



San Francisco

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Best Places to Eat

- Coi (p78)
- Benu (p79)
- La Taqueria (p79)
- Rich Table (p80)
- Aziza (p81)

Best Places to Stay

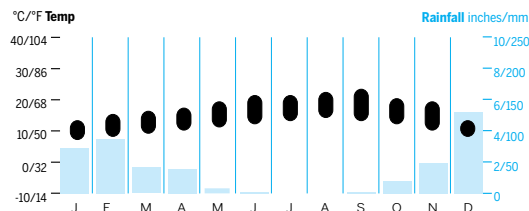
- Hotel Drisco (p76)
- Hotel Vitale (p76)
- Hotel Bohème (p74)
- Inn San Francisco (p76)
- Argonaut Hotel (p74)

Why Go?

Get to know the world capital of weird from the inside out, from mural-lined alleyways named after poets to clothing-optional beaches on a former military base. But don't be too quick to dismiss San Francisco's wild ideas. Biotech, gay rights, personal computers, cable cars and organic fine dining were once considered outlandish too, before San Francisco introduced these underground ideas into the mainstream decades ago. San Francisco's morning fog erases the boundaries between land and ocean, reality and infinite possibility.

Rules are never strictly followed here. Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz are entirely optional – San Franciscans mostly admire them from afar – leaving you free to pursue inspiration through Golden Gate Park, past flamboyantly painted Victorian homes and through Mission galleries. Just don't be late for your sensational, sustainable dinner: in San Francisco, you can find happiness and eat it too.

When to Go San Francisco



Jan–Mar

Low-season rates, brisk but rarely cold days, and Lunar New Year parade fireworks.

May–Aug

Farmers markets and festivals make up for high-season rates and chilly afternoon fog.

Sep–Nov

Blue skies, free concerts, bargain hotel rates and flavor-bursting harvest cuisine.

Bay Bridge

San Francisco's other landmark bridge was inspired by a madman. Joshua Norton lost his shirt and his mind in the Gold Rush before proclaiming himself 'Emperor of these United States and Protector of Mexico,' and ordering construction of a trans-bay bridge in 1872. Taxpayers took some convincing: the Bay Bridge was completed in 1936. But the eastern span collapsed in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, taking 12 years and \$6.4 billion to repair.

Emperor Norton's idea seemed not quite so bright anymore – until artist Leo Villareal installed 25,000 LED lights along the western span, mesmerizing commuters with a 1.8-mile-long light show that shimmers and pulses in never-repeating patterns. The show runs from dusk until 2am nightly until March 2015 – but a crowdfunding campaign may keep the lights twinkling through 2026. For more, see thebaylights.org.

DON'T MISS...

- **Saloons** The Barbary Coast is roaring back to life with historically researched whiskey cocktails and staggering gin concoctions in San Francisco's great Western saloon revival (p81).
- **Rooftop-garden cuisine** SF chefs are raising the roof on hyperlocal fare with ingredients raised right upstairs: city-bee honey at Jardinière (p80), edible pansies at Coi (p78), herbs at farm:table (p77) and salad greens to feed the homeless at Glide Memorial (p52).
- **Green everything** Recent reports rank San Francisco as the greenest city in North America, with its pioneering parklets, citywide composting laws and America's biggest stretch of urban greenery: Golden Gate Park (p97).

SF's Best Free...

- **Music** Golden Gate Park hosts free concerts summer through fall, from opera and reggae to Hardly Strictly Bluegrass.
- **Speech** City Lights Bookstore (p52) won a landmark free-speech case in 1957 over the publication of Allen Ginsberg's magnificent, incendiary *Howl*; take a seat in the designated Poet's Chair and celebrate your right to read freely.
- **Love** Pride fills San Francisco streets with free candy, free condoms and over a million people freely smooching total strangers under rainbow flags.
- **Spirits** Anywhere within city limits – and you're free to join in anytime.

DID YOU KNOW?

Despite slacker reputations cultivated at 30 medical marijuana clubs, San Franciscans hold more patents and earn more degrees per capita than residents of any other US city.

Fast Facts

- **Population** 839,336
- **Area** 47 sq miles
- **Telephone area code** 415

Planning Your Trip

- **Three weeks before** Book Alcatraz trips and dinner at Coi or Benu.
- **Two weeks before** Build stamina for downtown hills, Golden Gate Park adventures and Mission bars.
- **One week before** Score tickets to San Francisco Symphony or Opera, and assemble your costume – SF throws parades whenever.

Resources

- **SF Bay Guardian** (www.sfbg.com) Hot tips on local entertainment, arts, politics.
- **SFGate** (www.sfgate.com) News and event listings.