

North Beach & Chinatown

Neighborhood Top Five

- 1** Wandering **Chinatown alleyways** (p118) to hear mah jong tiles, temple gongs and Chinese orchestras.
- 2** Climbing Filbert St Steps past heckling parrots and fragrant gardens to panoramic **Coit Tower** (p112).
- 3** Reflecting in the Poet's Chair and celebrating free speech at **City Lights** (p113).
- 4** Time-traveling through the old Chinatown at the **Chinese Historical Society of America** (p115) in the historic Julia Morgan-designed Chinatown YWCA.
- 5** Picking up where Jack Kerouac left off at historic Beat hangouts: **Li Po** (p126), **Vesuvio** (p126) and **Caffe Trieste** (p125).



For more detail of this area see Map p318 ➔

Explore North Beach & Chinatown

From downtown, enter Dragon's Gate onto Chinatown's main tourist drag, Grant Ave. Hard to believe this pagoda-topped, souvenir-shopping strip was once notorious brothel-lined Dupont St – at least until you see the fascinating displays at the Chinese Historical Society of America. Duck into Chinatown's historic alleyways to glimpse a neighborhood that's survived against daunting odds, and detour for dim sum at City View. Cross into North Beach via Jack Kerouac Alley and City Lights, birthplace of Beat literature. Fuel up with espresso at Caffè Trieste for your North Beach Beat walking tour, and hike garden-lined Filbert St Steps to giddy panoramas and daring murals at Coit Tower. Descend for a bar crawl or dinner at Coi.

Local Life

- ➔ **Hangouts** Join regular crowds of writers at Caffè Trieste (p125), martial arts masters at Washington Square (p114) and skaters at Old St Mary's Square (p118).
- ➔ **Foodie discoveries** Even been-there, tried-that San Franciscans find new taste sensations at Coi (p121), Z & Y (p124), Red Blossom Tea Company (p128) and Naked Lunch (p121).
- ➔ **Local celebrity sightings** Keep an eye out for Sean Penn at Tosca Cafe (p125), Francis Ford Coppola at Columbus Tower (p114), Tom Waits and Carlos Santana at 101 Music (p127), and Countess Lola Montez reincarnated at Drag Me Along Tours (p127).
- ➔ **Five-buck bargains** Fly a butterfly kite from Chinatown Kite Shop (p128), carbo-load at Liguria Bakery (p119), and catch a show at Doc's Lab (p127).

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Bus** Key routes passing through Chinatown and North Beach are 1, 10, 12, 30, 39, 41 and 45.
- ➔ **Cable car** From Downtown or the Wharf, take the Powell-Mason and Powell-Hyde lines through Chinatown and North Beach. The California St cable car passes through the southern end of Chinatown.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Wild hawks and parrots circle above North Beach as though looking for a parking spot. The weekend parking situation is so dire that locals avoid North Beach and Chinatown – forgetting there's public parking underneath Portsmouth Square and at Good Luck Parking Garage, where spots are stenciled with fortune-cookie wisdom: 'You are not a has-been.'

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Coi (p121)
- ➔ Z & Y (p124)
- ➔ Liguria Bakery (p119)
- ➔ Ristorante Ideale (p121)
- ➔ City View (p124)

For reviews, see p119 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Specs Museum Cafe (p125)
- ➔ Caffè Trieste (p125)
- ➔ Comstock Saloon (p125)
- ➔ Tosca Cafe (p125)
- ➔ 15 Romolo (p125)

For reviews, see p125 ➔

Best for Artistic Inspiration

- ➔ City Lights (p113)
- ➔ Coit Tower (p112)
- ➔ Chinese Culture Center (p115)
- ➔ Bob Kaufman Alley (p113)
- ➔ Jack Kerouac Alley (p114)

For reviews, see p112 ➔