



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



MikeBehnken

Best of San Francisco Outdoors

Mill Valley, San Francisco, Point Reyes Station, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: San Francisco is the perfect destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Not only does the city boast a treasure trove of green spaces, beaches, and outdoor activities, but it also serves as a launching point for amazing nature attractions in its environs, many of which are under an hour away by car. In the city, explore the wonders of Golden Gate Park, take in unparalleled views of the Golden Gate Bridge and Marin from Baker Beach, or surf killer waves at Ocean Beach. Links lovers can enjoy the adjacent Harding and Fleming golf courses. Head north of the city to Marin for hiking trails galore at Mt. Tamalpais State Park; the Dipsea Trail is a challenging yet popular route, extending from Muir Woods National Monument to Stinson Beach. Further north, Pt. Reyes State Park offers seaside hikes, an abundance of wildlife, and serene camping spots.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - San Francisco, Mill Valley, Point Reyes Station



Golden Gate Park

1,000+ acres of green retreat in the heart of the city



Mount Tamalpais State Park

Bay Area icon



Point Reyes Lighthouse Visitor Center

Look for migrating whales



Muir Woods National Monument

Redwood forest refuge



Baker Beach

Presidio beach with views of the Golden Gate Bridge



Harding Park Golf Course

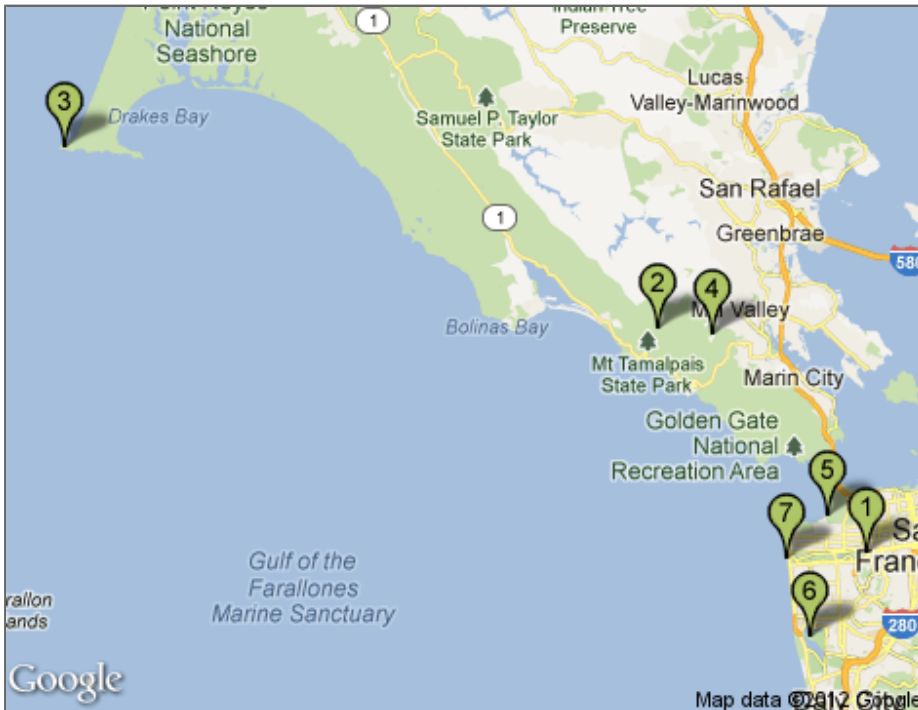
Scenic public links--Park Merced



Ocean Beach

San Francisco's largest

Day 1 - San Francisco, Mill Valley, Point Reyes Station



QUICK NOTE

contact:
tel: (415) 831-2700
fax: +1 415 581 2540
<http://www.sfgov.org/>

location:
Stanyan & Fulton Sts
San Francisco CA 94118

1 Golden Gate Park

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

You can pedal a boat around Stow Lake, but a better bet is to rent a bike at the boathouse there and pedal around the park. On your way, check out the historic herd of bison (That's right, big shaggy buffalo) in their paddock near the lake.

DESCRIPTION: Spanning three miles from the edge of Haight-Ashbury all the way to the Pacific Ocean, Golden Gate Park contains so many mini-universes and attractions you'll want to (literally) stop and smell the roses on several occasions. Die-hard nature lovers can check out the Rose Garden, the Conservatory of Flowers, or the famous Japanese Tea Garden, featuring a classic pagoda, cherry blossoms, and landscaping straight out of the Land of the Rising Sun. Golden Gate Park's natural highlight, however, is the San Francisco Botanical Garden, which features a horticultural trip around the world (don't miss the redwood grove and succulents section). Don't miss Golden Gate Park's two world-class museums, the California Academy of Sciences and the De Young Museum. Both were completely rebuilt in their original locations in the past decade, and are worth a visit for their architecture alone. The park is also the perfect place to get active. There are tons



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of walking paths, several public tennis courts, an affordable pitch and put nine-hole golf course, sport fields, and picnic grounds. You can even rent a boat and head out for a delightful row on Stow Lake. Spring, summer, and fall bring a number of events to Golden Gate Park, including bluegrass, rock, and hip-hop concerts and Shakespeare in the Park performances. © NileGuide

contact:

tel: 415-388-2070
fax: (415) 893-1583
<http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp>

location:

7665 Redwood Blvd, Suite 150
Mill Valley CA 94941

2 Mount Tamalpais State Park

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

While all Mount Tam hikes are exceptional, we are partial to those that begin at Pantoll Station, as they lead to the lushest parts of the mountain; the one considerable drawback of starting from there, and not East Peak Station, is missing out on mountaintop views.

DESCRIPTION: From its exposed 2,751-foot peak boasting panoramic views of the Bay Area to the redwood-, fir-, and oak-sheltered hiking and mountain biking trails meandering down to its base, Mount Tamalpais State Park is a paragon of Northern California natural beauty. Home to over 73 native plant species and a host of wildlife, Mount Tam is the ideal place to bask in the great outdoors. After all, visitors can not only hike or bike, but also go horseback riding or camping; overnight cabins are onsite and two quaint inns are nearby to provide more comfort to those who aren't crazy about tents. Although nature is the main attraction at Mount Tamalpais State Park, locals also hike in with a picnic to attend the annual springtime open-air Broadway revival performance at the Mountain Theater, which has natural-stone amphitheatre seating. © NileGuide



contact:

tel: (415) 464-5100
fax: (415) 663-8132
<http://www.nps.gov/pore/>

location:

Point Reyes Station CA 94956

3 Point Reyes Lighthouse Visitor Center

DESCRIPTION: This visitor center contains exhibits on lighthouses, wild flowers, geology and marine life. It is closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays. © NileGuide



contact:

tel: (415) 388-2595
fax: (415) 389-6957
<http://www.visitmuirwoods.com>

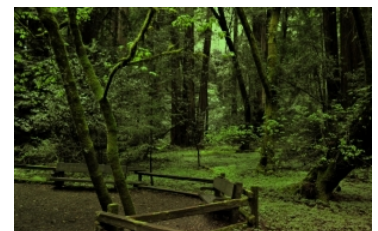
location:

Muir Woods Rd and Camino Del Cyn

4 Muir Woods National Monument

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

We recommend visiting the park as early in the day as possible, as finding parking becomes more difficult the later you arrive.



wcities

Mill Valley CA 94941

DESCRIPTION: Commissioned by President Teddy Roosevelt and named for conservationist John Muir, these woods are a tribute to the enchantment of redwood trees. For anyone who's encountered California redwoods, you know of what we speak. For those who haven't, Muir Woods National Monument is the perfect place to experience these majestic wonders for the first time. When you enter the park, you're treated to flat, paved walking paths that meander through the lush grove of towering redwoods, spiraling ferns, and other native plants, complete with historic and scientific explanations of the forest's features. We recommend taking this classic Muir Woods route and then ascending higher towards where you can choose from a variety of dirt hiking paths; that's where the magic truly happens. As most visitors stick to the easy ground-level path, hikers are treated to a truly serene experience the higher they climb, sometimes hearing almost nothing but delicate birdsong. Some trails originating in Muir Woods go all the way to Stinson Beach or to gorgeous parts of Mount Tamalpais State Park, or lead to very special local secrets, such as the Tourist Club, a German beer tavern. (Because what's better than a refreshing brew after some hearty physical exertion?) © NileGuide

contact:

tel: +1 415 831 2750(Tourist Information)
<http://www.nps.gov/prsf/place/s/bakerbch.htm>

location:

Lincoln Blvd.
San Francisco CA 94121

5 Baker Beach

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

You can't beat Baker Beach for views of the Golden Gate and Marin Headlands, or for accessibility to most of the city.

DESCRIPTION: Baker Beach is located inside the historic Presidio. If driving, consult a map for detailed directions, while Muni Bus #29 makes stops at the beach entrance. If you arrive in the middle of the day, you'll find a secluded beach, sheltered from the wind, with a great view of the massive cargo ships passing beneath the Golden Gate Bridge. Note that on a warm day it won't feel so secluded as the locals descend to soak in the sun. Also be aware that at the north end of the beach you might find some nude sunbathers. This is not a swimming or surfing spot as it has strong and dangerous rip currents. Arrive just before sunset and you'll think you stumbled upon the most beautiful beach in the world. As the sun is setting, get your cameras poised for a view of the ocean, the beach, and amazing view of the Golden Gate Bridge. © NileGuide



contact:

tel: (415) 664-4690 / (415) 750-4653
<http://www.harding-park.com/layout9.asp>

location:

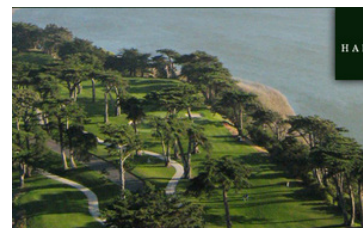
Harding Rd & Skyline Blvd
San Francisco CA 94132

6 Harding Park Golf Course

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

If you can only play 18

DESCRIPTION: A pretty, 18-hole, par 72 city-owned course around Lake Merced in the quiet Park Merced District, Harding is longer and flatter than other San Francisco courses. Tee



hours:
dawn to dusk daily

times are usually available on a walk-up basis during the week; for weekend reservations, however, it is highly recommended to call a week in advance. © wcities.com

contact:
<http://www.parksconservancy.org/visit/park-sites/ocean-beach.html>

location:
Great Highway
San Francisco CA 94121

7 Ocean Beach

DESCRIPTION: The massive beach stretches the length of the city's Pacific Ocean frontage from Seal Rocks all the way down to Daly City. Popular with surfers, kite flyers and families, it's San Francisco's main city beach. Although it can often be foggy and/or windy, on sunny warm days it's a joy. Swimming isn't advisable, as currents and waves can be extremely rough. A trip to Ocean Beach at sunset, followed by dinner at Beach Chalet (make sure you have a pint of the beer they brew on site) is just about a perfect evening. Or, enjoy a bonfire on the beach after dark, per NPS regulations.
© NileGuide



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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