

San Francisco

Top Attractions in the City by the Bay

San Francisco is one of the top tourist destinations in the world, throwing open her golden gates to millions of visitors every year. First-time visitors to the Bay Area (and long-time residents as well) shouldn't miss any of these legendary attractions.

ALAMO SQUARE

The crown jewels of San Francisco's Victorian treasures, this row of houses called "Postcard Row" is one of the most-photographed residential streets in America. Bounded by Webster, Broderick, Oak and Golden Gate streets, Alamo Square Park looks out over the downtown area to the east, framing these turn-of-the-century beauties against a backdrop of modern skyscrapers. A number of them are open to the public either on private-home tours or as B&Bs.

ALCATRAZ

Once the chilling destination of maximum-security convicts, Alcatraz now sees hundreds of thousands more tourists per year than the total number of prisoners in its entire 29-year life as a federal penitentiary. Audio-assisted tours in several languages recount the history of the island and its famous inmate inhabitants: Machine Gun Kelley, Al Capone, Robert Stroud, "the Birdman of Alcatraz." On a clear day, the views of the San Francisco skyline and bridges are alone worth the crossing by ferryboat. Escape from the mainland to this legendary prison for a memorable tour behind bars. Muni bus: 15 Third St, 19 Polk, 32 Embarcadero, 42 Downtown Loop, 82 Levi Plaza Express. Cable cars: Powell & Hyde line, Powell & Mason line. Golden Gate NRA, San Francisco, CA (415) 705-5555

BAY BRIDGE

Just as vital, though less famous than its golden cousin, the hardworking Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge links the City with the communities of the East Bay. Opened on November 12, 1936, it remains



one of the largest bridges in the world and carries more traffic than any other toll bridge -- over 270,000 vehicles each day.

CABLE CAR

The nation's only moving national historic landmarks, the cable cars still run on 8.8 miles of track along three of their original hundred-year-old routes. These motorless carriages travel by gripping onto the constantly-running underground cable on the ascent and releasing on the descent. Average speed: 9 1/2 miles per hour. Steepest grade: 21.3%. There were 9,600,000 cable car riders in 1995-1996. Hyde Street Pier, Alcatraz in background.

CHINATOWN

Much more than a tourist attraction--one of the city's most culturally aware, culinarily delectable neighborhoods. 800 Kearny St, San Francisco, CA Home to the largest concentration of Chinese outside of China, San Francisco's Chinatown crams exotic shops, restaurants, produce markets, herbalists and temples in its 24 square blocks of teeming activity in the midst of downtown. Chinatown was founded by the young men who came seeking fortunes from the Gold Rush and



San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau photo by Phil Coblenz.



transcontinental railroad in the late 1800s, and later brought over their families. Every year in February the neighborhood explodes in a riot of color and festivity for the Chinese New Year celebrations.

COIT TOWER

Fashioned in the shape of a fireman's ... um ... nozzle, this phallic monument features WPA paintings and beautiful views. Muni bus: 15 Third St, 39 Coit, 42 Downtown Loop. 1 Telegraph Hill Blvd, San Francisco, CA (415) 362-0808

FISHERMAN'S WHARF

You can still find plenty of romance and even an aura of authenticity still lingering among the tourist-heavy crowds. The Embarcadero at Taylor St, San Francisco, CA (415) 474-8796

GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

The beautiful old red bridge has become the defining symbol of the Bay Area. Muni bus: 28 19th Ave, 29 Sunset, 76 Marin Headlands. San Francisco, CA (415) 921-5858. The world's best-loved bridge is recognized everywhere as a symbol of San Francisco. Built in 1937, the 1.7-mile suspension span was designed to withstand the forces of nature, including gale force winds and earthquakes. Over 40 million vehicles a year make the crossing. The world's most famous bridge spans the Golden Gate strait, a mile-wide gap between the bay and the ocean, separating Marin County from the City. The early Spanish explorers sailed up and down the fog-shrouded coastline for years before finally discovering this vital gateway that, in 1769, led them from the violent Pacific to the vast shelter of the San Francisco Bay. The Golden Gate Bridge is actually painted "International Orange."

GOLDEN GATE PARK

Dappled sunlight, archery fields, family-friendly museums--this sprawling urban oasis has it all. San Francisco, CA (415) 831-2700

SAN FRANCISCO CITY HALL

Proudly referred to as the crown jewel of San Francisco. 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Pl, San Francisco, Ca

FISHERMAN'S WHARF

The most popular tourist destination in the city, Fisherman's Wharf is still a working fishing pier, bringing in thousands of tons of fresh fish and crabs annually. Freshly cracked crab and crusty sourdough bread are not the only delicacies to tempt the visitor here. Over eleven million people a year come for the shops, bay cruises, attractions and historic view restaurants. SFCVB photo by Phil Coblenz.

MISSION DOLORES

The oldest building in San Francisco, Mission Dolores was constructed by the Franciscan friars and Ohlone Indians in 1791, when the land was still claimed by Spanish pioneers and called Alta California. The columned façade is actually a single wall of whitewashed adobe bricks. Inside the church is a small museum and in back, the Mission cemetery contains an array of historical gravestones.

NIGHT SKYLINE

As seen from the bay, the lighted towers of the Financial District and northern waterfront gleam under a clear sky just after sunset. In the forefront, the Ferry Building, whose spire was built in 1898 to and modeled after the Giralda cathedral tower of Seville, Spain, is today dwarfed by the Transamerica Pyramid, Bank of America building and downtown skyscrapers.

PALACE OF FINE ARTS

Conceived as a grand classical ruin, the Palace of Fine Arts was originally designed by architect Bernard Maybeck as a temporary structure for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exhibition. The romantic lagoon, Romanesque rotunda and elegant colonnade evoke a sense of joy and timeless

beauty. Even after the other structures were torn down, the public clamored to preserve the Palace. It was rebuilt in near entirety in concrete in 1966, after crumbling for over 50 years. The Exhibition Hall now houses one of the most unusual museums in the world, the hand-on science Exploratorium, conceived by physicist Frank Oppenheimer, and an adjacent 1000-seat theater hosts events and concerts. Marina district. SFCVB photo by Phil Coblenz.

POWELL STREET HILL

The foot of Powell Street is a downtown transportation hub -- site of the cable car turnaround and underground Muni and BART stations, plus the F-Line Historic Streetcar route along Market Street. Four blocks up the hill lies Union Square, the heart of the City's vibrant shopping district. Bank buildings and retail shops line Market Street on either side. SFCVB photo by Phil Coblenz.

PYRAMID

The tallest building in San Francisco at 835 feet, the Transamerica Pyramid marks the edge of the financial district and beginning of North Beach, the cafe-studded Italian quarter.

UNION SQUARE

A shopper's paradise, Union Square abounds with stores from the popular to the exclusive -- from Chanel, Tiffany and Giorgio Armani to Disney, Macy's and Niketown. Within its four blocks, over 5 million square feet of retail space generate approximately \$1.5 billion in sales each year. Named to commemorate the pro-Union rallies that erupted here on the eve of the Civil War, Union Square is now host to national holiday observances, fashion shows, concerts, political rallies and the uniquely San Franciscan Cable Car Bell Ringing Competition.

MOSCONE WEST

Scheduled to open in 2003, Moscone West will add another 300,000 square feet of state-of-the-art and functional meeting and exhibition space to the existing Moscone South and North facilities.