

## TRAVEL

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## Digging into the City by the Bay



» The aquarium at the California Academy of Sciences replicates different underwater habitats, including a Philippine coral reef, the northern California coast and a swamp.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Visitors looking beyond popular attractions can get a fuller taste of San Francisco's breathtaking beauty, rich history and gorgeous architecture

BY CATHERINE SHU  
STAFF REPORTER

### Getting around

» San Francisco is covered by the Muni bus system, which costs US\$1.50 per ride for adults, US\$0.50 for seniors and children aged 5 to 17, and is free for young children. Buses run from 5am to 1am, with a late night service on limited lines. Exact change is needed to board.

**On the Net:** [www.sfmuni.com](http://www.sfmuni.com)

» Many popular attractions are also accessible by BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) trains. Tickets cost less than US\$3.50 for most destinations within the city.

**On the Net:** [www.bart.gov](http://www.bart.gov)



Fillmore Street was the center of San Francisco's jazz scene in the 1940s and 1950s. The diverse neighborhood is now home to independent boutiques and restaurants.

PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

**San Francisco** is famous for the Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars, the snake-like Lombard Street (known as the most crooked street in the world), Alcatraz Island, Haight-Ashbury and Fishermen's Wharf. All those places are worth a visit (with the possible exception of Fishermen's Wharf, which is perhaps the most obnoxious tourist trap in the Western Hemisphere) and cable cars are fun to ride, but plenty of less well-known attractions offer a fuller experience of the foggy City by the Bay for visitors.

The California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park previously flew under the radar, but recently reopened with great fanfare after a renovation that took a decade and cost nearly US\$500 million to complete. The end result is a museum that leads the vanguard of green architecture, with rechargeable vehicle stations outside and solar panels on its rooftop, which is also home to a massive garden filled with plants native to the area around San Francisco.

The Academy of Sciences at 55 Music Concourse Dr, **tel: 1-415-379-8000**, includes an aquarium, planetarium and the usual host of taxidermy and fossils you would expect to see in a natural history museum. The highlight, however, is a four-story rainforest located in the middle of the building. Part greenhouse and part natural habitat, the rainforest is located in a glass dome that measures 27.5m in diameter and teems with butterflies that flutter through the humidity, seeking cover under tall, shady trees and vines. A spiral walkway leads to the top level, where an elevator descends underwater into the museum's Amazonian flooded forest exhibit. The US\$25 admission price is a bit steep, but a lot less expensive than a plane ticket to South America.

**On the Net:** [www.calacademy.org](http://www.calacademy.org). Nature lovers will also want to visit Marin Headlands in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area on the northwest side of the Golden Gate Bridge. Admission is free, not counting a US\$6 toll for people driving across the bridge. (The Golden Gate Bridge is open to bicyclists and pedestrians during daylight hours and is 2.7km long.)

The winding drive up to the Headlands along Cozelman Road offers perhaps the most breathtaking views of the bridge and the San Francisco skyline — as long as the fog doesn't get in your way. Marin Headlands has easy-to-hike trails, Rodeo Beach (which is gorgeous for walks but not for swimming) and World War II-era military post Fort Cronkhite. Go to [www.nps.gov/goga/marin-headlands.htm](http://www.nps.gov/goga/marin-headlands.htm) for maps of hiking trails and historical information.

After taking in your fill of San Francisco's natural scenery, consider a day of shopping downtown in



Chateau Tivoli, a bed-and-breakfast, is located in the Western Addition, which has San Francisco's highest concentration of Victorian homes.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JASON GERIE

» Union Square, which is bordered by Geary, Powell, Post and Stockton streets. The square is home to Macy's flagship department store on its south side, Tiffany's, Saks Fifth Avenue and the Sir Francis Drake hotel, among other famous names, and is close to the city's theater district.

If your fashion tastes lean more towards do-it-yourself than Dolce & Gabbana, walk over to Britex Fabrics at 146 Geary St, **tel: 1-415-392-2910**. The four-story San Francisco institution sells fabrics ranging from simple calicos to couture-quality wools, brocades and velvets. The third floor of the sewing behemoth is home to an awesome selection of buttons, both new and vintage, ribbons, silk flowers, sequins, ribbon, and vintage lace and collars. **On the Net:** [www.britextfabrics.com](http://www.britextfabrics.com).

Just behind Britex Fabrics lies Maiden Lane, a pedestrian thoroughfare filled with upscale boutiques that is also home to the only building designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright in San Francisco at No. 140, now occupied by Xanadu Gallery, which sells Asian and African art. The sweeping, circular interior was a predecessor to Wright's design for the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Visit [www.xanadugallery.us](http://www.xanadugallery.us) or call **1-415-392-9999** for more information.

If your wallet is screaming for mercy after a day of shopping, consider eating at the no-frills Tad's Steakhouse at 120 Powell St, **tel: 1-408-982-1718**. The Tad's Famous Steak special comes with a large hunk of grilled beef of an indeterminate but nonetheless tasty cut with a baked potato, small salad and buttery slab of garlic bread for just US\$13.79. **On the Net:** [www.tadssteaks-sf.com](http://www.tadssteaks-sf.com).

On the higher end of the dining scale (but still reasonably priced) is Sears Fine Food at 439 Powell St, **tel: 1-415-986-0700**. The restaurant, open since 1938, is famous for its plates of 18 Swedish pancakes, which are served with warm maple syrup and plenty of freshly whipped cream. For dinner, try the classic American pot roast or gourmet Kobe burger; health-conscious diners can order the avocado and crab salad, which features a thinly sliced whole avocado topped with fat chunks of Dungeness crab meat. **On the Net:** [www.searsfinefood.com](http://www.searsfinefood.com).

Nob Hill, a few blocks away from Union Square between Van Ness Avenue and Bay, Taylor and Pine streets, offers a visual feast for architecture lovers. The upscale district is home to some of the most breathtaking views and beautiful buildings in San Francisco. Highlights include the Brockleback Apartments at 1000 Mason St, which is famous for being the home of Kim Novak's character in the Alfred Hitchcock classic *Vertigo*, the Fairmont Hotel, the Pacific-Union Club and Grace Cathedral.

Gorgeous homes are also plentiful in the Western Addition, which is located between Van Ness Avenue, Golden Gate Park, the Haight, and Pacific Heights and renowned for having the highest concentration of Victorian houses in San Francisco. Start with a visit to grassy Alamo Square, which is



» The California Academy of Sciences' four-story high indoor rainforest is home to 1,600 live animals, including 600 birds and butterflies that swoop among plants and trees from the tropics.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

best known as the vista point from which the "Painted Ladies," or a row of colorful Victorians at 712 Steiner St to 720 Steiner St, can be seen against the San Francisco skyline, a view that has been reproduced on countless postcards.

If gazing at the Painted Ladies has you yearning to see the inside of one of the houses, forgo the breaking-and-entering route for a stay at the nearby Chateau Tivoli, a bed-and-breakfast at 1057 Steiner St, **tel: 1-415-776-5462**. The exterior of the Chateau Tivoli, built in 1892 as a private home, is replete with 17 different colors of paint and a touch of 23-karat gold leaf, while an ornate cornucopia of friezes, intricate woodwork, faux-grained plaster, reproduction wallpaper and antique furniture fill its painstakingly renovated rooms. A complimentary continental breakfast is served on weekdays, a champagne brunch on weekends, and wine and cheese is available every afternoon in the building's formal parlors.

Many of the rooms are named after luminaries who visited the house when it was the home of Ernestine Kreling, the owner of the Tivoli Opera House, the first place opera was performed on the US west coast. The suites, which are dubbed the Luisa Tetravazzi and the Mark Twain, go for between US\$250 on weeknights and US\$290 on weekends, while smaller rooms like the Isadora Duncan and the Jack London, range from just US\$100 to US\$200 per night.

The Chateau Tivoli has wireless Internet but no television (though any guest watching TV while staying there is squandering their time) and friendly innkeepers. Visit [www.chateautivoli.com](http://www.chateautivoli.com) for more information and reservations.

The Western Addition is also home to Fillmore Street, which was the heart of San Francisco's jazz scene in the 1940s and 1950s. The neighborhood is now one of San Francisco's most diverse and hosts a variety of boutiques and restaurants. For modern American fare with a Cajun touch, visit the Elite Cafe, which is housed in an art deco building at



Above: The San Francisco skyline as seen from the Golden Gate Bridge's visitor center.

PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

» Top: Waves crash on the pier at Fort Point as the Golden Gate Bridge lights up in the background.

PHOTO: AP

2049 Fillmore St, **tel: 1-415-346-8668**. The restaurant excels at decadent brunches — try the seafood benedict with bay shrimp, crab and scallops on sourdough with poached eggs and Hollandaise sauce washed down with a spicy Elite bloody Mary made of jalapeno or habanero infused Skyy vodka. The restaurant's raw oysters are among the best in the city. They only appear on Elite Cafe's dinner menu, so make sure to ask your server if you want to have them with brunch or lunch (the hama hama and kunamoto oysters are the sweetest). **On the Net:** [www.theelitecafe.com](http://www.theelitecafe.com).

Depending on how much you love seafood, you might be willing to brave the wilds of Fishermen's Wharf for Fishermen's Grotto at Pier 45. The restaurant may not be the trendiest place to eat in San Francisco, but the old-fashioned, clubby decor, which looks like it has been barely touched since the restaurant opened in 1935, panoramic views from bay windows, enthusiastic waiters and large portions more than make up for it.

Fishermen's Grotto was the first sit-down restaurant on the wharf and is still family-owned and operated. Try the restaurant's signature avocado stuffed with crab salad, which features gigantic mounds of crab meat and shrimp in ripe avocados drizzled with sweet and creamy Louis dressing. The restaurant's address is 9 Fishermen's Wharf, **tel: 1-415-673-7025**. **On the Net:** [www.fishermensgrotto.com](http://www.fishermensgrotto.com).

Fishermen's Grotto is just steps away from the Musee Mecanique, a small gem of a museum that is home to a large collection of antique coin-operated machines, many of which are over a century old and still in working order, including Laffing Sal, a curly-haired, gap-toothed moppet who greets visitors with a hysterical (and slightly frightening) guffaw. Admission is free. Call **1-415-346-2000** or visit [www.museemecanique.org](http://www.museemecanique.org) for more information and a history of the museum.

If you're a bookworm, there is a no better way to finish a day of sightseeing than a trip to City Lights Books at 261 Columbus Ave, **tel: 1-415-362-8193**. The independent bookseller was founded by poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti in 1953 and had a pivotal role in the growth of the Beat Generation, the members of which treated City Lights as their unofficial headquarters. The store was cast into the national spotlight in 1957 after Ferlinghetti was arrested on obscenity charges for publishing Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* (Ferlinghetti was later acquitted).

City Lights' three floors feature titles from small presses alongside books from major publishing houses, as well as titles from City Lights Publishers, which in addition to *Howl* also published works by other Beat luminaries, including Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs. The store's selection of poetry titles and books on progressive politics is, not surprisingly, particularly impressive. **On the Net:** [www.citylights.com](http://www.citylights.com).