden, on Euclid Avenue between Bay View and Eunice Street, has a lot more to enjoy than just roses. It also offers stunning views of the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco Bay. We especially recommend it at sunset and sunrise. The roses look their best in mid-May and are pruned in January. Daily 6 am-6 pm. 1200 Euclid Ave., Berkeley. Phone 510-981-5150.
<http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/contentdisplay.aspx?id=12048>.

Golden Gate Park

Begun in 1870 by Scotsman John McLaren in a barren stretch of sand dunes, the park today boasts more than 6,000 varieties of plants, including a redwood memorial grove. The 1,017-acre/412-hectare park (larger than New York's Central Park) encompasses tennis courts, several playgrounds and picnic areas, the California Academy of Sciences, the Japanese Tea Garden, the de Young Museum, the San Francisco Botanical Garden, the Conservatory of Flowers, a musical concourse, paddleboat rentals, numerous statues, rose gardens, a herd of bison, two windmills and an island with a cascading waterfall. There are also plenty of trails for walking, hiking, jogging, skating and biking.

The winding roads that access the park can be quite a labyrinth if you're driving. Much of the park is closed to automobile traffic on Sunday, allowing a flourish of foot, bike and skate activity. On Saturday, Sunday and legal holidays, the city provides free shuttle rides through the park 9 am-6 pm, every 15-20 minutes at select attractions throughout the park. It's best to visit during daylight hours. Phone 415-831-2700.
<http://www.golden-gate-park.com>.

Japanese Tea Garden

Regarded as the jewel within the heart of Golden Gate Park, the garden dates from 1894. Originally built as part of the Midwinter Fair, this complex of paths, ponds and a teahouse features native Japanese and Chinese plants, along with 5 acres/2 hectares of sculptures and bridges. Because tradition holds that evil travels a straight route, the garden has winding paths, which offer serene places to stroll. The cherry blossoms are in bloom in March and April. Both Western-style and traditional Asian teas are served in the open-air stone teahouse, where some say

fortune cookies were invented. Daily 9 am-6 pm (until 4:45 pm November-February). US\$8 adults, US\$6 seniors and youth ages 12-17, US\$2 children ages 5-11, free for children age 4 and younger. Free Monday, Wednesday and Friday if entering before 10 am. 75 Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive (in Golden Gate Park, east of Stow Lake), San Francisco. Phone 415-666-3232. <http://japaneseteagardensf.com>.

People's Park

Berkeley's People's Park, where antiwar protesters once gathered, has changed: The university turned it into a recreational area, complete with basketball and volleyball courts, despite the protests of some who wanted to keep the park as it was. There are community gardens and a playground for kids. 2556 Haste St. (a half-block east of Telegraph Avenue), Berkeley. Phone 501-642-3255.

<http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/contentdisplay.aspx?id=12760>.

Presidio

Flanked by the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay, the sprawling 1,500-acre/607-hectare Presidio has a variety of terrain and activities far beyond what any other park in San Francisco can offer. Saunter amid hushed eucalyptus groves, hike along more than 11 mi/18 km of wilderness trails, bird-watch in a lush clearing, go sailboarding in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge, or drink in what are arguably the most spectacular vistas in the city.

The Presidio, once home to the Ohlone tribe, became a Spanish military post in 1776. In 1848, the U.S. Army established a headquarters there, and the Presidio played a role in every major U.S. conflict for the next century and a half. The park's military history is evident everywhere you turn, from the more than 500 historic buildings and fortifications (including impressive Fort Point) to a national cemetery. It became part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1972, and was turned over to the National Park Service in 1994.

The Presidio abounds with kid-friendly activities, including an ecology tour where children learn about native flora and fauna. For a tour of the park, hop on the free sightseeing bus that departs every 30 minutes (every hour on weekends and holidays) from the Presidio Transit Center, located between the firehouse and the post office. The park is open daily 24 hours, and the temporary Presidio Visitors Center, located at 105 Montgomery St. (next to the Walt Disney Family Museum), is open Thursday-Sunday 10 am-4 pm. Entrance to the park is free. Arguello Boulevard, San Francisco. Phone 415-561-4323 or 415-561-5300. <http://www.presidio.gov>.

University of California Botanical Garden at Berkeley

This is one of the biggest and most diverse botanical gardens that you'll find in the country. You can see plants from almost every continent and you can even buy some at the shop when you're done strolling the grounds. A variety of tours are offered for guests of all ages, so call ahead to book your reservation. It can get crowded during the spring. Daily 9 am-5 pm. US\$10 adults. 200 Centennial Drive, Berkeley. Phone 510-643-2755.

<http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu>.

Yerba Buena Gardens

This urban oasis packs a lot into a small space. The center green expanse is a nice place for a break, and the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial and waterfall are especially striking. It is bordered by the Metreon and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts' theater and galleries, and across the street from SFMoMA. The rooftop is home to the Children's Creativity Museum, a carousel, ice skating rink and a bowling alley. Daily 6 am-10 pm. Admission is free. 650 Howard St. (between Mission and Howard streets and Third and Fourth streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-820-3550. <http://www.yerbabuenagardens.com>.

ZOOS & WILDLIFE

Aquarium of the Bay

The aquarium's focus is on San Francisco Bay itself. Check out the clear acrylic vault from which you can watch sharks, rays and other fish swim above and alongside you. A moving walkway adds to the underwater experience. Hours vary seasonally; see the website for details. US\$21.95 adults. Embarcadero (at Beach Street; east side of Pier 39), San Francisco. Phone 415-623-5300. Toll-free 888-732-3483. <http://www.aquariumofthebay.org>.

San Francisco Zoo

The zoo is home to more than 250 species of animals, with koalas, meerkats and prairie dogs topping many visitors' lists. There's a 6-acre/2-hectare children's zoo, a special lemur forest and a 3-acre/1-hectare African Savannah habitat with giraffe, zebra, ostrich and other African wildlife. Daily 10 am-5 pm. Closes at 4 pm in winter. US\$17 adults. 2945 Sloat Blvd. (at Great Highway), San Francisco. Phone 415-753-7080. <http://www.sfzoo.org>.

OTHER OPTIONS

Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory

Fortunes in the making are the big attraction at this tiny Chinatown factory. No one is certain about the origin of the fortune cookie, but San Francisco legend says that the first one was made in 1909 by Makoto Hagiwara, the creator of the Japanese Tea Garden. In a shop down a narrow alley, a few Chinese cookie-crafters have worked at odd machines, folding flat wafers into delightful surprise-filled treats since 1962. Daily 9 am-6 pm. Free. 56 Ross Alley (between Jackson and Washington streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-781-3956. <http://sanfranciscochinatown.com>.

RECREATION

San Francisco and the larger Bay Area have plenty of recreational sights and activities to add to the city's culture and good looks. Easy access to nature is one of the things that makes this city so special. You can spend a day at the beach or on the links, sail the Bay, ride a bike through Golden Gate Park or walk across the Golden Gate Bridge.

BEACHES

It would be such a shame to ignore the water that surrounds San Francisco. It affords fabulous views from afar, but you can easily get closer. However, be aware that the water is cold and the currents are dangerously strong: You should consider soaking up the sun, walking on the beach or hiking nearby rather than going for a dip. The surf can be unpredictable, hazardous and deadly; never turn your back to the waves or allow unattended children anywhere near the water.

Baker Beach

This 1-mi-/1.6-km-long section of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area offers an opportunity for strolling in the sand and taking in gorgeous views of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin Headlands. It's one of the sunnier beaches in the area, but the water there is unsafe for swimming. Slightly isolated, the northern stretch of this beach (closest to the Golden Gate Bridge) is sometimes regarded as clothing-optional, though you may be ticketed for public nudity on any San Francisco beach. Grills and a picnic area are available in the cypress grove at the east end of the parking lot. 1504 Pershing Drive, Golden Gate National Recreation Area (off 25th Avenue), San Francisco. Phone 415-561-4323. <http://www.parksconservancy.org/visit/park-sites/baker-beach.html>.

China Beach

This small cove lies adjacent to Baker Beach in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Lifeguards are no longer on duty there, and swimming is not recommended because of unpredictable surf conditions. Sunbathers, however, are welcome to use the small deck on top of the lifeguard equipment pickup station. Grills and a picnic area are located above beach level. Restrooms and cold showers are open sunrise-sunset. Sea Cliff Avenue (at El Camino del Mar), San Francisco. Phone 415-561-4323. <http://www.parksconservancy.org/visit/park-sites/china-beach.html>.

Ocean Beach

This beach is a fine place for a stroll, and with nearly 4 mi/6 km of level sand, there's plenty of room to stretch your legs. Watch hang gliders rise above the dunes found on the southern end of the beach near Fort Funston or see wet-suit-clad surfers brave the waves farther north, closer to the Cliff House. Then walk up a small hill to watch the wildlife at Seal Rock and gaze down into the remains of the historic Sutro Bath House. The upstairs bar of the famous Cliff House is a great place to have a drink while enjoying the view. Point Lobos Avenue at Great Highway (at the western end of Golden Gate Park), San Francisco. Phone 415-561-4323. <http://www.parksconservancy.org/visit/park-sites/ocean-beach.html>.

Point Reyes National Seashore

This outstanding 67,000-acre/27,000-hectare coastal park on the Point Reyes Peninsula, extending 30 mi/50 km north of San Francisco on Highway 1, has secluded beaches and miles/kilometers of hiking trails along verdant ridges. Whale-watching is possible from shore in season (January-April), and herds of native tule elk are observable inland. The park offers camping, hiking, horseback riding, biking, an interpretive center (at Bear Valley) and the Point Reyes Lighthouse (open Friday-Monday 10 am-4:30 pm in winter with longer hours in spring and summer; phone 415-669-1534). The park is open daily sunrise-sunset throughout the year. The Bear Valley Visitor Center is open in winter Monday-Friday 10 am-4:30 pm; 9 am-4:30 pm Saturday, Sunday and holidays; extended hours late May-October. During weekends late December to mid-April, the end of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard is closed, and shuttle buses run every 20 or so minutes 9:30 am-3:30 pm. Entry to the beach is free, but the shuttle costs US\$5 for those ages 16 and up.

Overnight backcountry, hike-in camping is available by permit only, and reservations are strongly suggested.

Lodging is available in the nearby towns of Point Reyes Station and Inverness, or try the youth hostel in the park. The roads connecting this area to Highway 101 are very narrow: Extra time and caution are necessary when traveling them. Free. 1 Bear Valley Road, Point Reyes Station. Phone 415-464-5100. <http://www.nps.gov/pore>.

Stinson Beach

Just north of Muir Woods and Muir Beach, 20 mi/32 km north of the Golden Gate Bridge, Stinson Beach is a nice, white-sand shore area complete with parking areas, many picnic spots, a playground and hiking. Swimming is recommended only when lifeguards are on duty late May to mid-September. Rip currents and large waves are not unusual there, and occasional shark attacks have happened at this beach. A small snack bar is open in the summer at the base of the main lifeguard tower, and restaurants and grocery stores are nearby (<http://www.stinsonbeachonline.com>). Part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the beach is open year-round from 9 am; closing times vary by season. Free. Highway 1 (north of San Francisco), Stinson Beach. Phone 415-868-1922. <http://www.nps.gov/goga/stbe.htm>.

BICYCLING

The city's hills and traffic might well stand in the way of the novice rider, but there's plenty of easier terrain in the area. Golden Gate Park is a good option for pedaling around. If you're a little more ambitious, you could even head across the Golden Gate Bridge, but be sure to take a windbreaker.

Bike and Roll San Francisco

Pedal over the Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito, or tackle a serious adventure while huffing it to the summit of Mount Tamalpais, where modern-day mountain biking was born. Tandem bikes, in-line skates and electric hybrid bikes also available. Five locations in town, including three at Fisherman's Wharf and one at Embarcadero Center. Daily 8 am-6 pm. Rentals start at US\$32 for 24 hours, US\$22 for a children's bike. Discounts available if you book online. 899 Columbus Ave. (at Lombard), San Francisco. Phone 415-229-2000. Toll-free 888-544-2453. <http://bikethegoldengate.com>.

Blazing Saddles

Ride the bike path over the Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito or Tiburon, then return via ferry. This company offers regular rentals, electric bike rentals, and guided tours. Seven locations throughout the city. Daily 8 am-6 pm. Summer hours 8 am-9 pm; March and April 8 am-7 pm. 24-hour drop-off available. 2715 Hyde St. (between North Point and Beach Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-202-8888. <http://www.blazingsaddles.com>.

San Francisco Bicycle Rentals

Located just a half-block from the bike path over the Golden Gate Bridge, the Fisherman's Wharf location is ideal for the bridge ride to Sausalito. Three locations throughout the city, and hours vary slightly by location. Daily 9 am-7:30 pm, but closed in winter during heavy rain. Rentals start at US\$7 per hour (two-hour minimum), US\$30 per 24 hours. Discounts are available online. 425 Jefferson St. (at the Cannery), San Francisco. Phone 415-922-4537. <http://www.bikerentalsanfrancisco.com>.

BOATING & SAILING

Adventure Cat Sailing Charters

Sail the Bay on a catamaran. Join the whale-watching ecotour that sails from San Francisco Bay to the Farallon Islands, 27 mi/43 km offshore in the Pacific Ocean. Most cruises depart at 1 and 3 pm, with sunset cruise times varying seasonally. Bay cruise rates US\$40 adults, US\$20 for children ages 6-12, free for children age 5 and younger; sunset cruises US\$50. Whale-watching cruises are also arranged in season (usually throughout the spring and fall). Call or check the website for full schedule and fees. Departures from Pier 39, Dock J, San Francisco. Phone 415-777-1630. Toll-free 800-498-4228. <http://www.adventurecat.com>.

Oceanic Society Cruises

Full-day cruises feature commentary by expert naturalists from the Oceanic Society. Visit the ocean beyond the Bay, which is frequented by whales, seabirds, seals and dolphins. Trips depart from the San Francisco Yacht Harbor, Pillar Point Yacht Harbor in Half Moon Bay and Sausalito's Clipper Yacht Harbor. Dress warmly, wear a waterproof jacket and pack a lunch. Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday 9-2 pm. Reservations required. Cruises and whale-watching rates range US\$54-\$125 per person depending on the season and the excursion. Call or visit the website for reservations and exact fees. Children younger than 10 not admitted. Oceanic Society, Fort Mason, Quarters 35, San Francisco. Phone 415-441-1106 for whale-watching reservations. Toll-free 800-326-7491. <http://www.oceanic-society.org>.

Rendezvous Charters

Rendezvous lets you choose from more than 40 sailboats, skippered or bareboat, including the largest certified sailing yacht on the West Coast, *The Bay Lady* (90 ft/28 m), along with the square-rigged *Brigantine Rendezvous*, a historical schooner from the 1930s. Pier 40, South Beach Harbor (next door to AT&T Park; prepare for traffic on Giants' game days), San Francisco. Phone 415-543-7333. <http://www.rendezvous-charters.com>.

RocketBoat

If you're seeking more of an adrenaline rush than your average sightseeing ferry, this boat is for you. It hits speeds of 50 mph/80 kph and guarantees you'll feel at least one cold, salty splash. Classic rock music is played during the half-hour tour. You'll experience some great views from under the Golden Gate Bridge. Children shorter than 40 in/101 cm tall and younger than 3 are not permitted. The departure point is Pier 39. Operates May-October, weather permitting. Check website for schedule. US\$39 adults. The Embarcadero at Beach Street, Pier 39, San Francisco. Phone 415-705-8200 for recorded information; 415-773-1188 for tickets. <http://www.blueandgoldfleet.com/rocketboat>.

GOLF

Golden Gate Park Golf Course

A superb test over a short 4,100-ft/1,250-m course in a tricky layout. Nine holes, par 27. Driving range also on-site. Daily 30 minutes after dawn to 30 minutes before dusk. This is a walk-on, first-come, first-served golf course, so reservations are not accepted. 970 47th Ave. (at Fulton Street; in Golden Gate Park), San Francisco. Phone 415-751-8987. <http://www.goldengateparkgolf.com>.

Lincoln Park Golf Course

One of the oldest courses in San Francisco, and unparalleled for its natural ruggedness and views of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay. Eighteen holes, par 68. Lincoln Park is one of the courses used for the annual San Francisco City Golf Championships. Daily 6:30 am-dusk. Reservations for tee times are available up to six days in advance. 300 34th Ave. (at Clement Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-221-9911 or 415-750-4653 to reserve a tee time. <http://sfrecpark.org/destination/lincoln-park/lincoln-park-golf-course>.

Presidio Golf Course

This hilly 18-hole course is one of the city's top courses. Originally built in 1895, it has a colorful and sordid history. Once the Presidio became a national park, the golf course was opened to the public in 1995, and a clubhouse was built in 1999. The private Presidio Golf Club still exists, just outside the Presidio grounds. Daily dawn to dusk. Monday-Thursday US\$125 with cart, US\$110 without; Friday-Sunday and holidays US\$145 with cart, US\$130 without. 300 Finley Road (at Arguello Gate), San Francisco. Phone 415-561-4661. <http://www.presidiogolf.com>.

TPC Harding Park

Named after former U.S. president, and avid golfer, Warren G. Harding, this municipal park has two courses: Harding Park, which has 18 holes, and Fleming, a nine-hole course. Located on the edge of Lake Merced, enjoy the view while you play where PGA tour players swung their clubs. Several tournaments are held there annually. Daily 6:30 am-6 pm. 99 Harding Road, San Francisco. Phone 415-664-4690. <http://www.tpc.com/hardingpark>.

Urban Putt

San Francisco's only indoor mini-golf location, it offers a 14-hole course inside a restored Victorian building in the Mission. A full-service restaurant upstairs offers eclectic Californian cuisine. Mini-golf hours Monday-Thursday 4 pm-midnight (last tee at 11 pm), Friday 4 pm-2 am, Saturday 11 am-2 am (last tee at 12:30 am), Sunday 11 am-midnight (last tee at 11 pm). US\$12 adults, US\$8 for children ages 6-12. 1096 S. Van Ness Ave (at 22nd Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-341-1080. <http://www.urbanputt.com>.

HIKING & WALKING

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area, embracing much of the city's shoreline (including Alcatraz Island), continues across the bay where trails explore the Marin Headlands. It includes Muir Woods and the Presidio. Trail maps are available at ranger stations. Visitors centers are located at several places, including Fort Point, Marin Headlands, Muir Woods and the Presidio. Hours vary by location. Muir Woods admission US\$7 adults; other areas of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area are free. Phone 415-561-4700. <http://www.nps.gov/goga>.

Golden Gate Promenade

Also known as the Bay Trail, this 3.5-mi/5.6-km multipurpose path along the city's waterfront offers spectacular views of the Golden Gate Bridge and Bay (it's a world-famous spot for windsurfing). Located in the Presidio and within walking distance of the Marina District, the Promenade runs the length of Crissy Field, starting just past Yacht Harbor and ending near the Fort Point Coast Guard station. The Warming Hut Bookstore and Cafe (Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-7 pm; phone 415-561-3042) sits near the trail's western end. 983 Marine Drive (Warming Hut Bookstore address), San Francisco. <http://www.presidio.gov/explore/trails/Pages/golden-gate-promenade.aspx>.

The Embarcadero

This roadway runs along the eastern waterfront. Start your walk at Fisherman's Wharf for views of the East Bay, Buena Vista and Treasure Island, the Bay Bridge, Alcatraz and, finally, the Golden Gate Bridge. Stop in at the Ferry Building for lunch or some fresh produce or a delicious marmalade from one of the many local food vendors. Phone 415-788-3100.

Tilden Park

Tilden Park, at the top of the Berkeley hills, is enormous, with a botanic garden, steam train, carousel, walking trails, a lake (with areas for swimming) and a nature center. Bicycling paths also trail through the park and dogs are allowed during certain months. Park open daily 5 am-10 pm unless otherwise posted; hours for botanic garden, carousel and other attractions vary. Shasta Road, Berkeley. Phone 510-544-3169. Toll-free 888-327-2757 choose option 3, ext. 4562. <http://www.ebparks.org/parks/tilden>.

ICE SKATING

Oakland Ice Center

This public facility features two indoor rinks, one for figure skating and one for hockey. Open daily. The schedule for public skating is posted on the website. US\$9.75 adults, US\$8 seniors, US\$8.25 children age 12 and younger. Skate rentals US\$4.25. 519 18th St., Oakland. Phone 510-268-9000. <http://www.oaklandice.com>.

Union Square Ice Rink

A portion of Union Square gets converted into an ice skating rink for the holiday season, November through mid-January. Check website for calendar and schedules. Hours 10 am-11:30 pm, with an early closure on New Year's Eve. Each session is 90 minutes and starts on every even hour. Closed during heavy rain. US\$11 adults, US\$7 children age 8 and younger. Skate rentals US\$6. Union Square (at the corner of Geary and Powell streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-781-2688. <http://unionsquareicerink.com>.

Yerba Buena Ice Skating & Bowling Center

The only year-round skating venue in the city, the center is on the rooftop of Yerba Buena Gardens. Check the website for public skating times. Sunday-Thursday 10 am-10 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-midnight. Admission and skate rentals US\$10 adults, US\$8 seniors and children ages 6-12, US\$6 children age 5 and younger. Skate rental US\$4. 750 Folsom St. (between Third and Fourth streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-820-3521. <http://www.skatebowl.com>.

SPAS AND HEALTH CLUBS

Kabuki Springs & Spa

A calm respite near busy Japantown, this spa offers the usual treatments such as massage and facials, as well as acupuncture and communal Japanese-style baths. Male and female communal bath schedules alternate daily (Sunday, Wednesday, Friday for women; Monday, Thursday, Saturday for men) with co-ed Tuesday (bathing suit required). Daily 10 am-9:45 pm. Reservations recommended, especially for weekend treatments. 1750 Geary Blvd. (at Fillmore, inside the Kinokuniya building), San Francisco. Phone 415-922-6000 or 415-922-6001 for reservations. <http://www.kabukisprings.com>.

SenSpa

Unwind after a long day of exploring the Presidio at this local respite. Traditional massage, facial and body treatments are available. There are acupuncture and naturopathic medial options as well. The relaxing layout includes showers and a sauna. Treatment prices vary, and day use of facilities is included with spa appointments of 50 minutes or longer. Day use without treatment US\$25 Monday-Friday. 1161 Gorgas Ave., San Francisco. Phone 415-441-1777. <http://www.senspa.com>.

OTHER OPTIONS

House of Air

Take your children (or your inner child) to an indoor trampoline class. Wear comfortable clothes, such as shorts, and a long-sleeve t-shirt. It's recommended that you buy special grip socks, which are available at the sports shop. There is a training space and three separate areas, including the "Matrix," an enormous room with 42 conjoined trampolines for maximum bounce space. Children younger than 7 are not permitted on the main trampolines, but mini programs are available for kids ages 2-6. Monday 10 am-9 pm, Tuesday-Thursday 2-9 pm, Friday and Saturday 10 am-10 pm, Sunday 10 am-8 pm. 926 Old Mason St. (located in the airplane hangar at Crissy Field, in the Presidio), San Francisco. Phone 415-345-9675. <http://www.houseofair.com>.

NIGHTLIFE

At night, the city offers something for every taste, from quiet piano bars on Nob Hill and trendy SoMa hot spots to colorful saloons downtown and in North Beach.

There is no smoking indoors. Closing time at most nightspots is 2 am, which is when bars are legally bound to stop serving alcohol.

BARS, TAVERNS & PUBS

15 Romolo

Located in the alley below the Basque Hotel, this North Beach favorite is frequented by a creative young crowd attracted to the bar's slick interiors, upscale bar food, stiff cocktails and eclectic, tres-cool jukebox selection. Usually standing room only on weekends. Ask about the owners' other ultrahip nightclub, Rosewood, located behind an unmarked door on Broadway. Monday-Friday 5 pm-2 am, Saturday and Sunday 11:30 am-2 am. 15 Romolo Place (off Broadway near Columbus Avenue), San Francisco. Phone 415-398-1359. <http://www.15romolo.com>.

Bourbon & Branch

Those in the know reserve a table in advance to get into this reincarnation of a speakeasy behind an unmarked door in the Tenderloin. Look for the sign that reads, "Anti-Saloon League," hit the buzzer and give the secret password to get into the lush lounge (though all tables have a two-hour cap). The rest of us, who may not have planned ahead, can get in by saying "books" and will be ushered through a rotating door of fake books to the more casual "library." Don't run a tab on crowded weekends unless you want to wait in line just to pay. Daily 6 pm-2 am. 501 Jones St. (at O'Farrell), San Francisco. Phone 415-346-1735. <http://www.bourbonandbranch.com>.

Harvey's

Named after the slain San Francisco gay Supervisor Harvey Milk, this popular gay bar offers a mixed crowd and great people-watching in the heart of the Castro. The hearty weekend brunches, especially the overstuffed omelettes, will keep you going all day long. Comedy night is on Tuesday, and trivia is on select Wednesdays with drag queen Bebe Sweetbriar. Monday-Friday 11 am-11 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-2 am. 500 Castro St. (at 18th Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-431-4278. <http://www.harveyssf.com>.

Latin American Club

Don't be fooled by the name, since this is neither a club nor is it Latin American. Still, urban hipsters enjoy this busy yet relaxed neighborhood bar in the heart of the Mission. It's a perfect place to play a game of billiards and sit around a Formica table with friends drinking the deadly strong, pint-sized margaritas. Monday-Thursday 6 pm-2 am, Friday 5 pm-2 am, Saturday 1 pm-2 am, Sunday 2 pm-2 am. Cash only. 3286 22nd St. (between Bartlett and Valencia streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-647-2732.

Lone Palm

Lounge the night away at this neighborhood nook with classy cocktails, nattily dressed hipsters, candle-lit tables and old black-and-white movies on the TV screen. It can get crowded on Friday and Saturday nights, but weeknights are more mellow. Happy hour daily 4-6 pm. Open daily 4 pm-2 am. 3394 22nd St. (at Guerrero Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-648-0109.

Redwood Room

This sexy cocktail bar, awash in rich red hues, recalls the classic lounges of yesteryear. The gorgeous Philippe Starck-designed lounge furniture makes for fun photo ops, especially as the subjects of the portraits on the walls dart in and out of the pictures in *Harry Potter*-esque fashion. Artists, young professionals and hotel guests keep the bar hopping until the wee hours. Be forewarned: This place gets crowded on Friday and Saturday; you'd be wise to book a table in advance and take a fat wallet to pay for the atmosphere and service. Sunday-Thursday 5 pm-2 am, Friday and Saturday 4 pm-2 am. 495 Geary St. (at Taylor Street, inside the Clift Hotel), San Francisco.

Phone 415-929-2372.

<https://www.morganshotelgroup.com/originals/originals-clift-san-francisco/eat-drink/redwood-room>.

Rickhouse

The bartenders slide on a rolling ladder across wooden shelves to find that perfect pour from a floor-to-ceiling tower of booze. With such an overwhelming list of options, choosing your drink may be a mind bender. We suggest a whiskey concoction (there's a reason *GQ* magazine named this one of the best whiskey bars in America). Live music every Saturday 10 pm-1 am. Grab a seat in the second-floor loft if you can. Monday 5 pm-2 am, Tuesday-Friday 3 pm-2 am, Saturday 6 pm-2 am. Closed Sunday. 246 Kearny St., San Francisco. Phone 415-398-2827. <http://www.rickhousebar.com>.

Rye

Popular with the thirtysomething single crowd, this bar makes its claim to fame via specialty cocktail concoctions—such as the basil gimlet and drinks using the once-illegal absinthe—and various other unusual drinks crafted with care. It's heaven for smokers with lots of outside seating. There's even a billiard table. Monday-Friday 5:30 pm-2 am, Saturday 6 pm-2 am, Sunday 7 pm-midnight. 688 Geary St. (between Jones and Leavenworth streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-474-4448. <http://www.ryesf.com>.

The Buena Vista Cafe

A trip to San Francisco is not complete without a visit to the Buena Vista, where it's claimed that Irish coffee was first introduced to a thirsty American population. It serves breakfast all day and offers several menu options, but few venture past the good, strong brews and signature cocktails. Monday-Friday 9 am-2 am, Saturday and Sunday 8 am-2 am. 2765 Hyde St. (at Beach Street; take any Powell and Hyde street cable car to Fisherman's Wharf), San Francisco. Phone 415-474-5044. <http://www.thebuenavista.com>.

The Monk's Kettle

A laid-back gastropub in the Mission district, it's known for its extensive beer selection and European vibe. The name tips its hat to the first historic beer brewers, Belgian monks. Open daily noon-2 am; kitchen closes at 1 am. 3141 16th St. (between Albion and Valencia streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-398-1359. <http://monkskettle.com>.

The Tonga Room & Hurricane Bar

Step back in time in this kitschy but fun hotel bar, complete with tiki decor, umbrella-decorated tropical drinks and rainfall over the central pool every 20 minutes. We like it for after-work or predinner drinks, but dancing starts at 8 pm—the band plays while floating on a raft in the so-called lagoon. It serves mediocre Asian-inspired cuisine, but most people go for the decor and exotic drinks, including its famous Mai Tai. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday 5-11:45 pm; Friday and Saturday 5 pm-12:30 am. Reservations recommended for dinner. 950 Mason St. (at California Street, in the Fairmont Hotel), San Francisco. Phone 415-772-5278. <http://www.tongaroom.com>.

Toronado

Though it's a hole-in-the-wall and looks a little bit like hell—dark and cavelike—beer connoisseurs will be in heaven when they discover the 50 beers on tap there (the assortment changes regularly). Try a good West Coast Boont Amber, Belgian Tripel or tangy Hefeweizen. No food service, but tasty German sausages can be brought in from Rosamunde next door. Happy hour daily until 6 pm. Daily 11:30 am-2 am. Cash only. 547 Haight St. (between Steiner and Fillmore streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-863-2276. <http://www.toronado.com>.

Tosca Cafe

New York restaurateurs Bloomfield and Friedman have brought an Italian menu to this North Beach institution for the first time in 60 years, though the full bar and jukebox are still there. A favorite of visiting celebrities, socialites and an assortment of creative people. The house specialty since Prohibition, the Tosca cappuccino, has also been given an update. Tuesday-Sunday 5 pm-2 am. 242 Columbus Ave. (at Pacific), San Francisco. Phone 415-986-9651. <http://www.toscacafesf.com>.

Trad'r Sam

Located in the Outer Richmond, this tiny drinking hole has been around since 1937. Although it has lost most of its former tiki roots, regulars still squeeze into this small bar after choosing a song from the jukebox. Order a Scorpion to share—it comes in a bowl with four straws. Do yourself a favor and stick to just one drink, since these drinks pack a punch. Daily 10 am-2 am. Cash only. 6150 Geary Blvd. (between 25th and 26th avenues), San Francisco. Phone 415-221-0773.

Vesuvio

Located just across Jack Kerouac Alley from City Lights bookstore, this bar is a rich piece of North Beach history. It's the perfect place for downing a pint or two and soaking up the historic Beat atmosphere. A window seat upstairs is ideal for viewing the lively activity on Columbus Avenue below. No food. Daily 6 am-2 am. 255 Columbus Ave. (at Broadway), San Francisco. Phone 415-362-3370. <http://www.vesuvio.com>.

COMEDY CLUBS

Cobb's Comedy Club

One of San Francisco's premier comedy clubs. All seating is first-come, first-served. Validated parking is about five blocks away at the Anchorage Garage on Beach Street. Show times vary, but they're generally Thursday and Sunday at 7:30 or 8 pm, Friday and Saturday at 8 and 10:15 pm. Reservations can be made by phone on Wednesday 1-6 pm, or 4-6 pm on performance days. Tickets vary depending on performance, usually ranging US\$23.50-\$42.50, plus a two-drink minimum. Full dinner menu. Must be 18 or older to get in, but most shows are 21 and older. 915 Columbus Ave. (at Lombard Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-928-4320. <http://cobbscomedyclub.com>.

Punch Line

The Punch Line is one of San Francisco's best-known comedy clubs, booking both local and national talent. Aspiring comedians perform every Sunday night. Light-fare menu and full bar, although service can be spotty. Show time is usually 7:30 or 8 pm Wednesday-Sunday (doors open at 7 pm); Friday and Saturday there's a second show at 9:30 or 10 pm. It's a good idea to make reservations for all shows. Box office open daily except Monday 3-6 pm. Cover varies, usually US\$17.15-\$45, plus a two-drink minimum. Must be 18 or older. 444 Battery St. (between Clay and Washington streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-397-7573. <http://www.punchlinecomedyclub.com>.

DANCE & NIGHTCLUBS

Mezzanine

The variety of different entertainment options is part of the venue's appeal. Internationally renowned DJs might draw crowds to this multilevel SoMa club one night, and the next night could just as easily bring the black turtleneck crowd out for a massive art installation. The interiors are industrial but include several full bars serving overpriced cocktails, separate lounge areas and a stage. Advance tickets are recommended for many of the events, and seats are available only to those getting bottle service. Hours and covers vary. 444 Jessie St. (at Mint Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-625-8880. <http://www.mezzaninesf.com>.

Ruby Skye

Euro-yuppie and bridge-and-tunnel types primp for nighttime success at this high-end dance club, and so should you—fashionable attire is required (though bear in mind that, to Ruby Skye-goers, "fashionable" entails sequins and barely-there miniskirts). Remarkable sound and lighting systems surround the often packed crowd in this luxuriously spacious and revamped theater, complete with multiple bars, smoking lounge and VIP room. Famous guest DJs spin progressive house. Be warned: Getting a seat in the nightclub may cost extra. Open Thursday 7 pm-2 am, Friday and Saturday 9 pm-4 am. Free cover before midnight. 420 Mason St. (between Geary and Post in Union Square), San Francisco. Phone 415-693-0777. <http://www.rubyskye.com>.

The Cafe

One of the few spots in the Castro with a dance floor, The Cafe draws a hip, young crowd, primarily of gays and lesbians, ready to dance. A pool table and an open-air balcony overlooking the intersection of Castro and Market makes this a fine place to chill on a warm afternoon or evening. Monday is drag night, Thursday is Latin "Pan Dulce" and Friday is "Boy Bar" night. Monday-Friday 5 pm-2 am, Saturday and Sunday 3 pm-2 am. Cover varies. Cash only. 2369 Market St. (at Castro Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-834-5840. <http://www.cafesf.com>.

The Starlight Room

This famous nightclub on the top floor of the Sir Francis Drake Hotel draws an older crowd, with breathtaking views and live music that ranges from big band to blues. Light-fare menu. Tuesday-Saturday from 6 pm to close (usually midnight on weekdays and 1:30 am Friday and Saturday), Sunday 11 am-3:30 pm. Shows start at noon and 2:30 pm. Reservations recommended. Jackets recommended for men. Sunday's a Drag Brunch (US\$44.95) offers an average buffet and a fabulous show. 450 Powell St. (at Sutter Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-395-8595. <http://www.starlightroomsf.com>.

The Stud

This gay nightclub supplies terrific dance music with various theme nights. The underwear parties are legendary, and Friday is usually drag night. Sunday-Friday 5 pm-2 am, Saturday till late. The action doesn't usually start until after 11 pm. Closed on Monday and certain Wednesdays. Cover US\$5-\$10. Cash only. 399 Ninth St. (at Harrison Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-863-6623. <http://www.studsf.com>.

Top of the Mark

This place has been a Nob Hill landmark since 1939, known for the panoramic view of the city from its 19th floor vantage point. Sunday brunch 10 am-2 pm, last seating at 1 pm. Cocktails Monday-Thursday 4:30-11:30 pm, Friday and Saturday 4:30 pm-12:30 am, Sunday 5-11:30 pm. Live entertainment Tuesday-Saturday starting at about 7 pm. Dancing Friday and Saturday till 1 am. No minors allowed after 10 pm. Reservations are required for dinner, but none are taken for the bar. Dress code enforced after 7 pm: no shorts, tank tops, T-shirts, tennis shoes or sandals. Cover US\$5-\$15. 1 Nob Hill (in the Mark Hopkins InterContinental Hotel), San Francisco. Phone 415-616-6940. http://www.intercontinentalmarkhopkins.com/top_of_the_mark.

Vertigo

Twentysomethings populate the small raised dance floor at this medium-sized club, whose interiors include kitschy tiki accents and overhead TVs perpetually screening the bar's namesake film. DJs spin popular dance music, hip-hop, Top 40 hits and old-school tunes. Tropical drinks dominate the cocktail menu. A small smoking lounge accessible from the dance floor lets patrons indulge their habit without leaving the establishment. Daily 3 pm-2 am. Cash only. 1160 Polk St. (between Hemlock and Sutter streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-885-6800. <http://www.vertigobarsf.com>.

LIVE MUSIC

Bimbo's 365 Club

Jazz, electronica, indie rock and hip-hop acts perform at this legendary ballroom, complete with red curtains and tuxedoed waiters. The plentiful seats in back are great for cocktails, while the side lounge is perfect for those looking for a quieter place to drink. No reserved seating. Doors open an hour before showtime, which is usually 8 or 9 pm. Box office open Monday-Friday 10 am-4 pm. 1025 Columbus Ave. (between Taylor and Chestnut streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-474-0365. <http://www.bimbos365club.com>.

Biscuits & Blues

It's always jumping in this supper-club atmosphere, courtesy of great live blues and swing performers. Full bar. Serves tasty Southern-style food, too. In the heart of the theater district. Two shows per night daily except Monday at 7:30 and 9:30 or 10 pm; doors open at 6 pm. There are live jam sessions Friday and Saturday 3:30-6:30 pm. Reservations recommended. Cover varies US\$15-\$25, depending on the show with a required two-drink minimum. Parking available at the Mason/O'Farrell parking garage at 325 Mason St. for US\$15 for up to five hours with show ticket. 401 Mason St. (at Geary Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-292-2583. <http://www.biscuitsandblues.com>.

Boom Boom Room

John Lee Hooker has passed on, but his Boom Boom Room continues to showcase live blues, "funky-jam" band music and New Orleans-style funk for dancing. Tuesday-Friday from 4 pm, Saturday and Sunday from 3 pm. Shows usually around 8 or 10 pm. Cover US\$5-\$28 (no cover on Sunday). 1601 Fillmore St. (at Geary Boulevard), San Francisco. Phone 415-673-8000. <http://www.boomboomblues.com>.

Bottom of the Hill

This intimate venue offers live music nightly, and it ranges from alternative, rockabilly, punk and hard rock to folk, funk and pop. Listed in *Rolling Stone* as one of the best places to see live music in San Francisco; get there early if you want one of the few tables. The patio and pool tables are popular but are not in sight of the bands. Daily 8:30 pm-2 am. Cover US\$8-\$20. Bar is cash only. 1233 17th St. (between Missouri and Texas streets at the bottom of Potrero Hill), San Francisco. Phone 415-626-4455 or 415-626-4455. <http://www.bottomofthehill.com>.

Freight and Salvage Coffeehouse

This nonprofit music venue has been around since the 1960s. Consistently excellent performers, usually playing traditional sounds such as blues, folk, honky tonk or Celtic. The acoustics there are incredible, thanks to a sound system exclusively designed for the space by Meyer Sound Lab of Berkeley. Performances at 7:30 or 8 pm nearly every night of the week: Check the website for a schedule of upcoming concerts. Daily noon-5 pm and 8-10 pm. Cover charge varies depending on the performer, with a discount for advance purchases. 2020 Addison St., Berkeley, San Francisco. Phone 510-644-2020. <http://www.thefreight.org>.

Great American Music Hall

The regal balconies, marble columns and ceiling frescoes of the Great American Music Hall—one of San Francisco's most historic nightclubs—date from its heyday after the 1906 earthquake. It operated then as Blanco's, a notorious restaurant and bordello. It was also a jazz club and a Moose Club lodge, and was condemned before being refurbished and reopened as a live-music venue during the 1970s. The playlist is eclectic: Duke Ellington, the Grateful Dead, Robin Williams, Count Basie, Bobby McFerrin and Sarah Vaughan have all performed there. Most shows are all ages. Prices vary, but usually in the US\$15-\$30 range. 859 O'Farrell St. (between Polk and Larkin streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-885-0750. Toll-free 888-233-0449 for tickets. http://www.slimspresents.com/venue_detail/gamh.

Public Works

This "secret" bar and performance venue in the Mission hosts DJs, art shows, electronica, indie bands and other alternative events. Check website for listings. Shows usually start at 9 or 10 pm on weekends, but times can vary. Cover varies, but it's usually in the US\$10-\$40 range. 161 Erie St. (between Duboce and 14th streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-779-6757. <http://publicsf.com>.

Savanna Jazz

An excellent jazz club in the Mission District, with live music six nights a week ranging from smooth jazz and bebop to Brazilian and Latin beats. The walls are lined with portraits of famous musicians who played there. Nice drink selection; the food is nothing to write home about. Open daily except Monday from 6:30 pm. Shows begin at 8 pm Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday; 8:30 pm Thursday-Saturday. Cover varies, usually US\$5-\$10 depending on the night and the band. 2937 Mission St. (between 25th and 26th streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-285-3369. <http://www.savannajazz.com>.

Thee Parkside

A rockabilly dive bar that also features punk and indie rock bands. It's a lively venue that is popular with the tattooed and pierced set. It has a patio area, complete with heat lamps, videos projected on the wall and a Ping-Pong table. Monday-Friday 2-10 pm, Saturday noon-10 pm, Sunday 11 am-10 pm. Concert schedule and cover charges vary, but they usually range from free to US\$20. 1600 17th St. (at Wisconsin Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-252-1330. <http://www.theeparkside.com>.

The Fillmore

Everyone from the Grateful Dead and Jimi Hendrix to the Smashing Pumpkins and Green Day has played at the legendary Fillmore. Both the spacious main floor and the balcony have good acoustics, but reserve a table for dinner if you want a balcony seat. Concert schedule varies and show prices range US\$25-\$150, depending on the band. 1805 Geary Blvd. (at Fillmore), San Francisco. Phone 415-346-3000. <http://thefillmore.com>.

PERFORMING ARTS

San Francisco prides itself on its openness to cultural offerings, and this is most apparent at the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center (SFWMPAC) adjacent to the Civic Center on Van Ness Avenue (between McAllister and Grove), which includes The Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall, War Memorial Opera House and War Memorial Veterans Building.

The San Francisco Opera is one of the finest opera companies in the world, and the San Francisco Ballet has been acclaimed not only for its dancers, but also for its choreographic achievements in classical ballet and contemporary work. Innovative and experimental performance and dance companies abound in the city.

Live music is performed at many classic San Francisco venues: the Fillmore, the Nob Hill Masonic Center and the Great American Music Hall, to name just a few.

Make reservations and purchase tickets for performances as far in advance as possible. Even smaller, lesser-known events often sell out ahead of time.

The venues for performing arts extend far beyond the better-known stages, with dozens of intimate, timely, risky and experimental shows being performed across the city. If the event you are interested in is unavailable, there is sure to be a suitable alternative.

San Francisco, in fact, has long been regarded as one of the premier hotbeds of experimental dance and theater in the U.S. Some of them are wildly unique performing arts centers presenting genre-bending dance and theater.

DANCE

Dance Mission Theater

The performing arts space of Dance Brigade, this small venue hosts dance, circus, cabaret and musical performances in its casual theater. 3316 24th St. (at Mission St.), San Francisco. Phone 415-826-4441. <http://www.dancemission.com>.

Oberlin Dance Collective (ODC)

This award-winning modern dance company features a dynamic and imaginative repertory, including the annual holiday favorite *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Along with its various performances around the country, the company performs at the ODC Dance Commons (351 Shotwell St.) and at the ODC Theater Building (3153 17th St.), a stunning structure located right around the corner from the Dance Commons that was two years and US\$9 million in the making. ODC Theater box office is open one hour before performance times. Tickets range US\$20-\$125. 351 Shotwell St., San Francisco. Phone 415-549-8519 for information; 415-863-9834 for the box office. <http://www.odcdance.org>.

San Francisco Ballet

This is the oldest professional ballet company in the U.S.; its regular performance season runs late January-early May, following the company's holiday presentation of its hugely popular *Nutcracker* in December. The troupe performs in the War Memorial Opera House (the box office is in the lobby). The in-person box office is open only on performance days Monday-Friday from noon until the first intermission, Saturday and Sunday from 10 am. Tickets range US\$20-\$205. Rush discounts available for students, seniors and military with ID. Standing room tickets are available for purchase on performance dates US\$15-20 each. 301 Van Ness (at Grove Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-861-5600 for information or 415-865-2000 for tickets. <http://sfballet.org>.

MUSIC

San Francisco Symphony

Renowned music director Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the orchestra in Davies Symphony Hall. The symphony also maintains a performance schedule of special events. Regular season runs September-June and showcases many world-famous artists and conductors. Box office open Monday-Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday noon-6 pm, Sunday two hours before concerts. Tickets range US\$15-\$125. Davies Symphony Hall, 201 Van Ness Ave., Davies Symphony Hall (at Grove Street), San Francisco. Phone 554-0108. <http://www.sfsymphony.org>.

SF Jazz Center

The first free-standing building for jazz in the U.S. has its home in the Hayes Valley. Jazz, folk and blues concerts are held in the Robert N. Milner Auditorium. Box office open Tuesday-Saturday 11 am-5:30 pm and 90 minutes prior to shows. Tickets range US\$25-\$120, depending on the performer. 201 Franklin St. (at Fell Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-788-7353 or 415-864-6000 for tickets.. Toll-free 866-920-5299. <http://www.sfjazz.org>.

OPERA

San Francisco Opera

This is one of the great opera companies of the world. Productions benefit from the wonderful acoustics at the elegantly refurbished War Memorial Opera House. (Some call the upper balconies acoustical heaven.) The season runs mid-September to January, and June and July. Box office open Monday 10 am-5 pm, Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm. Purchase tickets well in advance; they usually range US\$33-\$380. Rush tickets are sometimes available for students, seniors and military starting from 11 am on the day of a performance. 301 Van Ness Ave. (across from City Hall), San Francisco. Phone 415-861-4008 for information. Phone 415-864-3330 for tickets. <http://www.sfopera.com>.

THEATER

San Francisco's Theater District is concentrated near Union Square on Geary, Mason and Market streets. Three major venues are the Curran, the Orpheum and the Golden Gate. Additional theaters to check out include Theatre Artaud, ODC Theater, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre in Fort Mason.

American Conservatory Theater

Known as A.C.T., San Francisco's Tony Award-winning repertory troupe presents a rich season of classic and contemporary works in the beautifully restored Geary Theater. Season runs September-July daily except Monday. Box office hours Monday noon-6 pm, Tuesday-Sunday noon-curtain. Tickets US\$25-\$80. 415 Geary Blvd. (between Mason and Taylor streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-749-2228 for tickets. <http://www.act-sf.org>.

Beach Blanket Babylon

For a uniquely San Francisco experience, Steve Silver's production at Club Fugazi is a zany, fast-paced, cabaret-style show with an ever-changing cast of celebrity caricatures. It's the nation's longest-running musical revue at more than 30 years. Buy your tickets well in advance and ask how early you should show up. (The line sometimes forms 45 minutes before curtain—and your place in line determines your exact seat.) Tickets US\$25-\$160. Shows are usually Wednesday-Friday 8 pm, Saturday 6:30 and 9:30 pm, Sunday matinees at 2 and 5 pm, but holiday schedules can vary. 678 Beach Blanket Babylon Blvd., Club Fugazi, San Francisco. Phone 415-421-4222 for tickets. <http://www.beachblanketbabylon.com>.

Berkeley Repertory Theatre

Definitely worth the trip across the Bay, this intimate, projected-stage theater presents a terrific mix of projects, ranging from traditional to experimental. Especially creative set designers make the performances visually striking. Season runs September-June daily except Monday. Tickets range US\$45-\$75 with discounts for seniors, students and those younger than 30 (with ID). Box office open daily except Monday noon-7 pm. 2025 Addison St. (around the corner from the Downtown Berkeley BART stop), Berkeley. Phone 510-647-2949 for information or 510-647-2900 for the box office. <http://www.berkeleyrep.org>.

EXIT Theatre

For cutting-edge experimental theater presented in especially intimate environments, it doesn't get much better than EXIT Theatre, which has been staging independent performances in San Francisco since 1983. Five separate venues make up the EXIT, and all are located within two or three blocks of the Powell Street Muni station (and cable car turnaround) in Union Square. The EXIT also produces the San Francisco Fringe Festival each September. Tickets range US\$15-\$25. 156 Eddy St. (between Taylor and Mason streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-931-1094. <http://www.theexit.org>.

Lamplighters Music Theatre

The Lamplighters Music Theatre has been producing light opera and musical theater—particularly Gilbert & Sullivan—since 1952. The performances are held at various venues around town, including the Novellus Theater at the Yerba Buena Center for The Arts (700 Howard St., at Third Street) and other theaters in the East Bay. Check the website for more details. Tickets range US\$20-\$97, with discounts for seniors, students and children. 469 Bryant St., San Francisco. Phone 415-227-4797. <http://lamplighters.org>.

Magic Theatre

Since its founding in 1967, the Magic Theatre troupe has been dedicated to the development and production of new plays. Located in San Francisco's historic Fort Mason Center overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay. There are two theater spaces: The Sam Shepard Theatre is a proscenium house seating 160, and the Northside Theatre seats 162. Box office phone open Tuesday-Saturday noon-7 pm, Sunday noon-4 pm; show days open 10 am-curtain call; in-person box office open one hour before curtain. Tickets US\$30-\$60 with a US\$5 discount for seniors and educators. Fort Mason Center, Building D, Third Floor, San Francisco. Phone 415-441-8001 for information. Phone 415-441-8822 for tickets. <http://www.magictheatre.org>.

San Francisco Playhouse

Inside a historic Spanish-Gothic building, the SF Playhouse produces professional and well-done plays in its 199-seat theater. Check its website for the latest performances. Tickets US\$35-\$70. 450 Post St. (on the second floor of the Kensington Park Hotel), San Francisco. Phone 415-677-9596. <http://www.sfplayhouse.org>.

Theatre Rhinoceros

One of the country's premier LGBT theater companies, it was founded in 1977 by the late Allan Estes Jr. Season runs September-July. Shows are held at a variety of venues throughout the city, including the Eureka Theatre. Tickets US\$15-\$25. 1 Sansome St., Suite 3500, Eureka Theatre, San Francisco. Phone 415-552-4100. Toll-free 800-838-3006 for tickets (24 hours). <http://www.therhino.org>.

TICKET BROKERS

Brown Paper Tickets

This international ticket broker offers tickets for some of San Francisco's smaller venues, and it also donates more than 5% of profits to nonprofit organizations. Toll-free 800-838-3006 24 hours. <http://www.brownpapertickets.com>.

TicketWeb

This independent company offers tickets to many of the city's smaller venues including Cobb's Comedy Club, the Castro Theatre and the Magic Theatre. Toll-free 866-468-3399 (California and Nevada) or 800-965-4827. <http://www.ticketweb.com>.

TIX Bay Area

TIX Bay Area is a walk-up box office selling half-price tickets on the day of performance and full-price tickets in advance to select events. Online sales are also available in partnership with ticket discounter Goldstar. Open Sunday-Thursday 9 am-5 pm, Friday and Saturday 9 am-6 pm. All half-price tickets go on sale at 11 am. Accepts cash, major credit cards and traveler's checks. 350 Powell St., Union Square (entrance on Geary Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-430-1140 or 415-433-7827 (for recorded information). <http://www.tixbayarea.org>.

VENUES

CounterPULSE

An intimate, alternative art space, it's known for its experimental dance, film, spoken word, performances, exhibits and other events. It focuses largely on local talent but also hosts traveling artists. 80 Turk St., San Francisco. Phone 415-626-2060. <http://counterpulse.org>.

Nob Hill Masonic Center

This former meeting hall for the Freemasons has been converted into a state-of-the-art concert venue with a capacity of 3,300. In-person box office open day of performances only from published door time until the main act goes on stage. Tickets available from Ticketmaster (toll-free 800-745-3000). 1111 California St. (across from Grace Cathedral), San Francisco. Phone 415-776-7457. <http://sfmasonic.com>.

San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center (SFWMPAC)

Adjacent to the Civic Center on Van Ness Avenue, SFWMPAC includes the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall, War Memorial Opera House and War Memorial Veterans Building. With nearly 7,000 seats, the complex makes up one of the largest performing-arts centers in North America. Guided tours of the performing arts center are available every Monday (except holidays) on the hour 10 am-2 pm. US\$7 adults, US\$5 for seniors and students. For additional tour information, call 415-552-8338. Tickets to performances can be purchased through the individual organizations, including the City Box Office, the San Francisco Ballet, the San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Symphony. 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco. Phone 415-621-6600. <http://www.sfwmpac.org>.

SPECTATOR SPORTS

San Francisco is a big sports town—baseball, basketball and football generate the most interest. With so many teams in town, there are multiple venues to keep straight. Some are in the city; others are across the bay in Oakland.

BASEBALL

Oakland Athletics

The American League's Oakland Athletics (the Oakland "A's") play home games at the O.co Coliseum April-late September. Direct public transportation from San Francisco is available via BART. Tickets range US\$10-\$175. 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. Phone 510-638-4627. Toll-free 877-493-2255. <http://oakland.athletics.mlb.com>.

San Francisco Giants

The Bay Area's other major league baseball team, the National League's San Francisco Giants, plays home games at AT&T Park April-late September. Coats and blankets are highly recommended even for summer home games, especially at night. The ballpark is easily reached by public transportation via Muni, which is highly recommended, as parking can be beastly. 24 Willie Mays Plaza (Third and King streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-972-2000 for information. Phone 510-972-2000 for tickets. <http://sanfrancisco.giants.mlb.com>.

BASKETBALL

Golden State Warriors

Home games are played in the Oracle Arena (or "The O," as it's often referred to by locals) in Oakland November-April. Games start at 7:30 pm, but go 90 minutes early if you want to see them warm up. Public transportation from San Francisco is available via BART (get off at the Coliseum/Oakland Airport station). Tickets US\$30-\$700. Parking US\$30. 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. Phone 510-986-2200 for arena information. Toll-free 800-745-3000 for tickets. <http://www.nba.com/warriors>.

FOOTBALL

Oakland Raiders

Home games are played at the O.co Coliseum September-December. Direct transportation from San Francisco is available via BART (get off at the Coliseum/Oakland Airport station). Tickets US\$35-\$160. 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. Phone 510-864-5000 for information. Phone 800-745-3000 for tickets. <http://www.raiders.com>.

San Francisco 49ers

Home games are played September-December at Levi's Stadium at 4900 Marie P. DeBartolo Way in Santa Clara, about 40 mi/64 km southeast of San Francisco off Highway 101. A limited number of tickets are usually available, and single tickets are available online (<https://faithful49.com>). Dress warmly because it can get windy. Phone 415-656-4900 for information or 415-464-9377 for tickets. <http://www.49ers.com>.

SHOPPING

If shopping is your passion and the sky's the limit, San Francisco is your city. It has a variety of shops for arts, antiques and fashions, but most San Franciscans will tell you that you can't say you've really shopped in San Francisco unless you've been to the Union Square area, with its wealth of upscale stores.

Other prominent shopping areas include Stonestown Galleria, Westfield San Francisco Centre, Union Street, Ghirardelli Square, The Cannery at Del Monte Square, Pier 39, the Crocker Galleria and the Embarcadero Center.

There are good selections of Chinese and Japanese products (from jade and porcelain to silk and art) in Chinatown and Japantown. Haight Street is the place to stock up on funky vintage duds, platform shoes and, of course, tie-dyed T-shirts.

Sacramento Street in Presidio Heights is a haven for clothing and furnishings that range from the very old to the brand new. Trendy furnishings, specialty boutiques and clothing can be found on Hayes Street (behind the San Francisco Opera House) and along chic Union Street in the Marina District.

Original art is best found near Union Square in galleries that belong to the San Francisco Art Dealers Association. Centered at the 400 block of Jackson Street is the Jackson Square Art and Antique Dealers Association, which consists of 24 antiques and design shops with high-quality goods.

ANTIQUÉ STORES

Antique and Art Exchange

This shop specializes in English and Continental antiques, paintings and decorative objects from the 18th and 19th centuries. The inventory changes frequently but has included such items as a Swedish crystal and cobalt-glass chandelier circa 1920, a 19th-century French giltwood mirror in the Louis XVI style, and an Italian walnut 18th-century desk. Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm. 151 Vermont St., No. 4, San Francisco. Phone 415-522-3580. <http://www.antiqueandartexchange.com>.

San Francisco Antique & Design Mall

A paradise for treasure hunters, there are more than 200 dealers tucked into every corner of this two-story flea market. Wear comfortable shoes and give yourself plenty of time to browse the eclectic selections. There are two locations: The Howard Street mall features a two-story, 10,000-sq-ft/929-sq-m showroom, and the smaller, 1,200-sq-ft/111-sq-m showroom is located at 538 Castro St. Daily 10 am-5:30 pm. 1112 Howard St., San Francisco. Phone 415-656-3530. <http://www.sfantique.com>.

The Butler and the Chef

The early-18th- to 20th-century French bar and kitchen furnishings at this 6,000-sq-ft/557-sq-m design showroom are enough to make any Francophile swoon. The owners personally select pieces on their trips to France and have an on-site restoration studio for repairs and refurbishments. The sizable selection of antique butcher blocks, marble sinks and wine racks will send culinary hearts racing. Not to be confused with the French bistro by the same name in the SoMA district. Monday-Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday 11 am-5 pm. 1118 Harrison St., San Francisco. Phone 415-626-9600. <http://www.thebutlerandthechef.com>.

BOOKSTORES

Book Passage

Although its original and much larger location resides in Marin County, the Book Passage's Ferry Building shop is nevertheless an exquisitely well-organized independent bookstore. There's a superb selection of travel guides, cookbooks, the best in contemporary fiction and nonfiction, and literary-themed gifts. Check the events calendar for frequent author appearances. Daily 9 am-9 pm. 1 Ferry Building No. 42 (at the Embarcadero), San Francisco. Phone 415-835-1020. <http://www.bookpassage.com>.

City Lights

This North Beach store and small press, founded by poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, is where the talents of Beat-generation notables Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs and Charles Bukowski were first exposed to the world. Legendary in the city and beyond, it has been at its present location for more than 50 years. A section is dedicated to the works of Beat writers. There's an impressive poetry section as well as independent publications, political works, and local authors and history, plus readings of poetry and prose. Daily 10 am-midnight. 261 Columbus Ave. (at Broadway), San Francisco. Phone 415-362-8193. <http://www.citylights.com>.

Green Apple Books and Music

Green Apple has been selling books since the 1960s and is known around town for its huge collection of used books on nearly any topic imaginable. You'll probably come across that hard-to-find, out-of-print book you've been looking for. Also sells new books and music. There is a second, smaller location at 1231 Ninth Ave. Daily 10 am-10:30 pm. 506 Clement St. (at Sixth Avenue), San Francisco. Phone 415-387-2272. <http://www.greenapplebooks.com>.

Kayo Books

Retro readers flock to this tiny specialty bookshop for pulp fiction and vintage paperbacks sold at bargain prices. Some go to hunt the shelves for rare and out-of-print books and pop-culture ephemera from bygone eras, and others just want a good, old-fashioned read. Special sections with titles such as Sleaze and Erotica, Westerns and Juvenile Delinquency reflect the shop's diverse inventory, all impeccably organized. Open Thursday-Saturday 11 am-6 pm or by appointment. 814 Post St. (at Leavenworth Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-749-0554 or 415-269-6286. <http://www.kayobooks.com>.

Omnivore Books

Home cooks and food lovers will delight in this store chock-full of both new and high-quality used books on everything and anything to do with food. It also holds several events during the year with guest chefs and authors, usually accompanied with tastings, of course. Monday-Saturday 11 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. 3885-A Caesar Chavez St. (at Church Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-282-4712. <http://www.omnivorebooks.com>.

The Booksmith

An incredibly helpful and friendly staff, a fantastic selection of new books, and perhaps the city's best schedule of author events are just a few of the reasons the Booksmith is one of San Francisco's best-loved bookshops. Book prices can sometimes be a bit high, but even penny-pinchers should check out the wonderful selections of magazines, cards and gifts. Monday-Saturday 10 am-10 pm, Sunday 10 am-8 pm. 1644 Haight St. (at Belvedere Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-863-8688. Toll-free 800-493-7323. <http://www.booksmith.com>.

William Stout Architectural Books

One of the country's best collections of new, used and antique art and architecture books. It started with Bill Stout's frequent architectural trips to Europe and has grown into two stories of books and a small, local press. There is a location in Berkeley, as well (1605 Solano Ave., phone 510-356-4740). Monday-Friday 10 am-6:30, Saturday 10 am-5:30 pm. 804 Montgomery St. (south of Broadway), San Francisco. Phone 415-391-6757. <http://www.stoutbooks.com>.

DEPARTMENT STORES

If you're in need of a department store, head to Union Square. Macy's, Gump's, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue, Barneys New York and Bloomingdale's all have stores in the area.

Gump's

There are department stores, and then there's Gump's. Established in 1861, when inventory was delivered by clipper ship, the Gumps brothers offer high-end home furnishings as well as Asian art objects and gifts. Even if you haven't the inclination—or the wallet—for a grand purchase, it's worth stopping by to see the store itself. Especially notable are the amazing—and amazingly expensive—ornaments displayed at Christmastime. If shopping the ordinary way isn't for you, you can arrange a private event with a personal shopper to guide you through displays of objets d'art. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. 135 Post St. (at Union Square), San Francisco. Phone 415-982-1616. Toll-free 800-766-7628 or 800-284-8677 for catalog orders. <http://www.gumps.com>.

GALLERIES

Encantada Gallery

Vibrant artwork celebrating Mexican, Latin American and Chicano heritage is presented at this bright location in the Mission District. Day of the Dead altars, paintings, wall hangings and colorful folk art crowd the shop with rotating art exhibits of local (mainly Latino) artists. Gallery open Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday noon-6 pm, Friday and Saturday noon-8 pm. 904 Valencia St. (near 20th Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-642-3939.

John Berggruen Gallery

On its three floors, this gallery exhibits major American postwar, internationally known and emerging artists, such as Anish Kapoor, Henri Matisse and Claes Oldenburg. Works include limited-edition prints, photographs, American and European paintings, drawings and sculpture. Monday-Friday 9:30 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 10:30 am-5 pm. 228 Grant Ave. (at Union Square), San Francisco. Phone 415-781-4629. <http://www.berggruen.com>.

Robert Koch Gallery

This Union Square gallery purveys historic and contemporary photographs by emerging visionaries and such well-known names as Ansel Adams, Man Ray, Sally Mann and Edward Weston. Exhibits rotate every 45 to 60 days. Tuesday-Saturday 10:30 am-5:30 pm. 49 Geary St., Fifth Floor, Fifth Floor (between Grant and Kearny streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-421-0122. <http://www.kochgallery.com>.

The Shooting Gallery

Obsessed with pop-culture and daring art from prominent young artists, photographers and illustrators, this small Tenderloin gallery garners quite a bit of attention each June with its annual Erotic Show. Other shows have featured works inspired by tiki art, bondage, surf-and-skate culture and Japanese animation as well as emerging artists from around the world. Tuesday-Saturday noon-7 pm. 886 Geary St., San Francisco. Phone 415-931-1500. <http://www.shootinggallerysf.com>.

Xanadu Gallery

When this small, circular space was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1948 to display fine china and silver, it was considered radical because it had no display window. A ramp spirals up to the mezzanine along curving walls in a design similar to that of New York's Guggenheim Museum, for which this building was a prototype. Inside, the gallery (established in 1979) specializes in very high-end art, decorative objects and antiquities from Asia, Africa and Oceania. The charming alley where it's located is closed to cars during business hours and holds many more interesting shops. Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm. 140 Maiden Lane (just off Union Square, between Stockton Street and Grant Avenue), San Francisco. Phone 415-392-9999. <http://www.xanadugallery.us>.

MARKETS

Ferry Plaza Farmers Market

This is a colorful, open-air display of seasonal produce, local growers, cheeses and baked goods. The Ferry Building itself is an upscale gourmet food center every day. Tuesday and Thursday 10 am-2 pm, Saturday 8 am-2 pm. 1 Ferry Building, Suite 50 (along The Embarcadero, at the foot of Market Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-291-3276. <http://www.cuesa.org>.

Heart of the City Farmers Market

This cornucopia of flowers, produce and seafood from California producers is held in the Civic Center. Although it may not be the most upscale open market in the city, it's one of the least expensive. Farmers sell directly to customers. Take cash or buy tokens with credit cards at the market information tent; tokens can be used at any of the market's booths. Wednesday 7 am-5:30 pm, Friday 7 am-2:30 pm, Sunday 7 am-5 pm. 1182 Market St., Suite 412 (off Market Street, above the Civic Center BART station), San Francisco. Phone 415-558-9455. <http://heartofthecity-farmersmar.squarespace.com>.

Off The Grid

San Francisco's food trucks are a popular and surprisingly well-organized operation. Weekly gatherings happen all over the Bay Area, including the Civic Center, North Beach, the Presidio and at the United Nations plaza. Tasty treats are available from dozens of vendors, including The Chairman Truck, Bacon Bacon and Creme Brulee Cart. Check website for schedule. \$-\$\$\$. Most trucks accept credit cards. 2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason Center, Building C, San Francisco. Phone 415-339-5888. <http://offthegridsf.com>.

San Francisco Farmers Market at the Crocker Galleria

This small but popular market features certified organic vendors touting locally grown seasonal fruits and vegetables in the Financial District. Thursday 11 am-3 pm. 50 Post St. (at Montgomery Street, in the Crocker Galleria), San Francisco. Phone 415-393-1505 for the mall. Toll-free 800-806-3276. <http://cafarmersmkts.com/markets/category/crocker-galleria>.

SHOPPING AREAS

In addition to the well-known malls and shopping areas, there are pockets of boutiques and small shops throughout the city. Union Street between Franklin and Scott streets has several blocks of shopping for the MBA and yuppie crowds. Upper Polk Street between Pacific and Filbert streets is a former rock-club and used-clothing-store strip that's now the place to go for hip home furnishings. You'll find antiques shops and ethnic-furnishings stores, plus offbeat dining options.

The heart of the Inner Mission (Valencia Street between 16th and 20th streets) is a funky zone of vintage-clothing boutiques, furniture stores and Latin American eateries. Long gone are the days of daisy chains and love-ins, but for old time's sake you can still pick up a tie-dyed T-shirt or beaded anklet in Haight-Ashbury. Gentrification, though, has made its mark: Funky music shops and vintage fashion boutiques share the streets with ubiquitous chain stores such as Gap.

Be sure to carry a reusable bag with you when shopping. San Francisco has implemented a Checkout Bag Ordinance, which means that plastic bags are banned, and customers are charged US\$0.10 per bag at retail and food establishments.

Crocker Galleria

Several specialty shops, boutiques and restaurants are housed under an elegant arched skylight in the Financial District, including such retail names as Bella Ceramica, the San Francisco Soup Company and For Eyes. Free validated parking for four hours with US\$10 purchase on Saturday. Monday-Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday 10 am-5 pm. 50 Post St. (at Montgomery Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-393-1505. <http://www.thecrockergalleria.com>.

Embarcadero Center

San Francisco's largest shopping center, designed by John Portman, is anchored by the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Its 17-story atrium is worth a look, but wear your shades—the lights could stun you. More than 125 stores and fine restaurants fill six tree-lined blocks, including Sallumeh, Hyegraph and Gunlocke. On the top level you'll find the Embarcadero Center Cinema, one of the city's leading movie houses for first-run independent and foreign-language films. Monday-Friday 10 am-7 pm, Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. Clay Street, San Francisco. Phone 415-772-0700. <http://embarcaderocenter.com>.

Ferry Building Marketplace

Located in a beautifully renovated 1898 beaux-arts building, the Ferry Building Marketplace houses food and wine shops, as well as restaurants. If you're looking for artisan cheeses, fine produce, chocolates, olive oils, caviar or oysters, this is the place to go. You can't go wrong with such shops as the Acme Bread Co., Cowgirl Creamery's Artisan Cheese Shop, Miette and Recchiuti Confections. Monday-Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday 9 am-6 pm, Sunday 11 am-5 pm. Validated parking is available at the Washington Embarcadero Lot just across from the Ferry Building. 1 Ferry Building (at Market Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-983-8030. <http://www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com>.

Ghirardelli Square

This former chocolate factory now houses shops and restaurants—it's one of many choices for shoppers around Fisherman's Wharf. Ghirardelli is the longest continuously operating chocolate manufacturer in the U.S. At its flagship store in the square, you can stock up on all sorts of goodies as souvenirs (and a bar or three for yourself).

In 1982, Ghirardelli Square was granted National Historic Registry status, and the original 1860 cast-iron chocolate grinder from France is displayed on the lower plaza level along with other chocolate-making paraphernalia. After a long day of shopping, head for a relaxing cocktail and eats at the excellent McCormick & Kuleto's Seafood Restaurant. Free Wi-Fi available in the square. Discounted parking with merchant validation is available off Larkin or Beach streets. Monday-Saturday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 900 N. Point St., Suite E-100 (between Beach and Larkin streets at the west end of Fisherman's Wharf), San Francisco. Phone 415-775-5500. <http://www.ghirardellisq.com>.

Noe Valley

Although chain stores are starting to move in, the main stretch of this neighborhood is lined with small, intriguing shops, cafes and restaurants—nothing overblown or extravagant. Pick up a bottle of California wine, some goat cheese or a box of gourmet chocolates for the trip back home. Then, choose from a selection of international magazines at the newspaper stand and stop for a coffee—all along one block. Hours vary. 4153 24th St. (between Church and Diamond streets), San Francisco. <http://www.noevalleymerchants.com>.

The Cannery at Del Monte Square

Built in 1907, this historic brick building, once the Del Monte fruit cannery, is now a three-level complex of restaurants, shops, galleries and cafes. Live music and street performers are scheduled regularly in the courtyard. It's a half-block walk from the Hyde Street cable car turnaround. Retail shops open Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm; some stores have extended evening hours. 2801 Leavenworth St. (in Fisherman's Wharf at Beach Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-771-3112.

Union Square

Union Square is the city's most scenic shopping district. All sorts of international designer boutiques, sumptuous gift stores, galleries and flagship stores of major retailers—from H&M to BCBG—populate the streets surrounding the square. When the weather is nice, sit on the terraced steps to soak up the sun between store visits. The center square is converted into an ice skating rink November-January. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the square. Parking is available underneath the square—though at US\$34 per day, it's not recommended; entrances are on Geary and Post streets. Union Square is located north of Market Street, bordered by Geary, Post, Stockton and Powell streets. Hours vary, but most shops open Monday-Saturday at 10 am, Sunday at 11 am. <http://www.unionsquashop.com>.

Westfield San Francisco Centre

In 1896, the Emporium opened its doors to a waiting public and became the first department store of its kind in the country. Fast forward 100 years or so and the Westfield San Francisco Centre was born. This nine-level shopping center downtown offers a ride on the nation's only spiral escalator (if you know where you want to go, the elevator may be faster). Nordstrom anchors the top five floors and is surrounded by specialty chain shops—from Godiva and Kenneth Cole to a two-level Abercrombie & Fitch. Monday-Saturday 10 am-8:30 pm, Sunday 11 am-7 pm. 865 Market St. (at Fifth Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-512-5656. <http://westfield.com/sanfrancisco>.

SPECIALTY STORES

Amoeba Music

With the largest selection of music in the Bay area, this massive independent music store lets you choose from more than a quarter-million used CDs, a large selection of new CDs, old vinyl, DVDs and more. If you're lucky, there may even be a live acoustic act or DJ performing on the small in-store stage. There is a classical-music area with its own listening rooms. The original location is across the bay in Berkeley at 2455 Telegraph Ave. Daily 11 am-8 pm. 1855 Haight St., San Francisco. Phone 415-831-1200. <http://www.amoeba.com>.

Britex Fabrics

This is one of the city's few remaining complete fabric emporiums, where you can find everything from silk to notions. It stocks four floors of wall-to-wall fabric, buttons, notions, thread and everything else for your sewing needs all in a historic building in Union Square. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6 pm. 146 Geary St. (between Stockton and Grant streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-392-2910. <http://www.britexfabrics.com>.

Ferry Plaza Wine Merchant and Wine Bar

Sample Californian wines without the long drive to Napa and Sonoma by stepping inside the Ferry Building. Although it specializes in Californian wines, selections also include European vintages. The on-site wine bar has 15-20 different wines available to taste daily. Open Monday 11 am-8 pm, Tuesday 10 am-8 pm, Wednesday-Friday 10 am-9 pm, Saturday 8 am-8 pm, Sunday 10 am-7 pm. 1 Ferry Building, No. 23, San Francisco. Phone 415-391-9400. Toll-free 800-991-9400. <http://www.fpwm.com>.

My Roommate's Closet

Formerly called My Roommate's Closet, this one-room boutique "outlet" gets selections from more than two dozen of California and New York's designer boutiques for at least 50% off retail prices. Best to shop on weekends when they've put up the new arrivals. Monday-Saturday 11 am-6:30 pm, Sunday noon-5 pm. 3044 Fillmore St. (at Union Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-447-7703. <http://www.shopmrc.com>.

Paxton Gate

This eccentric garden store was founded by two landscape designers who were intrigued by the natural world. Whether it's epiphytes or entomology, this Gothic garden supply shop has it covered. Natural science displays, terrariums, animal skulls, exotic plants and a stuffed, mounted mouse dressed up as an angel for Christmas Eve—it's all there. Take the little ones just down the street to Paxton Gate's Curiosities for Kids, at 766 Valencia St. Daily 11 am-7 pm. 824 Valencia St. (between 19th and 20th streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-824-1872. <http://www.paxtongate.com>.

Red Blossom Tea Company

Go there to pick up a porcelain tea set or other Chinatown souvenir. You'll enjoy lingering over an extensive selection of more than 100 loose green, black, white and rare teas, and two demonstration tables offering samples. Monday-Saturday 10 am-6:30 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 831 Grant Ave. (between Clay and Washington streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-395-0868. <http://www.redblossomtea.com>.

Sprout San Francisco

A lovely children's boutique specializing in natural and organic products. It carries huggably soft clothing—such as long-sleeved pajamas made from Turkish cotton—knit booties, books, furniture, pillows, plush toys, home decor and more. Monday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm. 1812 Union St. (at Octavia), San Francisco. Phone 415-359-9205. <http://www.sproutsanfrancisco.com>.

True Sake

Reputedly the nation's first retail outlet devoted entirely to sake, this Hayes Valley shop offers hard-to-find varietals that will wow even the most seasoned imbibers of the Japanese rice wine. Owner Beau Timken's mission is to educate novices and aficionados alike on the wide world of both filtered and unfiltered sake. So don't be afraid to pepper the knowledgeable, friendly staff with all your questions. Descriptive labels and food pairing suggestions accompany many bottles. Monday-Friday noon-7 pm, Saturday 11 am-7 pm, Sunday noon-6 pm. 560 Hayes St., San Francisco. Phone 415-355-9555. <http://www.truesake.com>.

XOX Truffles

Handmade by French chef Jean-Marc Gorce, the tiny chocolate truffles at this place are the best in San Francisco. There are more than two dozen unforgettable flavors, such as spicy cayenne tequila and Earl Grey, to keep you going back for more. And if that's not enough, the packaging is outstandingly imaginative. You can sip of cup of coffee while enjoying a small treat. Monday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 754 Columbus Ave. (between Filbert and Greenwich streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-421-4814. <http://www.xoxtruffles.com>.

DINING OVERVIEW

The city's stellar restaurants representing cuisines from around the world are a source of pride for San Franciscans, who claim they have more restaurants per capita than any other city.

A diverse set of neighborhoods makes ethnic dining a lively option: Chinatown and Inner Richmond for Chinese dishes; Polk and Larkin streets for Vietnamese and Cambodian; North Beach for Italian; and the Mission District for Mexican, Latin American and contemporary American. Then there's Fisherman's Wharf for seafood; SoMa (south of Market) for trendy, avant-garde cuisine; and Haight-Ashbury for inexpensive, eclectic menus geared to the bohemian crowd.

Though no longer nouvelle, California cuisine still makes use of ultrafresh, local ingredients—vegetables, fish and meats—in imaginative and colorful presentations. The dishes are often complemented by terrific California wines. You'll find fine restaurants serving California cuisine throughout the city, but many are around Union Square and in the Financial District.

Restaurants tend to be busiest for dinner between 7 and 9 pm, and most close their kitchens by 11 pm.

Smoking is illegal inside public buildings, including restaurants and bars. Be aware that many restaurants, theaters and stores in San Francisco have banned the use of cell phones, as well.

Expect to pay within these general guidelines, based on the cost of a dinner for one, not including drinks, tax or tip: \$ = less than US\$15; \$\$ = US\$15-\$35; \$\$\$ = US\$36-\$80; and \$\$\$\$ = more than US\$80.

LOCAL & REGIONAL

Chez Panisse

This is where modern California cuisine was born. Culinary visionary Alice Waters led the way, insisting upon using only organically grown vegetables and chemical-free meats. With a casual upstairs cafe and an elegant downstairs restaurant, this great American eatery has something for everyone. There's a prix-fixe menu every night in the restaurant, and the same dish is rarely served two nights in a row. This citadel is well worth a trip across the Bay Bridge. Monday-Thursday 5:30-6 pm and 8-8:45 pm, Friday and Saturday 6-6:30 pm and 8:30-9:15 pm.

Reservations required for the restaurant (and can be made up to 28 days in advance); reservations for the cafe are highly recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 1517 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. Phone 510-548-5049 (restaurant) or 510-548-5049 (cafe). .

Address

1517 Shattuck Ave.
Berkeley, California

Phone

510-548-5049

Foreign Cinema

Within the chrome and brick exterior, the simple and robust California and Mediterranean cuisine from the seasonal menu is the star at this popular restaurant in the Mission District. Foreign films flicker on a back wall of the heated patio as diners enjoy the ever-changing menu. The weekend-brunch oyster bar is a perennial favorite. Seating is available fireside and upstairs on the mezzanine overlooking the dining room. Private dining is offered in the art gallery. Monday-Wednesday 5:30-10 pm, Thursday and Friday 5:30 pm-1 am, Saturday 11 am-2:30 pm and 5:30 pm-1 am, Sunday 11 am-2:30 pm and 5:30-10 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$. Valet parking is available for US\$12. Most major credit cards. 2534 Mission St. (between 21st and 22nd streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-648-7600. .

Address

2534 Mission St.
San Francisco, California 94110

Phone

415-648-7600

Michael Mina

One of San Francisco's finest dining experiences—and that's a bold claim in a city boasting one of the country's greatest culinary scenes—Michael Mina is a one-of-a-kind experience. The presentation of each meticulously laid out dish—the black truffle-poached halibut, garlic-thyme roasted lamb, the lobster potpie and the passion-fruit panna cotta—is simply divine. The chef's selections tasting menu is US\$130. Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday and Sunday for dinner only. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards. 252 California St. (between Front and Battery streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-397-9222. .

Address

252 California St.
San Francisco, California

Phone

415-397-9222

The Beach Chalet

This is a great place to have a microbrew as you watch the waves crashing in Ocean Beach. Even on sunny days, the beach is cool and windswept, with stinging sand—so it's pleasant to sit, warm and protected, inside. It has a casual atmosphere and somewhat overpriced burgers and seafood, but hey, there *is* that killer view. Live music most evenings. The adjoining Park Chalet overlooks verdant Golden Gate Park and offers a similar, less expensive American bistro menu of pizzas, soups and salads. Monday-Thursday 9 am-11 pm, Friday 9 am-midnight, Saturday 8 am-midnight, Sunday 8 am-11 pm. \$\$. Most major credit cards. 1000 Great Highway (between Irving and Balboa streets, where Golden Gate Park reaches Ocean Beach), San Francisco. Phone 415-386-8439. .

Address

1000 Great Highway
San Francisco, California 94121

Phone

415-386-8439

Zuni Cafe

Located in a glass-walled space overlooking Market Street, Zuni still feels like a hot spot even after more than 20 years. The secret: a copper-topped bar, buzzing clientele and a semi-open kitchen with a brick oven. It all adds up to a place that can make any day into a special occasion. You *must* have the burger, although it's only available for lunch and after 10 pm. Downstairs is where the action is; avoid the cramped dining room upstairs. Tuesday-Thursday 11:30 am-11 pm, Friday and Saturday 11:30 am-midnight, Sunday 11 am-11 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$\$. Valet parking is available during dinner only for US\$12; enter on Rose Alley. Most major credit cards. 1658 Market St. (between Franklin and Gough streets), San Francisco. Phone 415-552-2522. .

Address

1658 Market St.
San Francisco, California

Phone

415-552-2522

PERSONAL SAFETY

As with all major cities, San Francisco has its share of hazards. Being aware of your surroundings and cautious in unfamiliar places can help you avoid most problems. Although most of the areas that travelers frequent are reasonably safe, some are adjacent to areas that are not. Use extra caution after dark in the Civic Center area, in the Tenderloin (near Union Square-Theater District), the Mission District and Western Addition (south of Japantown). San Francisco has one of the largest homeless populations in the country, and there are often aggressive panhandlers in tourist areas. Use a combination of respect and caution; refrain from giving money or engaging panhandlers.

Keep alert when walking in Golden Gate Park—stay on main paths if you're walking alone, and avoid walking there at night. Be cautious about venturing off the well-populated streets in SoMa (South of Market). Extra caution is also advised in the Mission District (Mission and 16th streets) and Haight-Ashbury (specifically the Lower Haight) at night.

Auto and bicycle theft is not uncommon in San Francisco. Always drive with your doors locked and stow your purse or other valuables under the seat. Do not leave any valuables or luggage in plain sight in your car, and park in well-lit, well-trafficked areas. If renting a bike, lock it to something substantial, not aluminum posts, chain-link fences or anything that could be cut easily.

When riding public transportation, keep your purse, cell phone or backpack in front of you and visible at all times. Don't carry large amounts of cash, and keep your wallet in your front pocket. When using ATMs, be aware of your surroundings; at night, visit machines inside buildings or in well-lit areas. Tourists aren't particularly more targeted than residents, but criminals will take opportunities when visitors are distracted, especially in crowded tourist districts.

Cell phone and tablet thefts have been on the rise in the city. Be aware of your surroundings when using your phone in public, especially on MUNI. Thieves have known to grab phones from people's hands and run out just before exit doors close.

If anyone calls your hotel room, do not give any personal or credit card information over the phone, even if they claim to be hotel staff. Handle any discrepancies in person at the front desk.

San Francisco is located near many geologic plates and faults, so there will always be earthquakes there. Most of them won't even be felt, but in case there's a major quake, there are some things to keep in mind. If indoors, stay inside (don't run outside). Stand in a doorway, under a heavy table or against a wall, but away from any windows. If outside, stay away from trees, power lines or the sides of buildings. If in a car, stay in your car but pull over to the side of the road, away from power lines, telephone poles, tall trees or bridges.

HEALTH

The city has excellent medical-care facilities. Emergency-room care is available 24 hours a day at area hospitals (San Francisco General, St. Francis Memorial, University of California San Francisco Medical Center and St. Mary's Medical Center are just a few). Pharmacies are plentiful, and Walgreens has some branches that fill prescriptions at any hour. There is even a medical clinic in the international terminal of the San Francisco International Airport (SFO), open Monday-Friday 8:30 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-1 pm. Phone 650-821-5600.

Dial 911 for emergencies and urgent ambulance service. For other ambulance service, phone American Medical Response at 415-922-9400 or King American Ambulance Company at 415-931-1400.

Dial 311 for nonemergency government health services.

For the Poison Control Center, call toll-free 800-222-1222.

DISABLED ADVISORY

Its peculiar geography can make getting around San Francisco a challenge for anyone, but this socially conscious city has taken some steps to make accessibility easier. Access Northern California offers information on lodging, attractions and getting around (<http://www.accessnca.com>). It publishes two free guides that can be downloaded online: *Access San Francisco*, which is distributed by the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau (phone 415-391-2000, TTY 415-392-0328; <http://www.sanfrancisco.travel>) and *A Wheelchair Rider's Guide*, available from the California Coastal Conservancy (phone 510-286-1015; <http://scc.ca.gov>).

Most of the city's major attractions and museums are wheelchair accessible, and many hotels provide services for wheelchair users and visitors with other disabilities, including ramps and extra-large tubs. Some taxi companies, including Yellow Cab (phone 415-282-3737) and SF Town Taxi (phone 415-401-8900) provide special taxi vans with wheelchair access that charge the regular fare. It's nearly impossible to flag one down on the street, though, so it's best to call and reserve in advance.

As for public transportation, the San Francisco Muni has both buses and trains with roll-on access or lifts. You can get a free copy of the *Muni Access Guide* from its offices and online (phone 415-701-4500; <http://www.sfmta.com/cms/mcust/access.htm>). Although all of the BART stations have elevators, they are frequently broken. Call the BART Elevator Hotline at 510-834-5438 to plan ahead. For other accessibility issues, call the BART Accessible Services line at 510-464-6446, or dial 511 (or visit <http://www.511.org>) for public transit, traffic and other Bay Area transportation information. There is a discount on MUNI for disabled travelers.

The Mayor's Office on Disability maintains up-to-date information about city accessibility at <http://www.sfgov2.org/index.aspx?page=4346>.

DISABLED ADVISORY

Independent Living Resource Center of San Francisco

The Independent Living Center of San Francisco can help with any specific access questions or any needed advice about city accessibility. Monday-Thursday 9 am-4:30 pm, Friday 9 am-4 pm. 825 Howard St., San Francisco. Phone 415-543-6222. Phone 415-543-6698 for TTY. <http://www.ilrcsf.org>.

DISABLED ADVISORY

SuperShuttle

SuperShuttle operates an accessible van to and from the San Francisco airport. Call or reserve online at least 24 hours in advance. US\$17 one way. Toll-free 800-258-3826. <http://www.supershuttle.com>.

DOS & DON'TS

Do dress warmly if you plan to walk across the Golden Gate Bridge—the heavy winds can make it mighty brisk. And for that matter, dress in layers all the time, even in summer; once the sun sets, the weather almost immediately turns chilly.

Don't ignore the color-coded curbs when parking. Yellow is for truck parking only, white for passenger loading, green for 15-minute parking and blue for disabled parking. If you disregard them, your car *will* be ticketed and towed.

Do go to the friendly TIX Bay Area box-office service, which sells half-priced tickets on the day of the performance for major theaters and cultural events. It's at Union Square.

Don't call it Frisco, whatever you do—natives hate that.

Do wear comfortable shoes. San Francisco's distinct neighborhoods are best explored on foot.

Do take public transportation, but be mindful of fellow riders. Enter in front and move to the back of a crowded bus, exiting through the rear doors. Don't stand on the left side of BART escalators; that's the passing lane.

Geostats

Passport/Visa Requirements: All U.S. citizens must have a passport when traveling by air to or from Bermuda, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America and Mexico. Citizens of Canada, Mexico and the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda also must have a passport or other designated secure document to enter the U.S. Passports are required for land crossings at the Canadian and Mexican borders with the U.S. and for cruise passengers returning to the U.S. from Mexico, the Caribbean, Canada or Bermuda. Reconfirm travel-document requirements with your carrier prior to departure.

Population: 825,863.

Languages: English, also Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

Predominant Religions: Christianity (Roman Catholic, Protestant), Judaism, Buddhism, Islam.

Time Zone: 8 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (-8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November.

Voltage Requirements: 110 volts.

Telephone Codes: 415, area code for San Francisco, Marin County; 650, South San Francisco (airport) and San Mateo County; 510, Alameda, Oakland and Contra Costa counties; 707, Sonoma and Napa counties; 650, Palo Alto; 408, San Jose; 925, Walnut Creek;

Currency Exchange

You'll have no problems finding ATMs within the city. Most banks in town are open Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-noon. Drive-through banking is generally available only outside downtown locations. Although most banks will be able to exchange currency, there are a number of exchange-only locations as well. Two well-known ones are Travelex, which has two locations in the city, one inside US Bank on Castro Street and one inside the San Francisco International Airport (phone 415-552-3108; <http://www.travelex.com>); and American Express, with one location at 455 Market St., No. 140. Phone 415-536-2600. Toll-free 800-528-4800. <http://www.americanexpress.com>.

Most restaurants and attractions take credit cards (Visa and MasterCard are the most common). Some bars and less-expensive restaurants are cash only. Traveler's checks are accepted at most high-end hotels, although they're becoming far less common in the U.S., so it's best to exchange them for cash for easier transactions.

Taxes

A hefty local sales tax of 8.75% is charged for most purchases, and there's a 14% transient occupancy tax applied on all hotel rooms. As a result of the Healthy San Francisco initiative (a free health insurance program for San Franciscans without coverage), many restaurants charge a Healthy San Francisco Surcharge; it's usually around 4% of the bill or an extra US\$1-\$2.

Tipping

Plan to tip restaurant servers 15%-20%, more if service is very good. It's customary to tip US\$1-\$2 per drink at bars, depending on the price of your beverage and the complexity of the preparation. Leave US\$5-\$10 for each day of your stay for hotel housekeepers.

Valets, concierges and bellhops should be tipped US\$1-\$2 for bringing your car, hailing a cab or helping with your luggage.

It's customary to tip your taxi driver 15%-20% on top of the fare.

Weather

Expect a moderate climate in San Francisco, where cool summers and mild winters almost blend into one. Temperatures in the city seldom rise above 80 F/21 C or fall below 40 F/4 C. Morning and evening fog is common during summer months but rarely remains through the day. (Little or no rain falls June-September.) Winter average maximum temperatures are in the high 50s F/10 C and only drop to the upper 40s F/4 C at night. Rain showers can be common November-March.

The weather in San Francisco literally varies from neighborhood to neighborhood—it may be sunny and pleasant in the Richmond district and foggy and cool in the Sunset district. No season is really out of the question for a visit, though September and October are the warmest and driest.

Nearby Marin County, the East Bay and the Wine Country enjoy similarly moderate weather, although their location, sheltered from the cool ocean winds, keeps them warmer and sunnier than San Francisco (the East Bay is also cooler at night). Expect temperatures to reach 85 F/29 C in some Marin County communities. The summer-morning fog or cloud cover usually clears well before noon.

What to Wear

It's best to wear layers of clothing in cool (sometimes downright cold) San Francisco—you can peel them off if the day warms up. You'll appreciate a Windbreaker or other jacket that will protect you from the sometimes strong winds. Although casual clothes are common, shorts and flip-flops will not only mark you as a tourist, but you'll be cold as well. You might also want to keep a lightweight scarf with you to ward off the chill, especially in the winter. Be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes (but not tennis shoes, which are also a tourist marker), as you'll likely be on foot a lot during the day.

San Francisco, as one of the world's major business and financial centers, is considerably cosmopolitan in style. For business trips, plan on wearing a suit, and take your most stylish one: Business attire is formal and fashionable, and it often incorporates noticeably eccentric touches designed to demonstrate Californian independence. Business-casual clothes are commonly worn at night, although dressy jeans with a jacket are not uncommon. Top-of-the-line restaurants and upscale nightclubs often have dress codes, so ask when making reservations.

Telephone

As in most other U.S. cities, the number of public phones has declined in San Francisco as more people rely on cell phones. You're more likely to find pay phones in hotels and business buildings rather than on the streets. To make a local call in San Francisco, dial just the number without the 415 area code. The initial cost of a local call is US\$0.50; long-distance rates vary. To call outside the immediate city area—to Oakland, for example—dial 1, then the area code. The best pay phones are the private booths in the Fairmont Hotel (950 Mason St.).

Cell phone coverage is good in San Francisco and surrounding areas, but be aware that wireless signals still don't reach every last part of the BART system. (Currently, cell phones work from Balboa Park through San Francisco and the Transbay Tube and all throughout the Oakland underground.)

If you're traveling from overseas or don't have a cell phone, you may wish to rent one when you arrive. One option is the San Francisco-based Triptel, which has one location downtown (1525 Van Ness Ave.; phone 415-474-3330) and one in the San Francisco International Airport (International Arrivals Terminal; phone 650-821-8000). Triptel rents phones daily, weekly and monthly for US\$3, US\$15 and US\$45, respectively. Smartphone rentals cost US\$15 daily, US\$90 weekly and US\$270 monthly. Calls are US\$0.49 per minute. An additional US\$3 daily insurance is optional. Toll-free 877-874-7835. <http://www.triptel.com>.

Internet Access

As might be expected in this wired city, Wi-Fi or Internet access is usually just around the corner. Internet cafes can be found in the Financial District, the Union Square area, near Pier 39 and in most neighborhoods. Free Wi-Fi is available at public libraries, and all branches provide access to PCs with Internet connections. Locations can be found on the library's website. The main branch is located at 100 Larkin St. Phone 415-557-4000. <http://www.sfpl.org>.

Some of the city's hotels, restaurants and cafes also offer free or inexpensive Wi-Fi to their customers. Wi-Fi is available in certain parts of the BART system; for detailed information, visit <http://www.bart.gov/guide/wireless>.

Another Cafe

A popular place for espresso and free Wi-Fi on the edge of Nob Hill and the Tenderloin. The hardest thing will be finding an empty spot on the crowded second floor. Open Monday-Friday 6 am-10 pm, Saturday and Sunday 7 am-9 pm. 1191 Pine St. (at Leavenworth St.), San Francisco. Phone 415-857-5770. <http://www.anothercafesf.com>.

Address

1191 Pine St.
San Francisco, California

Phone

415-857-5770

Cole Valley Cafe

Located in Haight-Ashbury, this friendly cafe offers free Wi-Fi along with a unique menu of house-made soups, bagels, and coffee and tea blends. Daily 6:30 am-7:30 pm. 701 Cole St. (at Waller Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-668-5282. <http://www.colevalleycafe.com>.

Address

701 Cole St.
San Francisco, California 94117

Phone

415-668-5282

Mail & Package Services

A variety of shipping services are available throughout the city. Companies that serve the Bay area include DHL Express (toll-free 800-225-5345; <http://www.dhl-usa.com>), FedEx (toll-free 800-463-3339; <http://www.fedex.com/us>) and UPS (toll-free 800-742-5877; <http://www.ups.com>).

U. S. Post Office

There are post offices in various districts around town. Hours may vary slightly by location, but most are open Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm and some on Saturday 9 am-1 pm. The main office is located at 170 O'Farrell St. (in the basement of Macy's), but the Bayview post office (1300 Evans Ave.; phone 415-550-5159) has longer hours—Monday-Friday 7 am-8:30 pm, Saturday 8 am-2 pm. The post office at the airport is open until midnight. Phone 415-284-0755. <http://www.usps.com>.

Address

San Francisco, California 94118

Phone

415-284-0755

Newspapers & Magazines

Major daily newspapers are the *San Francisco Chronicle* (<http://www.sfgate.com> or <http://www.sfchronicle.com>) and *San Francisco Examiner* (<http://www.sfexaminer.com>). These and other major papers are readily available at newsstands, vending machines, convenience stores and hotel gift shops throughout the city. For the most current coverage of the Bay Area's tech scene, pick up a copy of the *San Jose Mercury News*, a daily newspaper that's widely available in San Francisco. <http://www.mercurynews.com>.

The *San Francisco Business Times* is published weekly (<http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco>). Alternative weeklies proliferate in the Bay Area, along with a wide selection of foreign-language newspapers, including some in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Spanish. *San Francisco*, a magazine that covers the city and the Bay Area, is published monthly (<http://www.modernluxury.com/san-francisco>). Also published monthly is *7x7* (<http://www.7x7.com>), a lifestyle magazine that covers San Francisco's trendy arts, dining, design and fitness scenes. A useful visitor's guide can be found on its website.

For an entertainment and events guide, locals turn to the *San Francisco Chronicle's* "Datebook," the pullout section of the Sunday newspaper, summarizing theater, music and arts events. Up-to-date listings can also be found in the free *San Francisco Bay Guardian* (<http://www.sfbg.com>) or *SF Weekly* (<http://www.sfweekly.com>), two alternative newsweeklies that extensively cover music, movies, restaurants, plays and the arts.

Metro Silicon Valley, another free newsweekly, concentrates on Silicon Valley and the wider Bay Area's entertainment and arts scene. <http://www.metroactive.com>.

The *East Bay Express* is a wonderful (and free) alternative weekly covering news and the arts in Oakland, Berkeley and the East Bay. <http://www.eastbayexpress.com>.

The *Bay Area Reporter* is the area's weekly paper for the LGBT community. It comes out every Thursday. <http://www.ebar.com>.

Free entertainment guides handed out at hotels or visitors centers include *Bay City Guide* (<http://www.baycityguide.com>) and *San Francisco Travel* (<http://www.sanfrancisco.travel>). *WHERE San Francisco*, available at concierge desks or front desks of most hotels in the city, is the visitor magazine with maps, shopping tips, dining, entertainment and attractions in and around San Francisco. <http://www.wheretraveler.com/san-francisco>.

San Francisco and the larger Bay Area are also home to a number of professionally produced blogs and websites covering news, sports, the arts and nearly everything in between. Some of the best include *SFist* (<http://www.sfist.com>), a news, arts, style and gossip blog, and *SFStation* (<http://www.sfstation.com>), an arts and events website. For insider information about the city's cultural scene, visit the *San Francisco Chronicle's* Culture Blog (<http://blog.sfgate.com/culture>).

Many of the Bay Area's neighborhoods also have their own papers, such as *The Noe Valley Voice* (<http://www.noevalleyvoice.com>), the *Oakland Tribune* (<http://www.insidebayarea.com/oakland-tribune>), the *San Mateo Daily Journal* (<http://www.smdailyjournal.com>) and the *Contra Costa Times* (<http://www.contracostatimes.com>).

Transportation

Traveling about this compact city can be efficient, convenient and—if you ride one of the original cable cars—fun. Many San Franciscans prefer public and commercial transportation to the hassles of driving. The city's infamous hills and lack of parking spaces aren't impossible obstacles to overcome, but why burden yourself with these challenges when you have so many better options? Public transport is inexpensive and relatively quick—once it comes, that is, and when you're close to Market Street.

Traffic during rush hours is a challenge even for the cabdrivers, so always allow extra time for your travels. As the main corridors accessing San Francisco, the bridges can often be bottlenecks during high traffic periods and are best avoided during commuting times. Call 511 for traffic and transportation information in the Bay Area.

San Francisco is a city for walking, whether for fun or getting around on business. But beware of those scenic hills: Never cross against a light, even if there's no traffic in sight. The hills obstruct your view of oncoming traffic and

cops patrolling on bikes issue fines for jaywalking. Some of San Francisco's streets are so steep that sidewalks can be stairs (in fact, some hills are even too steep for cars and can only be scaled on foot). Sometimes a short walk up a steep street isn't worth the exhausting effort; it might be better to ride a cable car, call a taxi or use a courtesy car provided by the nicer hotels.

Air

Oakland International Airport (OAK)

Only 22 mi/35 km across the Bay, this airport may be more convenient for visitors, so you may want to check flights to compare arrival and departure times and airline prices with SFO. Southwest Airlines flights go to and from Terminal 2, whereas all other airlines operate in Terminal 1. The Oakland airport is about 30-40 minutes from downtown San Francisco by car or BART, but the journey can take longer if traffic is heavy, especially over the Bay Bridge. Phone 510-563-3300. <http://www.flyoakland.com>.

Address

Oakland, California 94621

Connecting Transportation

Best way:

The Oakland Airport BART station is located just across from the baggage claim area of Terminal 1 and a short walk from Terminal 2. A people mover can be boarded to/from the Coliseum Station and the Oakland International Airport Station. A one-way fare for adults from OAK to downtown San Francisco is US\$10.05, US\$8.50 to the Downtown Berkeley station and US\$7.85 to the Downtown Oakland station. Discounts are available for seniors, children younger than age 13 and disabled passengers. http://www.bart.gov/guide/airport/inbound_oak.

Other options:

Various shuttle services will take you door-to-door to and from your destination, often making other stops along the way. Prices range US\$25-\$45. Cheaper services may have to accommodate more passengers, which could lengthen your trip. Six limousine services, two van companies, two cab companies and more than 20 other door-to-door companies serve the Oakland Airport. For private shuttle information, phone Visitor Information 8 am-8 pm at 510-563-3300.

With no traffic, a taxi into the city will set you back US\$45-\$55. Be aware that during rush hours, this can double.

San Francisco International Airport (SFO)

The airport is located 16 mi/26 km south of downtown San Francisco, normally about 30 minutes by car during regular traffic. Allow an additional 15-30 minutes going back and forth from the airport to accommodate construction and other possible delays. There are three domestic terminals (gates B-F) and an international terminal (gates A and G). For detailed airport and transportation information, call 650-821-8211 or toll-free 800-435-9736 (Monday-Friday 7 am-5 pm). <http://www.flysfo.com>.

Address

San Francisco, California

Phone

605-821-8211

Ground transportation options include frequent and reliable public transit, Airporters (privately operated scheduled buses that take you to nearby cities), door-to-door vans, taxis, rental cars and limousines. Car rental agencies are located in the SFO Rental Car Center. To access the Rental Car Center from the airport terminals, take the AirTrain Blue Line. AirTrain, SFO's fully automated people-mover system, operates 24 hours daily and provides frequent service throughout SFO. AirTrain's Red Line takes you to all terminals, parking garages and SFO's BART station, while AirTrain's Blue Line takes you to the Rental Car Center, SFO's BART station, as well as all other destinations reached by the Red Line.

Travelers Aid booths are located on the departures and ticketing level of all terminals, staffed daily 8 am-8 pm. Travelers Aid provides general assistance and has a number of maps and printed public transportation schedules.

Connecting Transportation

Best way:

All shuttle services charge approximately US\$16-\$25 one way and provide service to any location in San Francisco. When departing San Francisco, reserve 24-48 hours in advance of your flight. One of the best (and most reliable) is SuperShuttle, because it can usually guarantee no more than three stops. It also offers an access van for disabled passengers (call well in advance to reserve). Toll-free 800-258-3826. Reservations can also be made online at <http://www.supershuttle.com>.

Other options:

The BART station is located at the international terminal (a short walk from Terminal 3). The BART system reaches SFO, offering easy access to downtown San Francisco and beyond. It also connects with the Caltrain commuter train at the Millbrae Station. The BART is convenient as long as luggage is minimal. Monday-Friday trains start at 4 am (6 am Saturday, 8 am Sunday) and run every 15 minutes until 7 pm; they run every 20 minutes until midnight during evenings, on Saturday and Sunday, and on holidays. A round-trip ticket to downtown San Francisco is US\$18.50. Phone 415-989-2278. <http://www.bart.gov>.

The SamTrans 292 and 397 buses run from SFO to downtown San Francisco. The 292 bus operates approximately every 20-30 minutes daily 5 am-11:54 pm from the Transbay Temporary Terminal. (Located just minutes from the former Transbay Terminal, the Temporary Terminal is located on the block bordered by Main, Folsom, Beale and Howard streets. A new Transbay Transit Center is currently under construction and is scheduled to be complete in August 2017. <http://transbaycenter.org>.) US\$2 from the airport to downtown, US\$4 from downtown to the airport; discounts for seniors and children age 17 and younger. Exact change is required.

The 397 bus provides late-night service to SFO. It provides four departures nightly from the Transbay Temporary Terminal (with extra pickups at the corner of Mission and First streets, and the corner of Market and 11th streets). From Transbay Temporary Terminal, the 397 bus departs at 2:02 am, 3:02 am, and 4:02 am, with the ride to SFO lasting 54 minutes. US\$2 from the airport to downtown, US\$4 from downtown to the airport. Exact change is required. An express bus, Route KX, also runs approximately every half-hour between the Transbay Temporary Terminal and the airport Monday-Friday 5:27 am-10:26 pm, Saturday and Sunday 6:10 am-9:10 pm. The express KX bus costs US\$5. However, only small carry-on baggage that can safely fit on passengers' laps is allowed. PDF versions of all SamTrans schedules, complete with route maps, can be downloaded on the SamTrans website. Toll-free 800-660-4287. <http://www.samtrans.com>

Cabs are available 24 hours a day at taxi stands. Taxis depart from the designated taxi zones located at the roadway center islands, on the arrivals and baggage claim level of all terminals. Uniformed taxi coordinators are stationed at the taxi zones 7 am-1 am to assist passengers. Ramp-accessible taxis are available. Please contact the taxi coordinator to request a ramp-accessible taxi, or phone *1191 from any airport courtesy phone. Fare to downtown San Francisco is approximately US\$40-\$50 to downtown (depending on traffic) for one or more passengers (with no more than three drop-offs).

For limousine service, call from the Lodging, Transportation and Attractions Board located in the Arrivals area. Limos run US\$35-\$65 per hour (sometimes with a three-hour minimum), though sedans may be cheaper. Be aware that it is illegal for limo drivers to solicit passengers within the airport.

SFO's Rental Car Center allows travelers to pick up and drop off rental cars at one convenient, central location.

Most major rental car companies are represented at the airport. To access the Rental Car Center, take the AirTrain Blue Line. Phone 605-821-8211.

Bus

Longer-range bus services can get you out of town easily. AC Transit is an Oakland-based public transportation system providing bus service from San Francisco to Western Alameda and Contra Costa counties in the East Bay. AC Transit also provides service to roughly a dozen area colleges and universities. Customer service available Monday-Friday 6 am-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-5 pm, closed most major holidays. For information, dial 511, then say "AC Transit" for the AC Transit menu. TTY 800-735-2929. <http://www.actransit.org>.

Golden Gate Transit buses provide regional fixed-route bus service linking San Francisco, Marin and Sonoma counties. Fare for adults within San Francisco US\$4.25 with fares going up for points farther. Monday-Friday 7 am-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 8 am-6 pm. Phone 415-455-2000 or 415-921-5858. <http://www.goldengatetransit.org>.

The SamTrans Bus system runs south from San Francisco as far as San Jose. Phone 650-508-6200. Toll-free 800-660-4287 (within the Bay Area). Toll-free 888-500-4636 (from outside the Bay Area). <http://www.samtrans.com>.

Greyhound buses—as well as Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, AC Transit and WestCAT Lynx buses—leave from the Transbay Temporary Terminal (<http://www.temporaryterminal.org>), located on the block bordered by Main, Folsom, Beale and Howard streets. Greyhound is based on the southern side of the Terminal closest to Folsom Street. Phone 214-849-8966. Toll-free 800-231-2222. TTY/TDD 800-345-3109. <http://www.greyhound.com>.

Car

You must be 16 years old to obtain a driver's license in California, and 21 years old to rent a car. There is a US\$27 surcharge for drivers younger than 25.

We really don't recommend driving in San Francisco. Plus, parking is a real bear for novices to navigate. There's no reason to complicate your trip when public transportation will easily get you where you need to go in a city best seen on foot. You may want to rent a car for jaunts outside the city, though.

Several San Francisco laws are of special importance to drivers: Always give cable cars the right-of-way (they can't go around you); curb your wheels when you park on hilly streets—which means you turn your wheels toward the curb when you're facing downhill, toward the street when you're facing uphill; bicycles share the road; and don't block residential driveways. The antigridlock law requires that you be clear of intersections when a traffic light turns red. This means that in thick stop-and-go traffic, avoid following a vehicle too closely into an intersection.

In the state of California, drivers must use hands-free devices while talking on their cellphones. Also, it is illegal to text while driving. California's motor vehicle safety laws can be seen at <http://www.dmv.org/ca-california/safety-laws.php>.

Parking tickets carry a stiff fine, so read posted signs carefully. Yellow parking meters are reserved for delivery vehicles. Bus stops are clearly marked. Pay attention to bike lanes running along the right side of many major streets in the city: These should not be blocked. Bicycles are a popular method of transportation, sharing many of the same traffic rights as autos. Also, remember that pedestrians have—and aggressively exercise—the right-of-way at crosswalks.

Many downtown streets have special tow-away zones during commuting hours and special truck loading zones. Look for street-cleaning signs as well, covering different times and days throughout the city. Many parking spaces have 30- to 60-minute time limits to encourage parking turnover. Feeding the meter repeatedly is illegal, and you may still get a ticket—meter maids mark tires with chalk. If the meter is broken, the parking time limit still applies. If you need to find parking for longer periods, use a parking garage or lot.

Parking is limited and can be expensive—downtown parking garages can cost US\$20-\$30 per day, but this is much cheaper than receiving a parking ticket. The city's Department of Parking and Traffic can give information about city-owned garages and useful tips (phone 415-554-9811). Be sure to read all posted signs before leaving your vehicle. Two useful and economical public parking lots are the Stockton Street garage, near Union Square, and the Mission Street garage at Mission and Fifth streets.
<http://www.sfmta.com/getting-around/parking/parking-garages>.

Ferry

Passenger ferries crisscross San Francisco Bay, docking at Alameda, Alcatraz, Angel Island, Larkspur, Oakland, Sausalito, Tiburon and Vallejo.

Blue & Gold Fleet

Destinations include Alameda, Oakland, Tiburon, Sausalito, Vallejo and Angel Island. Also operates scenic bay cruises. Ferries operate daily from the Ferry Building (foot of Market Street) and Piers 39 and 41 (at Fisherman's Wharf). The Angel Island ferry departs from Pier 41 daily at 9:45 am November-April. There are three returns from Angel Island Monday-Friday at 10:15 am, and 1:25 and 2:50 pm; Saturday and Sunday there are two returns at 10:15 am and 4:10 pm. Bay cruises US\$28 adults, US\$22 seniors and teens, US\$18 children ages 5-11. Other fares vary. Pier 41, Marine Terminal, San Francisco. Phone 415-705-8200 for recorded information. Phone 415-773-1188 for tickets. <http://www.blueandgoldfleet.com>.

Address

Pier 41, Marine Terminal
San Francisco, California 94133

Phone

415-705-8200

Golden Gate Ferries

Daily service to Larkspur and Sausalito from the Ferry Building (Embarcadero at the Bay end of Market Street). The ferries run every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The Sausalito ferry costs US\$10.75 one way for adults, US\$5.25 one way for seniors and children ages 6-18, free for children age 5 and younger. The Larkspur ferry costs US\$10 one way for adults, US\$5 one way for seniors and children ages 6-18, free for children age 5 and younger. Phone 415-455-2000. <http://goldengateferry.org>.

Address

San Francisco, California
94129-0601

Phone

415-455-2000

Public Transportation

Comprehensive regional transportation information is available by phone and online. Call 511 for free information about routes, schedules, fares and hours of operation for any of the Bay Area's transit providers, including Muni. NextBus (<http://www.nextbus.com>) also offers location-based transit information in real time. For TDD access, dial 711 within California. <http://www.511.org>.

If you plan on using mainly public transportation for a long trip, you may consider a Clipper Discount Card. A Clipper card can be used on Muni, BART, Caltrain, AC Transit, VTA, Golden Gate Transit and Ferry, and San Francisco Bay Ferry. However, the rules can be a little complicated. Cards can be purchased online or at in-person service centers, including at the Embarcadero BART station, Bay Crossings at the San Francisco Ferry Building and at AC Transit (1600 Franklin St.). Toll-free 877-878-8883. <https://www.clippercard.com>.

Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)

This subway system conveniently links downtown San Francisco to the San Francisco airport and outlying areas, including Oakland, Berkeley, Concord and other East Bay locations. The station at Milpitas offers access to the Caltrain system. Stations in downtown San Francisco are located along Market Street. Ticket machines are located at all terminals, and they take both cash and credit cards. Check the maps and trains carefully, because trains for more than one line operate from the same platform.

Monday-Friday 4 am-midnight, Saturday 6 am-midnight, Sunday and holidays 8 am-midnight. Fares range US\$1.75-\$10.90 one way. Phone 415-989-2278 or 510-465-2278. <http://www.bart.gov>.

Address

San Francisco, California 94080

Phone

415-989-2278

Muni System

San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni) provides transportation throughout the city on trolley buses, streetcars and the world-famous cable cars. Keep a map in your pocket along with several single U\$1 bills—Muni will get you everywhere you want to go, but exact change is required. Bus and streetcar fares are US\$2.25 adults, US\$0.75 seniors, disabled and children ages 5-17, free for children younger than 4, with free transfers good for 90 minutes.

If you plan on using the Muni or cable cars frequently, you can get one-, three- or seven-day passes, known as Passports, for US\$14, US\$22 and US\$28, respectively. Muni Passports are good for unlimited rides on Muni, including cable cars and the historic F-Line streetcars, but not BART. Without a Muni Passport, cable cars cost US\$6 each ride 7 am-9 pm, US\$3 9 pm-7 am; no transfers accepted. Muni Passports and monthly passes are available at various locations throughout the city and at the baggage claim area of the San Francisco International Airport. Single ticket US\$2.25 adults one-way. Most lines run until about midnight or 1 am, but service on some lines is available 24 hours. For schedule information, call 415-673-6864. <http://www.sfmta.com>.

Address

San Francisco, California

Vintage Street Cars

Although everyone knows about San Francisco's cable cars, most don't know about the vintage street cars that run on the F-Market and Wharves Line of the city's Muni system. Some of the street cars are historic from the area, but others were imported from as far away as Italy, Japan and Switzerland. Additional information can be found by contacting the nonprofit organization Market Street Railway. Phone 415-956-0472. <http://www.streetcar.org>.

Address

San Francisco, California

Phone

415-956-0472

Ship

Cruise ships dock at the new James R. Herman Terminal at Pier 27 (and no longer at Pier 35). Pier 39, the popular waterfront shopping area, is just a few blocks to the west. Just beyond that is Fisherman's Wharf. Taxis can be hailed without difficulty out front. The historic Muni F-line street cars also run along the Embarcadero. Phone 415-274-0400. <http://www.sfport.com>.

Taxi

Even short distances can seem long in such a hilly city, so grab a cab. Metered taxis are easily hailed on the street, especially in high-traffic areas, and readily available at all major hotels. Cab drivers are required to post the fare, display photo identification and provide a comment-complaint card upon request. Legitimate taxis will have "San Francisco Taxi Cab" written on the side and back of the cab, a metal license plate on the dashboard and the driver's ID visible from the back seat. Tip is usually 15%-20% of the fare.

Train

Amtrak

Passengers must disembark in Emeryville (EMY), Oakland (OKJ) or Berkeley (BKY). Those headed to San Francisco (SFC) are taken downtown to the Ferry Building Bus Station by shuttle bus, since there are no direct Amtrak trains into the city. 1139 Market St., San Francisco. Toll-free 800-872-7245. <http://www.amtrak.com>.

Address

1139 Market St.
San Francisco, California 94102

Caltrain

This rail system runs south from San Francisco to Gilroy, through San Mateo, Palo Alto, Sunnyvale and San Jose. There are several stops in San Francisco proper. The Milpitas Station offers access to the BART system. The main terminus in San Francisco at Fourth Street has easy access to the SoMa area near SBCI Park and public transportation connecting to most of the city's points of interest. One-way tickets range US\$3.25-\$13.25, depending on the number of zones traveled. Discounts are available with day passes and/or a Clipper card. 700 Fourth St. (at King Street; this is a staffed ticket station), San Francisco. Phone 650-508-6200. Toll-free 800-660-4287 from within the Bay Area; 888-500-4636 from all other locations. <http://www.caltrain.com>.

Address

700 Fourth St.
San Francisco, California
94070-1306

Phone

650-508-6200

Additional Reading

travel42 Tipster. travel42 editor Megan Leader shares three stand-out nightlife options in San Francisco. <http://www.travel-42.com/tipster/post/2011/12/05/Three-one-of-a-kind-San-Francisco-bars.aspx>.

Tourist Offices

Berkeley Visitor Information Center

Stop by this location in Berkeley's downtown arts district for maps and information about this intellectual city. Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday 10 am-4 pm. 2030 Addison St., Suite 102 (across the street from the Berkeley Repertory Theatre's box office), Berkeley. Phone 510-549-7040. Toll-free 800-847-4823. <http://visitberkeley.com>.

Address

2030 Addison St., Suite 102
Berkeley, California 94704

Phone

510-549-7040

California Welcome Center

Located on the upper level at Pier 39 (Building B). Tourist information, itinerary planning, discounts to local attractions, car rentals and tour bookings are a few of the services the Welcome Center offers. Open daily 9 am-7 pm, with extended hours in the summer. Pier 39 (unit B12, second level), San Francisco. Phone 415-981-1280. <http://www.visitcalifornia.com/attraction/california-welcome-centers>.

Address

Pier 39
San Francisco, California

Phone

415-981-1280

Oakland Visitor Center

Located in Jack London Square, the visitors center is available to answer your questions, provide maps and help with your trip to this East Bay city. Open daily except Monday 9:30 am-4 pm. 481 Water St., Oakland. Phone 510-839-9000. <http://visitoakland.org>.

Address

481 Water St.
Oakland, California

Phone

510-839-9000

San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau Visitor Information Center

Centrally located downstairs at Hallidie Plaza (at Market and Powell streets), it's conveniently near the starting point for the Powell Street cable cars and a major BART station. (Take the escalator down to the lower level.) The staff is multilingual and helpful. Hotline information in French (phone 415-391-2003), Japanese (phone 415-391-2101), German (phone 415-391-2004) and Italian (phone 415-391-2002). May-October Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9 am-3 pm; November-April Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-3 pm. 900 Market St. (at Powell Street), San Francisco. Phone 415-391-2000. <http://www.sanfrancisco.travel>.

Address

900 Market St.
San Francisco, California 94102

Phone

415-391-2000

Calendar

Vibrant San Francisco, consistently dazzling visitors with its beauty and vigor, always seems to be mounting a celebration of some sort. The city's long-standing ballet, symphony and opera companies perform to full houses during their seasons.

Sports enthusiasts take in home games all around the Bay Area: the National Football League's San Francisco 49ers and Oakland Raiders, the NBA Golden State Warriors, and Major League Baseball's San Francisco Giants and Oakland Athletics.

Fireworks displays happen every Fourth of July and New Year's Eve, though fireworks in foggy San Francisco can disappoint. The fog may glow briefly, but it is more of a sound display than a light display. The Chinese New Year festival is among the nation's best.

Note: If possible, make reservations for ticketed events several weeks in advance, because they tend to sell out early.

For detailed information about upcoming events in the San Francisco area, contact the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau. Phone 415-391-2000. <http://www.sanfrancisco.travel>.

Other useful websites include <http://www.sfgate.com>, <http://www.sfarts.org> and <http://www.sfweekly.com>.

To call any of the phone numbers listed in this calendar from outside the U.S. or Canada, you must first dial your country's international access code, followed by the U.S. country code, 1.

Information in this calendar is subject to change and should be confirmed.

October

Mid October—Fleet Week San Francisco The Bay Area's salute to the U.S. Navy and Marines includes an air show over San Francisco Bay, musical performances and more. Pier 39, Beach Street and the Embarcadero. For information, call 415-705-5500. <http://www.pier39.com>.

2-4 Oct—Hardly Strictly Bluegrass This bluegrass festival is held in picturesque Golden Gate Park and features performances by dozens of local and nationally acclaimed artists. Free to the public. <http://www.strictlybluegrass.com>.

4 Oct—Castro Street Fair This predominantly gay district holds its annual fair for charity with nonstop dancing pavilions, arts and crafts, retail and community booths, food and beverages, and more. Castro and Market streets. For information, call 415-841-1824. <http://www.castrostreetfair.org>.

9-17 Oct—Litquake San Francisco's annual literary festival features author talks and a vast amount of literary entertainment. It highlights the work of more than 800 authors and draws thousands of people each year. Various venues throughout San Francisco. For information, phone 415-440-4177. <http://www.litquake.org>.

12 Oct—Indigenous Peoples Day (Columbus Day) Public holiday.

17, 18 Oct—Treasure Island Music Festival A music festival highlighting local and nationally known alternative and hip-hop artists, held on a small island in San Francisco Bay. <http://www.treasureislandfestival.com>.

Late October—NBA Basketball The Golden State Warriors host regular-season home games at Oracle Arena in Oakland, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. For information and tickets, call 510-986-2200. For tickets, call toll-free 888-479-4667. <http://www.nba.com/warriors>. Season continues through mid April 2016

Throughout October—Opera The San Francisco Opera performs in War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave. For information and tickets, call 415-864-3330. <http://www.sfopera.com>. Continues through early July 2016

Throughout October—NFL Football The San Francisco 49ers play regular-season home games at Levi's Stadium, Copyright ©2024 Northstar Travel Media LLC. All Rights Reserved.

4900 Marie P. DeBartolo Way, Santa Clara. For information, call 415-464-9377. <http://www.49ers.com>. Season continues through late December

Throughout October—Concert The award-winning San Francisco Symphony performs regularly in Davies Symphony Hall, 201 Van Ness Ave., and other area venues. For information and tickets, call 415-864-6000. <http://www.sfsymphony.org>. Continues through late June 2016

Throughout October—NFL Football The Oakland Raiders play regular-season home games at the Oakland Coliseum, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. For tickets and information, call 510-864-5000. <http://www.raiders.com>. Season continues through late December

November

11 Nov—Veterans Day Public holiday.

26 Nov—Thanksgiving Day Public holiday.

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December

Mid-Late December—Dance The San Francisco Ballet performs eight programs and *Nutcracker* during its short season at the War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave. For information and tickets, call 415-861-5600. <http://www.sfballet.org>. Continues through mid May 2016

25 Dec—Christmas Public holiday.

31 Dec—New Year's Eve Celebrations San Francisco is the host to exciting New Year's Eve parties at many venues throughout the city. Many performing arts organizations put on special New Year's Eve performances, the Children's Museum has special activities for children, and parties take place everywhere from the deck of the USS *Hornet* aircraft carrier to a cultured celebration at Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall. For more information, call the San Francisco Visitor Information Center at 415-391-2000. <http://www.sanfrancisco.travel>.

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January

1 Jan—New Year's Day Public holiday.

18 Jan—Martin Luther King Jr. Day Public holiday.

Late January—SF Sketchfest This comedy festival combines up-and-coming comedy acts with well-known performers. Various venues throughout San Francisco. <http://sfsketchfest.com>. Continues through early February

Throughout January—Opera The San Francisco Opera performs in War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave. For information and tickets, call 415-864-3330. <http://www.sfopera.com>. Continues through early July

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February

Early February—Southwest Airlines Chinese New Year Festival and Parade Chinatown's lavish celebrations of the lunar new year include a flower fair, community street fair and beauty pageant. The Golden Dragon Parade, a procession of costumed characters and floats, is said to be the nation's best. For information and tickets, call the Chinese Chamber of Commerce at 415-982-3000. <http://www.chineseparade.com>.

Early February—SF Sketchfest This comedy festival combines up-and-coming comedy acts with well-known performers. Various venues throughout San Francisco. <http://sfsketchfest.com>. Concludes early February

Mid February—Tulipmania A display of 39,000 tulips is arranged along Pier 39 in this long-standing tradition. Free tours are also offered daily at 10 am and 1 pm, and landscaping specialists point out the differences among the varieties. Beach Street and the Embarcadero. <http://www.pier39.com/home/events/tulipmania>.

12-14 Feb—California International Antiquarian Book Fair The country's largest book fair showcases rare and antiquarian books and manuscripts from more than 200 U.S. and international sellers. This event alternates annually between the San Francisco area and LA. Oakland Marriott City Center, 1001 Broadway, Oakland. For information, call 415-551-5190, or toll-free 800-454-6401. <http://www.sfbookfair.com>.

15 Feb—Presidents Day Public holiday.

Throughout February—Opera The San Francisco Opera performs in War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave. For information and tickets, call 415-864-3330. <http://www.sfopera.com>. Continues through early July

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March

Mid March—San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival North America's largest festival showcasing Asian and Asian-American cinema by new and established filmmakers. Special exhibits include *Directions of Sound*, which features Asian-American musicians. Various cinemas. <http://caamedia.org>.

16-20 Mar—San Francisco Flower and Garden Show North America's fourth-largest garden show covers 6 acres/2.5 hectares with hundreds of exhibits, gardens and free educational seminars. San Mateo Event Center. For information, call 415-684-7278 or 925-605-2923. <http://www.sfgardenshow.com>.

17 Mar—St. Patrick's Day Parade One of the longest-running parades in the U.S. features Irish dancers, floats and marching bands and attracts more than 100,000 viewers. The route goes from Second and Market streets to the Civic Center. <http://www.saintpatricksdaysf.com>.

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April

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Early-Late April—Major-League Baseball The Oakland Athletics play regular-season home games at the Oakland Coliseum, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. For information, call 510-638-4900. For tickets, call Tickets.com toll-free at 800-225-2277. <http://www.oaklandathletics.com>. Season continues through late September

Early-Late April—Major-League Baseball The San Francisco Giants play regular-season home games at AT&T Park, 24 Willie Mays Plaza. For information, call 415-947-3395. For tickets, call Tickets.com at 510-762-2277. <http://www.sfgiants.com>. Season continues through late September

Mid April—Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival This Japantown street fair features a food bazaar, traditional arts and crafts, beauty pageant, children's village, classical and folk dancers, martial-arts

demonstrations and *taiko* drumming. More than 1,500 entries, including *mikoshi* (portable shrines), march in the Grand Parade from City Hall to Post and Fillmore streets. For information, call 415-563-2313. <http://sfcherryblossom.org>.

Mid April—Bouquets to Art Lunch and tea are served during the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco's annual fund-raiser. Lectures by horticulturists and displays by 100 of California's top floral designers. M.H. de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park. For information and tickets, call 415-750-3600. <http://famsf.org>.

Late April—San Francisco International Film Festival The country's oldest cinematic festival screens nearly 200 films from 50 countries to an audience of 100,000 and gives the Golden Gate Awards in 14 categories of film. Various venues in San Francisco, Berkeley and throughout the Bay Area. For information, call 415-561-5000. <http://festival.sffs.org>. Continues through early May

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May

Early May—San Francisco International Beer Festival Samples of more than 300 craft beers from breweries around the world. Also food from some of San Francisco's best restaurants. Festival Pavilion, Fort Mason. <http://www.sfbeerfest.com>.

Early May—San Francisco International Film Festival The country's oldest cinematic festival screens nearly 200 films from 50 countries to an audience of 100,000 and gives the Golden Gate Awards in 14 categories of film. Various venues in San Francisco, Berkeley and throughout the Bay Area. For information, call 415-561-5000. <http://festival.sffs.org>. Concludes early May

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7 May—Cinco de Mayo Festival commemorating Mexico's victory at the 1862 Battle of Puebla. Arts and crafts, entertainment and food at the San Francisco Civic Center Plaza. Also a parade down Mission Street. For information, call 415-554-9529. <http://www.sfcincodemayo.com>.

15 May—Bay to Breakers Footrace One of the world's largest footraces is a 100-year-old San Francisco tradition. Approximately 100,000 zany, costumed participants run 7.5 mi/12 km from Embarcadero to the Great Highway. Good viewing spots include Hayes Street Hill and Golden Gate Park, where a health-and-fitness expo and the Foodstock fair with live music, sports events and food take place in Polo Field. Phone: 415-864-3432. <http://www.baytobreakers.com>.

30 May—Memorial Day Public holiday.

Late May—Carnaval This multicultural street festival features dancers and food, as well as Latino, jazz, samba and Caribbean music. A parade on Sunday draws lavish floats, costumed samba dancers and international musicians. Harrison Street, between 16th and 22nd streets. <http://www.carnavalsanfrancisco.org>.

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June

Early June—Haight Ashbury Street Fair Revisit the Summer of Love during this street fair held in San Francisco's notorious hippie district, Haight Ashbury. More than 100,000 flower-child wannabes flood the area to inspect arts-and-crafts booths and to rock out to live music by local groups. <http://www.haightashburystreetfair.org>.

4, 5 Jun—Union Street Festival One of the city's largest free arts festivals attracts more than 100,000 visitors. It features works by more than 200 artists, live music on two stages, specialty food booths and an interactive children's area. Union Street, between Gough and Steiner streets. For information, call toll-free 800-310-6563. <http://www.unionstreetfestival.com>.

11, 12 Jun—North Beach Festival The city's oldest urban street fair celebrates San Fran's Little Italy and the home of the beat generation. Juried arts and crafts, Italian street chalk-art and pizza-tossing competitions, cooking and cheese-carving demonstrations, and stages and dance floors swinging to R&B, pop, salsa, rock, blues and classical music. Washington Square Park, Grant Avenue and surrounding streets. For information, call toll-free 800-310-6563. https://www.sresproductions.com/north_beach_festival.html.

Late June—San Francisco Pride Celebration and Parade With more than 200 parade participants and 300 exhibitors, the San Francisco Pride Celebration and Parade is the largest gathering of LGBT people and allies in the nation. For nearly 50 years, the parade has been a San Francisco tradition. The celebration is free and open to all. The parade begins at the corner of Market and Beale streets. For information, call 415-864-0831. <http://sfpride.org>.

Late June—Cable Car Bell-Ringing Competition Cable-car operators compete by clanging out melodies. Next to Union Square. For more information, call 415-701-4500. <http://www.sfmta.com/cms/mfleet/cablecar.htm>.

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July

Early July—Opera The San Francisco Opera performs in War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave. For information and tickets, call 415-864-3330. <http://www.sfopera.com>. Concludes early July

4 Jul—Independence Day Public holiday.

Throughout July—Major-League Baseball The Oakland Athletics play regular-season home games at the Oakland Coliseum, 7000 Coliseum Way, Oakland. For information, call 510-638-4900. For tickets, call Tickets.com toll-free at 800-225-2277. <http://www.oaklandathletics.com>. Season continues through late September

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September

5 Sep—Labor Day Public holiday.

25 Sep—Folsom Street Fair One of the city's most risqué street fairs is the final event of Leather Week, drawing more than 400,000 people. Arts, crafts, entertainment and food. Folsom Street, between Seventh and 12th streets. For information, call 415-861-3247. <http://www.folsomstreetfair.com>.

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