

# *Things to Do in San Francisco*

## *General Information*

For all attractions, we recommend visiting during off hours (weekdays or morning time) as many popular locations get very busy with tourists during the weekend and afternoons.

## *Cars*

If you are renting a car, please be aware that there is a serious car burglary problem in San Francisco at the moment, so do not leave anything visible inside the car, and ensure that your car is locked when visiting popular areas. Thieves actively target rental cars for smash and grab burglaries.

If you plan on driving across the Golden Gate Bridge up to Marin, check with your rental car company for their toll policy. The Golden Gate Bridge is all cashless now, and some rental car companies will charge a hefty premium for crossing without paying in advance.

Parking in San Francisco can be a real challenge in popular neighborhoods, so be sure to allocate time for that. Some tips for finding parking: keep moving and circulating around the area; take the first spot you see and can fit into; pay attention to all signs (temporary construction signs are often only valid during the week or expired, most commercial zones are free to park after 6pm, be aware of street cleaning or permit time limits if leaving the car overnight); on steep streets, perpendicular parking spots are easier to get into and generally easier to find a spot. Make sure to also curb your wheels in the correct

direction if parking on an incline (towards the curb if on a decline, away from the curb if on an incline) and use your parking brake.

## *Public Transit*

Public transit is a great—but at times frustrating—way to get around San Francisco. MUNI is San Francisco's transit department which runs buses, cable cars, street cars, and light rail cars within San Francisco city limits. BART is the subway that connects San Francisco with surrounding regions like Oakland, Livermore, or Millbrae. Along Market Street, MUNI light rail lines and BART share the same underground stations, but have different platforms. Note that unless you have a Clipper Card, MUNI and BART require separate payments to ride.

For MUNI, it's a flat fare for 3 hours to ride all buses, historic street cars, and light rail. Just pay in exact change, and keep your fare stub. Show the stub to the driver or ticket person for each transfer. Cable car fares are separate from this fare, and are only good for one way travel. We would recommend taking a historic streetcar from Fisherman's Wharf to Market Street.

For BART, you pay based on distance travelled. To ride, go to one of the BART ticket machines outside the gated area and find your current station and the fare to the destination station. Add that amount to the card and print it. You must insert the card on entry and exit to the system. On exit, if the card does not have enough money, the gate will not open. You must add an additional fare to the card using one of the "add fare" machines located within the station. If the card has the exact fare, the gate will open, but the card will not be returned to you.

If you want a great view of the city and have some extra time, you can take the ferry. There are a multitude of ferry companies, each going to different locations. In San Francisco there are two main ports, the ferry terminal at the end of Market Street, and various piers in Fisherman's Wharf. Popular ferry destinations include Alcatraz, Sausalito, Angel Island, and Oakland.

## *Ride Sharing Services*

San Francisco is the birthplace of ride sharing apps, so these are king when it comes to needing an impromptu ride somewhere. The big ones are Lyft, Uber, and Flywheel. They are usual pretty reliable.

## *Bicycles*

There are many bike sharing services sprouting up around the city. The most visible are Ford GoBikes which can be rented by the hour or the day from one of the stations located in many high trafficked neighborhoods. A popular tourist thing to do is to bike across the Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito. There are many places around Union Square and Fisherman's Wharf where these bikes can be rented.

Be very careful while biking around the city. Obey all traffic laws (as if you were a car), maintain high situational awareness, and signal your intentions using your hands. If possible, opt for less busy streets to reduce the chances of negatively interacting with cars. Stay off of the sidewalks unless there is a dedicated bike lane on them and always yield to pedestrians.

# *Popular Attractions*

Here's a list of recommendations and tips for making the most of your time in San Francisco. We have also created a [map of some of our favorite locations around the area](#). Feel free to contact us for more recommendations or itineraries.

## *Alcatraz*

If you're interested in seeing Alcatraz, we would highly recommend getting ferry tickets ahead of time (up to ninety days). During peak tourist season, ferries can get booked up in advance, so grab tickets ahead of time so you don't have to worry. The visit takes at least half a day, and we would recommend doing it if you have any interest at all.

Ferries leave at least every hour from [Pier 33](#) near Fisherman's Wharf. Once on the island, you're giving a self-guided audio tour and can explore most of the island at your own pace.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.nps.gov/alca/planyourvisit/fees.htm>

## *Cable Cars*

There are 3 cable car lines in San Francisco: California, Powell & Hyde, and Powell & Mason. If we could only ride one, we would recommend taking the Powell & Hyde line as it's the longest, climbs some steep hills, and passes right past Lombard and Hyde. If you want to be a tourist, you can wait at one of

the turnarounds to get on board, but be aware that during peak times, this can be a bit of a wait (up to an hour or more). Generally, you pay the conductor after you board the cable car. If you're boarding at a turnaround, watch out of scammers trying to sell fake or cheap tickets. When in doubt, pay in cash when boarding the cable car (exact fare - \$7 one way per person). There are other options if you plan on taking public transit including a muni or visitor passport. If the turnarounds are busy, you have a small party, and have exact fare, you can also hop on a cable car along the route at almost every cross street (look for the brown "cable car" stop signs on the sideway). The cable cars will stop in the middle of the intersection for boarding, so don't be shy about hopping on if the road is clear. While riding, take special note of the burning wood smell while going downhill - that's the wood block brakes scraping against the ground to slow down the car.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.sfmta.com/getting-around/muni/cable-cars>

## *Muir Woods National Monument*

If you're able to, a visit to Muir Woods is a great experience. We would recommend getting there early before the crowds arrive (it can become a real mad house after 10am on the weekends). Also, the morning fog makes for great atmosphere. You have to reserve parking or shuttle ahead of time, so if you're interested, you should grab reservations (<https://gomuirwoods.com/>).

Since it's up in Marin, plan for at least half a day for the drive, parking, and hiking. If you have a car and want recommendations for less crowded Redwood Forests to explore, feel free to contact us.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.nps.gov/muwo/index.htm>

## *Golden Gate Bridge*

The [Golden Gate Bridge](#) is worth seeing, but there are a lot of ways to experience it. Most tourists park and visit the Golden Gate Bridge Visitors Center at the Southeast Anchorage of the span. This parking lot can get very busy on the weekends and afternoons. There is a gift shop, cafe, a pretty neat outdoor museum about the bridge's construction, as well as several neat overlooks for photos and easy access for walking across the span. If you have some time, we would recommend parking down near Crissy Field, visiting the Warming Hut and Fort Point before (or after) leisurely climbing up to hustle and bustle of the Visitor's Center.

The northern end of the bridge offers the best views as you can see the bridge with the skyline of San Francisco. There is a parking lot and restrooms immediately after exiting the bridge when heading north. This area can get crowded on the weekends, and offers an okay view. For the best view, we recommend driving up Conzelman Road on the western side of 101 to Battery Spencer. From here (and along Conzelman Road), you get a spectacular view of the bridge with downtown San Francisco visible behind it. Another neat view from the northern side is from Fort Baker on the eastern side near the water. Cavallo Point Lodge is a cool place to grab a drink or appetizers before heading back.

## *Golden Gate Park*

San Francisco's central park includes some of the city's biggest cultural attractions. The deYoung museum, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco Botanical Gardens, and the Japanese Tea Garden can be found near each other in the eastern portion of the park. The western portion is less developed, but contains a bison paddock, windmills, disc golf course, golf

course, and many other recreation areas. The park's many meadows and groves offer a relaxing escape from the urban environment.

Near the museum area of the park, parking can get bad during peak hours, so try to arrive early if its on your itinerary, or buy one of those "Hop On and Off" tourist bus passes.

## *Lombard and Hyde*

The famous crookedest street in San Francisco can be experienced by car or on foot. By car, you can approach the intersection straight on Lombard, or you can take a right from Hyde. Note that you cannot take a left from Hyde, so be sure to approach the intersection from the South or the West. By foot, the Powell & Hyde cable car line will drop you off at the top, or you can walk 3 steep blocks from Columbus Ave along Lombard if you are visiting North Beach.

It gets extremely crowded on weekend afternoons, but it can be traversed at any time, so we recommend visiting at off hours (night time or morning).

# *Neighborhoods*

## *Fisherman's Wharf*

Fisherman's Wharf caters mainly to tourists but don't let that diminish some of the neater "only in San Francisco" attractions that are here. Fisherman's Wharf centers along Jefferson from Beach to Fort Mason. If you can, try to wander away from Jefferson along the docks and discover Fisherman's and Seaman's Memorial Chapel, the Musée Mécanique (featuring turn of the century arcade and amusement machines), the Hyde Street Pier and San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park and Museum, and some fresh sourdough bread from the Boudin Bakery.

## *North Beach*

One of the more livelier neighborhoods both day and night, North Beach runs along Columbus Avenue roughly from Lombard Street to Broadway. A fun area to walk around, highlight include Washington Square Park, Coit Tower, Lombard and Hyde, and a multitude of Italian restaurants and bars.

## *Union Square*

Located in the heart of San Francisco, Union Square is center of high-end shopping and fashion. A weird mix of touristy places, high-end bistros, and older establishments, Union Square is a fun place to take a stroll and do some shopping.



## *Chinatown*

One of the most unique neighborhoods in San Francisco, Chinatown is worth a stroll. The touristy section runs along Grant from Bush to Columbus. Paralleling that to the west, is Stockton where most of the local shops are. Both streets are worth exploring, and if you want the full experience, head there on a weekend when most of the locals are out shopping or playing games in the parks.

## *The Mission*

The hipster neighborhood of San Francisco features great burritos and a robust nightlife scene. Centered along Valencia from roughly 16th to 24th Street, heading west will get you more gentrified shops and cafes, whereas east will get a little grittier and more divey. If the weather is nice, grab an ice cream from Bi-Rite or a beer from a bodega and head over to Mission Dolores Park to soak up the sun.

## *The Haight*

San Francisco's well-known hippie neighborhood, the Haight was the epicenter of the Summer of Love, and still proudly wears that history like a badge of honor. Centered on Haight Street roughly from Masonic to Golden Gate Park, the Haight is a hodgepodge of hippie boutiques, head shops, and ethnic cuisine. While somewhat touristy, the neighborhood still keeps its local vibe intact - although lately it's been giving off a pretty strong "dirty hippie" vibe. If you are into music, Amoeba Records is worth checking out.

## *SOMA*

The neighborhood south of Market consists of high-rise offices and converted warehouses. Not terribly worth checking out unless you are in the area visiting the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art or AT&T Park.

## *The Sunset*

West of Twin Peaks, the city falls into a repeating grid pattern of dense two to three story housing. Most of the neighborhoods cater to local needs, and they are far from developed public transport making them less appealing to visit. Main commercial corridors from north to south are: Clement, Geary, Irving, Judah, and Taraval. Attractions include Golden Gate Park, Sutro Baths, Lands End, and Ocean Beach.