

San Francisco

There are many ways to look at that city by the bay

By Doris Scharfenberg
staff writer

Take a poll at the next Super Bowl party, or even in the next crowded elevator, on the subject of favorite cities. Note that San Francisco is not only the most-mentioned, there is a dreamy glaze over the eyes of those who speak its name.

With good reason. Sophisticated, scenic, traditional, futuristic, and unmatched San Francisco puts all corners into an enormous theater where hills and a shimmering bay share leading roles with Victorian houses, grand towers and tilting streets.

Tall glass monoliths speak of the Wall Street of the West, ships heading through the Golden Gate hint of the Orient. It is a city of all worlds, shrouded in frequent mists but untroubled by soot so that old buildings have a freshly restored look while new ones (such as the pyramidal Transamerica Building) soar upward in shapes tried nowhere else.

Those improbable cable cars and travel poster vistas also add to the feeling of being part of a romantic drama where all backgrounds are not quite real.

San Francisco is an El Dorado of things to see, and no metropolis in the land offers as many ways to get from A to B or makes looking around so much fun. Best of all, the traveler on a budget need not worry. Although it is no secret that this is an expensive place to live, sightseeing can be a genuine bargain. Here's what to do.

HIKE ACROSS the Golden Gate Bridge. It's hard to believe that there was ever any opposition to building this bridge, one of the most popular, most photographed constructions of man.

Two-hundred-thousand people walked across on opening day in 1937, and the 1.7-mile stroll hasn't lost its drawing power, not even when the rusted towers are hidden in swirling fog.

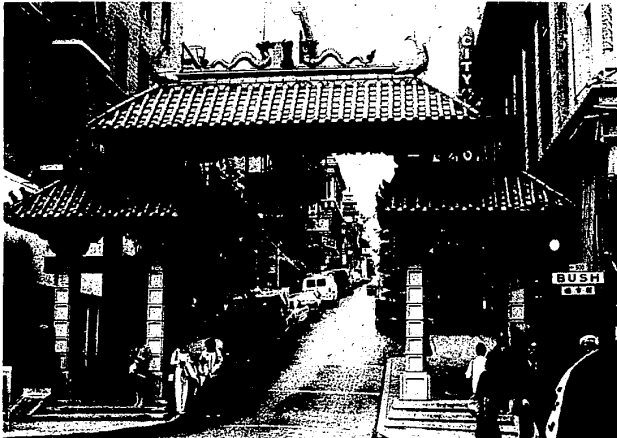
At clear moments the view from the bridge is one of hills, bay, ships coming and going and cityscapes melting into far horizons.

Watch the weather for chances to go in the morning when skyscrapers are silhouetted against a rising sun and a golden path stretches toward you from the east. Or go late in the day when the setting sun turns upper stories into burning beacons.

Dress warmly. San Francisco is known for a mild climate, but up on the bridge the word is COLD.

FOR 50 CENTS, ride the cable car. Probably the most unnecessary suggestion ever. Nobody sees San Francisco without boarding one of those swaying, rattling transports, the nation's only mobile historic monuments, and the city's best sightseeing buy.

There are 10 1/2 miles of cable route involved in three separate lines, but they intersect, and transfers are free.



The famed gateway to Chinatown on Grant Street in San Francisco will take you into a world of oriental wonders.

Fifty cents takes you at an exciting slant through the financial district, past Union Square to Nob Hill, Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf; a tour spiced with glorious, world-famous glimpses of the bay.

In summer (especially) one look at the lineup to get a ride may be enough to start you walking. Keep cool. Enterprising music students, unemployed clowns and the unusual sight of conductors turning streetcars around with early-American muscle power makes the waiting go quickly.

More than sentiment keeps cable cars going. Visit the Car Barn and Museum (on the line), see how they work and why they are a practical answer to steep hills.

FOR \$1, take BART. Mild pangs of civic envy may grip you on the Bay Area Rapid Transit, a smooth, comfortable quiet, swift way to get from downtown to suburbia, Oakland, Fremont, Daly City and the rest. You can buy a \$1 excursion ticket for a three-county tour of the 71-mile system.

When the end of the line is reached you merely cross the platform and head back to the heart of town, then go off in another direction.

In less than three hours you will have been everywhere and not all underground, either. BART emerges to let you see ships and skylines.

Sightseeing during rush hours defeats the purpose and can be hazardous to your nerves. Watch the clock or go on weekends.

FOR \$2, board the ferry. All week, all-year service to Sausalito and Larkspur leaves from the foot of Market Street, takes 30 to 40 minutes and only costs about \$2 for one way. Besides being a good vantage point for photo-

graphers, passengers get a close look at Alcatraz Island, which can be toured these days without federal aid.

FOR \$4-6, JOIN a cruise. There are at least three companies eager to take you on a general swish around the bay, all lasting about 1 1/4 hours. This is one way to go under the Golden Gate and Bay bridges, munching snacks and listening to commentaries on the passing landmarks.

Land cruises via such veterans as Grey Line Tours have a variety of bargain packages that include trips through old houses and new hotels or even up to the Redwoods.

Walk, as you have never walked before. In San Francisco walking three blocks can be something of an athletic event. Ignoring dome-like hills, city planners laid out streets as though the land was as flat as a Kansas prairie.

Chinatown, the Embarcadero Center, Ghirardelli Square, the Cannery, the Wharf, and other marvels need your step-by-step attention.

Walk around Aquatic Park, through the Marine Museum, and sit on the cement steps to watch swimmers and scuba divers, then walk to the plainly visible collection of historic ships on the Hyde Street Pier.

Walk around the Civic Center where the Museum of Modern Art, the Public Library, the Opera House and such diversions are located. Explore the Japanese Gardens, Aquarium and DeYoung Museum in Golden Gate Park.

Walk also to the Visitor's Center (1390 Market Street) and find out where not to walk. As in any other city, you could easily walk into big trouble. While you're at it, check out the guided walking tours, building tours, area hiking paths. The Chinese Heritage Walk, City Hall Tours, San Francisco Discovery Tours are starters.

DRIVE. WATCH for the signs with the sea gulls and follow a 49-mile scenic drive that meanders in and around downtown, through Golden Gate Park, past the zoo, the seal rocks, the bridge and nearly everything you planned to take a picture of while you were here. Avoid rush hour.

Another fun drive is only a block long; the hairpin turns of Lombard Street between Hyde and Leavenworth, winner of the "world's crookedest street" title.

Go to the top. Scoop up all the money

Photos by
Doris Scharfenberg



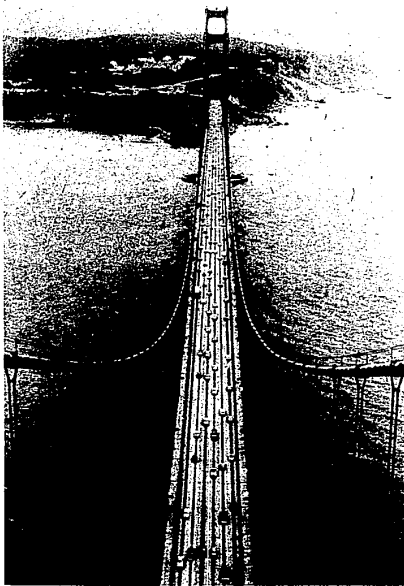
you've saved on economy sightseeing and splurge on a twilight-to-dark dinner at one of San Francisco's fabulous "top-of-the" (Mark, Fairmont, Drake) restaurants.

The Caruelian Room of the Bank of America is 52 stories above the town, and the Hyatt Regency's Equinox Room gives you a revolving view.

You may forget the Chateaubriand eventually, but you will never forget watching the steel-gray bay blacken behind the city lights, the look of the moon over Oakland Bridge, the Transamerica pyramid and contrasting Coit Tower standing against the night or the way Chinatown's Grant Street sends up its own glow.

San Francisco is a visual feast. Eat your heart out.

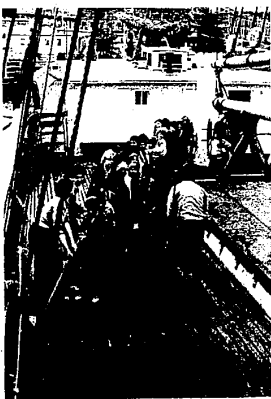
Planning to go? Load up on information by writing San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1390 Market Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94102, (415) 626-5500.



At clear moments, the view from San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge is one of hills, bay, ships coming and going and cityscapes melting into far horizons.



Nobody goes to San Francisco without boarding one of the famous streetcars (above). The fare is 50 cents a ride. Conductors use early-American muscle power (right) to turn the streetcars around.



Young visitors to Hyde Street pier in San Francisco try hoisting sail on an historic ship.

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