

The Castro & Noe Valley



Neighborhood Top Five

- ❶ Catching an evening film at the **Castro Theatre** (p178) and hearing the Mighty Wurlitzer's pipes roar before showtime.
- ❷ Climbing **Corona Heights** (p172) at sunset and watching Market St light up below.
- ❸ Dodging baby strollers on **24th St** as you window-shop indie stores.
- ❹ Watching for kooky naked dudes at **Jane Warner Plaza** (p172).
- ❺ Not going over the handlebars while biking down SF's steepest street, **22nd St** (p173).

For more detail of this area see Map p320 and p321 ➔

Explore the Castro & Noe Valley

The Castro's main crossroads is at the intersection of Market, 17th and Castro Sts. Noe Valley extends along 24th St, a scant mile down Castro, over the (gigantic) 21st St hill. You can explore both neighborhoods in a few hours.

Mornings are quiet. The Castro is busiest afternoons and evenings, especially weekends, when crowds come to people-watch, shop and drink; at night expect to see 20-somethings stumbling down Castro's wide sidewalks. Noe Valley is best midday and in the afternoon – there's not much open after 7pm, just some bars and restaurants.

If the 21st St Hill atop Castro St proves too daunting, bus 24-Divisadero connects the two neighborhoods but it's notorious for gaps in service: expect to wait or check www.nextmuni.com for real-time arrivals. In Noe Valley, shops on 24th St extend between Diamond and Church Sts; and on Church St, the restaurants and shops continue until the last stop on the J-Church line, around 29th St. Castro-area shops line Market St, between Church and Castro Sts, and Castro St itself, from Market to 19th Sts, with a few scattered along 18th St. Both neighborhoods are surrounded by residential streets, good for strolling, with many pretty Victorians.

Local Life

➔ **Hangouts** The Wednesday afternoon Castro Farmers Market (March through November) provides the best glimpse of locals, especially from sidewalk tables at Cafe Flore (p177).

➔ **Drinking** The Castro is packed with bars, but most don't get going till evening. For listings, pick up a copy of *BarTab* magazine – supplement to the local, gay *Bay Area Reporter* newspaper.

➔ **Paying homage** When a friend of the community dies, locals lay flowers and post pictures on the wall of the B of A building at 18th & Castro – always a touching sight.

➔ **What (not) to wear** You may be tempted to flaunt your gym-toned physique in the sexy Castro, but once afternoon fog blows, carry a jacket or shiver – locals spot tourists by their shorts and tank tops.

Getting There & Away

➔ **Metro** K, L and M trains run beneath Market St to Castro Station. J trains serve Noe Valley.

➔ **Streetcar** Vintage streetcars operate on the F-Market line, from Fisherman's Wharf to Castro St.

➔ **Bus** The 24 and 33 lines operate to the Castro but may have long waits between buses. The 24 and 48 lines serve Noe Valley.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Historic streetcars run like toy trains along the waterfront and up Market St, from Fisherman's Wharf to the Castro, via Downtown. Trouble is, trains sometimes get stuck in traffic and you can wait forever. Check arrival times at www.nextmuni.com, which uses GPS tracking; use the 'live map' to determine trains' exact locations. If the F-Market service is far away or running slow, take underground-metro K, L or M trains, which move (much) faster beneath Market St – same ticket, same price.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Frances (p176)
- ➔ Starbelly (p173)
- ➔ Anchor Oyster Bar (p173)
- ➔ Chow (p173)
- ➔ Dinosaurs (p176)

For reviews, see p173 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Cafe Flore (p177)
- ➔ Blackbird (p177)
- ➔ 440 Castro (p177)
- ➔ Moby Dick (p177)
- ➔ Twin Peaks Tavern (p177)

For reviews, see p177 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Sui Generis (p179)
- ➔ Unionmade (p179)
- ➔ The Podolls (p180)
- ➔ Omnivore (p180)
- ➔ Cliff's Variety (p179)

For reviews, see p179 ➔