

# Downtown, Civic Center & SoMa

FINANCIAL DISTRICT | JACKSON SQUARE | UNION SQUARE | SOMA | CIVIC CENTER | THE TENDERLOIN

## Neighborhood Top Five

**1** Taking a bite out of the Northern California food scene at the **Ferry Building** (p73) – showcase for the Bay Area's food purveyors and organic farmers – with incredible bay views.

**2** Squealing with glee aboard the **cable cars**, and congratulating yourself

for not wearing shorts and shivering the whole way.

**3** Seeing all the way across the Pacific and glimpsing priceless treasures inside the **Asian Art Museum** (p75).

**4** Watching impresario Michael Tilson Thomas conduct Beethoven from the tips of his toes at the

Grammy-winning **San Francisco Symphony** (p101).

**5** Wandering south along the Embarcadero for daytime people-watching, sneak peeks at Giants Games and dazzling nighttime views of the **Bay Bridge Lights** (p74).



For more detail of this area see Map p303, p304, p306 and p308 ➔

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Most tourists begin their trips at Powell St but often get stuck waiting in the long lines at the Powell St cable-car turnaround at Market St – and subjected to pan-handlers and bad street performers. Either queue up for the Powell St cable car before noon, or get your fix on the lesser-traveled California St line.

### Best Places to Eat

- Ferry Building (p73)
- Benu (p94)
- Kusakabe (p89)
- Cotogna (p88)
- Tout Sweet (p89)

For reviews, see p87 ➡

### Best Places to Drink

- Bar Agricole (p97)
- Local Edition (p95)
- Eagle Tavern (p100)
- Wilson & Wilson Detective Agency at Bourbon & Branch (p96)
- Sightglass Coffee (p97)

For reviews, see p95 ➡

### Best Live Performances

- San Francisco Symphony (p101)
- San Francisco Opera (p101)
- American Conservatory Theater (p101)
- Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (p103)
- Oasis (p103)

For reviews, see p101 ➡

## Explore Downtown

The cluster of public buildings around City Hall is called Civic Center. Start your day at Asian Art Museum, then graze local food stalls at Heart of the City Farmers Market, The Hall, or Twitter building marketplace. A word of warning: seedy Tenderloin streets west of Powell, east of Van Ness and south of Geary to Mission St are best avoided, except for groundbreaking nonprofit art galleries along Market St between 8th and 6th. Hop the F line to Powell St for Union Square shopping, or to Montgomery to admire Financial District architecture. Come nightfall, SoMa clubs and drag cabarets encourage outrageousness – and SF Symphony and SF Opera offer glimpses of greatness.

## Local Life

- **Markets** Ferry Building farmers market days are local foodie magnets with heirloom produce, local artisan foods and free samples galore.
- **Arts revival** Blighted blocks of SoMa and Market St west of Powell may not be much to look at outside, but inside they're full of ideas as arts nonprofits stage provocative shows in formerly derelict dives.
- **Happy hours** Whether your drink of choice is wine, beer or a craft cocktail, you're spoiled for choice downtown – and weekday drink specials beckon.

## Getting There & Away

- **Streetcar** Historic F-Market streetcars run above Market St, between the Castro and Fisherman's Wharf.
- **Cable car** Powell-Hyde and Powell-Mason lines link downtown with the Wharf (Mason is shorter, Hyde more scenic); the California St line runs perpendicular, over Nob Hill.
- **Bus** Market St-bound Muni lines serve downtown: 2, 5, 6, 7, 14, 21, 30, 31, 38, 41, 45. In SoMa the 30 and 45 run down 4th St from the Marina and Union Square, and the 14 runs through SoMa to the Mission along Mission St. The 27 runs from the Mission to Nob Hill via SoMa; the 47 runs along Harrison St through SoMa, up Van Ness to Fisherman's Wharf; and the 19 runs up 8th and Polk Sts to the Wharf.
- **Metro** J, K/T, L, M and N metro lines run under Market St. The N continues to the Caltrain station, connecting SoMa to the Haight and Golden Gate Park. The T runs from downtown, via SoMa, stopping along 3rd St.
- **BART** Downtown stations are Embarcadero, Montgomery and Powell.