

The Castro & Noe Valley



Neighborhood Top Five

- ❶ Catching a classic film at the **Castro Theatre** (p172) and hearing the Mighty Wurlitzer's pipes roar before showtime.
- ❷ Climbing **Corona Heights** (p166) at sunset and watching Market St light up below.
- ❸ Dodging baby strollers on **24th St** (p173) as you window-shop indie stores.
- ❹ Watching sexy strangers in **Jane Warner Plaza** (p166), by the F-Market line terminus.
- ❺ Not going over the handlebars while biking down SF's steepest road, **22nd St** (p166).

Explore the Castro & Noe Valley

The Castro's main crossroads is the intersection of Market and Castro Sts. Noe Valley is over the (big) hill at Castro and 24th Sts. You can explore both neighborhoods in a few hours.

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

If the 21st St Hill atop Castro St proves too much, bus 24-Divadero 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 Sanchez 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, 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 a sidewalk table at the Cafe Flore (p170).

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

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

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, service can be sporadic. To save time, take a train or bus and check their arrival times at www.nextmuni.com, which uses GPS tracking. If the F-Market line is running slow, take the underground K, L or M lines, which move (much) faster up Market St.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Frances (p166)
- ➔ Starbelly (p167)
- ➔ Anchor Oyster Bar (p167)
- ➔ Chow (p167)
- ➔ Chilango (p167)

For reviews, see p166 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Cafe Flore (p170)
- ➔ Blackbird (p170)
- ➔ 440 Castro (p170)
- ➔ Moby Dick (p170)
- ➔ Twin Peaks Tavern (p170)

For reviews, see p170 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Sui Generis (p172)
- ➔ Ambiance (p173)
- ➔ Omnivore (p173)
- ➔ Cliff's Variety (p172)
- ➔ Neon Monster (p173)

For reviews, see p165 ➔