

# Downtown, Civic Center & SoMa

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

## Neighborhood Top Five

- 1 Ferry Building** (p79) Grazing the Northern California food scene with incredible bay views at this showcase for the Bay Area's food purveyors and organic farmers.
- 2 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** (p76) Getting lost in mesmerizing installation art at the new

triple-sized SFMOMA – and discussing it over museum-quality meals at In Situ.

- 3 Riding a cable car** (p82) Squealing with glee during the trip and congratulating yourself for not wearing shorts and shivering the whole way.

- 4 San Francisco Symphony** (p102) Watching

impresario Michael Tilson Thomas conduct Beethoven from the tips of his toes at the Grammy-winning Symphony.

- 5 Asian Art Museum** (p78) Seeing all the way across the Pacific via the museum's priceless treasures.



For more detail of this area see Maps p294, p296, p298 and p301 ➔

## Explore: Downtown, Civic Center & SoMa

The cluster of monumental stone buildings and plazas around City Hall is called Civic Center. Start your day at the Asian Art Museum (p78), then take your pick of dozens of local food stalls at Heart of the City Farmers Market (p94) or the Twitter building marketplace (p86). North and east of Civic Center is the less-than-savory Tenderloin, which most first-time visitors are advised to skip – though adventurous gallery-goers brave Market St between 8th and 6th for groundbreaking arts nonprofits. Hop the F line to Powell St for shopping around Union Sq, or head onward to Montgomery to discover splendid architecture among the Financial District's mighty temples of money. Come nightfall, SoMa bars, nightclubs and drag cabarets encourage outrageousness. If you scored tickets to the SF Symphony or Opera, catch the California cable car to Van Ness and stroll downhill to your show.

## Local Life

- **Markets** Ferry Building and Civic Center farmers-market days are foodie magnets, with heirloom produce, local artisan foods and free samples galore.
- **Arts revival** The blighted blocks of SoMa and Market St west of Powell may not be much to look at from the outside, but inside they're full of ideas: arts nonprofits stage provocative shows in many formerly derelict dives.
- **Happy hours** 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 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 Sq; 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; 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, Powell and Civic Center.

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Most tourists begin cable-car trips at Powell St but often get stuck waiting in the long lines at the cable-car turnaround at Powell and Market Sts – and subjected to panhandlers and clamorous street performers. Either queue up for the Powell St cable car before noon, or hop the lesser-traveled, more historic California St line near the Embarcadero.

## Best Places to Eat

- In Situ (p92)
- Ferry Building (p79)
- Benu (p92)
- Tout Sweet (p90)
- Cotogna (p88)

For reviews, see p88 ➔

## Best Places to Drink

- Bar Agricole (p98)
- Bourbon & Branch (p101)
- Pagan Idol (p95)
- Aunt Charlie's (p101)
- Eagle Tavern (p98)
- Local Edition (p95)
- Stud (p98)

For reviews, see p94 ➔

## Best Entertainment

- San Francisco Symphony (p102)
- American Conservatory Theater (p103)
- San Francisco Opera (p102)
- Oasis (p104)
- Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (p105)

For reviews, see p102 ➔