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# The Best **Full-Day** **Tours**



# The Best in One Day



Previous page: The beloved International Orange icon, the Golden Gate Bridge.

**T**his full-day tour introduces you to San Francisco's best-known neighborhoods—Union Square to scenic Fisherman's Wharf, historic North Beach, and vibrant Chinatown. Once you arrive at Fisherman's Wharf, you can do the rest on foot, but public transportation options are listed, just in case. **START: BART/Muni at Powell or Montgomery. Bus no. 2, 3, 4, 38 to Powell Street or bus no. 30 or 45 to Geary Street. Cable car on Powell lines.**

**1 Union Square.** Start your tour at the shopping and commercial hub of San Francisco. The square itself, named for a series of violent pro-union mass demonstrations staged here on the eve of the Civil War, is an oft-used art and music exhibition space. Restored for \$25 million in 2002, all that remains from the old square is the 90-foot (27m) Victory Tower, dedicated by Theodore Roosevelt after the Spanish-American War. ⌚ 30 min; best before 9am. Union Sq. is btw. Post, Geary, Stockton & Powell sts. BART: Powell or Montgomery. Bus: 2, 3, 4, 38 to Powell St. or 30, 45 to Geary St. Cable car: Powell lines.

**2 ★★ kids Ride the Powell-Hyde cable car.** Head to the cable-car turnaround at Powell and Market streets and await the Powell-Hyde line. The first of these engineless cars made its maiden voyage in 1873. The cable car will take you over Russian Hill. Pay attention as you crest Hyde Street at Greenwich

Street: You'll catch your first breathtaking glimpse of the San Francisco Bay and Alcatraz Island. For details on how these cars work, see p 167.

⌚ 30 min; best before 9:30am. Powell & Market sts. \$5 per ride.

**3 ★ Lombard Street.** "The crookedest street in the world" is in fact not even the crookedest street in San Francisco (Vermont St. btw. 20th and 22nd sts. in Potrero Hill is more crooked!). The zigzags were added in the 1920s, as the street's 27-degree pitch was too steep for cars. Cars are only permitted to descend, but pedestrians can take the stairs up or down on either side. ⌚ 30 min.; best weekday mornings. Lombard St. (btw. Hyde & Leavenworth sts.). Cable car: Powell-Hyde line.

**4 ★★ Fisherman's Wharf.** San Francisco's most-visited destination is filled with history and a multitude of activities. Although the wharf has plenty of tacky souvenir shops and overpriced restaurants, it offers

*Riding a cable car is one of the best ways to see San Francisco up close.*



some beautiful vistas that make a visit well worth it. The following minitour points you to the wharf's most scenic aspects and minimizes time in the crowds. ⌚ 90 min. Hyde & Beach sts. [www.fishermanswharf.org](http://www.fishermanswharf.org)

*org. Bus: 10, 30, 47 to Van Ness Ave. & N. Point St. or 19 to Polk & Beach sts. Cable car: Powell-Hyde line to Fisherman's Wharf or Powell-Mason line to Taylor & Bay sts. Streetcar: F to Jones & Beach sts.*

## Fisherman's Wharf



**4A Victorian Park** is where you'll alight from the cable car. You'll see arts and crafts for sale as you walk toward **4B Ghirardelli Square**, built in 1893 as Domingo Ghirardelli's chocolate factory. When the factory moved in the 1960s, the building became a National Historic Landmark and now houses a mall.

**4C The Maritime Museum** (p 23) is a three-story Art Deco structure shaped like an ocean liner and filled with seafaring memorabilia. A walk along the **4D Municipal Pier** affords views of the Golden Gate Bridge. The **4E Hyde Street Pier** (p 22) holds

refurbished antique ships, including a 19th-century square-rigger. Walk to the end of the pier to take in the view of the Golden Gate Bridge.

**4F The Cannery**, once a fruit-canning facility, now houses shops, restaurants, and the National Maritime Visitors Center. **4G Order a crepe** from the cart in the Cannery courtyard. Now fortified, you can brave the crowds at **4H PIER 39**. Look for the infamous sea lions that have lived by the pier since 1989.

⌚ 2–3 hr.; go in the morning to beat the crowds; bring a jacket—it can be chilly year-round.

**5 ★ Coit Tower.** The 210-foot (64m) landmark atop Telegraph Hill was erected in 1933 with \$125,000 bequeathed by local character Lillie Hitchcock Coit, who wished to add beauty to the city. Inside the tower's base are murals by several artists, many of whom studied under Diego Rivera. Commissioned as part of the New Deal's Works Project Administration, the murals have a pro-worker motif that caused a stir in their day. Pay the fee to climb the tower: A 360-degree city view awaits you. While on Telegraph Hill, look out for the flock of wild green parrots, descendants of escaped pets. 🕒 45 min. ☎ 415/362-0808. *Admission to the top \$5 adults, \$3.50 seniors, \$1.50 kids 6–12. Daily 10am–6pm. Bus: 39.*

**6 ★★ North Beach.** The immigrants from Genoa and Sicily who founded the Bay Area's fishing industry settled into North Beach in the 1870s—establishing a plethora of Italian restaurants, cafes, and bakeries. In the 1950s, the area's cafes and bars became a haven for writers and artists from the **Beat Generation** (p 49). Today the neighborhood is a combination of Mediterranean warmth and Bohemian spirit. For more on this area, see p 46. 🕒 1–2 hr.; *best Mon–Sat from 11am–4pm. Sun and early mornings shops are closed. Bus: 39 to Washington Sq.*

**7 🍷 Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store and Cafe.** Pick up sandwiches and enjoy them in Washington Square Park (p 47) across the street. *566 Columbus Ave. (at Union St.). ☎ 415/362-0536. \$.*



*PIER 39's sea lions bathe, bark, and splash about—it's one of the best shows in town, and it's free.*

**8 Chinatown.** The most densely populated neighborhood in San Francisco, Chinatown is also one of the most fascinating. Take a walk down Grant Street to find shops filled with creative, eclectic knick-knacks. Chinatown locals shop on Stockton Street, which is teeming with grocery stores, herb shops, and vendors of ceremonial items. *(See p 42 for a complete tour of this colorful neighborhood.) 🕒 1–2 hr.*

# The Best in Two Days



- |                                |                                               |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1 Ferry to Alcatraz Island     | 9 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) |
| 2 Red & White Fleet Bay Cruise | 10 SoMa                                       |
| 3 F-Market Streetcar           | 11 Yerba Buena Center for the Arts            |
| 4 Ferry Building               | 12 Civic Center                               |
| 5 Ferry Plaza Farmers Market   | 13 Zuni Café                                  |
| 6 Gott's Roadside              | 14 Suppenküche                                |
| 7 Embarcadero Promenade        |                                               |
| 8 Garden Court                 |                                               |

**If you have two days, take the one-day tour outlined above on the first day.** For your second day, you should start by going to prison. For many, a visit to Alcatraz is a major highlight. However, pre-reserved tickets are required. If you're unable to get tickets ahead of time, I've listed an alternative bay cruise. Following Alcatraz (or the cruise), you'll get a taste for the city's epicurean underpinnings, as well as its rich artistic and cultural life, in SoMa and the Civic Center. You'll want the whole day for this tour. **START: Pier 41, Fisherman's Wharf. Cable car Powell-Mason. Bus no. 30. Streetcar F.**

**1 ★★★ Alcatraz Island.** This tiny island, less than 1½ miles (2.4km) offshore, beckons onlookers taking in the vista of the SF Bay. It's hard to believe this scenic rock once housed the country's most hardened criminals, including Al Capone, "Machine Gun" Kelly, and Robert Stroud (the Birdman). Spanish for "pelican," Alcatraz was so named in 1775 for the birds that nested on its rocky shores. From the 1850s to 1933, the U.S. military used Alcatraz as a fort, and in 1934 the government converted it into a maximum-security prison. Given its sheer cliffs and surrounded by frigid waters with treacherous currents, Alcatraz was considered inescapable. However, the prison's upkeep cost a fortune, as all supplies had to come by boat. In 1962 three prisoners did escape; the prison was shut down the next year. The island remained unoccupied until 1969, when Native Americans seized it to publicize American Indian rights' issues. They were expelled in 1971. Today, the National Park Service manages Alcatraz. The boat trip to

Alcatraz takes you over chilly waters away from the vibrant city; you arrive and walk uphill to the barren former prison. During the audio tour, former guards and inmates recount riveting tales of prison life and spectacular escape attempts. Two night tours (highly recommended) are also available, offering a more intimate and wonderfully spooky experience.

 **2–3 hr., including ferry ride. Take the first ferry of the day, if possible. Wear a jacket & walking shoes; it's an uphill walk from the ferry landing to the prison (motorized carts carry visitors with disabilities). The ferry sells snacks, but there's no food on the island. Pier 41, Fisherman's Wharf. ☎ 415/981-7625 to reserve tickets. [www.alcatrazcruises.com](http://www.alcatrazcruises.com) or [www.nps.gov/alcatraz](http://www.nps.gov/alcatraz). Admission (includes ferry trip and audio tour) \$26 adults, \$25 seniors 62 & older, \$16 children 5–11. Night tours cost \$33 adults, \$31 seniors 62 & older, \$20 children 5–11. Arrive at least 20 min. before departure time. Bus: 30. Cable car: Powell-Mason line. Streetcar: F.**

*Take a daytime (or even better, nighttime) tour of Alcatraz (a.k.a. "The Rock"). Book ahead.*



**2 ★ Red & White Fleet Bay Cruise.** If you are unable to pre-reserve Alcatraz tickets, take a 1-hour bay cruise with audio narration. You'll travel under the Golden Gate Bridge and around Alcatraz while you take in dazzling views.

🕒 1 hr. Pier 43½. ☎ 415/673-2900. [www.redandwhite.com](http://www.redandwhite.com). Tickets \$24 adults, \$16 seniors over 62 & kids 5–17, free for kids under 5. Check the website for discount fares. Bus: 30. Cable car: Powell-Mason line. Streetcar: F.

**3 ★ F-Market Streetcar.** Several streetcars travel along Market Street, but the F line also heads along the scenic waterfront. Its streetcars are imported from around the world, including vintage cars from Europe and turn-of-the-20th-century trolleys from other U.S. cities. 🕒 15 min.; avoid rush hour (Mon–Fri, before 9:30am & 4:30–6:30pm). Board at Beach & Stockton sts.; exit at the Ferry Terminal loop. Fare \$2 adults, 75¢ seniors & kids 5–17.

**4 ★★ Ferry Building.** This 1898 building reopened in 2003 after a 4-year, multimillion-dollar renovation. Outside, you'll see a 240-foot

*Take a trip back in time on a vintage F-Market & Wharves line streetcar.*



(72m) clock tower. Inside is a collection of restaurants and gourmet-food stores offering artisan cheese, handcrafted chocolates, and other specialty foods that will make your mouth water. Make your way to the back of the building for a look at the stately Bay Bridge. If you're lucky, you'll visit on a day the **Farmers Market** is being held. 🕒 1 hr. 1 Ferry Building (at the Embarcadero & Market sts.). [www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com](http://www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com). Mon–Fri 10am–6pm; Sat 9am–6pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Bus: 2, 14, 21 to Steuart & Market sts. Streetcar: F, any Market St. streetcar to the Ferry Bldg. or Embarcadero.

**5 ★★★ Ferry Plaza Farmers Market.** On Saturday and Tuesday, local farmers and food producers set up booths around the Ferry Building. On Saturday mornings, the market teems with locals making their regular market trek to stock up on organic fruits and vegetables, naturally raised meats, fresh-baked goods, and so on. Saturdays also feature trailer cars out back, from which city restaurants serve gourmet breakfasts. Given the penchant for using local, organic, and naturally raised produce and meats at many San Francisco restaurants—not to mention homes—this market is a hallmark of city life. 🕒 1 hr. 1 Ferry Building (at Embarcadero & Market sts.). Tues 10am–2pm; Sat 8am–2pm.

**6 ☕ Gott's Roadside.** Order an all-natural Niman Ranch burger with sweet potato fries and sit at the outdoor tables. (See p 21 for full review.) Ferry Building Marketplace. ☎ 415/318-3423. \$.

**7 ★★ Embarcadero Promenade.** The city developed this scenic stretch of waterfront after the

1989 earthquake destroyed the ugly elevated freeway that once obscured the view. The wide sidewalk and bayside scenery make this a favored destination for pedestrians, bikers, and runners. Notice the Embarcadero Ribbon, a 2½-mile (4km) continuous line of glass encased in concrete, as well as the 13-foot-tall (4m) metal pylons and bronze plaques embedded in the sidewalk, which are imprinted with photographs, drawings, poetry, and historical facts about the waterfront.

🕒 **30 min.–1 hr.;** *avoid weekday afternoons 4–6pm when traffic is heavy. Return to Market St. to catch the F-Market streetcar to the Montgomery St. station, or walk.*

**8 Garden Court.** The extravagant Palace Hotel astounded San Franciscans and bankrupted its owner, who allegedly committed suicide a day before the grand opening in 1875. Three decades later the hotel was ravaged by fire following the 1906 earthquake. The hotel was restored and reopened in 1909, unveiling the magnificent Garden Court with its domed ceiling made from 80,000 panes of glass. After admiring the glass ceiling, step

into the Pied Piper bar to admire the \$2.5-million Maxfield Parrish painting of the same name. 🕒 **20 min. 2** *New Montgomery St. (at Market St.).* ☎ **415/546-5089.** [www.sfpalacerestaurants.com/gardencourt](http://www.sfpalacerestaurants.com/gardencourt). *Mon–Sat 6:30am–11am and 11:30am–2pm; Sun breakfast 6:30–9:30am; Sun brunch 10am–2pm; Sat tea 1–3pm. BART/Muni: Powell, Montgomery.*

**9 ★★★ San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA).** In 1995, SFMOMA moved into its \$62-million home, designed by Swiss architect Mario Botta. The permanent collection includes more than 15,000 works by Henri Matisse, Jackson Pollock, Georgia O’Keeffe, and others. The first major museum to recognize photography as an art form, SFMOMA also has numerous excellent examples by Ansel Adams, Man Ray, and others. Not enough of the permanent collection is on display at any one time, but temporary exhibits are usually excellent. The **Caffè Museo**, to the right of the museum entrance, offers very good quality fresh soups, sandwiches, and salads. Be sure to visit the **MuseumStore**, which carries a

*The glass ceiling of the Garden Court is a glittering masterpiece.*



wonderful array of modern and contemporary art books, innovative design objects and furniture, jewelry and apparel, educational children's books and toys, posters, and stationery: It's one of the best gift shops in town. 🕒 *1½ hr.; weekdays are the best time to visit.* 151 3rd St. (btw. Mission & Howard sts.). ☎ 415/357-4000. [www.sfmoma.com](http://www.sfmoma.com). Admission \$18 adults, \$9 seniors over 62, \$9 students with ID, free for kids 12 and under. Half-price Thurs 6–9pm. Free to all 1st Tues of the month. Thurs 11am–8:45pm; Fri–Tues 11am–5:45pm. Closed Wed & major holidays. Bus: 15, 30, 45. BART/Muni: Montgomery St.

**10 ★★★ SoMa (South of Market).** This former industrial area south of Market Street has become a major center for art and culture. While the SFMOMA and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, detailed in bullets 9 and 11 respectively, are the cultural anchors of the neighborhood, you'll find numerous other museums and galleries here. I list my favorites in the minitour on the next page. 🕒 *2–4 hr. Visit any time during daylight hours, although SFMOMA is closed Wed.*

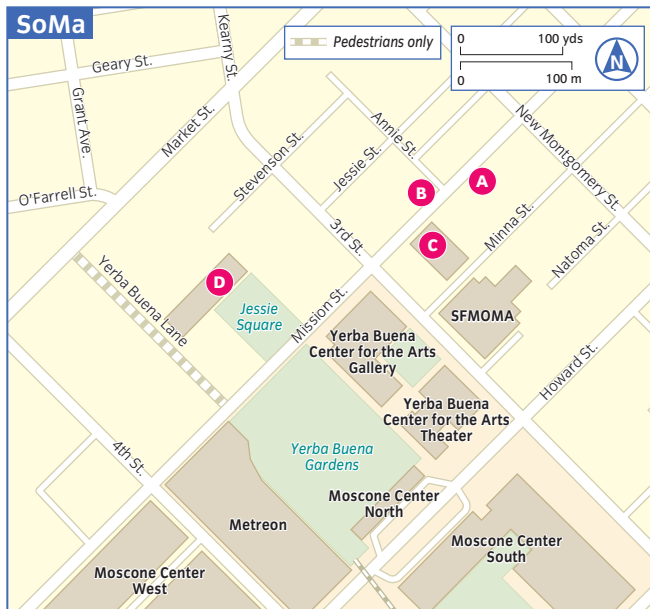
SFMOMA.



**11 ★★★ kids Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA).**

The YBCA transformed an area once filled with dilapidated buildings into San Francisco's artistic center. Take a moment to stroll through the tranquil grounds and contemplate the soothing Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Fountain. From May to October, you might enjoy a free concert on the grassy Esplanade. Among the structures here, the galleries building designed by Pritzker Architecture Prize-winning architect Fumihiko Maki contains several exhibition spaces, while the theater building hosts dance, music, and theater performances. Kids will enjoy Yerba Buena's playground, ice-skating rink, bowling alley, and Zeum, a high-tech museum for children. 🕒 *1½ hr.; best time to come is during daylight hours.* ☎ 415/978-2787. [www.ybca.org](http://www.ybca.org). Ice-skating & bowling center: 750 Folsom St. ☎ 415/820-3532. [www.skatebowl.com](http://www.skatebowl.com). Zeum: 701 Mission St. ☎ 415/777-2800. [www.zeum.com](http://www.zeum.com). Admission \$10 adults, \$8 students & seniors, \$8 kids 3–18, free for kids under 3. Wed–Fri 1pm–5pm; Sat–Sun 11am–6pm.

**12 ★★ Civic Center.** Less than a decade after the 1906 earthquake destroyed City Hall, San Francisco completed an ambitious new administrative and cultural center in grandiose, Beaux Arts style. It contains City Hall, with its 308-foot-tall (92m) dome; the homes of the San Francisco Symphony, Opera, and Ballet; the main public library; the Asian Art Museum; and other notable buildings. For more details on the Civic Center, see the neighborhood tour on p 57. 🕒 *1 hr.; best time to visit are weekdays during daylight hours. Most Civic Center buildings are bordered by Hayes, Franklin & Hyde sts. & Golden Gate Ave.*



The **A California Historical Society** has artwork detailing California history, including photographs by Ansel Adams. 678 Mission St. ☎ 415/357-1848. [www.california-historical-society.org](http://www.california-historical-society.org). Admission \$3 adults, \$1 students & seniors, free for kids under 5. Wed–Sat noon–4:30pm. Among the cool things at the **B Museum of the African Diaspora** is a three-stories-tall image of a young girl composed of thousands of photographs. 685 Mission St. ☎ 415/358-7200. [www.moadsf.org](http://www.moadsf.org). Admission \$10 adults, \$5 students & seniors, free for kids under 13. Wed–Sat 11am–6pm; Sun

noon–5pm. The **C Contemporary Jewish Museum** opened in spring 2008 in an arresting building designed by Daniel Libeskind. 736 Mission St. ☎ 415/655-7835. [www.thecjm.org](http://www.thecjm.org). \$10 adults, \$8 seniors/students, \$5 Thurs after 5pm Fri–Tues 11am–5pm; Thurs 1pm–8pm. The **D Museum of Craft and Folk Art** features folk art from around the world. 51 Yerba Buena Ln. (at Mission St. btw. 3rd & 4th sts.). ☎ 415/227-4888. [www.mocfa.org](http://www.mocfa.org). Admission \$5 adults, \$4 seniors, free under 18. Wed–Sat 11am–6pm.

Treat yourselves to dinner at **13 Zuni Café** (1658 Market St.; ☎ 415/552-2522; \$\$\$; see p 116), an SF institution and one of the first purveyors of innovative California

cuisine. For a festive—and cheaper—alternative, enjoy hearty German fare and refreshing beers at **14 Suppenküche** (601 Hayes St.; ☎ 415/252-9289; \$\$; see p 113).

## The Best in Three Days



**F**or those who can stay 3 days in the city, we recommend that you spend the third day visiting one of San Francisco's most celebrated landmarks, the Golden Gate Bridge. You'll take in breathtaking views from there, as well as from the de Young Tower in Golden Gate Park and again from the Top of the Mark in historic Nob Hill. Dress warmly. **START: Chestnut and Fillmore streets. Bus no. 22, 30.**

**1 ★ The Marina.** Start your day in this mercifully hill-free San Francisco neighborhood, where parents pushing strollers share the sidewalk with young urbanites buying their lattes before hopping on the bus to work. Window-shop at the many boutiques before stepping into the Grove (p 55). Fortify yourselves with a good breakfast before trekking the bridge. For more on Chestnut Street, see p 55. ⌚ **45 min. Chestnut St., btw. Fillmore & Divisadero sts.**

**2 ★★★ Golden Gate Bridge.** At any time of day, gleaming in sunshine or draped in wispy white fog, this imposing red structure spanning the narrow opening into the San Francisco Bay—with the wooded Presidio on one end and the golden Marin Headlands on the other—is a sight to behold. Crossing the bridge itself offers breathtaking views of the SF skyline, the bay flecked with picturesque sailboats, and the area's striking, hilly geography. If you don't want to walk all the way across, you can head part of the way and then return. You can also take a bus back. For more details, see p 39. ⌚ **1½–2 hr.; best in the morning or midday, before the wind picks up. Bus: 28. Catch bus westbound on Lombard St. and exit at south end of Golden Gate Bridge.**

**3 ★★★ Golden Gate Park.** The park itself is the pride of San Francisco, but what really makes it special are the multitude of attractions located within it, such as the de Young Museum and California

Academy of Sciences. Visit the de Young first, so you can grab lunch at the cafe (see next stop). Then check out the California Academy of Sciences in its new, very green home. After that, stroll through the serenely beautiful Japanese Tea Garden and the fascinating Conservatory of Flowers. For a complete description, see the Golden Gate Park tour on p 88. Don't miss the free trip up the de Young's observation tower for panoramic city, park, and Marin Headlands views. ⌚ **2–3 hr. Bus: 28. Catch bus southbound; exit on Presidio Park and Fulton St. and walk east 4 blocks to de Young entrance.**

*Whether you drive, bike, or walk, you'll never forget the first time you cross the Golden Gate.*



**4 ☕ de Young Cafe.** Grab a sandwich made with fresh local ingredients and enjoy it alfresco next to the resplendent sculpture garden.

**50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr.**

☎ 415/750-2614. \$.

**5 Nob Hill.** This neighborhood is named for its once wealthy residents, or “nabobs” as the elite of San Francisco were known. The “Big Four” railroad barons of the Southern Pacific Railroad—Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, Charles Crocker, and Collis Huntington—built their ostentatious mansions here in the late 1870s. They were all destroyed in the fire following the 1906 quake. Today some of the city’s most prestigious hotels occupy Nob Hill. ⌚ 20 min. **Taylor & Sacramento sts.** From GG Park, take bus 33 or 44 to California St., then take bus 1 to Nob Hill. You’ll pass the Richmond & Pacific Heights neighborhoods along the way.

**6 ★ Grace Cathedral.** Following the destruction of the Crocker mansion in 1906, Crocker’s family donated the land to the Episcopal Church to build Grace Cathedral. Completed in 1964, it’s built from reinforced concrete beaten to

achieve a stonelike effect. The doors are stunning replicas of Ghiberti’s bronze *Doors of Paradise* in the Baptistry of Florence; inside, the 1840 organ and the stained-glass windows impress. ⌚ 25 min. **1100 California St. (at Taylor St.)** ☎ 415/749-6300. [www.gracecathedral.org](http://www.gracecathedral.org). Free admission.

**7 Huntington Park.** The mansion of David Colton, another Southern Pacific Railroad magnate, was here until he sold it to Collis Huntington in 1892. The mansion burned following the 1906 quake, and Huntington donated the lot to the city. The city used the land to create Huntington Park. Framed by the granite walls that were once part of the Colton estate, the park is an oasis in a very urban section of town. ⌚ 15 min. **Taylor & California sts.** Bus: 1. Cable car: all lines.

**8 ☕ Top of the Mark.** Head to the 19th floor lounge at the Mark Hopkins Intercontinental, located on the site of a former Nob Hill mansion. Make a toast and admire the panoramic city view. **Number 1 Nob Hill. (at Mason & California sts.)** ☎ 415/392-3434. \$\$\$.

*Flood Fountain is one of two fountains in Huntington Park.*

