



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



MikeBehnken

# First Time in San Francisco

## **Mill Valley, San Francisco, 4 Days**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** The best thing about visiting San Francisco is that the city has a little something for travelers of every stripe. World-class museums and performing arts? Check. Glorious, gorgeous nature? Check. Outstanding food? Check. Cool neighborhoods to explore? Check. Fun for the whole family? Check. And if you're the kind of traveler who likes it all, taking in the following sights is a surefire way to have an unforgettable first visit. Note that while we've packed a lot into four days, you can easily spread out the fun to last a week or more!

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - San Francisco

**DAY NOTE:** Your first day of your first SF visit takes you on a tour of the most famed sights. Take a Cable Car from Powell and Market streets up, up, up through the hilly climes of elegant (and aptly named) Nob Hill, all the way to Fisherman's Wharf. Tons of good, clean, touristy fun can be had in the way of The Wharf's maritime history, unique museums, abundant seafood (we recommend Scoma's), and souvenir shopping. The Wharf is also the jumping off point for visiting the notorious former penitentiary on Alcatraz Island, a definite can't-miss SF experience. After "escaping" from Alcatraz, journey along the twists and turns of the "crookedest street in America," Lombard Street, and then explore the Italian and former Beat-poet enclave of North Beach, followed by a romp through America's oldest Chinatown. End your day with a fantastic Chinese meal at Yank Sing.



### Cable Cars

San Francisco Trademark



### Nob Hill

The best of old San Francisco



### Fisherman's Wharf

Tourist hot spot



### Scoma's

Wharf Favorite



### Alcatraz Island

Legendarily inescapable prison worth the tourist crowds



### Lombard Street

World's crookedest street!



### Chinatown

North America's oldest.



### Yank Sing

Chinese cooking that touches the heart

Arboretum & Botanical Garden. The California Academy of Sciences boasts amazing educational exhibits and architectural marvels to delight people of all ages, while the de Young Museum features impressive contemporary art and indigenous artifacts collections. Then explore the city's hippie legacy in nearby Haight-Ashbury, a great neighborhood for window-shopping and affordable dining.



### Golden Gate Park

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



### Japanese Tea Garden

Garden and tea house



### Strybing Arboretum & Botanical Gardens

Nature wonderland



### California Academy of Sciences

Wonders of the natural world in an architectural marvel



### de Young Museum

Cultural Destination



### Haight-Ashbury

Counter culture shopping, center of the 60's

## Day 3 - San Francisco

**DAY NOTE:** Explore the gourmet offerings of the San Francisco Ferry Building Marketplace and, if the timing is right, at the Farmer's Market (only open on Tuesdays and Saturdays). Then take a ferry to the quaint Marin town of Sausalito, where you can stroll in the sun, check out art galleries and funky shops, and have a leisurely lunch. A first visit to the Bay Area would be incomplete without making the journey across the Golden Gate Bridge. Hoof it or cycle across the iconic bridge back into San Francisco for an unparalleled, up-close experience that also affords you amazing city and bay views. That night, catch a show at the legendary Fillmore Auditorium concert venue, located in the historic Fillmore District.



### Ferry Building Marketplace & Farmer's Market

Waterfront Allure, foodie delight, transportation hub.

## Day 2 - San Francisco

**DAY NOTE:** First-timers to SF will discover that Golden Gate Park may very well be the best urban park in America, as it truly affords visitors the best of both indoor and outdoor worlds. Take a leisurely romp through the Japanese Tea Garden for East-meets-West splendor, and go on a horticultural world tour at the Strybing

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
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nightlife



## Golden Gate Bridge

An architectural icon capping off the San Francisco Bay



## Fillmore Auditorium

Music in a palace!

## Day 4 - Mill Valley, San Francisco

**DAY NOTE:** Yesterday you checked out Sausalito, but much more of Marin County begs exploring—and any first-timer to the Bay Area shouldn't miss these Marin marvels. Behold the majesty of California redwoods at Muir Woods National Monument and then take in gorgeous coastal views at Stinson Beach. The beautiful drive back to the city on Highway 1 will blow you away. Save the best for last—have a swanky, final SF dinner at one of the city's finest eateries, Gary Danko.



## Muir Woods National Monument

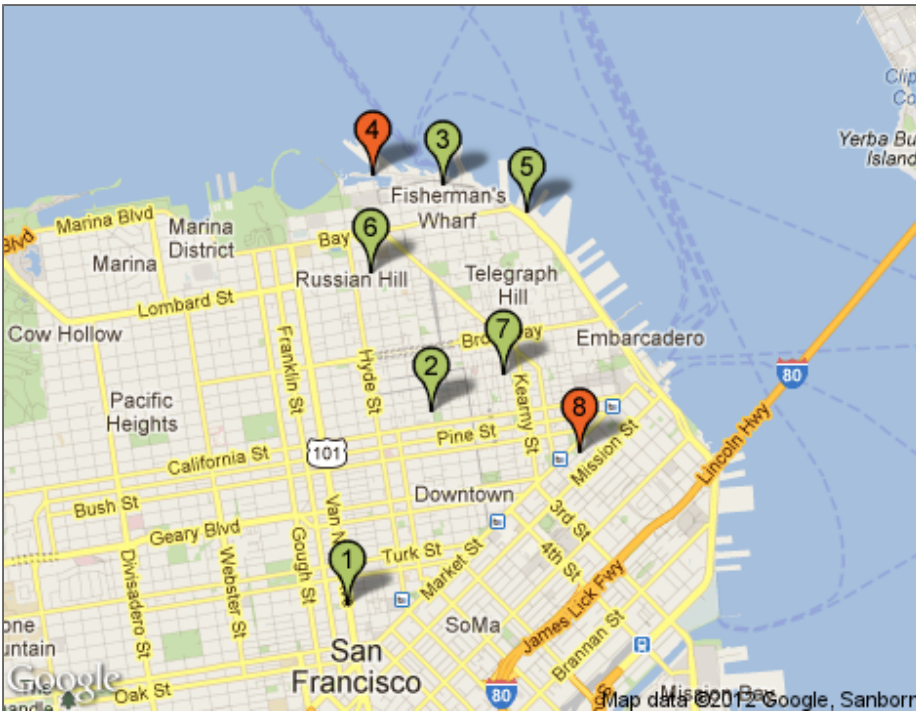
Redwood forest refuge



## Gary Danko

Award-winning new American excellence

# Day 1 - San Francisco



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Your first day of your first SF visit takes you on a tour of the most famed sights. Take a Cable Car from Powell and Market streets up, up, up through the hilly climes of elegant (and aptly named) Nob Hill, all the way to Fisherman's Wharf. Tons of good, clean, touristy fun can be had in the way of The Wharf's maritime history, unique museums, abundant seafood (we recommend Scoma's), and souvenir shopping. The Wharf is also the jumping off point for visiting the notorious former penitentiary on Alcatraz Island, a definite can't-miss SF experience. After "escaping" from Alcatraz, journey along the twists and turns of the "crookedest street in America," Lombard Street, and then explore the Italian and former Beat-poet enclave of North Beach, followed by a romp through America's oldest Chinatown. End your day with a fantastic Chinese meal at Yank Sing.

**contact:**  
tel: (415) 673-6864  
<http://www.sfmuni.com>

**location:**  
401 Van Ness  
San Francisco CA 94102

## 1 Cable Cars

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

For a map detailing all cable car lines and stops, visit the San Francisco MUNI web site, linked on the left side of this page.

**DESCRIPTION:** You just might not be able to stop yourself from singing the old Rice-a-Roni jingle each time you ride a gleaming, red San Francisco Cable Car. Although it's mostly tourists who ride these iconic streetcars, even locals who live near the cable lines get in on the action just because it's the most fun way to experience the hilly, roller-coaster ride that is San Francisco topography. Hold on tight and boldly lean outside the Cable Car for unparalleled views of the cityscape and the Bay rising and fading. For the best Cable Car ride the city has to offer, brave the line at Powell and Market and take the Powell Street line up some of the city's steepest



hills, all the way to its terminus at Fisherman's Wharf. For an alternative, take the Hyde Street line to the top of twisty-turny Lombard Street. The California Street line takes you through the Financial District to the more elegant residential turf of the Nob Hill district, home to some of the city's most luxurious hotels. © NileGuide

**location:**

Sacramento and Taylor  
San Francisco CA 94109

**2 Nob Hill**

**DESCRIPTION:** Famous for panoramic views, expensive hotels, and restaurants, a stroll up to Nob Hill is a must for any visitor to San Francisco. Jimmy Stewart drove around these very blocks in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and the views were impressive all the same. Sit on a bench by the fountain in Huntington Park to take in the surroundings or meditate as you wander the labyrinth to the side of gorgeous Grace Cathedral. If you're feeling swanky, grab a drink at the Mark Hopkins Intercontinental, which affords glorious views, or sip a whiskey at the inconspicuous Big Four - you'll feel like you're in another era. © NileGuide



Ewan M.

**contact:**

tel: (415) 956-3493  
<http://www.fishermanswharf.org/>

**location:**

The Embarcadero  
San Francisco CA 94133

**3 Fisherman's Wharf**

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Visit Fisherman's Wharf earlier in the day to avoid all the other tourists...don't forget to grab your clam chowder in a bread bowl too!

**DESCRIPTION:** Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco's historic waterfront, is at the top of every visitor's muse-see list—and we mean every visitor (locals tend to avoid it). Despite abundant souvenir shops, Fisherman's Wharf still has plenty of appeal. Families shouldn't miss the aquarium and sea lions sunning outdoors at Pier 39, nor Fisherman's Wharf's novelty museums, including Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum, the Musee Mecanique, and the Wax Museum at Fisherman's Wharf. History lovers can explore the area's maritime past at an anchored submarine, a WWII ship, and an array of old-time vessels. Shopaholics can find more than just souvenirs on Jefferson Street and at Ghiradelli Square, an outdoor mall featuring (you guessed it!) the city's signature chocolate. Fisherman's Wharf is also an unbeatable dining destination, whether you prefer only-in-Cali burgers at In-n-Out or premium fish and seafood. If you're in town during November through February, you're in store for a harvest of Dungeness crab, a local specialty. Try clam chowder in a sourdough bread bowl for a year-round Fisherman's Wharf culinary delight. © NileGuide



**contact:**

tel: 800/644-5852

fax: +1 415 775 2601

www.scomas.com

**location:**

Al Scoma Way

San Francisco CA 94133

**hours:**

Sun-Thurs 11:30am-10pm;

Fri-Sat 11:30am-10:30pm; bar

opens 30 min. prior to lunch

daily

**4 Scoma's**

**DESCRIPTION:** A throwback to the dining of yesteryear, Scoma's eschews trendier trout preparations and fancy digs for good old-fashioned seafood served in huge portions amid a very casual windowed waterfront setting. Gourmands should skip this one. But if your idea of heaven is straightforward seafood classics -- fried calamari, raw oysters, pesto pasta with rock shrimp, crab cioppino, lobster thermidor -- served with a generous portion of old-time hospitality, then Scoma's is as good as it gets. Unfortunately, a taste of tradition will cost you big time. Prices are as steep as those at some of the finest restaurants in town. Personally, I'd rather splurge at Gary Danko, but many of my out-of-town guests insist we meet at Scoma's, which is fine by me since it's a change of pace from today's chic spots, and the parking's free. © Frommer's



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**contact:**

tel: (415) 705-5555

http://www.alcatrazcruises.com/

**location:**

Embarcadero and Powell St

San Francisco CA 94133

**hours:**

Arrive at least 20 min. before departure time

**5 Alcatraz Island**

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

To get there, take the Alcatraz ferry from Fisherman's Wharf, but be sure to purchase Alcatraz Ferry tickets in advance, as they book up fast. They can be obtained on the Alcatraz Cruises web site.

**DESCRIPTION:** "The Rock," as Alcatraz is known locally, has a formidable past. Most people don't know it served as a lighthouse, military outpost, and military prison before becoming the notorious federal prison that held the likes of Al Capone, George "Machine Gun" Kelly, and Robert Stroud, a.k.a. "The Birdman of Alcatraz." The tiny island only miles from the San Francisco shore was considered the perfect detainment spot due to the surrounding shark-infested, frigid waters. Today visitors can safely enjoy guided tours of Alcatraz, including various cells, the mess hall, the exercise yard, and the surprisingly beautiful natural features of the island. Tour guides are extremely knowledgeable and relish regaling visitors with quirky stories of prisoners past. The truly brave can get locked up in a darkened cell for several minutes—all the more exhilarating considering the penitentiary's claim that all 14 escape attempts in the prison's 29 years of operation failed! © NileGuide



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**contact:**  
tel: (415) 391-2000

**location:**  
Between Hyde &  
Leavenworth streets  
San Francisco CA 94133

## 6 Lombard Street

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Take the Powell-Hyde Cable Car line there, as it conveniently stops at the very top of the street.

**DESCRIPTION:** Famed as the "crookedest street in the world," the swath of Lombard Street between Hyde and Leavenworth streets in San Francisco's Russian Hill district is indeed full of twists and turns. Lombard Street was designed as a series of switchbacks in order to make its steep grade navigable by automobile. Today, you'll almost definitely see Lombard Street congested with cars making the celebrated drive down. Therefore, we recommend hoofing it—you'll be able to admire all the more slowly the lovely, brightly-colored houses flanked with bougainvillea and all manner of flowers, as well as the gorgeous view of North Beach, Telegraph Hill, and the bay. After winding down Lombard Street, head east to nearby North Beach for serious Italian eats, or north to the maritime delights of Fisherman's Wharf and Ghiradelli Square. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Lombard Street

**contact:**  
tel: +1 415 391 2000  
<http://www.sanfranciscochina.com/>

**location:**  
Bush St. and Kearny St.  
San Francisco CA 94108

## 7 Chinatown

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Good dim sum is surprisingly hard to find, as many restaurants seem to favor grease as a main ingredient. Chinatown's best dim sum can be found at the Golden Door Restaurant and Yank Sing. For an absolutely delectable yet no-frills Chinese dining experience, head to local favorite House of Nanking.

**DESCRIPTION:** Red lanterns waving in the breeze. Incense wafting out of small temples. Esoteric medicinal herbs dangling in shop windows. Some aspects of San Francisco's Chinatown, the oldest in America, hardly seem worlds apart from the motherland and haven't changed much from when the neighborhood was first built in the mid-19th century. Enter at the dragon-flanked gate on Bush Street at Grant Avenue and get lost in a wonderland of bustling produce markets, touches of ancient Chinese architecture, quirky gift and houseware shops, art galleries, clothing stores, dim sum eateries, and serene tea houses, the densest concentration of which are on Grant Avenue and Stockton Street. Some hot spots are Portsmouth Square, where you can admire the graceful movements of Tai Chi practitioners and the strategy of elderly chess players, and the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco, where Sinophiles can take in art exhibits, be led on an informative, guided Heritage Walking Tour (excellent for those wishing to pick up on the area's rich history), or take a brush painting or traditional Chinese music workshop. © NileGuide



[www.bluewaikiki.com](http://www.bluewaikiki.com)

**contact:**

tel: (415) 541-4949

fax: (415) 541-0308

<http://yanksing.com/locations/index.html>

**location:**

101 Spear Street

San Francisco CA 94105

**hours:**

11a-3p M-Su, Mother's Day:

10a-3p

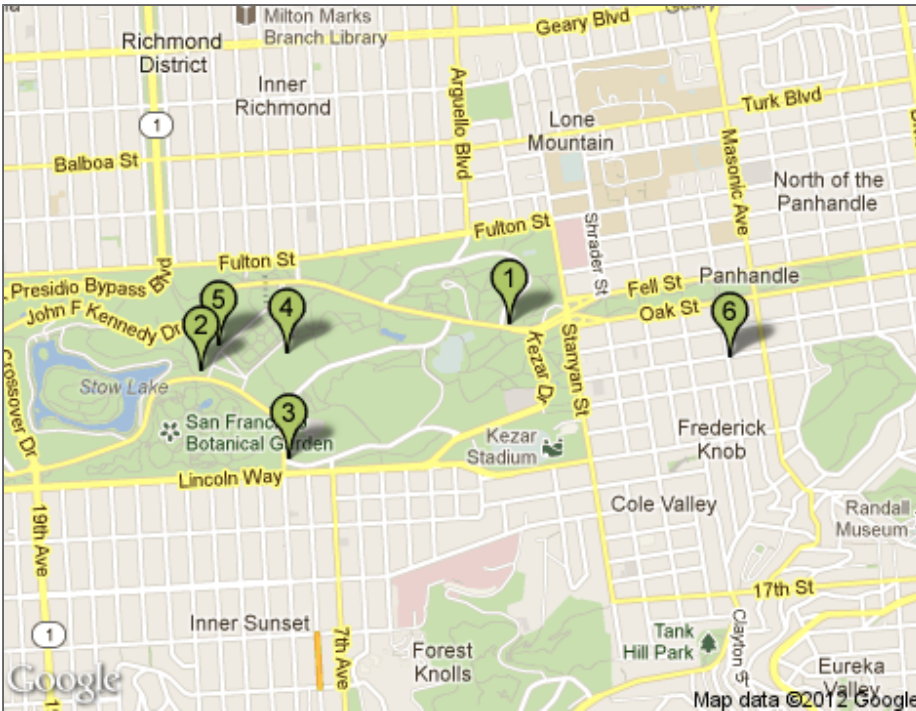
**8 Yank Sing**

**DESCRIPTION:** This huge Shanghai-style restaurant features clean lines, good service and an outstanding array of dishes from which to choose. The menu runs to several pages and there are always a good number of daily specials available, in addition to some very good Dim Sum ordered from rolling carts. You could probably eat here every day for a month and always have something new. The Chicken Soup is also noteworthy both as a light lunch in itself or a starter for one of the wonderful noodle entrees that come with a variety of toppings. For something a little more fancy, the Wine-marinated Squab, served cold, makes for a piquant dining experience. © wcities.com



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# Day 2 - San Francisco



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** First-timers to SF will discover that Golden Gate Park may very well be the best urban park in America, as it truly affords visitors the best of both indoor and outdoor worlds. Take a leisurely romp through the Japanese Tea Garden for East-meets-West splendor, and go on a horticultural world tour at the Strybing Arboretum & Botanical Garden. The California Academy of Sciences boasts amazing educational exhibits and architectural marvels to delight people of all ages, while the de Young Museum features impressive contemporary art and indigenous artifacts collections. Then explore the city's hippie legacy in nearby Haight-Ashbury, a great neighborhood for window-shopping and affordable dining.

**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



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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 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) 752-4227  
<http://japaneseteagardensf.com/>

**location:**  
At the corner of Tea Garden at Martin Luther King, Jr. San Francisco CA 94117

## 2 Japanese Tea Garden

**DESCRIPTION:** Located in Golden Gate Park, this garden is a marvel of the landscape architects art. This traditional Japanese garden covers five acres. Several paths take you by an authentic pagoda, a monumental Buddha, a miniature waterfall, and over an acutely arched bridge that no kid can resist. Overlooking the gardens koi-filled pond is a Japanese-style tea house, which in spring is covered with a cascade of wisteria. The gift shop sells souvenirs with a Japanese flair. © wcities.com



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**contact:**  
tel: (415) 661-1316  
fax: +1 415 661 7427  
<http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/>

**location:**  
9th Avenue at Lincoln Way San Francisco CA 94122

**hours:**  
8a-4:30p M-F, 10a-5p Sa, Su

## 3 Strybing Arboretum & Botanical Gardens

**DESCRIPTION:** This is a living museum in Golden Gate Park that is home to a wide array of rare and exotic plant life from around the world. Visit the 70-acre garden and explore seemingly endless trails with duck ponds, an arbor, herbs, flowers, blooming trees and redwoods, and smaller, specialized gardens with names like the Garden of Fragrance. Also on hand is an education center that provides different gardening, horticulture, botany, and environmental classes for adults and children, plus a horticulture library and bookstore. The public is allowed to stroll through the garden anytime, although they are asked to keep on the paths. © wcities.com



**contact:**  
tel: (415) 379-8000  
<http://www.calacademy.org/>

**location:**  
55 Music Concourse Drive San Francisco CA 94143

**hours:**  
Mon-Sat 9:30am-5pm; Sun 11am-5pm

## 4 California Academy of Sciences

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**  
Yes, the lines can be long; we suggest arriving early or booking tickets online on the museum's web site, linked on the left side of this page. You can book tickets from 24 hours up to 90 days in advance.



**DESCRIPTION:** Renovated and reopened in late 2008, the California Academy of Sciences has a lot to boast about. With a four-story tropical rainforest, an aquarium housing over 38,000 species of fish, the deepest coral reef exhibit in the world, an impressive all-digital planetarium, and a host of other exhibits that take visitors on a tour of the natural world, it's no wonder tourists and locals alike are lining up every weekend. The building is an attraction in and of itself. A gem of sustainable architecture, it features a living roof made of solar panels and 1.7 million species of native plants, uses recycled denim for insulation, and has floor-to-ceiling windows that give visitors a seamless view of surrounding Golden Gate Park greenery. Underscoring its hip, green image, the California Academy of Science's café serves up decidedly healthy, yummy dishes that even kids could like (and that's no small feat). © NileGuide

**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

## 5 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



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**contact:**  
tel: +1 415 391 2000 (Tourist Information)

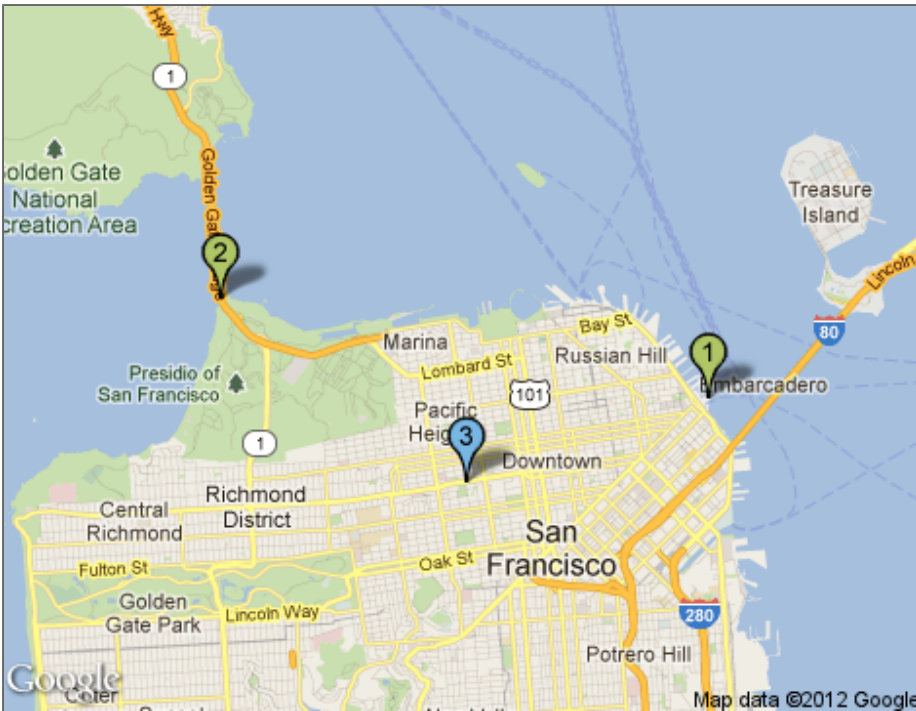
**location:**  
Haight and Ashbury Streets  
San Francisco CA 94117

## 6 Haight-Ashbury

**DESCRIPTION:** This center of '60s psychedelic activity to this day retains counterculture credentials with a proliferation of piercing salons, bookstores brimming with hippie nostalgia, and off-beat shops set amid Victorian architecture. © NileGuide



# Day 3 - San Francisco



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Explore the gourmet offerings of the San Francisco Ferry Building Marketplace and, if the timing is right, at the Farmer's Market (only open on Tuesdays and Saturdays). Then take a ferry to the quaint Marin town of Sausalito, where you can stroll in the sun, check out art galleries and funky shops, and have a leisurely lunch. A first visit to the Bay Area would be incomplete without making the journey across the Golden Gate Bridge. Hoof it or cycle across the iconic bridge back into San Francisco for an unparalleled, up-close experience that also affords you amazing city and bay views. That night, catch a show at the legendary Fillmore Auditorium concert venue, located in the historic Fillmore District.

### contact:

tel: (415) 693-0996  
<http://www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com>

### location:

Ferry Building Marketplace  
San Francisco CA 94111

## 1 Ferry Building Marketplace & Farmer's Market

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The Ferry Building is situated at the nexus of several bus and train lines, making it a most convenient attraction to visit.

**DESCRIPTION:** While ferries still run from this historic building, it's also been transformed into a veritable shrine to food. The San Francisco Ferry Building Marketplace is chockablock with eateries, specialty culinary stores, and gift shops. Dining highlights include the mouth-watering burgers at Taylor's Refresher, the decadent sandwiches at Lulu Petite (the egg salad with truffle-artichoke pesto on brioche is truly the nectar of the gods), and the Vietnamese-inspired deliciousness of SF's legendary Slanted Door. Shopping for some special culinary treats? Stock up on loads of rare mushrooms and truffle salt at Far West Fungi, the finest fromage at local fave Cowgirl Creamery's Artisan Cheese Shop, and creative chocolate flavor



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combinations Rechiutti Confections. Want to sample local farmers' bounty? The San Francisco Farmer's Market convenes behind the Ferry Building every Tuesday and Saturday, and features stalls upon stalls of produce, meat, eggs, cheese, baked goods, and prepared foods (we love the tamales and crepes, but everything is tasty). Vendors are friendly and always willing to allow shoppers a sample taste or a detailed explanation of farming practices. After all that munching, take a brisk walk on the Embarcadero past piers and views of the Bay Bridge. © NileGuide

**contact:**  
tel: (415) 921-5858  
<http://www.goldengate.org/>

**location:**  
Lincoln Blvd & Hwy 1  
San Francisco CA 94129

## 2 Golden Gate Bridge

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Dress in layers, as the bridge is in the city's fog and wind belt; even on a picture-perfect day, the temperature can fluctuate.

**DESCRIPTION:** Perhaps the most iconic bridge in the country, if not in the world, the rusted-orange expanse of the Golden Gate Bridge is a not-to-miss sight while in San Francisco. Connecting the city and neighboring Marin County to the north, the Golden Gate Bridge also serves as a gateway between the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Although you'll be treated to glimpses of the bridge throughout the city, the best way to experience it is to walk or bike across, starting in the Presidio. You can then spend a serene afternoon strolling around the quaint Marin seaside city of Sausalito. If you prefer a gentler route, you can take a ferry from the San Francisco Ferry Building or from Fisherman's Wharf to Sausalito or Tiburon (another beautiful Marin town full of great restaurants and nearby walking paths), gazing at the majestic Golden Gate Bridge, plus sailboats, kite-surfers, and the gorgeous Bay views along the way. © NileGuide



wcities

**contact:**  
tel: (415) 346 6000  
<http://www.thefillmore.com>

**location:**  
1805 Geary Boulevard  
San Francisco CA 94115

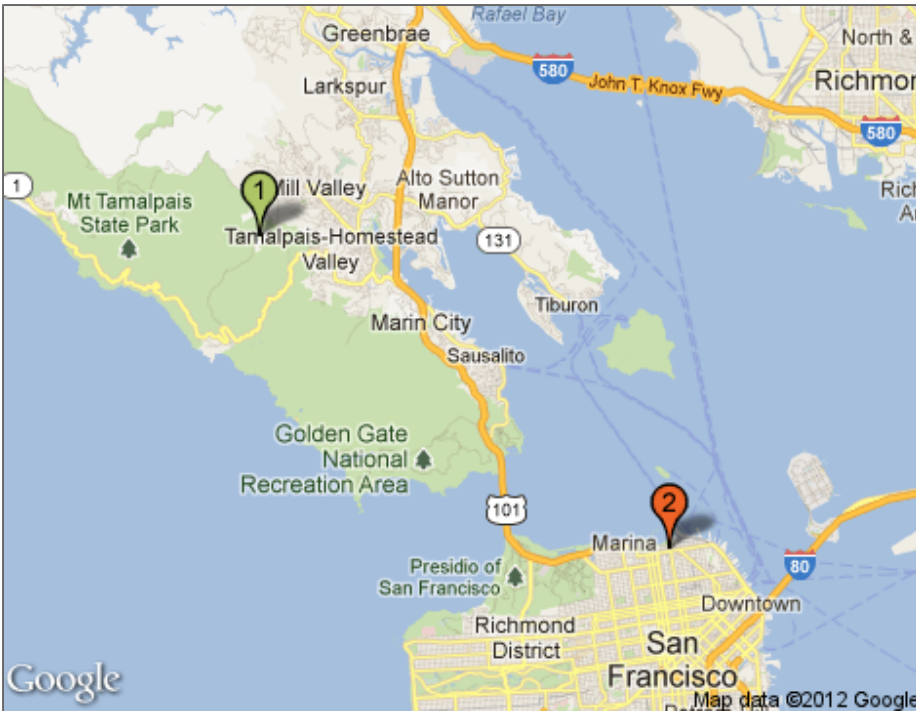
## 3 Fillmore Auditorium

**DESCRIPTION:** An architectural masterpiece, the Fillmore itself is as worth seeing as any band playing here. Stand on the main floor next to the historic stage and look up at soaring ceilings embellished with ornate carvings while the booming speakers rattle your bones. If you choose the tranquility of the balcony instead, sink into the loungy seats and sip cocktails. With posters representing almost every group that has ever played here, the history of American music is on full display. © wcities.com



citysearch

# Day 4 - Mill Valley, San Francisco



## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Yesterday you checked out Sausalito, but much more of Marin County begs exploring—and any first-timer to the Bay Area shouldn't miss these Marin marvels. Behold the majesty of California redwoods at Muir Woods National Monument and then take in gorgeous coastal views at Stinson Beach. The beautiful drive back to the city on Highway 1 will blow you away. Save the best for last—have a swanky, final SF dinner at one of the city's finest eateries, Gary Danko.

### contact:

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

### location:

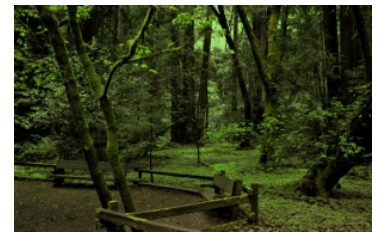
Muir Woods Rd and Camino Del Cyn  
Mill Valley CA 94941

## 1 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.

**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



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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

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**contact:**

tel: (415) 749-2060  
fax: (415) 775-1805  
<http://www.garydanko.com>

**location:**

800 North Point Street  
San Francisco CA 94133

**hours:**

5:30p-9:30p Su-W, 5:30p-10p  
Th-Sa, Bar: 5p-midnight M-Su

**2 Gary Danko**

**DESCRIPTION:** The recipient of the coveted James Beard cooking award, chef Gary Danko practices his genius at his eponymous, 65-seat restaurant. Luxurious appetizers, flavorful entrees, and decadent desserts are the true crowd pleasers. Try the Lobster Salad with Fennel, Citrus, Avocado and Mustard Tarragon Dressing or an entree of Seared Maine Scallops with Black Truffle, Leek and Potato Puree. Indulge in the special Flambeed Pineapple with Macadamia Nuts and Cocounut Sherbert, prepared tableside and with gusto. An outstanding wine list featuring hundreds of California and French bottles is available (prices vary). © wcities.com



# 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

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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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