

OTHER THINGS TO DO/PLACES TO VISIT

SAN FRANCISCO

Background - If you have never visited San Francisco, use the X2011 West Convention as the incentive to finally enjoy the City! San Francisco is one of the most highly-rated and beautiful cities in the world. The Internet can provide hundreds of options for a day-long visit so the following is only a sample from a Bay Area resident.

Hints - San Francisco is not called “Frisco” but either San Francisco or the “City”. It is one of the top tourist destinations in the world so expect to hear dozens of languages during your visit. It is a cosmopolitan city and may be one of the most liberal cities in the world, so just go “with the flow” and accept its eccentricities.

Getting There by Transit - You can easily visit San Francisco from Sacramento via public transit. Board a [Capital Corridor Amtrak](#) train in Sacramento near Old Sacramento. You can log onto this website to get a train schedule—there are over a dozen westbound trains each day. Board at the Sacramento Amtrak station and get off at Richmond, a 1½ hour ride. Follow the signs downstairs to the [BART](#) (Bay Area Rapid Transit) platform and board a San Francisco-bound train (note that there are also Fremont trains leaving here; make sure you are on the correct train). Once under the Bay, you can exit at a variety of San Francisco stations depending on your destination. If you want to visit Fisherman’s Wharf, get off at the Embarcadero station, the first station in the City and around 35 minutes from the Richmond station. The Ferry building is three blocks toward the Bay (ask anyone when you come up to street level which way to walk). At the Ferry Building, you can board a historic trolley on The Embarcadero which will take you to the Fisherman’s Wharf, including the shopping opportunities at Pier 39.

The real shopping hub of the City is [Union Square](#), which is two blocks north of Market Street at Fourth Street and is easily reached from the Powell Street BART station. Macy’s faces Union Square and the Neiman Marcus Showroom is across Fourth Street from Macy’s; there are many other well-known stores surround the Square. [Westfield San Francisco Centre](#) (directly accessible from the Powell Street BART station) is anchored by Nordstrom and Bloomingdale’s. Also plan to check out the shops and restaurants along the utterly chic [Maiden Lane](#), a block east of the Square. As its name implies, it has a history of ill repute. The street was once home to brothels, but is now the posh address for outdoor cafes and boutiques such as Chanel.

You can also board one of the famous [San Francisco cable cars](#) at the intersection of Market Street and Powell Street. This cable car terminates at the west end of the Fisherman’s Wharf area which provides direct access to [Ghirardelli Square](#), the former Ghirardelli Chocolate Company factory, and now a shopping area. The San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, a fleet of historic vessels at Hyde Street Pier, is also near this cable car stop.

Getting There by Automobile - I-80 west will take you directly from Sacramento to San Francisco via the Bay Bridge. Although California doesn’t have toll roads (although we do now have toll express lanes on some freeways), there are tolls on all of the bridges in the Bay Area. Tolls are collected in one direction only—toward San Francisco. The toll on the Bay Bridge during non-commute hours is \$4; it is \$6 during commute hours. There are toll-takers so exact change is not required.

Regardless of the time of day, there tends to be congestion on southbound I-80 approach to the Bay Bridge through Berkeley. (Without congestion, the trip from Sacramento to downtown San Francisco will take about 2 hours.) Google Maps will show any traffic slowdowns. Note that vehicles with 3 or more persons are considered High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) and can be driven in HOV lanes anytime. However, bridge tolls are still collected for HOV vehicles and you must have a FasTrak

transponder in your vehicle to take advantage of the HOV toll lanes through the toll booth. So, unless you have a rental car with a FasTrak transponder, you cannot use the HOV lanes to pass through the toll booths.

The Bay Bridge consists of two distinct bridges, a cantilevered section from the toll booth to Treasure Island, and a suspension bridge from there to San Francisco. The cantilevered section is being replaced by a new self-anchored suspension bridge with a single tower which is under construction adjacent to the existing bridge. The construction has resulted in a number of changes to the existing bridge alignment to allow for the new bridge.

If you choose to visit the [Fisherman's Wharf](#) area, exit at Fremont Street and follow the guide signs to Fisherman's Wharf. Note that for locals, Fisherman's Wharf is considered a "tourist trap" with lots of T-shirt shops, crowds, etc. But it is still fun, even for locals. The street performers are always interesting and the atmosphere is somewhat typical of what the area was like when all of the commercial fishing boats went out fishing from the docks here (as opposed to taking tourists out for rides on the Bay). Parking rates are high at around \$7/hour. However, if you visit, we suggest parking in the [Pier 39](#) parking structure, watch the sea lions at Pier 39 (if there are there, you'll usually hear them), and then walk westerly and have a crab cocktail from one of the vendors near the intersection of Taylor Street and Jefferson Street (in the heart of the area). Then backtrack a half block and have lunch at [Bistro Boudin](#). The Boudin family began making sour dough French bread in 1849 during the Gold Rush. Wild yeasts in the San Francisco air imparted a unique tang to their traditional French bread, giving rise to "San Francisco sourdough French bread." For the ultimate Fisherman's Wharf lunch, order clam chowder in a sourdough bowl baked on-site. Yum!!

If you'd like a more upscale seafood restaurant, try [Scoma's Restaurant](#). Walk/drive a block west of the intersection of Taylor Street and Jefferson Street (keep your eyes open along here for the [Bushman](#), one of the street performers) to Al Scoma Way which appears to be an industrial alley. Turn right and the restaurant is at the end of the short street. If you are driving, free valet parking is available at the restaurant. They have the best fresh seafood!

A few blocks west is [Ghirardelli Square](#), the former Ghirardelli Chocolate Company factory established by Domenico "Domingo" Ghirardelli in 1895. Ghirardelli Square, with a number of interesting shops, is considered the first successful adaptive re-use project in the country. They have their own parking structure.

If you instead want to visit the downtown [Union Square](#) shopping area, exit I-80 at Fremont Street. At the bottom of the ramp, turn left onto Fremont Street. Take the 3rd left onto Mission Street. Turn right at 3rd Street and then, after crossing Market Street, turn left at Geary Street. There is a parking garage under Union Square—turn right at the far end of Union Square onto Powell Street and then right onto Post Street to reach the garage entrance.

Another option we use is the valet parking for the Nordstroms store on 5th Street south of Market Street. Just pull up to the curb...the all day fee is \$30.

Keep in mind that on-street parking anywhere in San Francisco can be hard to find. There are a lot of parking garages but expect relatively high parking fees.

Some other places you might want to consider visiting if you are traveling by auto include the [Golden Gate Bridge](#) overlook (take Highway 101 north toward the bridge and exit at the signed overlook parking area before you reach the toll booths). For a different view of the bridge, visit [Fort Point National Historic Site](#), directly under the southern end of the bridge. Fort Point was built between 1853 and 1861 as part of a defense system of forts planned for the protection of San Francisco Bay. The fort is open for visitors Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays although you can park here any day.

Other interesting places to visit via automobile include the steepest streets (Gough Street from Lombard Street/Highway 101 to Washington Street is a nice warm-up but the steepest street is [Filbert Street](#) east of Columbus Avenue near [Coit Tower](#) which reaches 31%!). You can also drive on one of the

crookedest streets which is [Lombard Street](#) east of Van Ness Avenue between Hyde Street and Leavenworth Street. This section of Lombard Street, with 8 turns in its one-block-length, was actually rebuilt that way in 1922 out of necessity in order to reduce the hill's natural 27% grade which was too steep for most vehicles to climb. For some boutique shopping, visit [Union Street](#) in the vicinity of Fillmore Street to Gough Street; or visit the vintage shops in the [Haight/Ashbury](#) area.

[Chinatown](#) in San Francisco is the largest Chinatown outside of Asia as well as the oldest Chinatown in North America. Chinatown is about eight blocks long and has two long main streets, Grant Avenue and Stockton Street at the cross street Jackson Street. Grant Avenue tends to be more of a “tourist trap” so get off of it and explore the side streets and alleys such as Ross Alley, home to the [Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory](#). There is parking under Portsmouth Square on Kearny Street at Washington Street.

If you have already “done” San Francisco, consider some other options. Instead of visiting San Francisco, drive instead to [Sausalito](#), across the Bay from San Francisco. Sausalito has some great shopping and restaurants along with grand views of the City and the Golden Gate Bridge. Nearby is [Muir Woods National Monument](#) and an opportunity to see some of the tallest trees in the world. You can also take a ferry to the City from Sausalito and back. Or drive to the vista at the north end of the Golden Gate Bridge which provides one of the most photographed views in the world. Park your car and walk out onto the bridge.

If you haven't visited [Alcatraz](#), consider getting advance [reservations](#) (the sell out in advance) for this very interesting National Park. It might sound strange to visit a prison but Alcatraz is very different. You'll recognize many scenes from the numerous movies about Alcatraz but also realize what it might have been like to serve time in this institution, while San Francisco with its smells from sour dough bread and Ghirardelli Chocolate, reminded those incarcerated of what they were missing. Not only can you go inside cells but also experience solitary confinement. People of all ages say this was their favorite thing to do.

Weather - The average high temperature in San Francisco in July is in the mid-60s and overcast skies and fog coming in during the evenings. Dress appropriately!

Note - *These directions are fairly general. You should carry a good map and/or GPS if you are driving.*