

PART ONE

PLANNING *your* VISIT



UNDERSTANDING *the* CITY: A BRIEF HISTORY *of* SAN FRANCISCO

AFTER NEW YORK CITY, SAN FRANCISCO IS THE most densely populated city in the United States, with more than 720,000 people crowded on a 49-square-mile peninsula. Understanding why so many people choose to live here is easy: You really never need a down-filled coat or shorts, and the city serves as a backdrop to some of the most beautiful natural landscapes on the planet. The Golden Gate Bridge is photographed widely for its red features towering above the misty fog that engulfs the city predictably every summer and early mornings. Make a turn down Marina Boulevard toward the bridge and you will certainly feel a sense of wonder and peace at the surreal beauty that is within the city and across the bridge. Mountains abound, scenic drives with hairy cliffside drops are everywhere, palm trees and parks punctuate the city . . . it is one of the most beautiful and interesting cities you will ever experience.

THE ORIGINAL NATIVES

THE FIRST SPANISH SETTLERS ARRIVED JUST OVER 200 years ago. But for thousands of years before that, the Bay Area was occupied by Miwok, Ohlone, and Wituk Native American people, who lived across much of Northern California. They formed small villages and survived mainly by hunting and fishing. Not much is known about the earliest San Francisco natives, and the ecologically conscious can only imagine the kinds of lives these Native Americans enjoyed in this beautiful landscape.

One of the first colonists characterized the Indians as “constant in their good friendship and gentle in their manners.” But without any

political or social organization beyond the tribal level, it did not take long after the first Spanish settlement was built for the local tribes to be wiped out, probably through epidemics brought by the settlers rather than outright genocide. Today, no Bay Area Native Americans survive on their original homelands.

EARLY EXPLORERS

AS YOU DRINK IN THE VIEW FROM FORT POINT OR the visitor center at the southern end of the Golden Gate Bridge, it's hard to imagine that ships cruising up or down the California coast could miss such an impressive sight. But they did. Dozens of European explorers, including heavy hitters such as Juan Cabrillo, Sir Francis Drake, and Sebastian Vizcaino, sailed past for centuries, oblivious of the great harbor beyond. Why? The opening is cloaked in fog for much of the year; even on clear days, the East Bay hills rise behind the opening and disguise the entrance to the point of invisibility.

Sir Francis Drake may have come close. In 1579, while on a mission from Queen Elizabeth I to “annoy” the Spanish provinces, he passed by the bay’s entrance. Like so many other explorers, he never saw it. Drake anchored his ship, the *Golden Hind*, just to the north and sent several landing parties ashore. He was met by a band of Miwoks who greeted him with food and drink; in return, Drake claimed their land for Queen Elizabeth and named it Nova Albion (New England).

The first Europeans to cast their eyes on the Bay Area and the site of the future San Francisco were in a company of 60 Spanish soldiers, mule skinnners, priests, and Indians led by Gaspar de Portola. The small contingent was the advance party of 300 soldiers and clergy on an overland mission from Mexico in 1769 to secure lands north of the colony for Spain and convert the heathens. Somewhere around Half Moon Bay, south of San Francisco, Portola sent out two scouting parties, one north up the coast and the other east into the mountains. Both groups returned with extraordinary descriptions of the Golden Gate—the entrance from the Pacific into the safe waters of the harbor—and the huge bay. On November 4 the entire party gathered on an exposed ridge, overwhelmed by the incredible view. Father Crespi, the priest, wrote that the bay “could hold not only all the armadas of our Catholic Monarch, but also all those of Europe.”

FIRST SETTLEMENT

IT WAS ANOTHER SIX YEARS BEFORE THE SPANISH sent an expedition to explore the bay Portola had discovered. In May 1775, Juan Manuel de Ayala became the first European to sail into San Francisco Bay, when he piloted the *San Carlos* through the Golden Gate. A year later Captain Juan Bautista de Anza came back with 200 soldiers and settlers to establish the Presidio of San Francisco overlooking the Golden Gate. He also established a mission three miles to the southeast along a creek he named Nuestra Señora de Dolores—“Our Lady

of Sorrows”—from which comes the mission’s name, Mission Dolores. (It’s the oldest building in San Francisco.)

Four more missions were established in the Bay Area in the following years. Each was similar, with a church and cloistered residence surrounded by irrigated fields, vineyards, and ranch lands. A contingent of soldiers protected the missions, many of which were attacked by Native Americans. To resist fire, the ubiquitous red-tiled roof replaced the thatched roof. By the end of the 18th century, the Bay Area settlements’ population remained less than 1,000. Northern California was still a remote outpost and held little appeal for foreign adventurers. While the garrison was strong enough to resist Indian attacks, it would have easily fallen to attacks from the sea, had there been any.

Small towns, called “pueblos,” were established to grow food for the missions and to attract settlers. The first, San Jose, was built in a broad, fertile valley south of Mission Santa Clara. Though the town was considered successful, fewer than 100 inhabitants lived there until well into the 1800s. Another small village, not sanctioned by Spanish authorities, emerged between Mission Dolores and the Presidio around a deepwater landing spot southeast of Telegraph Hill. Called Yerba Buena, or “good grass” (after the sweet-smelling minty herb that grew wild on the nearby hills), it was little more than a collection of shanties and ramshackle jetties. Although not called San Francisco until the late 1840s, this was the beginning of the city.

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE AND AMERICAN SETTLERS

IN THE 1820s, THE BAY AREA WAS STILL A REMOTE backwater. The mission era ended with the independence of Mexico in 1821; in a few years the missions were secularized, and their lands were handed over to Californios—mostly former soldiers who had settled there after completing their service. The Mexican government hardly exercised any control over distant Yerba Buena and was more willing than the Spanish to let foreigners settle and remain.

In the early part of the decade, a number of Americans and Brits started to arrive in the Bay Area. Many were sailors who jumped ship—even in its toddler years, San Francisco attracted those souls seeking a better life! Other settlers came, started businesses, and influenced the development of San Francisco into a major port town. William Richardson, for example, arrived on a whaling ship in 1822 and stayed for the rest of his life. He married the daughter of the Presidio commander, eventually owned most of southern Marin County, started a profitable shipping company, and ran the only ferry service across the treacherous bay waters.

While the locals were doing well by the 1840s, the Bay Area wasn’t viewed as being rich in natural resources, and as a result it wasn’t a major factor in international relations. In the 1830s the U.S. government decided to buy all of Mexico north of the Rio Grande, but

nothing happened until June 1846, when the Mexican-American War broke out in Texas. U.S. naval forces quickly took over the West Coast—the fulfillment of the United States’ “manifest destiny” to cover the continent from coast to coast—and captured San Francisco’s Presidio on July 9.

At about the same time, an interesting—although historically insignificant—event occurred north of San Francisco. An ambitious U.S. army captain, John C. Fremont, had been encouraging unhappy settlers to declare independence from Mexico and set him up as their leader. He assembled an unofficial force of about 60 sharpshooting ex-soldiers, spread rumors that war with Mexico was imminent, and persuaded settlers to join him. The result was the Bear Flag Revolt. On June 14, 1846, a force descended on the abandoned Presidio in Sonoma, took the retired commander captive, raised a makeshift flag over the plaza, and declared California independent. The flag, featuring a grizzly bear above the words “California Republic,” was eventually adopted as the California state flag.

But the republic was short-lived. Three weeks after the disgruntled settlers hoisted the flag, it was replaced by the Stars and Stripes. California was now U.S. territory. Ironically, on January 24, 1848, just nine days before the U.S. government took formal control at the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe (which ended the war with Mexico and ceded California to the United States), gold was discovered in the Sierra Nevada foothills 100 miles east of San Francisco. It changed the face of the city—and California—forever.

SUTTER’S SAWMILL AND THE GLEAM OF GOLD!

IT ALL STARTED WITH A SAWMILL. CONTRACTOR James Marshall and a work crew were commissioned to construct a sawmill for John Sutter, a Swiss immigrant whose Sacramento Valley ranch had been granted to him by the Mexican governor of California. On January 24, 1848, along the American River near Sacramento, Marshall uncovered a few tiny gold nuggets. Sutter tried to keep the find under his cap, but word got out. Aided by a notice printed in *The Californian* in San Francisco, as well as by more discoveries of gold by General John Bidwell, the great human migration west began. More than a half-million pioneering spirits from around the world descended upon California in search of instant wealth. By the end of May the editor of *The Californian* announced the suspension of his newspaper because the entire staff had quit. “The whole country from San Francisco to Los Angeles and from the sea shore to the base of the Sierra Nevada,” he wrote, “resounds with the sordid cry of gold! GOLD! GOLD!—while the field is left half-planted, the house half-built, and everything neglected but the manufacture of shovels and pickaxes.” Before the year was over, more prospectors arrived from neighboring territories, Mexico, and South America.

At the time gold was discovered, the total population of the Bay Area was around 2,000, about a quarter of whom lived in tiny San Francisco (changed from Yerba Buena the year before). Within a year, 100,000 men, known collectively as Forty-Niners (now you'll have one correct answer to a sports trivia question—that's the origin of the modern-day football team's name) had arrived in California; it was one of the most madcap migrations in history. While many of the prospectors passed through San Francisco, few stayed long before moving on to the gold fields. About half made a three-month slog across the continent to get there. And once there, as reflected in an essay written by a gold-hopeful Mr. Chandler, they were "bound to stick awhile longer." The lure of fortune was irresistible. Others arrived by ship in San Francisco, which at that time consisted of a few shoddily constructed buildings, abandoned hulks in the harbor, and rats overrunning filthy streets; there was also a shortage of drinking water. But by the winter of 1850, the shanty-town settlement began to evolve into a proper city. Former miners set up foundries and sawmills to supply prospectors, while traders arrived to cash in on miners' success, selling them clothing, food, drink, and entertainment.

The city where successful miners came to blow their hard-earned cash now boasted luxury hotels and burlesque theaters, some of which featured the semiclad "spider dance" of Lola Montez—the famous femme fatale of the gold rush. Throughout the 1850s, immigrants continued to pour into San Francisco. While many headed on to the mines, enough stuck around to increase the city's population to about 35,000 by the end of 1853. More than half were foreigners, chiefly Mexicans, Germans, Chinese, and Italians.

Lolaland

She may have been a bad dancer—booed and hissed off stage most of her performing life—but she made history with her vicious temper, whip snapping, and bedroom antics. The infamous femme fatale of the Victorian age, Lola Montez stormed the gold rush in California for a fresh start—after many marriages and a decade of seducing kings and czars across Europe—in order to pursue her dream of becoming a respected performer and actress.

She opened a saloon in a boisterous mining town called Grass Valley. Her act included Louis XVI cabinets, ormolu mirrors, priceless jewels from her ex-husbands, a pet bear, a swan bed, gold leaf, and one extra-large deep-red-top billiard table with dragons carved on its legs. With a bosom worth as much as the nuggets of gold and her crazy delusions of capturing California from the United States and becoming the Queen of "Lolaland," she attracted governors, senators, and millionaires.

Early comers to the gold fields made instant fortunes by merely washing nuggets out of streams or scraping gold dust from easily accessible veins in the rock, but it was much more difficult for later arrivals. The real money was being made by merchants, many of whom charged outrageous prices for essentials: \$50 for a dozen eggs, \$100 for a shovel or pick axe. There were reports of exuberant miners trading a shot glass full of gold dust for an equal amount of whiskey—something like \$1,000 a shot.

But the real necessities were buckets, shovels, dippers, and pans. Before long, those who supplied everyday items to prospectors were richer than the miners themselves. Levi Strauss, for instance, arrived from Germany to sell tents but ended up converting his supply of canvas into durable pants. Women, too, were in short supply. Hundreds of prostitutes boarded ships in Mexico and South America, knowing their fares would be paid on arrival by captains selling them to the highest bidder.

THE GOLD BUST

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD, the easy pickings were gone and the freewheeling mining camps evolved into corporate operations. San Francisco swelled from a frontier outpost to a bustling city with growing industry, a branch of the U.S. Mint, and a few newspapers. But when revenues from the gold fields leveled out in the late 1850s, the speculative base that had made so many fortunes dried up. Building lots that had been advertised at premium rates couldn't be given away, banks went belly-up, and San Francisco declared bankruptcy, following years of political corruption. The freewheeling city descended into near anarchy, and mobs roamed the streets. By the summer of 1856, the Committee of Vigilance was the city's de facto government and hanged petty criminals in front of enthusiastic mobs. Soon, though, cooler heads prevailed and the city was restored to legitimate governance. The rest of the 1850s was relatively uneventful.

BOOM . . .

BUT WHATEVER CHANCE SAN FRANCISCO HAD of becoming placid ended in 1859, when another torrent of riches flowed down the slopes of the Sierras. This time it was silver, not gold. The Comstock Lode, one of the most fantastic deposits ever discovered, was a solid vein of silver mixed with gold, ranging from 10 to more than 100 feet wide and stretching to more than two miles long. It would be an even bigger boom than the gold rush of a decade before.

Most of the silver, however, was buried several hundred feet underground, and mining it would be nothing like the freelance prospecting of the early gold rush. Many of San Francisco's great engineers, including George Hearst, Andrew Hallidie, and Adolf Sutro, put their talents to the formidable task. As the mines went deeper to get at the valuable ore, the mining companies needed larger infusions of capital, which

they attracted by issuing shares dealt on the San Francisco Stock Exchange. Speculation was rampant, and the value of shares vacillated wildly, depending on daily rumors and forecasts. Fortunes were made and lost in a day's trading; cagier speculators made millions. By 1863, \$40 million in silver had been wrenched from the tunnels around the boomtown of Virginia City, 105 miles from San Francisco, and 2,000 mining companies had traded shares on the city's mining exchange, further pumping up the city's economy.

... AND BUST

WHILE SAN FRANCISCO ENJOYED UNSURPASSED prosperity in the 1860s, another major development was taking place: the construction of a transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869. Although the trains opened up California, they also brought problems. The Southern Pacific ensnared San Francisco in its web, creating a monopoly over transportation in the Bay Area. Besides controlling long-distance railroads, the firm also owned the city's streetcar system, the network of ferry boats that crisscrossed the bay, and even the cable-car line that lifted rich San Franciscans up California Street to their Nob Hill palaces.

The coming of the railroad usurped San Francisco's role as the West Coast's primary supply point, and products began to flood in from the East well under prices that local industry could meet. At about the time the Comstock mines began to taper off, a depression set in. A series of droughts wiped out agricultural harvests, followed by the arrival of thousands of now-unwanted Chinese workers who had built the railroads. As unemployment rose through the late 1870s, frustrated workers took out their aggression on the city's substantial Chinese population. At mass demonstrations, thousands rallied behind the slogan, "The Chinese Must Go!" For much of the late 19th century, San Francisco wrestled with problems of racism; the need to build a varied, stable economy; and corruption in city politics.

A GOLDEN AGE

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, San Francisco was entering a golden age. The city now boasted a population of some 400,000 inhabitants—about 45% of the population of California (today it's about 4%). Political corruption was still a problem, but the economy was expanding—due in equal parts to the Spanish-American War and the Klondike Gold Rush in Alaska. Both events increased ship traffic in the port, where dockworkers were beginning to organize themselves into unions on an unprecedented scale.

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE

CIVIC REFORMERS' EFFORTS TO REVERSE MUNICIPAL abuses were well under way when one of San Francisco's most defining events occurred: the Great Earthquake of 1906. On April 18, the city was awakened by violent earth tremors. At 8.1 on the Richter scale, it was

the worst earthquake to hit the United States before or since (over ten times as strong as the 1989 quake). While the earthquake, which lasted 48 seconds, destroyed hundreds of buildings, the postquake conflagration caused the most damage. Ruptured natural gas mains exploded and chimneys toppled, starting fires across the city that destroyed 28,000 buildings. Looting was rampant, forcing the mayor to post a “Shoot to Kill” order. The fire raged for three days and all but leveled the entire area from the waterfront north to south of Market Street and west to Van Ness Avenue (where mansions were dynamited to form a fire break). Five hundred people were killed in the immense disaster and 100,000 were left homeless. Those who didn’t flee the city made camp in what is now Golden Gate Park, where soldiers from the Presidio set up a tent city for about 20,000 displaced San Franciscans. Today you can pay tribute to one of the allies of the fight against total devastation—one fire hydrant that saved the Mission District from burning to the ground. The 1906 earthquake fire hydrant is on the corner of 20th and Church Streets.

RECOVERY

RESTORATION OF THE RUINED CITY BEGAN almost immediately. Financial assistance flooded in from around the world, \$8 million in a few weeks. Even the hated Southern Pacific railroad pitched in, freight-ing in supplies without charge, offering free passage out of the city, and putting heavy equipment and cranes to work on clearing up rubble.

Much of the reconstruction was completed by 1912, and an era of political reform and economic restructuring was ushered in when James Rolph was elected mayor. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, which made the long sea journey around Cape Horn obsolete, and the first transcontinental phone call later that year (from Alexander Graham Bell himself) held great significance for San Francisco. The completion of the Civic Center and the opening of the Panama Pacific International Exhibition (which attracted 19 million visitors) were icing on the cake. The distant war in Europe had few repercussions in San Francisco beyond boosting the economy.

THE ROARING TWENTIES AND THE DEPRESSION

LIKE MOST AMERICAN CITIES, SAN FRANCISCO prospered through the 1920s after recovering from a steep drop in employment after World War I. Financiers and industrialists erected the city’s first skyscrapers, and the jazz clubs and speakeasies of the Barbary Coast District were in full swing. San Francisco, now completely recovered from the 1906 quake, was the West Coast’s premier art and culture center—a role that it passed to Los Angeles in the next decade. It was also a major banking center: the Bank of America, headquartered here, became the largest bank in the world.

After the stock market crash of 1929, San Francisco bore the full brunt of a recession that hit the city’s port activities particularly

hard. In 1934, one of the most severe strikes in its history broke out. On July 5—Bloody Thursday—police protecting strike-breakers from angry picketers fired into the crowd, wounding 30 and killing 2. The army was sent in to restore order; in retaliation, unions called a strike, and 125,000 workers put down their tools, halting San Francisco's economy for four days.

It was also an era that saw some of the city's finest monuments take form—for example, Coit Tower. In 1933, Alcatraz Island became the site of America's notorious federal prison. But most importantly, two great structures over San Francisco Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge, were built. Before the bridges opened, the Bay Area was served by an impressive number of ferry boats; in 1935, their peak year, 100,000 commuters crossed San Francisco Bay by boat each day. Just five years later, the last of the ferries was withdrawn from service, unable to compete with the new bridges.

WORLD WAR II

FOLLOWING JAPAN'S ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR and the advent of World War II, San Francisco became the main military port on the Pacific; more than 1.5 million servicemen were shipped to the South Pacific from Fort Mason. New shipyards sprang up within months, the number of factories tripled, and the Bay Area was transformed into a massive war machine. The Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond, the largest shipbuilding facility, employed more than 100,000 workers on round-the-clock shifts.

Men and women poured into the region from all over the country for jobs in the plants. Today, Hunters Point, one of the most economically distressed neighborhoods in San Francisco, and Marin City, one of its most affluent suburbs, are remnants of cities built to house the influx of workers who moved to the Bay Area during the war.

THE 1950s: EMERGENCE OF THE BEAT GENERATION

FOLLOWING THE WAR, THOUSANDS OF GIs RETURNING from the South Pacific passed through San Francisco and many decided to stay. New neighborhoods such as Sunset, with massive tracts of lookalike housing, were formed, and huge highways were built. The postwar years brought prosperity but also created a backlash. As the middle class moved out of the inner city, many of their offspring moved back in. North Beach bars and cafés incubated a wellspring of iconoclastic, antiestablishment youth in what was to become the Greenwich Village of the West Coast. Leading this movement was writer Jack Kerouac, who, after the publication of the movement-defining book *On the Road*, was asked by reporters to define the term “beat.” He first heard the term a decade before his writing, from a rough-and-tumble 42nd Street—hustler who used the term to describe a state of

exalted exhaustion. The novel was a classic story that broke open conformist 1950s America. The Beat Generation was news, and Kerouac had been officially dubbed its chief incarnation. Tired of conventional America, this tribe was searching—on a quest for spiritual identity and vision—and many of them found clarity in San Francisco.

The Beat Generation rebelled against the empty materialism of the 1950s; many lost themselves in orgies of jazz, drugs, and Buddhism. The new counterculture also fostered a highly personal, expressive blend of prose and poetry. City Lights Bookstore in North Beach became the focal point for the new literary movement, which included poets Lawrence Ferlinghetti (the shop's owner, who you can still spot in between book shelves—usually the poetry section) and the late Allen Ginsberg.

PSYCHEDELIC 1960s

BY THE EARLY 1960s THE STEAM WAS GONE from the Beat movement. Shortly thereafter, though, an offshoot of the antiestablishment trend surfaced—the hippies. Originally the term was a Beat putdown for the inexperienced, enthusiastic young people following in the footsteps of their countercultural elders. The first hippies appeared on college campuses around San Francisco.

There was a difference, though. Hippies were experimenting with a new hallucinogenic drug called LSD (better known by its street name, acid). Around 1965, hippies began moving into communes in low-rent Victorian houses in the Haight-Ashbury District, west of the city's center. It was the beginning of flower power and would culminate in 1967's "Summer of Love," when 100,000 young people converged on the area.

REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

WHILE HIPPIES TUNED INTO PSYCHEDELIC MUSIC by bands such as Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother and the Holding Company, and the Grateful Dead, across the bay, in Berkeley and Oakland, it was politics, not acid and acid rock, that topped the agenda. The Free Speech Movement began at the University of California, Berkeley campus, in 1964 and laid the ground for passionate protests against the Vietnam War in the Bay Area and around the country later in the decade.

The most famous protest took place in Berkeley's People's Park, a plot of university-owned land that local activists took over as a community open space. Four days later, an army of police under the command of Edwin Meese (later attorney general under President Ronald Reagan) tear-gassed demonstrators and stormed the park, accidentally killing one bystander and seriously injuring more than 100 others.

In a response to the era's overt racism, the Black Panthers emerged in the impoverished flatlands of Oakland. Formed in 1966 by Bobby Seale, Huey Newton, and Eldridge Cleaver, the Panthers were a heavily armed but outnumbered band of activists who wanted self-determination for blacks. A nationwide organization sprung from the Oakland headquarters; 30 members across the country died in gun battles with police and the FBI.

MAKING HEADLINES: THE 1970s AND 1980s

STUDENT UNREST, ANTIWAR PROTESTS, AND FLOWER power spilled over into the early 1970s, though at a less-fevered pitch. One headline-grabbing event was the 1974 kidnapping of Patty Hearst, who was snatched from her Berkeley apartment by the Symbionese Liberation Army, a small, hardcore group of revolutionaries demanding free food for Oakland's poor in exchange for the rich heiress. Later on, during her captivity, Hearst helped the SLA and was photographed wielding a submachine gun in the robbery of a San Francisco bank.

Compared to the 1960s, most of the decade was quiet. The Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) finally opened, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area was established to protect 75,000 acres of incredibly scenic open areas on both ends of the Golden Gate Bridge. In 1973, the Transamerica Pyramid was completed, receiving mixed reviews from San Francisco critics; today it's a beloved piece of the city's skyline.

New battle lines were being drawn. The city's homosexuals, inspired by the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City, began to organize, demanding equal status with heterosexuals. Just as important, gays and lesbians "came out," refusing to hide their sexuality and giving rise to the gay liberation movement. One leader, Harvey Milk, won a seat on the city Board of Supervisors, becoming the first openly gay man to win public office in San Francisco. When he was assassinated in 1978 along with Mayor George Moscone, the entire city was shaken. A riot ensued when Milk's killer, former Supervisor Dan White, was found guilty of manslaughter and not murder.

In the 1980s, San Francisco's gay community retreated somewhat, hit by a staggering AIDS epidemic that toned down a notoriously promiscuous scene. The gay community, in conjunction with City Hall, continues to fight the disease.

During Mayor (now Senator) Diane Feinstein's term, San Francisco added millions of square feet of office towers to downtown's Financial District as some bemoaned the Manhattanization of the city.

There were also setbacks. A hundred million people watched on national TV as a 7.1 magnitude earthquake shook San Francisco during the third game of the 1989 World Series between Bay Area rivals, the San Francisco Giants and the Oakland As; freeways collapsed,

power was out for three days, and dozens were killed. Two years later a horrific fire in the Oakland hills killed 26 people and destroyed 3,000 homes. In the early 1990s, most of the problems San Francisco faced were similar to those in other American cities: urban poverty, drug abuse, homelessness, and AIDS. An ongoing economic turn-down in California was amplified by post-Cold War military cutbacks, which saw the closure of military bases in the Bay Area and the loss of 35,000 civilian jobs. But things were brewing about 30 miles south of San Francisco that would send the city into a mass of hysterics reminiscent of the flash and fortune during the gold rush era.

THE DOT: RIP

NOTHING DEFINES THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL climate in San Francisco in the mid-1990s more than a dot. The “dot com,” as the Internet industry became known, redefined the global economy and sent investors running like dogs to a bone. In this case, the apparent billion-dollar bone would prove in the end to be bare for most investors and entrepreneurs alike.

The Nasdaq was at an all-time high, jobs were plentiful, and San Francisco more than any other city was riding high on the dot-com coattails, thanks to the technological revolution pouring out of neighboring Silicon Valley. Industrial SoMa District became the hub of Internet companies, trendy bars, and elaborate bashes. Rents soared, neighborhoods became gentrified, and stock options landed in the laps of everyone from landlords to graduating nieces. It seemed that retiring at the ripe old age of 30 wasn’t just a pipe dream, and a million dollars could be earned by anyone from the mail clerk to the janitor. Hopes were high, bank accounts overflowing, and Mercedes and BMW dealerships quite busy.

Then in April 2000, there was a crash that sent heads spinning, horses galloping, and doors slamming in the Internet industry. As hard as it tried, the dot-com empire couldn’t keep out profit loss, market devaluation, and downsizing. Pioneering fortune seekers were left in the rubble, sharing casualty stories at pink-slip parties. Their inflated titles and salaries faced judgment day in front of a more frugal post-dot com market. Jobs were hard to come by, and as a result most returned from where they came, with their tails between their legs.

Today, the city is in a state of transition. The transition comes with mixed feelings, however. Some native San Franciscans are happy to see the hype and prices fall, while others mourn the loss of the boom. In any case, vacancy signs in a once impossible real-estate market are swinging on chains outside buildings, rents are lowering, and the artistic community is seeing a revival. The face of technology is changing also, and it is a matter of time before recovery comes full circle and a new trend surfaces.

WHEN *to* GO: THE SWEATER SEASON *and the . . .* WELL, SWEATER (WETTER) SEASON

MAYBE YOU HAVEN'T HEARD, BUT SAN FRANCISCO isn't very warm—and summer is its coolest time. So right now you are probably staring at your suitcase packed with tanks, shorts, and swimsuits, thinking, "What the heck do I pack?" The answer is simple. Pack the fleece *and* the tank. The City by the Bay is in fact just that—a city by a bay—and it is regularly swept by winds from the water that surrounds it on three sides. Yet it boasts one of the most stable climates in the world. Temperatures during the day rarely venture more than 5°F from the average 60°F. Temperatures at night rarely drop lower than 40°F, and snow is virtually unheard of. This stable weather, however, can be frustrating. It is impossible to predict. With sunny rays beaming through your window, you'll wake up anticipating a bright, warm day, and by the time you've showered and tied your shoes, the fog is thick enough to cut with a knife and the temperature has turned chilly. We don't mean to sound like a nagging old grandmother, but dress in layers!

Now for the tank. Take a drive across any bridge and you'll feel a heat resurrection. The toes will start to uncurl and the hairs will flatten as all things simmer under the sun and heat that await in the East Bay, South Bay, and Marin County. Almost everywhere else in the Bay Area is warmer than San Francisco, especially in the summer, when Berkeley and Oakland bask in sunshine, and the wine country and surrounding valleys shrivel like prunes under the intense heat.

THE DRY SEASON

SORRY-I'M-NOT-THAT-WARM SAN FRANCISCO HAS two kinds of weather: wet and dry. The dry season starts in April and usually lasts through October (and sometimes into November). If the virtually dry months of July and August sound too good to be true, you're right. It is too good to be true. There's a catch—the city's fabled fog envelops the city mornings and evenings during much of the summer, hovering over the Golden Gate and obscuring the bridge. But the fog usually burns off by early afternoon—just in time for you to burn off that burrito by jogging, biking, or kayaking.

Summer is also the most crowded. If you're visiting in the summer, don't be like the rest of the shivering shorts-clad tourists at Fisherman's Wharf—bring the sweater! The city can be decidedly unsummerlike, even in July and August,

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A final note: When dense afternoon fogs roll in during the summer months, the temperature can drop as much as 20°F in less than an hour.

especially at waterside locales such as the Wharf, Fort Point, the ocean beaches, and the Golden Gate Bridge.

THE WET SEASON

WINTER BRINGS MOST OF SAN FRANCISCO'S rainfall, usually starting sometime in November and continuing through March. Often the rain is quite torrential, especially in December and January. Yet daytime highs rarely plunge far below 60°F, and the lows hover in the mid-40s. Two days in a row without rain are rare on a winter trip to the city, but crowds are nonexistent and finding a convenient and reasonably priced hotel room is less of a hassle. And again, bring the sweaters.

THE SHOULDER SEASONS

IF YOU WANT TO ENJOY SAN FRANCISCO WHEN the weather is on its best behavior and you want to avoid large crowds, you have two options: spring and fall. These are the favorite seasons of *Unofficial Guide* researchers. In May and June the hills are at their greenest and are covered with wildflowers. Yet rainfall is nearly nil and daytime highs average in the mid-60s. Crowds at major tourist attractions usually don't pick up until later in the summer, when families with children begin to arrive. September and October are San Francisco's warmest months. They're popular months with visitors, but they lack the big crowds that

 **unofficial TIP**
September and October are the city's least foggy months (although many visitors don't seem to mind the fog).

pack the city's attractions during the height of the summer season. Warm, cloudless days are the norm. As a bonus, it's grape-harvesting season in the wine country, making a one- or two-day excursion to Napa or Sonoma imperative.

AVOIDING CROWDS

IN GENERAL, POPULAR TOURIST SITES ARE BUSIER on weekends, and Saturdays are busier than Sundays. The summer season by far is the busiest time of year at most attractions. If Alcatraz is on your itinerary (and if you're a first-time visitor to San Francisco, it should be), call in advance for tickets on a weekday, and hit attractions at Fisherman's Wharf on the same day. On summer weekends, the wharf is jammed with visitors.

Driving in San Francisco's rush-hour traffic is a true bite-your-nails experience. The major arteries and bridges are very congested during rush hour. If you're driving to the city on a weekday, avoid hitting town between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. and between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. If you're driving in on a weekend, you're still not off the hook. Traffic in and around San Francisco on Saturday and Sunday afternoons sometimes exceeds weekday rush-hour intensity. One theory is that frisky San Franciscans like to head to playgrounds outside of the city.

Evidence of this is seen as cars toting surfboards, snowboards, bikes, kayaks, and ropes venture across the bridges. Another theory is that the region around the city, the fifth-largest in the country, registers a population of six million. On weekends, residents of San Jose, Berkeley, Oakland, and other towns nearby do what you would if you lived here—they drive to San Francisco. Try to arrive before noon on weekends and you'll miss the worst of the weekend crush.



HOW *to* GET MORE INFORMATION *before* YOUR VISIT

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ENTERTAINMENT, sightseeing, maps, shopping, dining, and lodging in San Francisco, call or write:

San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau

Hallidie Plaza, 900 Market Street

San Francisco, CA 94102-2804

☎ 415-391-2000 or fax 415-362-7323

www.sfvisitor.org

The Convention and Visitors Bureau's Visitor Information Center is in the Benjamin Swig Pavilion on the lower level of Hallidie Plaza at Market and Powell Streets. It's easy to find, and the center's multilingual staff can help answer any questions you may have. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The center is closed Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

There are great Web sites that can help in your preparation. A few to check out include:

- **www.sfstation.com** provides up-to-the-minute events and insider information.
- **www.sfarts.org** will give you the scoop on everything indy, controversial, and artistic that's happening in all forms of art.
- **www.sfcchamber.com** is your run-of-the-mill tourist information put out by the chamber of commerce. It's handy for maps and mainstream attractions.
- **www.sfgate.com** is a branch of the newspaper, the *Chronicle*. Great place for current events and activities, as well as jobs (if the city inspires you enough to move!).
- **www.sfvisitor.org** is valuable for a rundown of neighborhoods and maps.
- **www.bayarea.citysearch.com** is the San Francisco leg of the popular "what to do and where to go" nationwide city guide.
- **www.sonoma.com** is your guide to everything wine in Sonoma County, including current info on Napa lodgings, dining, and tours.



GAYS *and* LESBIANS

IN SAN FRANCISCO, “THE LOVE THAT DARE NOT speak its name” is expressed more freely than in any other U.S. city. San Francisco boasts the largest gay and lesbian population of any city in America, with some reports estimating that one quarter of its total population of 723,000 is gay. Hundreds of restaurants, hotels, shops, and other businesses and services are owned and operated by gays, who enjoy a high level of visibility, acceptance, and political clout in the community at large.

HISTORY

THE ROOTS OF THE CITY’S LARGE GAY POPULATION and its live-and-let-live ambience go back to the waning days of World War II, when the United States military began purging its ranks of homosexuals and suspected homosexuals, booting them out at the point of embarkation. This was often San Francisco, the major military stepping-off point. Many of the men, officially stigmatized, stayed in the Bay Area. Another migration occurred in the McCarthy era of the early 1950s, when the federal government dismissed thousands of homosexuals from their jobs. Persecution by the U.S. military and local police was common in the postwar years; in the early 1960s, gays began organizing for their civil rights.

By the 1970s, an estimated one in four San Francisco voters was gay, and homosexuals were an influential minority group. It didn’t hurt that gays tended to vote in larger numbers and contributed to political candidates who supported issues important to gays. As gays of the flower-power generation began moving in and restoring Victorian town houses, Castro Street (formerly an Irish-American neighborhood going to seed) became a flourishing enclave and the embodiment of the gay drive for acceptance.

In 1977, the Castro District elected Harvey Milk to the city Board of Supervisors. Milk, a gay activist who organized the district’s merchants group, became the first openly gay city official elected in the United States. The drama of gay liberation heightened when former Supervisor Dan White, a former cop and the city’s most anti-gay politician, assassinated Milk and pro-gay mayor George Moscone in City Hall in 1978. Six months later, after White was sentenced to only five years for the double murder, a mob marched on City Hall, drawing worldwide attention and headlines. (White, paroled in 1985, eventually committed suicide.)

In the 1970s, San Francisco became notorious for its bar-and-bathhouse culture and its anonymous promiscuity. But the reputation toned down after AIDS struck in the early 1980s, causing more than 11,000 deaths in San Francisco. Socially, the city’s gay scene mellowed in the 1990s, although gay bars, parades, and street fairs are still prevalent.

The 1980s also saw a flowering of the city's lesbian culture that parallels the male upswing of the 1970s. Today, as in most American cities, the lesbian community is more subtle and less visible than the gay scene (but it's just as powerful politically). Much smaller than the Castro, the main lesbian community is concentrated around 16th and Valencia Streets in the Mission District, while larger lesbian communities are across the bay in Oakland and Berkeley.

In the late 1990s, the city's gays and lesbians escaped the moral backlash provoked by AIDS in other parts of the country, thanks to San Francisco's tolerance and the gay community's support of people with AIDS and their survivors. Gays have, by and large, melded into the mainstream. Gay life is less ghettoized, and gay bars and clubs are scattered all over town. For years the city has had gay and lesbian political leaders, police officers, bureaucrats, and judges. It can be argued that one of the major aims of the gay liberation movement has been met here—the acceptance of people regardless of whether they're gay or straight.

GAY VISITORS

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR GAY AND LESBIAN visitors to the city? By and large, you needn't concern yourself with fitting in during a visit to San Francisco. Take, for example, getting a room. While many hotels are gay-owned and cater to a gay clientele, the Bay Area's level of tolerance just about guarantees that a visitor's sexual orientation—and the roommate's gender—isn't going to be an issue at any hotel in or around San Francisco.

BEFORE YOU GO

FOR INFORMATION ON THE CITY'S GAY SCENE, check out **www.timeout.com/sanfrancisco/gay**. A good site for tours is **www.sfgaytours.com**.

GAY AND LESBIAN PUBLICATIONS AND COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARDS

NUMEROUS NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES in San Francisco cater to the gay and lesbian community. The largest and best-known are the *San Francisco Bay Times* (distributed every other Thursday; ☎ 415-626-0260; **www.sfbaytimes.com**) and the weekly *Bay Area Reporter* (distributed on Thursdays; ☎ 415-861-5019; **www.ebar.com**). Both are free and are distributed to bookstores, bars, and street vending boxes. The newspapers provide complete event calendars and resource listings for gays and lesbians.

Other publications include *Drummer* (a gay leather and S/M webzine; **www.drummer.com**), *Girlfriends* (a monthly magazine for lesbians; ☎ 415-648-9464; **www.girlfriendsmag.com**), and *Odyssey* (a gay nightclub and listing guide published every other Friday;

☎ 415-621-6514). The *Gay Guide* and *Betty and Pansy's Severe Queer Review* are more underground papers found at cafés throughout the Castro and the Mission. An excellent place to find these publications and others under one roof is the bookstore **A Different Light** (489 Castro Street; ☎ 415-431-0891).

The San Francisco gay and lesbian community has several information resources. One of the more popular is the **Women's Building of the Bay Area** in the Mission District (☎ 415-431-1180; www.womensbuilding.org). It's a clearinghouse for feminist and lesbian art, entertainment, and resource information; call from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

CELEBRATE GAY TIMES: TOP GAY ATTRACTIONS

- **AIDS Memorial Chapel** and the **Keith Haring Altarpiece** in Grace Cathedral off of California Street, ☎ 415-749-6300.
- **The Names Project Visitor Center** on Market Street is perhaps the most well known of all AIDS memorials. You can watch the panels being created, and there are tons of informational videos on the making of the quilt and the meaning of the project. The national headquarter's number in Atlanta is ☎ 404-688-5500.
- **Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Pride Parade** (☎ 415-864-3733; www.sfpride.org) every June follows Market Street from the Civic Center to the Embarcadero. The parade is for the flamboyant, shy, family, couple . . . anybody wanting to express themselves for a day! Dykes on Bikes kicks off the celebration; \$3 donation requested.
- **Castro Street Fair** in October is a scaled-down version of the Pride Parade. Costumes, shopping, and munching are all part of the festivities (☎ 415-841-1824; www.castrostreetfair.org).
- **A Different Light Bookshop** (489 Castro Street; ☎ 415-431-0891; www.adlbooks.com) stocks its shelves with mostly gay and lesbian literature by gay and lesbian authors.
- **Theatre Rhinoceros** (2926 16th Street, in the Mission at South Van Ness; ☎ 415-861-5079; www.therhino.org) is the place to come for gay performance art.
- **Bay to Breakers Race** (☎ 415-359-2800; www.baytobreakers.com) held in May is not just the largest footrace in the world, it's also the most fun you'll ever have on a Sunday afternoon! Come dressed up (although clothes are optional), bring the beer or margarita, and race your way from Fremont Street to Ocean Beach.
- **Cruisin' the Castro Tour** on Tuesdays through Saturdays (☎ 415-255-1821) takes you on a walking tour to all the sights of the Castro, highlighting history along the way.

GAY NEIGHBORHOODS

THE TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD FOR GAY MEN has been the sprawling Castro, now more typified by prepped-up, well-heeled yuppies than the disheveled leftists and ex-hippies that symbolized the early days of the gay liberation movement. SoMa, the city's emerging

art-and-nightlife district, features a gay enclave around Folsom Street; the look tends toward black leather and chains. Polk Street and the edges of the Tenderloin District is the tight-blue-jeans-and-pimps zone of young gay transients; it's not the safest part of town at 2 a.m. (or anytime—see below). An enclave of successful gay business executives resides in posh and proper Pacific Heights. Noe's 24th Street, Bernal Heights, and Hayes Valley are San Francisco's newest lesbian/gay-oriented neighborhoods. Just take a look inside Bernal's dyke bar Wild Side West—the oldest women's bar in the city.

While San Francisco is hands-down the most tolerant city in the country, gay bashing is still alive. Avoid displays of affection in the Mission District, the largely Hispanic neighborhood where street gangs have attacked gay men. While the Polk Street area has a long gay history, it's now primarily a hustling scene with many bars and porn shops; it's a dangerous area, and more gay bashing is reported here than in any other part of the city.

A CALENDAR *of* FESTIVALS *and* EVENTS

SAN FRANCISCO HOSTS A VARIETY OF ANNUAL special events throughout the year, including films, jazz and blues festivals, craft fairs, art festivals, street fairs, and ethnic festivals. Exact dates are subject to change, so be sure to call the number indicated if you are interested in attending.

unofficial TIP
We've highlighted some not-to-be-missed events that are true showcases of the city's vibrant arts, funk, and soul (look for the ★).

January

CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION The city's largest festival with a parade from Market and Second streets to Columbus Avenue. ☎ 415-982-3000; www.chineseparade.com.

MACWORLD EXPO Where better to see the latest in chips, bytes, and megahertz than San Francisco! Moscone Center. ☎ 415-974-4000; www.macworldexpo.com.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION A host of festivities highlight the city's commemoration of Dr. King's life. San Francisco Exploratorium. ☎ 415-561-0360; www.exploratorium.edu.

SAN FRANCISCO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL Showcases the best of indie films from the Bay Area and beyond. Various locations. ☎ 415-820-3907; www.sfindie.com.

SAN FRANCISCO SPORTS AND BOAT SHOW Boats, fishing tackle, camping gear, and hunting equipment on display. Cow Palace. ☎ 415-931-2500; www.sfboatshow.com.

SEA LION'S ANNUAL ARRIVAL AT PIER 39 Spectators can see, hear, and enjoy hundreds of sea lions in close proximity. ☎ 415-705-5500; www.pier39.com.

February

★ **CALIFORNIA INTERNATIONAL ANTIQUARIAN BOOK FAIR** World's largest rare book fair. Concourse Exhibition Center. ☎ 415-551-5190; www.californiabookfair.com.

SAN FRANCISCO ARTS OF PACIFIC ASIA SHOW Exhibitors from around the world offer antiques and art from the Pacific Asia region. Fort Mason. ☎ 310-455-2886; www.asianart.org.

SAN FRANCISCO ORCHID SOCIETY'S PACIFIC ORCHID EXPOSITION An annual expo featuring dozens of floral collections. Fort Mason. ☎ 415-665-2468; www.orchidsanfrancisco.org.

SAN FRANCISCO TRIBAL, FOLK, AND TEXTILE ARTS SHOW More than 80 folk and ethnic art dealers sell North American pottery, basketry, textiles, and jewelry. Fort Mason. ☎ 310-455-2886; www.caskeylees.com.

★ **TULIPMANIA** View more than 40,000 brilliantly colored tulips from around the world. Pier 39, Fisherman's Wharf. ☎ 415-705-5500; www.pier39.com.

March

ACROSS THE BAY 12K RACE The largest run ever to cross the Golden Gate Bridge. It ends with a bang, at the post-race party at Fisherman's Wharf. 8 a.m. start time. Sausalito to Fisherman's Wharf. ☎ 415-759-2690; www.rhodyco.com/across12k.html.

BOUQUETS TO ART Works by 100 floral designers, lectures by horticultural experts, luncheons, and tea service. California Palace of the Legion of Honor. ☎ 415-750-3600; www.famsf.org.

★ **ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE DOWNTOWN** The Irish have an annual march from Fifth and Market streets to the Embarcadero. ☎ 415-675-9885; www.sfstpatricksdaysparade.com.

SAN FRANCISCO FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW 27 gardens, 300 market booths, orchid show, and 75 free seminars. Cow Palace. ☎ 415-771-6909; www.gardenshow.com/sf.

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL ASIAN-AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL The biggest ever in North America dedicated to the exhibition of Asian-American and Asian cinema. AMC Kabuki Theaters. ☎ 415-225-4299; www.naatnet.org/festival.

April

CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL Taiko drumming, martial arts, Japanese food. A parade from Civic Center to Japantown. Japantown. ☎ 415-563-2313; www.nccbf.org.

★ **SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL** (April through May) More than 100 films and videos from around the world. Various locations but mostly at the AMC Kabuki and Castro Theaters. ☎ 415-561-5000; www.sffs.org.

May

CINCO DE MAYO CELEBRATION Arts, crafts, and food, as well as a parade to celebrate Mexican independence. Mission District. ☎ 415-256-3005; www.cincodemayosf.com.

SAN FRANCISCO DECORATOR SHOWCASE Top Bay Area designers display the latest design innovations at luxurious San Francisco homes. Pacific Heights. ☎ 415-447-3115; www.decoratorshowcase.org.

★ **SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER BAY TO BREAKERS FOOTRACE** Come sporting your birthday suit or whatever other costume you can muster up and take part in the world's largest footrace. Clothes optional, beer mandatory. The Embarcadero to the Great Highway. ☎ 415-359-2800; www.baytobreakers.com.

SAN FRANCISCO YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL Area students display their works. Golden Gate Park. ☎ 415-750-8630; www.sfyouthartsfestival.org.

June

★ **HAIGHT STREET FAIR** Bring out the tie-dye and lava lamps—the Haight celebrates its roots with arts, crafts, and entertainment. Haight Street. ☎ 415-863-3489; www.haightstreetfair.org.

JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL An annual outdoor event celebrating African-American culture. Fillmore Street. ☎ 415-931-2729; www.sfjune15th.org.

★ **LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER PRIDE CELEBRATION FESTIVAL AND PARADE** San Francisco's celebration of lesbian and gay pride. Castro District. ☎ 415-864-3733; www.sfpride.org.

NORTH BEACH FESTIVAL San Francisco's oldest street fair offers arts, crafts, and live entertainment. Grant Avenue and Green Street. ☎ 415-989-2220; www.sfnorthbeach.org.

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY FILM FESTIVAL The second-largest film festival in California showcases more than 100 films and videos from around the world. Castro Theatre and other locations. ☎ 415-703-8650; www.frameline.org/festival.

★ **UNION STREET SPRING FESTIVAL ARTS AND CRAFTS FAIR** Arts and crafts, wine, food, a waiter's race, tea dancing, a fashion show, street performers, and a swing dance contest. Union Street. ☎ 800-310-6563; www.unionstreetfestival.com.

July

CABLE CAR BELL-RINGING COMPETITION Where the cars come to belt out their favorite tune—operators clang out melodies on the cars' bells and compete for top bell-ringer. Fisherman's Wharf. ☎ 415-474-1887; www.cablecarmuseum.org.

FILLMORE STREET JAZZ FESTIVAL Three stages of continuous jazz performances, more than 300 artists' booths, and an international food court. Free. Fillmore Street. ☎ 800-731-0003; www.fillmorejazzfestival.com.

FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION It's that childhood favorite, fireworks! Entertainment, food, arts and crafts. Fisherman's Wharf. ☎ 415-705-5500; www.pier39.com.

JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL Films from American and international filmmakers showcase Jewish culture. Castro. ☎ 415-621-0556; www.sjfff.org.

August

ACC CRAFT FAIR The largest juried craft fair on the West Coast features necklaces, stoneware, silk scarves, and quilts. Fort Mason. ☎ 800-836-3470; www.craftcouncil.org.

AFRO SOLO ARTS FESTIVAL Festival commemorating the African-American experience through solo performances. Yerba Center of Arts and other locations. ☎ 415-771-2370; www.afrosolo.org/events.html.

GOLDEN GATEWAY TO GEMS Minerals, crystals, and jewelry from all over the world. San Francisco County Fair Building. ☎ 415-564-4230; www.sfgms.org.

NIHONMACHI STREET FAIR Lion dancers, taiko drummers, Japanese arts and crafts, music, food, and children's events. Japantown and Japan Center. ☎ 415-771-9861; www.nihonmachistreetfair.org.

September

★ **À LA CARTE, À LA PARK** Bring an empty stomach and an adventurous gastronomic appetite for this outdoor smorgasbord. Outdoor dining with over 40 restaurants and chefs, wineries and microbreweries, celebrity chefs, and music. Golden Gate Park. ☎ 415-478-2277.

AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL Multicultural entertainment, traditional lion and dragon dances, Chinese costumes, and children's activities. Grant Avenue between California and Pacific Streets. ☎ 415-982-6306; www.moonfestival.org.

FOLSOM STREET FAIR A popular fair with arts and crafts, kinky collectibles, entertainment, and food. For obvious reasons, it's for adults only! Folsom Street. ☎ 415-861-3247; www.folsomstreetfair.com.

GHIRARDELLI SQUARE CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL A chocolate lover's dream! Sample chocolate treats and more. Ghirardelli Square. ☎ 415-775-5500; www.ghirardellisq.com.

★ **SAN FRANCISCO BLUES FESTIVAL** The oldest blues festival in the country. Great Meadow, Fort Mason. ☎ 415-979-5588; www.sfblues.com.

SAN FRANCISCO FRINGE FESTIVAL Marathon of 260 performances by 50 theater companies in various venues. Downtown. ☎ 415-931-1094; www.sffringe.org.

SAN FRANCISCO GRAND PRIX Top international bicycle racers compete through the streets of San Francisco. ☎ 415-705-6000; www.sanfrangrandprix.com.

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL ART EXPOSITION Galleries exhibit their collections of more than 1,500 artists, ranging from painting to drawing to sculpture to prints and video. Fort Mason. ☎ 312-587-3300; www.sfiaa.com.

SAN FRANCISCO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL All of Shakespeare's classics. Pack a picnic lunch and your *Cliffs Notes* and enjoy Saturdays and Sundays on several weekends throughout the summer; locals arrive by noon for a seat. Golden Gate Park. ☎ 415-865-4434; www.sfshakes.org.

SAUSALITO ART FESTIVAL A fine-arts festival with more than 20,000 original works of art from around the world. Sausalito. ☎ 415-332-3555; www.sausalitoartfestival.org.

October

INTERNATIONAL VINTAGE POSTER FAIR The oldest and largest vintage poster fair in the world. Fort Mason Center. ☎ 650-548-6700; www.posterfair.com.

ITALIAN HERITAGE PARADE AND FESTIVAL A commemoration of the city's Italian heritage with a parade through North Beach. North Beach, Fisherman's Wharf. ☎ 415-703-9888; www.sfcolumbusday.org/parade.

SAN FRANCISCO JAZZ FESTIVAL Features local, national, and international jazz artists at locations throughout the city. ☎ 800-850-7353; www.sfjazz.org.

November/December

CHRISTMAS AT SEA Caroling, storytelling, hot cider, cookies, children's crafts, and Santa. Hyde Street Pier. ☎ 415-561-6662.

GHIRARDELLI SQUARE ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY Deck the 35-foot Christmas tree with cheer and good tidings. Ghirardelli Square. ☎ 415-775-5500; www.ghirardellisq.com.

ORIGINALS HOLIDAY GIFT SHOW An arts-and-crafts fair for the holiday season. Concourse Exhibition Center. ☎ 707-778-6300; www.originalsartandcraftshow.com.

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET'S NUTCRACKER America's oldest ballet company, regarded as one of its finest, presents Tchaikovsky's beloved family classic every December. War Memorial Opera House. ☎ 415-865-2000; www.sfballet.org.

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW The latest and greatest in automobiles. Moscone Center. ☎ 415-331-4406; www.sfauto.com.