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MikeBehnken

Architectural Jewels in SF. A Joie de Vivre Guide.

San Francisco, 7 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Some of San Francisco's attractions are obvious, and most tour companies explore the well-known tourist traps. There are, however, loads of hidden treasures and a whole lotta folks who make it their business to show you their favorite spots. In this guide we present a sampling of the architecture of our beautiful city, so get out there and have fun! (NOTE: Our suggestion of San Francisco's "architectural jewels" are excerpted from Don & Betty Martin's Best of San Francisco book.)

contact:

tel: (415) 441-3004
fax: (415) 441-3015
<http://www.sfheritage.org/>

location:

2007 Franklin St
San Francisco CA 94109

hours:

Noon-3p W, noon-3p Sa,
11a-4p Su

1 Haas-Lilienthal House

DESCRIPTION: The first thing you will learn here is that the fanciful polychrome paint jobs on SF's Victorians are a recent invention. This turreted and gabled gingerbread fantasy is a uniform and authentic shade of gray. Inside, this large house still feels like the family home that it was from 1886 to 1972, with rooms covered in expensive wood paneling, embossed wallpapers and featuring marble fireplaces. Guided tours leave every 20-30 minutes and last about an hour. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: Haas-Lilienthal House

Our premiere Victorian is a delightful clutter of elements from that architectural period: gingerbread trim, turrets, cupolas, dormer windows, and more filigree than you'll find in your great grandmother's hankie.



wcities

contact:

tel: +1 415 776 5462
fax: (415) 776-0505
<http://www.bedandbreakfast.com/california-san-francisco-chateau-tivoli.html>

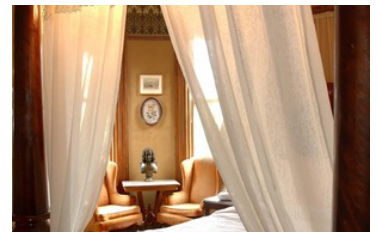
location:

1057 Steiner Street
San Francisco CA
94115-4620

2 Chateau Tivoli

DESCRIPTION: The Chateau Tivoli Bed and Breakfast is a magnificently preserved part of San Francisco's rich history. Built in 1892 for lumber baron D.B. Jackson by renowned British architect William Armitage, it has been home to many eclectic and illustrious personalities from the city's archives. Past inhabitants include Ernestine Kreling, the owner of the storied Tivoli Opera House and Bob Kaufman, the poet who inspired the term 'Beatnik'. The house at 1057 Steiner Street was restored to its original Victorian splendor by Rodney Karr in the 1980s. The Shohet family has locally owned and operated the now Bed and Breakfast since 1997 and continues to keep its doors open so that others may share the Tivoli's dynamic history and charm.

MY NOTE: It is probably the most elaborate, gingerbread Victorian in the city, a fun conglomeration of cupolas, witch-hat towers, balconies, and gabled roofs. It's as close to a fairy-castle Victorian as you'll find.



more at BedandBreakfast.com

contact:

tel: (415) 666-7001
<http://www.conservatoryofflowers.org/>

location:

JFK Drive, Golden Gate Park
San Francisco CA 94117

3 Conservatory of Flowers

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

This unique structure houses a beautiful variety of tropical plants. As you walk through the humidity, note the thoughtful way in which each species has been displayed in a semi-natural form.

DESCRIPTION: Built in the late 1870s, the oldest building in the park is the last remaining wood-frame Victorian conservatory in the country. It's also a copy of the conservatory



The oldest structure in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park is the Conservatory of Flowers. An import from England, this structure

in the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew, England, with a spectacular, 14-ton glass dome atop its perch. The gardens in front of the conservatory are planted seasonally, with the flowers often fashioned like billboards depicting the Golden Gate Bridge or other city sights. On the east side of the conservatory (to the right as you face the building), cypress, pine, and redwood trees surround the Dahlia Garden, which blooms in summer and fall. To the west several hundred feet on John F. Kennedy Drive is the Rhododendron Dell. The dell contains the most varieties -- 850 in all -- of any garden in the country. It's especially beautiful in March, when many of the flowers bloom, and is a favorite spot of locals for Mother's Day picnics. © NileGuide

MY NOTE: A grand greenhouse in the Victorian style, and the oldest structure in Golden Gate Park was supposedly fashioned after London's Kew Gardens Conservatory. Ordered as a gift to the city of San Jose by early real estate magnate James Lick, it was built in Europe, taken apart, and shipped around Cape Horn. Lick had a falling out with San Jose officials and, in a huff, left the thing in its crates, where it remained until his death. In 1877, a group of San Francisco businessmen bought it from Lick's estate and had it assembled in the Park. The structure was badly damaged by a wind storm in 1998 and after a 25 million dollar reconstruction is open again to the public. JFK Drive, Golden Gate Park.

contact:

tel: (415) 563-6504
fax: (415) 567-4062
<http://www.palaceoffinearts.org/>

location:

3301 Lyon Street
San Francisco CA 94123

4 Palace of Fine Arts

DESCRIPTION: Constructed as a temporary attraction for the 1915 Pan-Pacific International Exhibition, this Grecian temple of a monument continues to enchant and enhance the city. The original plaster, which made up the bulk of the monuments exterior, has been gradually replaced with funds raised by bond measures and the donations from the Marinas well-heeled residents who were loath to lose such a graceful part of their landscape. Swans in the adjoining lagoon glide by the soaring ochre-tinted colonnades and the imposing dome ringed with panels of centaurs and warriors engaged in battle over nubile maidens. Those column-top statues of sorrowing maidens turned away from prying eyes are using their tears to water the long-gone oaks that originally stood in the planters that they surround. Stroll inside the dome, clap your hands and marvel at the uncanny acoustics, then enjoy a picnic lunch on one of the park benches scattered to provide an unparalleled view of this gem. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: Romanesque colonnaded rotunda stands before a reflecting pool in the Marina District. It was built as a showpiece for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Expo.



contact:

tel: (415) 288-3800
fax: +1 415 288 3838
<http://www.oldsaintmarys.org/>

location:

660 California Street
San Francisco CA 94108

hours:

Choir: 8:30a, 11a Su, Vigil:
12:05p, 5p Sa, Mass: 7:30a,
12:05p M-F

5 St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral

DESCRIPTION: At one time, the spire of this cathedral was the tallest structure in the city. There may be buildings taller than this cathedral these days, but none offers such a rich history. The church foundation is granite cut in China. The exterior of the Old Catholic Cathedral Of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception is composed of red bricks made in New England and brought around Cape Horn. Inside, the white plaster sanctuary has some nice stained glass and exhibits the ribbed-vault arches typical of neo-gothic architecture. The lighting is kept low, giving the shrines along the walls, lit with indirect spots and votive candles, an ethereal glow. Display cases house a collection of drawings, photographs, and artifacts from St. Marys rich history, including dramatic photos of the devastation caused by the 1906 earthquake and fire. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: St. Mary's is perhaps the most striking example of modern church architecture in the west, with wing like rooflines that sweep up into a cross. The massive yet graceful structure occupies two city blocks and soars skyward 200 feet. Inside, the lofty conception continues as your eyes trace four brilliant strips of leaded glass up the walls to the top of the distinctive square dome.



wcities

contact:

tel: (415) 749-6300
fax: (415) 749-6301
<http://www.gracecathedral.org>

location:

1100 California St
San Francisco CA 94108

hours:

Cathedral: 7a-6p Su-F, 8a-6p
Sa, Office: 9a-5p M-F

6 Grace Cathedral

DESCRIPTION: This impressive neo-Gothic structure crowning Nob Hill was built on the site of the Crocker Mansion after the 1906 earthquake and fire. The interior features stained glass windows in celestial blues and vibrant reds and yellows. There are also frescoes depicting the history of San Francisco and scenes from the life of San Francisco's patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi. The gilded bas-reliefs that adorn the doors of the main entrance are cast from Ghiberti's original molds for the Gates of Paradise that adorn the Baptistry in Florence. This facility also boasts an indoor and an outdoor labyrinth. Admission free. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: This "French Gothic" masterpiece was built to replace a church destroyed in the 1906 Fire and is the third largest Episcopal cathedral in the nation. Famed for its Ghiberti doors ("The Gates of Paradise"), labyrinths, varied stained glass, and medieval and contemporary furnishings, as well as its carillon, organs, and choir, the Cathedral has become an international pilgrimage center for church-goer and visitor alike.



wcities

contact:
tel: (415) 983-4100
<http://www.tapyramid.com/>

location:
600 Montgomery St
San Francisco CA 94111

hours:
6a-7p Mon-Fri

7 Transamerica Pyramid

DESCRIPTION: As much a trademark of The City's skyline as the Golden Gate Bridge, this 853-foot high masterpiece, the tallest office tower in The City, is headquarters to some of San Francisco's most powerful companies. Unfortunately, the elevator, which ascends to the building's uppermost heights, is no longer open to the public. Fortunately, rooftop video cameras allow visitors to "virtually see" the bird's-eye view from the comfort of the lobby. Outside, a man-made Redwood Park offers a welcome green oasis within the concrete jungle. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: This is, of course, the iconic image of the San Francisco skyline. Like the towers of the Golden Gate Bridge it symbolizes San Francisco to the world.



contact:
tel: (415) 863-3330
<http://www.thinker.org/deyoung/index.asp>

location:
50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr
San Francisco CA 94118

hours:
Tues-Sun 9:30am-5:15pm

8 de Young Museum

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Check out panoramic views of the city and beyond from the top floor observatory.

DESCRIPTION: Renovated in 2005, de Young Museum's ultra-modern design stirred up quite the controversy in San Francisco when it was first reopened. However, locals warmed to the sleek, angular exteriors once they experienced the museum's indoor wonders. Perhaps San Francisco's most eclectic art museum, the de Young features permanent collections of American art, indigenous art and artifacts from around the world (including masks from Oceania, basketry from Africa, and pottery from the Americas), crafts and textiles, and graphic arts. And then there are the rotating special exhibits, which have proven to be the not-to-miss art events of the season, featuring the likes of ancient Egyptian relics or 20th century fashion designer retrospectives. © NileGuide

MY NOTE: This copper clad asymmetrical towered building opened in October 2005 and has become a city favorite almost overnight. Its modern lines a striking contrast to the eclectic collection of Pacific and Oceanic as well as North, Central, and South American art.



wcities

contact:

tel: (415) 554-4000
fax: +1 415 554 4936
<http://www.sfgov.org>

location:

1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett
Place
San Francisco CA 94102

9 City Hall

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The largest dome structure outside of the U.S. Congress is truly impressive to behold.

DESCRIPTION: This building is the site of some of San Francisco's finest moments. In 1954 Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio were married here. More recently, in 1991 over 100 gay and lesbian couples were married by the mayor in the foyer. The Renaissance architecture rivals some of the country's most historical structures. Two Parisian architects designed and constructed the building from 1913-1915. The dome is based on the one crowning St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Visitors can pick up brochures and take a self-guided tour between 8a-5p, Monday through Friday. A small store, open during normal business hours, sells traditional San Francisco souvenirs including T-shirts, posters and postcards. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: The crown jewel of the Beaux Arts collection buildings that are Civic Center.



contact:

tel: Contact Yerba Buena Arts
& Events: 415/543-1718
<http://www.yerbabuenagardens.com>

location:

Mission/ 3rd
San Francisco CA 94104

hours:

Daily 6am-10pm

10 Yerba Buena Gardens

DESCRIPTION: Unless you're at Yerba Buena to catch a performance, you're more likely to visit the 5-acre gardens, a great place to relax in the grass on a sunny day and check out several artworks. The most dramatic outdoor piece is an emotional mixed-media memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. Created by sculptor Houston Conwill, poet Estella Majozo, and architect Joseph de Pace, it features 12 panels, each inscribed with quotations from King, sheltered behind a 50-foot-high waterfall. There are also several actual garden areas here, including a Butterfly Garden, the Sister Cities Garden (highlighting flowers from the city's 13 sister cities), and the East Garden, blending Eastern and Western styles. May through October, Yerba Buena Arts & Events puts on a series of free outdoor festivals featuring dance, music, poetry, and more by the San Francisco Ballet, Opera, Symphony, and others. © Frommer's

MY NOTE: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater, 1994, James Stewart Polshek; Metreon, 1999, SMWM, Gary Handel + Associates This park and multi use arts complex replaced blocks of run down tenancy hotels and provides much needed green and art space in the heart of the city.



Photo Courtesy of Yerba Buena Gardens

contact:

tel: (415) 863-3330
<http://legionofhonor.famsf.org/>

location:

Lincoln Park
San Francisco CA 94121

11

California Palace of the Legion of Honor

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The collection of Rodins is an instant hit, but look deeper for some impressive 19th century American art.

DESCRIPTION: This museum houses more than 87,000 paintings, sculptures, decorative arts, and tapestries. Some pieces date back 4,000 years. The main floor is dedicated to the museum's permanent collection, much of which features the works of Rodin. European and ancient art are also on display. The lower garden level features temporary exhibitions, ranging from Andy Warhol to Francis Bacon. Take a break in the museum cafe, which features light snacks and has outdoor seating. The gift shop, though small, has a nice selection of postcards, books, posters, jewelry, and some reproductions from this and other fine arts museums. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: The Legion of Honor displays a collection of 4,000 years of ancient and European art in an exquisite Beaux-Arts building in an unforgettable setting overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge.



San Francisco Snapshot

Local Info

Sun and fog, grandeur and blight, hipsters and suits, relaxed and industrious... San Francisco's juxtapositions are infinite. Arguably the most beautiful city in the United States, the city by the bay is also the most un-American city, in attitude as well as looks. Old Victorian homes blend with modern, shiny skyscrapers, and the skyline is neither wholly gray concrete nor red brick like its East Coast sister cities.

The second most densely populated city in the U.S., San Francisco is more akin to Europe than to America. The city has 63 miles of bike lanes within its seven-by-seven square miles, with some 40,000 residents cycling to work every day. On Sundays in the spring and summer, some streets are closed to car traffic and open to the public for biking, rollerblading, and just hanging out. Plazas attract farmer's markets, protests, and coffee-sipping denizens. San Francisco has always been iconoclastic, from the early Gold Rush Days, to the 1967 Summer of Love, to the legalization (and subsequent prohibition) of same-sex marriage, a movement which pushed five other states to do the same. Flanked on the east and west side by its beloved bridges, the metropolis could be easily perched next to the Mediterranean Sea. It's no wonder it attracts the third-highest number of foreign visitors in the U.S. each year.

San Francisco isn't so much a city as a collection of neighborhoods, each with its own character and micro-climate, which is why the city can have sun, fog and drizzle at the same time on the same day. In all, there are 27 distinct neighborhoods with dozens of sub-neighborhoods that mesh together like puzzle pieces.

Often only a block or two separates one from the other, one world from the next. The Tenderloin, San Francisco's skid row, borders sparkling and tourist-ridden Union Square; the modish Mission lies side by side with stroller-central Noe Valley; gritty Polk Gulch rubs rich Russian Hill; overlooked Western Addition nuzzles posh Pac Heights; blue-collar Chinatown kisses the corporate Financial District.

The characters who inhabit these communities are a paradox as well – Jimmy Choos pound the pavement

alongside friendly bums, and white-collar workers take the same bus as fuzzy boot-clad street performers. To label San Francisco's citizens as eclectic is an understatement. It's also an understatement to call them "unique." Don't be surprised if you find yourself amongst an impromptu pillow fight along the Embarcadero, a naked bike parade up Market Street, or a flash dance party on public transit.

Despite the stereotype, California does not a hot, sunny destination make. Most visitors underestimate the fog's chill, which is felt most strongly between 4-8pm, after which the wind tends to calm down. San Franciscans are a practical bunch; you'll rarely see a local without a spare scarf, hat, or long sleeves. They also shy away from wintry black and gray wardrobes; color plays a huge part in street fashion, and nobody looks twice if somebody dons a purple velvet suit while walking their dog or if a bride wears red instead of white to her wedding. San Franciscans also know that when it's hot, you take advantage of it, whether it's in November, March, or May. Beach days and mild nights do happen, but they are few and far between, and they are rarely enjoyed in the summer.

San Francisco boasts festivals nearly every weekend, from the largest Chinese New Year's Parade outside of China, to Pride, the oldest of the world's gay pride parades. Much of the population turns out for the annual Bay to Breakers run as well as the three-day Outside Lands concert in Golden Gate Park, both of which make San Francisco a party destination on par with New Orleans, Berlin, Austin, and Miami. Chances are high that you'll be in town for some event like the Stern Grove free concerts, Cinco de Mayo, Treasure Island Music festival, Carnaval, Fillmore Street Jazz festival, or the dozens of film festivals which descend upon the most cultured of cities yearly. Don't forget the Haight Street, Folsom Street, Union Street, North Beach, and Japantown neighborhood street fairs. And the list goes on...

Yet, even with endless fun at their fingertips, San Franciscans are a diligent bunch. It's no coincidence that the city is home to online powerhouses Twitter, Craigslist, Zynga, and Yelp, and only a few miles away you'll find Paypal, Google, and Facebook. San Francisco seems to be

experiencing a second boom to the dot-com era with hundreds of tech start-ups invading SOMA, Potrero Hill, and the blighted 5th street and Market corridor (Twitter recently got a tax break for moving here versus retreating to blander Silicon Valley).

Since the first dotcom boom in 2000, newfound wealth has made an obvious impression on the city. Old SOMA warehouses have turned into condos; decrepit Dogpatch industrial spaces have been transformed into airy live/work lofts; and just wait until 2017, when the "Grand Central Station of the West" opens. The new Transbay Transit Center project will add three 1,200 foot skyscrapers and 10 additional towers to the San Francisco skyline. Lest we forget, the highly anticipated eastern span of the Bay Bridge, with its single self-supporting suspension tower, is slated to finally open in 2013.

To some, all of this development has meant San Francisco has lost its counter culture character. Ridiculously high rents have driven many of the "hippies" out. Those that remain are finding it less hospitable. The Haight-Ashbury neighborhood has been populated with vagabonds ever since the Summer of Love and business owners are finally taking a stand against their loitering. The controversial Sit/Lie Law, which bans sitting or lying on sidewalks between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m., was just passed by voters.

Next to its cable cars and hills (you'll never forget your first ride over the crest of Nob Hill) San Francisco is known as epicurean heaven. Boasting around 3,600 restaurants, San Francisco has fantastic ethnic cuisine—sushi, Vietnamese, Thai, and Chinese, to name just a few. The large Hispanic population contributes dozens of popular taquerias; most are concentrated in the Mission district. The birth of California cuisine, pioneered by Alice Waters of the world famous Chez Panisse, turned the entire country on to fresh, local ingredients, a movement which is reflected across the board in San Francisco eateries like Zuni Café, Range, Michael Mina, and newcomer Prospect.

San Francisco's stunning beauty and easy access to nature make it a paradise for outdoor-lovers. There are over 50 city, state, and federal parks within the city itself, including the crown jewel: Golden Gate Park. Gorgeous golden beaches are mere

San Francisco Snapshot continued

minutes from downtown, mountain biking was born in the Marin hills just north of the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area covers close to 75,000 acres, including 59 miles of bay and ocean shoreline.

You won't find that kind of space in any other major American city. More

community-focused than Los Angeles, milder than Boston, more relaxed than New York, more focused than Miami, San Francisco is a destination of dreamers and achievers- people don't just talk the talk, they put their plans into action and aren't afraid to fail. Just look at the San Francisco Giants- even a baseball team

deemed "a bunch of rag tag misfits" can pull off a World Series championship...just sayin'. It's obvious San Franciscans love their city, and when you visit, you probably will too.

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