San Francisco Travel Guide

Discover San Francisco: The City by the Bay

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Things to do in San Francisco

Landmarks & Monuments

San Francisco's iconic landmarks define the city's skyline and capture its unique spirit. From the world-famous Golden Gate Bridge to the historic Alcatraz Island, these structures tell the story of a city built on innovation, resilience, and natural beauty.



Must See

Golden Gate Bridge

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The **Golden Gate Bridge** is an internationally recognized symbol of San Francisco and American ingenuity. Spanning 1.7 miles across the Golden Gate strait, this Art Deco suspension bridge painted in distinctive International Orange offers breathtaking views from multiple vantage points. Walk or bike across the bridge, visit the Bridge Pavilion to learn about its construction history, or photograph it from Battery Spencer, Crissy Field, or Fort Point. The bridge connects San Francisco to Marin County and the scenic route to Sausalito.



Must See Book Ahead

Alcatraz Island

2.5-3 hours Book Ahead

Map

Alcatraz Island, known as 'The Rock,' is America's most infamous former federal penitentiary. This fascinating historical site housed notorious criminals including Al Capone and Robert Stroud. The excellent audio tour features narration from former guards and inmates, bringing the prison's dramatic history to life. Beyond the prison, explore the island's Civil War-era fortifications, lighthouse, and thriving seabird colonies. The ferry ride offers spectacular views of the San Francisco skyline and Golden Gate Bridge. *Book tickets weeks in advance as they sell out quickly, especially during summer.*



Top Pick

Palace of Fine Arts

45 minutes - 1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

The **Palace of Fine Arts** is a stunning Beaux-Arts monument originally built for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition. Its massive Roman-inspired rotunda and colonnades surrounding a tranquil lagoon create one of San Francisco's most romantic and photogenic settings. The structure's reflection in the water, especially at sunset, provides perfect photo opportunities. The surrounding parkland is ideal for picnics, and swans often grace the lagoon.



Notable

Coit Tower

1-1.5 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Perched atop Telegraph Hill, **Coit Tower rises 212 feet above Telegraph Hill. offering 360-degree views of San Francisco. Built in 1933, the tower's interior features stunning Depression-era murals depicting California life, created by 25 different artists. Take the elevator to the observation deck for panoramic vistas of the Bay Bridge, Alcatraz, and downtown. The surrounding Pioneer Park and the walk up to the tower through charming neighborhoods add to the experience.**

Tips for Landmarks & Monuments

- **Photography:** The Golden Gate Bridge is most photogenic during the golden hour just after sunrise or before sunset, weather permitting
- **Fog Advisory:** San Francisco's famous fog can obscure views, especially in summer mornings; check fog forecasts before planning landmark visits
- **Walking Tours:** Many landmarks are connected by scenic walking routes like the Coastal Trail and Embarcadero waterfront path
- **Alcatraz Planning:** Book Alcatraz tickets 2-4 weeks in advance; night tours offer a unique atmospheric experience

Museums & Galleries

San Francisco's world-class museums showcase everything from classical art and natural history to cutting-edge science and Asian culture. The city's cultural institutions reflect its innovative spirit and diverse heritage, offering enriching experiences for all interests.



Top Pick

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

SFMOMA is one of the largest modern and contemporary art museums in the United States. The museum's striking contemporary building houses over 33,000 works including pieces by Frida Kahlo, Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollock, and Ansel Adams. Rotating exhibitions showcase cutting-edge contemporary artists alongside modern masters. The photography collection is particularly renowned, and the Rooftop Garden offers stunning city views. Free admission for visitors 18 and under makes it family-friendly.



Top Pick Book Ahead

California Academy of Sciences

3-4 hours Book Ahead

Map

The **California Academy of Sciences** combines an aquarium, planetarium, natural history museum, and rainforest under one living roof in Golden Gate Park. Explore the four-story rainforest dome with free-flying butterflies and birds, visit the Philippine coral reef in the aquarium, experience cosmic shows in the planetarium, and learn about California's unique ecosystems. The building itself is an architectural marvel with a 2.5-acre living roof covered in native plants. Perfect for families and science enthusiasts.



Top Pick

de Young Museum

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Located in Golden Gate Park, the **de Young Museum** houses American art from the 17th through 21st centuries, international contemporary art, textiles, and art from the Americas, Africa, and Pacific. The museum's distinctive copper-clad building and its 144-foot observation tower offer panoramic views of the city. Notable collections include works by Georgia O'Keeffe, Grant Wood, and extensive holdings of American decorative arts. Free general admission on the first Tuesday of each month.



Notable

Exploratorium

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The **Exploratorium** is a hands-on science museum on Pier 15 featuring over 600 interactive exhibits exploring perception, art, and science. This isn't a traditional museum visitors touch, play, and experiment with everything from optical illusions to weather phenomena. The Tactile Dome (reservation required) offers a unique pitch-black sensory experience. The waterfront location provides beautiful bay views, and After Dark events (18+) on Thursdays create an adult-oriented atmosphere with cocktails.



Notable

Asian Art Museum

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The **Asian Art Museum** houses one of the most comprehensive Asian art collections in the world, with over 18,000 objects spanning 6,000 years. Collections include Chinese jade, Japanese samurai armor, Korean ceramics, Southeast Asian textiles, and Indian sculptures. The Beaux-Arts building in Civic Center was beautifully renovated and provides an elegant setting for these treasures. Regular programs include tea ceremonies, festivals, and contemporary Asian artist exhibitions.

Tips for Museums & Galleries

- **Free Days:** Many museums offer free admission days monthly; check individual websites for schedules
- **Combo Tickets:** The de Young and Legion of Honor offer same-day admission tickets that cover both museums
- **Golden Gate Park:** Visit the de Young and California Academy of Sciences on the same day as they're both in Golden Gate Park
- **Advance Booking:** Reserve timed entry tickets online for popular museums, especially during peak season and weekends

Religious Sites

San Francisco's religious architecture reflects the city's diverse spiritual heritage and immigrant history. From grand cathedrals to Buddhist temples and historic missions, these sacred spaces offer both architectural beauty and peaceful contemplation.



Notable

Grace Cathedral

45 minutes - 1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

Grace Cathedral is an impressive Episcopal cathedral atop Nob Hill, modeled after Notre Dame in Paris. This Gothic Revival masterpiece features stunning stained glass windows, including a rose window by Charles Connick, two labyrinths (outdoor and indoor) for meditative walking, bronze doors cast from Lorenzo Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise, and an organ with over 7,000 pipes. The cathedral hosts concerts, yoga classes, and interfaith events. The views from the cathedral steps over the city are magnificent.



Notable

Mission Dolores

45 minutes - 1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

Mission Dolores (Mission San Francisco de Asís), founded in 1776, is the oldest surviving structure in San Francisco and the birthplace of the city. The mission's original adobe chapel has survived earthquakes that destroyed much of the city. The cemetery contains the remains of early settlers and Ohlone people. The mission museum showcases artifacts from the Spanish colonial period. The basilica next door features stunning Churrigueresque architecture and beautiful stained glass.



Optional

Saints Peter and Paul Church

30 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

Located in North Beach, **Saints Peter and Paul Church** is a beautiful Italian Renaissance-style Catholic church serving San Francisco's Italian-American community since 1924. The twin spires and ornate facade dominate Washington Square Park. Inside, stunning stained glass, marble altars, and intricate woodwork create an inspiring space. Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio photographed their wedding here (the ceremony was elsewhere). The church remains the spiritual heart of North Beach.

Tips for Religious Sites

- **Respect Services:** Be mindful during religious services; visiting hours may be limited during worship times
- **Dress Code:** Modest attire is appreciated when visiting religious sites
- **Labyrinth Walking:** Grace Cathedral's labyrinths are open daily for meditative walking a unique San Francisco experience
- **Free Entry:** Most religious sites have free entry but welcome donations

Neighborhoods & Districts

San Francisco's diverse neighborhoods each possess distinct personalities shaped by geography, history, and cultural communities. From the Italian heart of North Beach to the colorful Victorian homes of the Haight, exploring these districts reveals the true character of the city.



Top Pick

Fisherman's Wharf & Pier 39

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Fisherman's Wharf is San Francisco's most visited waterfront district, offering tourist attractions, seafood restaurants, and maritime history. **Pier 39** features shops, street performers, the famous sea lion colony lounging on floating docks, and bay views. While touristy, the area provides access to Alcatraz ferries, historic ships at Hyde Street Pier, Ghirardelli Square for chocolate, and fresh Dungeness crab vendors. The Musée Mécanique houses vintage arcade games and penny arcades.



Top Pick

Chinatown

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

San Francisco's **Chinatown** is the oldest and one of the largest in North America, established in the 1840s. Enter through the Dragon's Gate on Grant Avenue to discover authentic dim sum restaurants, traditional herbal shops, Buddhist temples, and bustling markets. Explore historic alleyways like Ross Alley and Waverly Place where craftspeople practice traditional arts. The Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory offers tours. Beyond tourist areas, Stockton Street reveals where locals shop for fresh produce, live seafood, and Chinese groceries.



Top Pick

North Beach (Little Italy)

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

North Beach, San Francisco's Little Italy, is a charming neighborhood of Italian cafes, restaurants, bakeries, and the historic Beat Generation literary scene. Columbus Avenue and Grant Avenue form the heart, lined with trattorias, gelato shops, and City Lights Bookstore (Beat Generation landmark). Washington Square Park provides a European plaza atmosphere with Saints Peter and Paul Church as backdrop. The neighborhood's Italian heritage blends with its literary history Kerouac Alley honors Beat poets. Excellent nightlife includes jazz clubs and cocktail bars.



Top Pick

Mission District

3-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The vibrant **Mission District** is San Francisco's sunniest and most culturally diverse neighborhood, famous for colorful murals, Latin American culture, and thriving food scene. Explore Balmy Alley and Clarion Alley to see incredible street art addressing social justice themes. The district offers the city's best Mexican food, trendy restaurants, craft cocktail bars, and hip boutiques. Mission Dolores Park provides stunning city views and people-watching. Valencia Street features bookstores, cafes, and nightlife, while 24th Street retains authentic Latin character.



Notable

Haight-Ashbury

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The legendary **Haight-Ashbury** neighborhood was ground zero for the 1960s counterculture and Summer of Love. Today, it retains its bohemian character with vintage clothing shops, record stores, head shops, and colorful Victorian homes. Visit the former homes of Janis Joplin and Grateful Dead (private residences, view from outside). Haight Street offers eclectic shopping and dining, while the adjacent Panhandle and Golden Gate Park provide green spaces. The neighborhood remains a vibrant mix of hippie history and modern San Francisco culture.



Notable

The Castro

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The Castro is one of the world's first and most prominent LGBTQ+ neighborhoods, synonymous with gay rights history and activism. The historic Castro Theatre marquee welcomes visitors to a district of rainbow flags, colorful storefronts, bars, restaurants, and the GLBT Historical Society Museum. Harvey Milk's former camera shop and the Pink Triangle Memorial honor the neighborhood's activist legacy. Castro Street offers diverse dining and nightlife. The neighborhood remains a vibrant, welcoming community and important cultural destination.

Tips for Neighborhoods & Districts

- **Walking Shoes:** San Francisco's hills can be steep; wear comfortable shoes for neighborhood exploration
- **Local Timing:** Neighborhoods are best experienced during daytime and early evening when shops and cafes are open
- **Food Tours:** Consider guided food tours in Chinatown, North Beach, or Mission District to discover hidden culinary gems
- **Cable Cars:** Use historic cable cars to reach hillside neighborhoods like Nob Hill and Russian Hill

Parks & Gardens

San Francisco's parks and green spaces offer peaceful retreats from urban life while showcasing the city's natural beauty. From the expansive Golden Gate Park to waterfront gardens and hilltop retreats, these spaces provide recreation, stunning views, and connection to nature.



Must See

Golden Gate Park

3-6 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Golden Gate Park stretches 1,017 acres from the Haight to the Pacific Ocean, making it larger than New York's Central Park. This urban oasis features gardens, lakes, meadows, museums, and recreational facilities. Highlights include the Japanese Tea Garden, Conservatory of Flowers, Botanical Garden, bison paddock, Dutch windmills, and Stow Lake where you can rent paddle boats. The park hosts numerous cultural institutions including the de Young Museum and California Academy of Sciences. Perfect for picnics, jogging, cycling, or simply relaxing.



Top Pick

Japanese Tea Garden

1-1.5 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Located in Golden Gate Park, the **Japanese Tea Garden** is the oldest public Japanese garden in the United States, created in 1894. The Japanese Tea Garden covers 3.5 acres. The traditional tea house serves Japanese tea and fortune cookies (invented here). Best visited early morning for tranquility or during cherry blossom season in spring. The garden offers a peaceful escape and stunning photo opportunities.



Top Pick

Lands End

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Lands End offers some of San Francisco's most spectacular coastal scenery with rugged cliffs, windswept cypress trees, and dramatic ocean views. The Coastal Trail winds along the bluffs providing vistas of the Golden Gate Bridge, Marin Headlands, and shipwrecks visible at low tide. The Lands End Lookout visitor center features a cafe and historical exhibits. Explore the ruins of Sutro Baths, elaborate 19th-century swimming facilities destroyed by fire. Mile Rock Beach and hidden coves reward adventurous hikers. Perfect for photographers and nature lovers.



Top Pick

Presidio of San Francisco

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The **Presidio** is a 1,500-acre national park site featuring forests, beaches, historic military buildings, and stunning bay views. Former military post turned public park, it offers dozens of hiking and biking trails through eucalyptus and cypress forests. Key attractions include Crissy Field beach with Golden Gate Bridge views, the Walt Disney Family Museum, and the historic Officers' Club. The Presidio Tunnel Tops, opened in 2022, transformed a highway into 14 acres of parkland with playgrounds, gardens, and city vistas.



Notable

San Francisco Botanical Garden

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The **San Francisco Botanical Garden** in Golden Gate Park showcases over 9,000 plant species from around the world across 55 acres. Collections include a fragrant garden, redwood grove, Mediterranean garden, succulent garden, and specialized areas representing different global regions. The mild San Francisco climate allows cultivation of diverse plants rarely seen together. Educational programs, guided tours, and seasonal displays make this a living museum. Free for San Francisco residents; modest admission for others.

Tips for Parks & Gardens

- **Layers:** San Francisco's microclimates mean coastal parks are often cooler and windier; dress in layers
- **Early Visits:** Popular parks like Golden Gate Park are most peaceful early morning on weekdays
- **Parking:** Street parking near major parks fills quickly on weekends; consider public transit or arrive early
- **Fog Season:** Summer mornings often bring fog to western parks; afternoons typically clear up

Squares & Streets

San Francisco's famous streets and public squares define the city's character. From the serpentine curves of Lombard Street to the bustling Embarcadero waterfront, these iconic thoroughfares and gathering spaces showcase urban design, architecture, and city life.



Top Pick

The Embarcadero

1-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The Embarcadero is San Francisco's waterfront boulevard stretching from AT&T Park to Fisherman's Wharf. This palm tree-lined promenade offers bay views, historic piers, restaurants, the Ferry Building Marketplace, and public art. The waterfront path is perfect for walking, jogging, or cycling. Key attractions include the Ferry Building's artisan food vendors and farmers market, Pier 7 with panoramic views, historic streetcars, and access to bay ferries. The Embarcadero connects multiple neighborhoods and provides stunning photography opportunities, especially at sunset.



Notable

Lombard Street

30 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

Lombard Street, famously known as the 'crookedest street in the world,' features eight hairpin turns descending a steep hill between Hyde and Leavenworth Streets. The one-block section was designed in 1922 to make the 27% grade passable for vehicles. Today, beautiful gardens line the brick-paved curves, creating a picturesque scene. While driving down is memorable, walking provides better photo opportunities and views of Coit Tower and the bay. Expect crowds during peak tourist season; visit early morning or evening for fewer people.



Notable

Union Square

1-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Union Square is San Francisco's premier shopping district and cultural hub, surrounded by department stores, boutiques, hotels, theaters, and art galleries. The central plaza hosts events, art installations, and a popular ice skating rink during holidays. Maiden Lane, a pedestrian alley off the square, features upscale shops and Frank Lloyd Wright's only San Francisco building. The area offers everything from luxury brands to local designers, plus numerous restaurants and cafes. The square serves as a central meeting point and starting location for exploring downtown San Francisco.

Tips for Squares & Streets

- **Cable Car Access:** Many famous streets are accessible via cable car lines a historic way to navigate steep hills
- **Walking vs Driving:** Many streets are best experienced on foot; parking is limited and expensive in popular areas
- **Photo Timing:** Lombard Street is less crowded early morning (before 9am) or after 6pm
- **Ferry Building:** Visit the Ferry Building on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday mornings for the acclaimed farmers market

Tours & Activities

San Francisco offers diverse tours and activities that showcase the city from unique perspectives. From bay cruises and bike rides to food tours and cultural experiences, these activities provide deeper insights into the city's history, culture, and natural beauty.



Top Pick

Golden Gate Bridge Bike Tour

3-4 hours No Booking Needed

Biking across the Golden Gate Bridge is a quintessential San Francisco experience. Rent bikes near Fisherman's Wharf and follow the waterfront path through Fort Mason and Crissy Field to the bridge. Cross the 1.7-mile span (use the designated bike path) to Sausalito, a charming bayside town. Most tours include return ferry tickets from Sausalito back to SF. The ride is mostly flat with stunning bay views throughout. Guided and self-guided options available. Allow 3-4 hours for the full experience including Sausalito exploration.



Top Pick

Cable Car Experience

30-45 minutes per ride No Booking Needed

Riding a **Cable Car** is an iconic San Francisco experience and the only moving National Historic Landmark. Three lines operate: Powell-Hyde and Powell-Mason (both serving Fisherman's Wharf from downtown) and California Street. The open-air cars climb steep hills using underground cables, offering thrilling rides and photo opportunities. The Powell-Hyde line provides the most scenic route with views of Alcatraz and stops near Lombard Street. Visit the Cable Car Museum to learn about the mechanical system. Board at terminals to guarantee a seat, or brave the lines at popular stops.



Notable

Bay Cruises

1-3 hours Book Ahead

Bay Cruises offer spectacular perspectives of San Francisco's waterfront, bridges, and Alcatraz Island. Multiple operators provide various experiences including 1-hour scenic cruises under the Golden Gate Bridge, sunset cocktail cruises, and dinner cruises. Red and White Fleet and Blue & Gold Fleet are major providers. The water-level views of the city skyline, Bay Bridge, and Golden Gate Bridge create unforgettable photo opportunities. Whale watching tours seasonally extend beyond the bay. Dress warmly as it's always cooler on the water.



Notable

Food Tours

3-4 hours Book Ahead

San Francisco's **Food Tours** explore the city's diverse culinary scene through tastings in neighborhoods like North Beach (Italian), Chinatown (dim sum and tea), Mission District (Mexican and Latin), and Ferry Building (artisan foods). Expert guides share neighborhood history, cultural insights, and insider recommendations while visiting bakeries, restaurants, markets, and specialty shops. Tours typically include 5-7 tastings totaling a meal's worth of food. Popular companies include Avital Food Tours, Local Tastes of the City, and SF Food Tours. Excellent way to discover hidden gems.



Notable

Walking Tours

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

San Francisco's **Walking Tours** reveal the city's rich history, architecture, and culture. Popular themes include Victorian architecture and Painted Ladies, Gold Rush history, Chinatown's hidden alleys, literary North Beach, LGBTQ+ history in the Castro, and murals in the Mission District. Free walking tours operate on a tip-based model, while specialty tours charge set fees. San Francisco City Guides offers excellent free tours covering 40+ topics. Walking tours provide intimate neighborhood experiences and historical context that driving tours miss. Wear comfortable shoes for hilly terrain.

Tips for Tours & Activities

- **Advance Booking:** Popular tours (especially Alcatraz and food tours) should be booked 1-2 weeks ahead during peak season
- **Weather Preparation:** Bay activities are significantly cooler than inland; bring layers and windbreakers
- **Cable Car Strategy:** Board at terminal stations (Powell & Market) for better chance of getting seats
- **Combination Tickets:** Some tour companies offer multi-activity packages at discounted rates

Day Trips & Excursions

The San Francisco Bay Area offers exceptional day trip destinations within 1-2 hours, from wine country valleys to coastal towns, national parks to tech hubs. These excursions showcase Northern California's diverse landscapes and attractions.



Must See Book Ahead

Muir Woods & Sausalito

5-7 hours Book Ahead

Map

Muir Woods National Monument protects ancient coastal redwood forests just 12 miles north of San Francisco. Walk among towering trees up to 1,000 years old on peaceful trails ranging from easy paved paths to challenging hillside hikes. The Cathedral Grove features the tallest trees. Combine with a visit to **Sausalito**, a charming Mediterranean-style waterfront town with art galleries, boutiques, and restaurants offering bay views. The ferry ride back to SF provides spectacular city skyline vistas. *Parking reservations required at Muir Woods book well in advance.*



Top Pick Book Ahead

Napa & Sonoma Wine Country

Full day (8-10 hours) Book Ahead

Map

Napa Valley and **Sonoma County** are world-renowned wine regions located 1-1.5 hours north. Napa offers luxury wineries, Michelin-starred restaurants, and the charming towns of Yountville and St. Helena. The Napa Valley Wine Train combines dining and wine tasting aboard vintage rail cars. Sonoma provides a more relaxed atmosphere with historic Sonoma Plaza, family-owned wineries, and scenic countryside. Both regions offer vineyard tours, wine education, and beautiful landscapes. Designated driver required, or book guided tours with transportation included. Visit spring for wildflowers or fall for harvest season.



Top Pick

Monterey & Carmel-by-the-Sea

Full day (10-12 hours) No Booking Needed

Map

Monterey is a historic coastal city 2 hours south featuring the world-class Monterey Bay Aquarium, Cannery Row's shops and restaurants, and Old Fisherman's Wharf. The scenic 17-Mile Drive winds through Pebble Beach with dramatic coastal views and famous golf courses. **Carmel-by-the-Sea** is an enchanting village with fairy-tale cottages, art galleries, white sand beaches, and upscale dining. The drive along Highway 1 through Big Sur (if continuing south) offers some of California's most breathtaking coastal scenery. Early departure recommended to maximize time.



Notable

Point Reyes National Seashore

Full day (8-10 hours) No Booking Needed

Map

Point Reyes National Seashore, located 90 minutes north, offers 71,000 acres of pristine coastline, beaches, forests, and wildlife. Highlights include the historic Point Reyes Lighthouse (308 steps down coastal cliffs), Drakes Beach, Chimney Rock Trail, and Tomales Bay. The area features elephant seal colonies (winter-spring), wildflower meadows (spring), oyster farms, and hiking trails for all levels. Charming Point Reyes Station and Inverness offer dining options. The dramatic coastal scenery differs markedly from San Francisco's urban landscape, providing peaceful natural beauty and excellent wildlife viewing opportunities.



Optional

Silicon Valley

Half to full day (5-8 hours) No Booking Needed

Map

Silicon Valley, located 45 minutes south, is the global center of technology innovation. Visit the Apple Park Visitor Center, Computer History Museum in Mountain View (featuring tech evolution from abacus to AI), Google's colorful campus (view from outside), and Stanford University's beautiful campus in Palo Alto. The Intel Museum and HP Garage (birthplace of Silicon Valley) offer tech history insights. While corporate campuses aren't publicly accessible, the area provides fascinating glimpses into the tech industry's heart. Best for technology enthusiasts and those interested in innovation history.

Tips for Day Trips & Excursions

- **Early Departure:** Leave San Francisco early morning to avoid traffic and maximize time at destinations
- **Reservations:** Muir Woods requires parking/shuttle reservations; popular Napa wineries need advance tasting reservations
- **Designated Driver:** Wine country visits require a sober driver or book guided tours with transportation
- **Weather Variance:** Coastal areas can be significantly cooler and foggier than inland destinations; check forecasts and dress in layers

Food & Dining

Real, highly-rated Restaurants in San Francisco, sourced from Google Places (rating above 4★).



Restaurant Naides★★★★★ 4.9 (37)

1-2 hours

Map

Restaurant Naides is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.9★ from 37 reviews. Located at 708 Bush St, San Francisco, CA 94108, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: Closed
- Wednesday: Closed
- Thursday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Friday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Saturday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Sunday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM



Lazy Bear★★★★★ 4.7 (1,191)

1-2 hours

Map

Lazy Bear is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.7★ from 1191 reviews. Located at 3416 19th St, San Francisco, CA 94110, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



The Morris★★★★★ 4.7 (668)

1-2 hours

Map

The Morris is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.7★ from 668 reviews. Located at 2501 Mariposa St, San Francisco, CA 94110, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Rich Table★★★★★ 4.7 (1,592)

1-2 hours

Map

Rich Table is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.7★ from 1592 reviews. Located at 199 Gough St, San Francisco, CA 94102, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM



Sons & Daughters★★★★★ 4.7 (389)

1-2 hours

Map

Sons & Daughters is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.7★ from 389 reviews. Located at 2875 18th St, San Francisco, CA 94110, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Wednesday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Thursday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Friday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Saturday: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Kokkari Estiatorio★★★★★ 4.7 (3,525)

1-2 hours

Map

Kokkari Estiatorio is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.7★ from 3525 reviews. Located at 200 Jackson St, San Francisco, CA 94111, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM, 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM



Californios★★★★★ 4.7 (562)

1-2 hours

Map

Californios is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.7★ from 562 reviews. Located at 355 11th St, San Francisco, CA 94103, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Scoma's Restaurant★★★★★ 4.6 (7,054)

1-2 hours

Map

Scoma's Restaurant is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.6★ from 7054 reviews. Located at 1965 Al Scoma Way, San Francisco, CA 94133, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 12:00 – 9:30 PM
- Tuesday: 12:00 – 9:30 PM
- Wednesday: 12:00 – 9:30 PM
- Thursday: 12:00 – 9:30 PM
- Friday: 12:00 – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: 12:00 – 9:30 PM



House of Prime Rib★★★★★ 4.6 (7,355)

1-2 hours

Map

House of Prime Rib is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.6★ from 7355 reviews. Located at 1906 Van Ness Ave, San Francisco, CA 94109, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 4:00 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: 4:00 – 10:00 PM



The Progress★★★★★ 4.6 (1,329)

1-2 hours

Map

The Progress is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.6★ from 1329 reviews. Located at 1525 Fillmore St, San Francisco, CA 94115, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: Closed
- Friday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Sunday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM



Boulevard★★★★★ 4.6 (1,703)

1-2 hours

Map

Boulevard is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.6★ from 1703 reviews. Located at 1 Mission St, San Francisco, CA 94105, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 9:30 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Birdsong★★★★★ 4.6 (471)

1-2 hours

Map

Birdsong is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.6★ from 471 reviews. Located at 1085 Mission St, San Francisco, CA 94103, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 5:30 – 8:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:30 – 8:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:30 – 8:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 8:30 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 8:30 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Waterbar Restaurant★★★★★ 4.5 (4,473)

1-2 hours

Map

Waterbar Restaurant is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.5★ from 4473 reviews. Located at 399 The Embarcadero, San Francisco, CA 94105, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:30 AM – 9:00 PM
- Tuesday: 11:30 AM – 9:00 PM
- Wednesday: 11:30 AM – 9:00 PM
- Thursday: 11:30 AM – 9:00 PM
- Friday: 11:30 AM – 9:30 PM
- Saturday: 11:30 AM – 9:30 PM
- Sunday: 11:30 AM – 9:00 PM



State Bird Provisions★★★★★ 4.5 (2,474)

1-2 hours

Map

State Bird Provisions is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.5★ from 2474 reviews. Located at 1529 Fillmore St, San Francisco, CA 94115, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 5:30 – 10:30 PM
- Saturday: 5:30 – 10:30 PM
- Sunday: 5:30 – 10:00 PM



Dalida Restaurant★★★★★ 4.5 (754)

1-2 hours

Map

Dalida Restaurant is a highly-rated restaurant in San Francisco, rated 4.5★ from 754 reviews. Located at 101 Montgomery St Ste 100, San Francisco, CA 94129, USA.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM
- Wednesday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:00 – 9:00 PM
- Thursday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:00 – 9:00 PM
- Friday: 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:00 – 9:00 PM
- Saturday: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:00 – 9:00 PM
- Sunday: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM, 5:00 – 9:00 PM

Practical Information

Seasonal Guide to San Francisco

September - November (Fall) - BEST TIME TO VISIT. San Francisco's warmest and sunniest season with temperatures 65-75°F (18-24°C). Minimal fog, clear skies, and fewer tourists after Labor Day. Perfect weather for outdoor activities and neighborhood exploration.

March - May (Spring) - Excellent visiting season with mild temperatures (55-65°F/13-18°C) and blooming flowers in parks and gardens. Some fog begins in late May. Cherry blossoms peak in Japanese Tea Garden late March. Moderate tourist crowds.

December - February (Winter) - San Francisco's rainy season but still mild (50-60°F/10-16°C) with occasional sunny days. Holiday decorations and events make it festive. Lowest hotel rates and smallest crowds except around major holidays. Perfect for museum visits and indoor attractions.

June - August (Summer) - Most popular but FOGGIEST season. Morning fog (known locally as 'Karl the Fog') often blankets western neighborhoods and can last until afternoon. Temperatures surprisingly cool (55-65°F/13-18°C) especially near the coast. Warmest areas are Mission District, South of Market, and eastern neighborhoods. Large tourist crowds and highest prices. *Pack layers summer in SF is not beach weather!*

Month	Avg High	Avg Low	Rain Days
January	57°F/14°C	46°F/8°C	11
April	63°F/17°C	49°F/9°C	4
July	67°F/19°C	54°F/12°C	0
October	70°F/21°C	54°F/12°C	3

Pro Tip: Mark Twain never actually said "The coldest winter I ever spent was a summer in San Francisco," but the sentiment rings true. Always bring layers!

Getting Around San Francisco

Public Transportation (Recommended)

Muni (Municipal Transportation Agency) operates buses, light rail (Metro), historic streetcars, and cable cars throughout SF. Single rides $3 (cash) or $2.50 (Clipper card). Day passes available: 1-day ($13), 3-day ($31), 7-day ($41). Download MuniMobile app for easy fare payment.

BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) connects SF to East Bay, SFO Airport, and Peninsula cities. Fares based on distance ($2.50-$11). Essential for airport transfers and regional travel. Use Clipper card for seamless transfers between Muni and BART.

Cable Cars - Three lines (Powell-Hyde, Powell-Mason, California Street) offering scenic rides and National Historic Landmark experience. $8 per ride (cash exact change or Clipper). Cable Car Day Pass $17. Lines can be long at peak times; board at terminal stations for better chance of seats.

Historic Streetcars (F-Line) - Vintage streetcars run along Market Street and the Embarcadero from Castro to Fisherman's Wharf. Beautiful restored cars from cities worldwide. Regular Muni fare applies.

Rideshare & Taxis

Uber and Lyft operate extensively. Convenient but expensive, especially during surge pricing. Useful for late nights, steep hills, and traveling with luggage. Wait times vary by neighborhood.

Traditional taxis available but less common. Can be hailed on street in downtown areas or called. Metered fares with standard rates.

Driving & Parking

Driving NOT Recommended - Challenging steep hills, heavy traffic, aggressive parking enforcement, and extremely limited expensive parking ($5-10/hour, $25-50/day in garages). Many neighborhoods have residential permit parking. Street parking requires careful attention to complex posted rules. If driving, use parking apps like SpotHero or ParkWhiz for pre-booked parking.

Biking

Bay Wheels (Bike Share) - 500+ stations throughout SF. Perfect for short trips. $3 for single 30-minute rides, $20 for day pass with unlimited 30-minute rides. Download Bay Wheels app.

Bike Rentals available near Fisherman's Wharf for Golden Gate Bridge rides to Sausalito. Protected bike lanes expanding but hilly terrain can be challenging.

✈ Airport Transfer

SFO (San Francisco International Airport) - 13 miles south of downtown.
• BART: Direct service to downtown (30-45 min, ~$10). Most economical option.
• Rideshare: $35-55 to downtown, pickup from designated zones
• Door-to-door shuttles: $17-20 per person
• Taxis: $45-65 to downtown

Oakland Airport (OAK) - Across the bay, often cheaper flights. BART accessible via AirBART shuttle ($6 shuttle + $11 BART = ~$17 total).

Money-Saving Tip: Get a Clipper Card ($3 card fee) at BART stations or Walgreens. Saves money on fares and eliminates need for exact change on Muni. Can be used on all Bay Area transit systems.

Shopping in San Francisco

What to Buy

Local & Artisan Products:

- **Ghirardelli Chocolate** - San Francisco's famous chocolate brand since 1852. Visit Ghirardelli Square for factory-fresh treats and shopping
- **Blue Bottle Coffee** - SF-born specialty coffee roaster, now with locations worldwide
- **Anchor Brewing merchandise** - America's first craft brewery (since 1896)
- **Sourdough bread** - Boudin Bakery's famous SF sourdough in decorative shapes
- **Local wines** - Napa and Sonoma valley wines from Ferry Building wine shops
- **Artisan foods** - Olive oils, preserves, and gourmet items from Ferry Building Marketplace
- **Tech gadgets** - Latest innovations from Apple Store, Silicon Valley brands

Unique SF Memorabilia:

- Golden Gate Bridge souvenirs and artwork
- Cable car replicas and models
- Beat Generation literature from City Lights Bookstore
- Local artist prints and photography
- SF Giants and 49ers sports merchandise

Shopping Districts

Union Square - Premier shopping destination with department stores (Macy's, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue), luxury brands (Dior, Gucci, Louis Vuitton), and popular retailers. Maiden Lane features upscale boutiques.

Ferry Building Marketplace - Gourmet food hall with 50+ artisan food vendors, specialty shops, and acclaimed farmers market (Tue, Thu, Sat mornings). Perfect for foodie gifts and local products.

Haight-Ashbury - Vintage clothing, record stores, head shops, and counterculture memorabilia. Unique bohemian shopping experience with independent boutiques.

Hayes Valley - Trendy neighborhood with local designers, boutique fashion, home décor, and specialty shops. More upscale than Haight with contemporary aesthetic.

Valencia Street (Mission) - Independent bookstores, vintage shops, record stores, and eclectic boutiques. Very hip, local feel.

Fillmore Street - Upscale shopping in Pacific Heights with boutique fashion, jewelry, home goods, and beauty products.

Chinatown - Authentic Chinese products including tea, herbs, jade, silk, ceramics, and traditional goods. Grant Avenue for tourist shops, Stockton Street for authentic local shopping.

Japantown - Japanese goods including anime, manga, ceramics, kimonos, and authentic Japanese food products in Japan Center.

Shopping Tips

- **Sales Tax:** California state + SF local = 8.625% sales tax added to purchases (not included in displayed prices)
- **Bargaining:** Not customary in established stores. May work at some Chinatown shops for multiple purchases
- **Hours:** Most stores open 10am-7pm daily. Some stay open later Thursday-Saturday. Sunday hours often shorter
- **Farmers Markets:** Ferry Building (Tue/Thu/Sat), Alemany (Sat), Heart of the City (Wed/Sun) offer fresh produce and artisan goods
- **Outlet Shopping:** Premium Outlets in Gilroy (1 hour south) or Livermore (45 min east) for designer discounts

Annual Events & Festivals

Major Annual Events

Chinese New Year Celebration & Parade (February) - North America's largest Chinese New Year celebration featuring elaborate floats, lion dancers, fireworks, and the famous Golden Dragon. The parade through Chinatown and downtown draws hundreds of thousands. Multi-week celebration with community events, flower market fair, and Miss Chinatown USA pageant.

SF Pride Celebration & Parade (June) - One of the world's largest LGBTQ+ pride events commemorating the 1969 Stonewall riots. Weekend festival in Civic Center with live entertainment, vendors, and activism. The Sunday parade through Market Street features colorful floats, marchers, and celebration of diversity. Over 1 million attendees.

Outside Lands Music Festival (August) - Three-day music festival in Golden Gate Park featuring major headliners across genres, food from top SF restaurants, wine lands, beer lands, and art installations. San Francisco's premier music event attracting 200,000+ attendees. Tickets sell out quickly.

Fleet Week (October) - Week-long celebration of US military with spectacular Blue Angels air shows over the bay, ship tours, parade of ships under Golden Gate Bridge, and military demonstrations. Massive crowds gather at waterfront viewing locations. Free events throughout the city.

Hardly Strictly Bluegrass (October) - Free three-day music festival in Golden Gate Park featuring bluegrass, folk, country, and roots music on multiple stages. Over 100 artists perform. San Francisco's beloved free concert tradition attracting 750,000+ attendees. Bring blankets and picnic supplies.

Bay to Breakers (May) - Legendary 12K race from Embarcadero Bay to Ocean Beach. Known for elaborate costumes, festive atmosphere, and party spirit as much as serious running. San Francisco's quirky character on full display.

Food & Wine Events

SF Restaurant Week (January & June) - Twice-yearly promotional event with prix-fixe menus at 100+ participating restaurants. Opportunity to try upscale establishments at reduced prices.

Eat Drink SF (August) - Premier food and wine festival featuring tastings, celebrity chef events, Grand Tasting with 150+ wineries and restaurants, and culinary experiences at various venues.

Cultural Events

Cherry Blossom Festival (April) - Two-weekend celebration of Japanese culture in Japantown with parade, performances, martial arts demonstrations, ikebana, tea ceremonies, and Japanese food. Beautiful cherry blossoms bloom in Japan Center Peace Plaza.

Carnaval San Francisco (May) - Mission District celebration of Latin American and Caribbean culture featuring samba dancers, elaborate costumes, live music, and Grand Parade. Vibrant expression of SF's Latino community.

North Beach Festival (June) - San Francisco's oldest street fair celebrating Italian heritage with food vendors, live music, arts and crafts, and blessing of the animals. Washington Square Park festival atmosphere.

Holiday Events

Union Square Tree Lighting & Ice Skating (November-January) - Holiday season kickoff with Christmas tree lighting ceremony. Union Square ice rink operates through early January. Downtown holiday shopping district fully decorated.

New Year's Eve Fireworks - Midnight fireworks at Embarcadero waterfront. Various neighborhood celebrations and parties throughout the city.

Planning Tip: Major events significantly increase hotel prices and crowds. Book accommodation well in advance for Pride, Fleet Week, and Outside Lands weekends. Some streets close during major parades and events plan transportation accordingly.

5 Perfect Day Itineraries

Day 1: Classic San Francisco Icons

Morning (8am-12pm):
• Start at Ferry Building for breakfast and coffee (8am)
• Walk Embarcadero to Pier 39 viewing sea lions (9am)
• Take ferry to Alcatraz (book first tour, typically 9:45am)
• Explore Alcatraz Island with audio tour (2.5 hours)

Afternoon (12pm-5pm):
• Return to Fisherman's Wharf, lunch at Boudin Bakery or In-N-Out (12:30pm)
• Walk to Lombard Street via Hyde Street (1:30pm)
• Explore North Beach neighborhood and Saints Peter & Paul Church (2:30pm)
• Coffee at Caffe Trieste, browse City Lights Bookstore (3:30pm)

Evening (5pm-9pm):
• Cable car ride down to Union Square (5pm)
• Dinner in Union Square or Chinatown (6:30pm)
• Evening walk through Chinatown's lit streets (8pm)

Day 2: Golden Gate & Parks

Morning (8am-12pm):
• Early breakfast in Marina District (8am)
• Walk or bike Crissy Field to Fort Point for bridge views (9am)
• Walk/bike across Golden Gate Bridge (10am)
• Explore Marin Headlands viewpoints or continue to Sausalito (11am)

Afternoon (12pm-5pm):
• Lunch in Sausalito, ferry back to SF (12:30pm)
• Palace of Fine Arts visit (2:30pm)
• Enter Golden Gate Park from north, visit Japanese Tea Garden (3:30pm)
• Stroll park to Conservatory of Flowers (4:30pm)

Evening (5pm-9pm):
• Uber/bus to Haight-Ashbury for vintage shopping (5:30pm)
• Dinner on Haight Street (7pm)
• Explore neighborhood's colorful Victorians and murals (8pm)

Day 3: Museums & Culture

Morning (9am-12pm):
• Breakfast in Hayes Valley (9am)
• Visit SFMOMA (opens 10am, spend 2 hours)

• Walk to Yerba Buena Gardens (12pm)

Afternoon (12pm-5:30pm):
• Lunch near SFMOMA or Union Square (12:30pm)
• Uber to Golden Gate Park (1:30pm)
• California Academy of Sciences (2pm entry, spend 2.5 hours)
• Walk through park to de Young Museum observation tower for sunset views (free, 5pm)

Evening (6pm-9pm):
• Uber to Mission District (6:15pm)
• Walk Balmy Alley and Clarion Alley murals (6:30pm)
• Dinner at acclaimed Mission restaurant (7:30pm)
• Mission District nightlife or return downtown (9pm)

Day 4: Neighborhoods & Views

Morning (9am-12pm):
• Breakfast in Castro District (9am)
• Explore Castro neighborhood and historical sites (10am)
• Walk or streetcar to Mission District (11am)
• Coffee and pastries at Mission bakery, explore Valencia Street shops (11:30am)

Afternoon (12pm-5:30pm):
• Lunch in Mission District authentic Mexican or trendy restaurant (12:30pm)
• Uber to Lands End (1:30pm)
• Hike Coastal Trail to Sutro Baths ruins and viewpoints (2pm)
• Visit Legion of Honor art museum (3:30pm, optional)
• Watch sunset from Lands End Lookout (5pm)

Evening (6pm-9:30pm):
• Uber to Clement Street in Richmond District (6pm)
• Explore Asian restaurants and dim sum houses for dinner (6:30pm)
• Evening walk through Lincoln Park (weather permitting, 8pm)

Day 5: Waterfront & Local Favorites

Morning (8:30am-12pm):
• Early breakfast at Ferry Building (8:30am)
• Explore Saturday Farmers Market if weekend (9am)
• Walk Embarcadero south to AT&T Park/Oracle Park area (10am)
• Mission Bay waterfront parks and public art (11am)

Afternoon (12pm-5pm):
• Lunch in SoMa or Dogpatch neighborhood (12pm)
• Visit Exploratorium on Pier 15 (1:30pm, spend 2 hours)
• Walk to Coit Tower via Filbert Steps (3:30pm)
• Climb Coit Tower for 360° views (4pm)

Evening (5pm-9pm):
• Descend to North Beach for aperitivo hour (5:30pm)
• Italian dinner in North Beach trattoria or family-style restaurant (7pm)
• Catch live jazz at a North Beach club (8:30pm) or nightcap at historic bar

Itinerary Tips: These itineraries are ambitious but achievable. Build in flexibility for fog delays, longer-than-expected visits, and spontaneous discoveries. Use rideshare for time-sensitive connections. Book Alcatraz tickets weeks in advance. Carry layers as weather changes throughout the day and between neighborhoods.

Best Photography & Instagram Locations

Iconic Landmarks

Golden Gate Bridge
• *Battery Spencer (Marin Headlands):* Classic elevated view of bridge with SF skyline behind. Best at sunrise or golden hour. 15-min drive from bridge.
• *Fort Point:* Dramatic underneath perspective looking up at bridge's southern span. Best midday for lighting. Accessible by foot/bike from Crissy Field.
• *Marshall's Beach:* Beach-level views with bridge above. Clothing-optional beach beyond the photography spot. Steep trail access.
• *Baker Beach:* Wide beach views with bridge in background. Sunset magic but can be foggy. Popular spot so arrive early for best positions.
• *Crissy Field:* East end offers bridge views with sailboats and windsurfers. Very accessible, flat walking.

Painted Ladies (Alamo Square)
Victorian homes with downtown skyline behind SF's most photographed residential street. Best in late afternoon/evening when sun lights the houses. Visit early morning on weekdays to avoid crowds. Use the park's eastern side for classic angle.

Lombard Street
Shoot from top looking down the curves, or from bottom looking up. Early morning (before 8am) or evening for fewer people. Spring flowers add color.

Palace of Fine Arts
Stunning at golden hour and blue hour when rotunda lights illuminate. Swan lagoon reflections double the beauty. Multiple angles from different sides of lagoon. Often uncrowded early morning.

Viewpoints & Panoramas

Twin Peaks
360° panoramic views of entire city from 922-foot elevation. Sunset and night city lights spectacular. Can be very windy and cold bring layers. Drive or Uber up (limited parking). Clear days offer views to Pacific Ocean.

Coit Tower Observation Deck
Downtown views, Bay Bridge, Alcatraz, and bay panoramas from 210-foot tower. Interior murals also photogenic. Less crowded than Twin Peaks.

Bernal Heights Park
Local favorite with 360° views, less touristy than Twin Peaks. Wildflowers in spring. Sunset views looking west over Mission District.

Grand View Park (Turtle Hill)
Hidden gem in Sunset District with ocean, Golden Gate, and downtown views. Steep walk up sand dune. Spectacular sunsets.

Urban & Street Photography

Chinatown
• Dragon's Gate entrance on Grant Avenue
• Red lanterns along Grant Avenue at dusk
• Ross Alley and Waverly Place for authentic atmosphere
• Early morning captures locals shopping on Stockton Street

Mission District Murals
• Balmy Alley (25th & Balmy) concentrated alley of political murals
• Clarion Alley (between 17th & 18th, Valencia & Mission) frequently changing street art
• Women's Building (18th & Lapidge) massive facade mural
• Best light: late morning to early afternoon

Cable Cars
• Powell & Market turnaround catch operators manually turning cars
• Powell-Hyde line California Street crossing cars passing each other
• Moving shots on Hyde Street hill descending toward Alcatraz views
• California & Grant intersection for urban context

Waterfront Locations

Pier 7
Wooden pier extending into bay with no admission. Sunrise shoots with Bay Bridge. Evening city light reflections on water. Wide-angle bridge shots.

Embarcadero at Ferry Building
Bay Bridge framed by Ferry Building clock tower. Palm trees add California vibe. Farmers market Saturdays adds color and activity.

Lands End Coastal Trail
Rugged coastline, Sutro Baths ruins, Golden Gate Bridge distant views, cypress trees. Moody Pacific Ocean scenes. Mile Rock Beach at low tide reveals shipwreck.

Hidden Gems

16th Avenue Tiled Steps
Mosaic tile staircase (163 steps) with sea-to-stars design. Best midday for colors. Continue to Grandview Park summit for bonus views.

Wave Organ
Acoustic sculpture at jetty creating sounds from waves. Golden Gate Bridge views. Unusual architectural photography. Best at high tide.

Seward Street Slides
Concrete slides built into hillside unique playful San Francisco quirk. Bring cardboard for sliding. Castro neighborhood context.

Photography Tips

- **Fog Forecast:** Check fog patterns summer mornings often foggy, afternoons clearer. Fog can add mood but obscures landmarks
- **Golden Hour:** San Francisco's golden hour is magical roughly 1 hour before sunset. Light hits Victorian architecture beautifully
- **Blue Hour:** Twilight (30 min after sunset) perfect for city lights with remaining sky color. Bridge lights, downtown skyline, Embarcadero
- **Weekday Mornings:** Popular spots much less crowded before 9am on weekdays
- **Weather Apps:** Use specific SF weather apps microclimates mean conditions vary dramatically by neighborhood
- **Drone Rules:** Drones prohibited in National Park areas (Golden Gate Bridge, Lands End, Alcatraz, etc.). Check regulations before flying

Electricity & Electronics

Voltage & Frequency: United States standard **120 volts AC, 60 Hz**

Plug Types: Type A and Type B (American standard)

- **Type A:** Two flat parallel pins
- **Type B:** Two flat parallel pins plus round grounding pin

Adapters Needed:

- Visitors from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and most other regions will need plug adapters

- Many modern electronics (phones, laptops, cameras) have dual-voltage chargers (110-240V) and only need plug adapters, not voltage converters
- Check your device's power adapter for voltage compatibility look for "INPUT: 100-240V"
- Hair dryers, straighteners, and other heat-producing appliances often require voltage converters if not dual-voltage

Where to Buy Adapters:

- Purchase before arrival for best selection and prices
- Available at SFO Airport shops (expensive)
- Target, Walgreens, Best Buy, or hardware stores throughout SF
- Many hotels provide adapters upon request ask at front desk

USB Charging:

- USB outlets increasingly common in hotels, airports, cafes
- Bring USB cables for your devices
- Portable power banks useful for full day exploring

Important: Using incorrect voltage (plugging 120V-only device into 240V or vice versa) can permanently damage electronics. Always verify voltage compatibility, not just plug type.

San Francisco Food Scene

Must-Try San Francisco Dishes

Sourdough Bread
San Francisco's signature food since Gold Rush era. The city's unique climate and wild yeast create distinctive tangy flavor. Try the bread bowl filled with clam chowder at Fisherman's Wharf, or purchase loaves from Boudin Bakery (since 1849) or Tartine Bakery.

Dungeness Crab
Fresh from local waters, Dungeness crab season runs November-June (peak December-January). Enjoy whole cracked crab at Fisherman's Wharf vendors, crab Louis salad, or cioppino (seafood stew). Scoma's, Sotto Mare, and Crustacean are excellent restaurants.

Mission-Style Burrito
San Francisco's contribution to Mexican cuisine enormous foil-wrapped burritos pioneered in the Mission District. La Taqueria, El Farolito, and Taqueria Cancún are legendary. Debate continues over best spot. Super burrito comes loaded with everything.

Cioppino
Italian-American seafood stew created by San Francisco's Italian fishermen. Tomato-based broth with Dungeness crab, clams, shrimp, mussels, and fish. Best at Italian restaurants in North Beach or Fisherman's Wharf.

Chinese Dim Sum
San Francisco's Chinatown offers authentic Hong Kong-style dim sum. Steamed dumplings, buns, rice rolls, and small plates served from rolling carts or ordered from menus. Yank Sing (downtown), Ton Kiang, Hong Kong Lounge, and Good Mong Kok Bakery are top choices.

Irish Coffee at Buena Vista Cafe
The Buena Vista Cafe claims to have introduced Irish Coffee to America in 1952. This Fisherman's Wharf institution serves their famous version whiskey, coffee, sugar, and cream. Historic atmosphere and bay views included.

It's-It Ice Cream Sandwich
San Francisco original ice cream between two oatmeal cookies, dipped in dark chocolate. Multiple flavors available. Find at local markets or It's-It factory store in Burlingame.

Diverse Culinary Scene

Ferry Building Marketplace
Gourmet food hall featuring 50+ artisan producers. Sample oysters at Hog Island Oyster Co., Vietnamese at Out the Door, cheese at Cowgirl Creamery, and chocolate at TCHO. Saturday farmers market is legendary.

Mission District
Best Mexican food, Latin American cuisine, plus innovative restaurants and trendy spots. Authentic taquerias, Salvadoran pupuserías, and Michelin-starred dining coexist. Valencia Street and 24th Street are epicenters.

North Beach (Little Italy)
Italian restaurants, cafes, bakeries, and delis. Try housemade pasta, Neapolitan pizza, Italian pastries, and espresso. Tony's Pizza Napoletana, Mama's, Molinari Delicatessen are institutions.

Chinatown
Beyond dim sum: hand-pulled noodles, Peking duck, hot pot, Chinese BBQ, and Hong Kong-style cafes. Explore Stockton Street for authentic spots locals frequent.

Japantown
Ramen, sushi, Japanese curry, okonomiyaki, and specialty Japanese items. Japan Center houses multiple restaurants. Marufuku Ramen draws long lines.

Dining Tips

- **Reservations Essential:** Popular restaurants book weeks ahead. Use OpenTable, Resy, or Tock. Some accept walk-ins but expect waits
- **Price Expectations:** SF dining is expensive. Budget $15-25 per person casual, $40-80 mid-range, $100+ fine dining, before drinks and tip
- **Tipping Culture:** 18-20% standard for sit-down meals. 15-18% for more casual. Some restaurants add service charge check bill
- **Tax:** 8.625% sales tax added to food bills
- **Happy Hour:** Many restaurants offer discounted food/drinks 5-7pm. Great way to sample upscale places affordably
- **Food Halls:** Ferry Building, Spark Social, La Cocina Municipal Marketplace offer variety without commitment to single restaurant
- **Dietary Restrictions:** SF exceptionally accommodating vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, and allergy-conscious options widely available
- **Coffee Culture:** Third-wave coffee capital. Blue Bottle, Sightglass, Ritual, and independent cafes serve exceptional coffee. Expect $4-6 for specialty drinks
- **Michelin Stars:** SF has numerous Michelin-starred restaurants. Benu, Saison, Quince, Lazy Bear, State Bird Provisions among celebrated. Book far in advance

Avoid Tourist Traps: While Fisherman's Wharf has iconic spots, many restaurants there are overpriced and mediocre. Research specific recommendations rather than choosing randomly along the wharf.

Tourist Passes

CityPASS San Francisco

The official site currently advertises savings of up to 45%; the actual saving depends on the selected ticket and attractions. Pass includes: California Academy of Sciences, Blue & Gold Fleet Bay Cruise, choice of Aquarium of the Bay OR SF Zoo, choice of Exploratorium OR de Young Museum/Legion of Honor. Price: check the current price and validity on the official site. *Best for:* First-time visitors hitting major attractions. Skip-the-line benefits at some venues.

www.citypass.com

Go City San Francisco All-Inclusive Pass

Go City Pass offers unlimited admission to 25+ attractions including Alcatraz (with reservation), bike rentals, bay cruises, tours, and museums. Choose 1, 2, 3, or 5-day pass. **Price:** check the current price on the official site. *Best for:* Ambitious sightseers wanting flexibility and variety. Most value if visiting many attractions daily. Includes some tours and activities beyond standard entry tickets.

gocity.com

San Francisco Muni Passport

Muni Passport provides unlimited rides on Muni buses, light rail, historic streetcars, AND cable cars. **Current prices are $15 for 1 day, $35 for 3 days, and $47 for 7 days. Available via MuniMobile app, participating vendors, or visitor centers. *Best for:* Everyone using public transit. Cable cars cost more per ride than regular Muni, so the pass pays for itself quickly. Essential for exploring multiple neighborhoods without rideshare expenses.**

www.sfmta.com