

Downtown & Civic Center

UNION SQUARE | THE TENDERLOIN | FINANCIAL DISTRICT | JACKSON SQUARE

Neighborhood Top Five

- 1 Ooh-ing and ahh-ing as you travel 6000 years back in time at the **Asian Art Museum** (p77), marveling at the largest viewable collection of Eastern art outside Asia.
- 2 Drinking in spectacular bay views while eating your way through the **Ferry Building** (p86).
- 3 Hearing impresario Michael Tilson Thomas conduct Mahler or Beethoven at the **San Francisco Symphony** (p92).
- 4 Lying on the marble stairs at **City Hall** (p82) and gazing up at the world's fifth-largest dome.
- 5 Congratulating yourself for not wearing shorts and freezing your butt off aboard the **cable cars** (p79).



For more detail of this area, see Map p316, p320 and p322 →

Explore Downtown

Start your day assembling a picnic at the Ferry Building, then ride the California St cable car to the top of Nob Hill. From here, you can decide to walk east into Chinatown and North Beach, north to Russian Hill and Fisherman's Wharf, west toward Polk St and Pacific Heights and Japantown, or south to Civic Center and the Asian Art Museum.

Montgomery St is the main street in the buttoned-up Financial District, which extends to the Embarcadero waterfront. Downtown's main epicurean destination, the waterfront Ferry Building, marks the foot of Market St. Two miles up Market St, Civic Center refers to the governmental buildings behind City Hall, which abut the less-than-savory Tenderloin and lower Polk St. The Polk St north of Geary St has happening bars and indie boutiques, but they mostly lie beyond Civic Center around Russian and Nob Hills. Shoppers and gallery-hoppers will love Union Square.

A word of warning: most first-time visitors are thrown by the grittiness of some downtown areas, including lower Powell St, the Downtown destination of two cable car routes. Downtown is generally safe, but the streets west of Powell St and south of Geary St are rife with panhandlers and junkies.

Local Life

- ➔ **Markets** The farmers markets at the Ferry Building (p76) draw food-savvy locals.
- ➔ **Waterfront walks** Locals walk south toward the Bay Bridge for expansive vistas and stellar public art.
- ➔ **Cheap eats** The Tenderloin is full of cheap ethnic restaurants, but walking here is not for the faint of heart: when in doubt, take a taxi.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Streetcar** Historic F-Market line streetcars run above Market St, then along the Embarcadero to Fisherman's Wharf.
- ➔ **Cable car** The Powell-Hyde and Powell-Mason lines link Downtown with the Wharf (the Mason line is shorter, the Hyde line more scenic); the California St line runs west up Nob Hill.
- ➔ **Bus** Market St-bound Muni lines serve downtown: 2, 5, 6, 14, 21, 30, 31, 38, 41, 45 and 71.
- ➔ **Metro** The J, K, L, M and N metro lines run under Market St.
- ➔ **BART** Downtown stations are Embarcadero, Montgomery and Powell.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Most tourists begin their trips at Powell St as it's near many hotels and it's the route of Wharf-bound cable cars. However, they often get stuck waiting in the long lines at the Powell St cable car turnaround at Market St, held hostage by panhandlers and bad street performers. Either queue up for the Powell St cable car well before noon or get your fix on the lesser-traveled California St line.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Ferry Building (p86)
- ➔ Gitane (p85)
- ➔ Slanted Door (p86)
- ➔ Cotogna (p84)
- ➔ Wayfare Tavern (p84)

For reviews, see p84 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Rickhouse (p89)
- ➔ Barrique (p91)
- ➔ Edinburgh Castle (p91)
- ➔ Cantina (p89)
- ➔ Bix (p91)

For reviews, see p89 ➔

Best Places for Live Performances

- ➔ San Francisco Symphony (p92)
- ➔ San Francisco Opera (p92)
- ➔ Rrazz Room (p93)
- ➔ Café Royale (p93)
- ➔ Biscuits & Blues (p93)

For reviews, see p92 ➔