



BE MY GUEST: San Francisco

Whether you're wandering around the chic shops and art galleries, riding a cable car or gazing out to the blue bay, this is a city where you might leave – or find – your heart, says Kimberly Miller



Known for its views, world-class chefs and Silicon Valley technology companies that have redefined communication, San Francisco brims with casual sophistication and cutting-edge culture. To call it the culinary capital of California would be a claim easily substantiated, but the adventure in exploring this hippie geek-meets-boho chic melting pot does not stop there...

Retail therapy

Nestled in bustling downtown lies the fashion epicentre **Union Square**, where department stores like **Barneys** and **Neiman Marcus** are intermixed with boutique flagships –

from **Bulgari** and **Gucci** to the three-storey **Chanel**. Those seeking a bespoke men's suit or a gown for the opera need look no further than **Wilkes Bashford** (www.wilkesbashford.com), an exquisitely curated store. Stroll down the street to **Torso Vintages** (www.torsovintages.com), every local fashionista's go-to spot for yesteryear's Pucci, Halston, and the like. For homeware and gifts, **Gump's** (www.gumps.com) is the destination, and designer labels at reduced prices are too good to pass up at **Jeremys** (www.jeremys.com) in nearby SoMa – a weekly pilgrimage for those in the know. **Restoration Hardware's** (www.restorationhardware.com) new gallery store in the Design District has rustic antiques and reproduction furnishings.

City highs

There's nothing quite like taking in the salty air while crossing the **Golden Gate Bridge**, a stretch of just under 3km. A visit to **Alcatraz** takes you through the cell blocks that once housed notorious criminals such as Al Capone. If the views from your

hotel room at **Mandarin Oriental, San Francisco**, in the city's third tallest building, 345 California Center, aren't enough, hike the **Lyon Street Steps** in Pacific Heights, after taking in the renovated dome of the **Palace of Fine Arts**. Or climb the stairs of **Coit Tower** in North Beach for a great panorama. A visit to **Nob Hill** is a must, where the majestic Beaux-Arts-style **Grace Cathedral** towers over the park.

Room with a view Mandarin Oriental, San Francisco is in the city's third tallest building, 345 California Center



Above: take in San Francisco Bay and Alcatraz from the city's cable cars. Left: the Palace of Fine Arts, built for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition. Below: a Bay View King Room at Mandarin Oriental, San Francisco

Cool culture

With a living green rooftop and albino alligator, the **California Academy of Sciences** – new to Golden Gate Park – will mesmerise. Across the way is the **de Young Museum** (www.deyoung.famsf.org), a sibling of the **Legion of Honor** and exhibitor of post-Impressionist masterpieces on loan from the Musée d'Orsay, Paris (until 18 January 2011). After touring **SFMOMA's** (www.sfmoma.org) tribute to the wine industry, in *How Wine Became Modern: Design + Wine 1976 to Now* (until 17 April 2011), venture through Union Square's fine art galleries, beginning with **Fraenkel Gallery** (www.fraenkelgallery.com) for photography lovers, **Serge Sorokko Gallery** (www.sorokko.com) for the Damien Hirst-obsessed, and ending with **John Berggruen Gallery** (www.berggruen.com), the go-to for billionaires, and **Hackett Mill** (www.hackettmill.com), ground zero for Bay Area figurative work. The critics flock to **Yoshi's** (www.yoshis.com) to hear emerging talent in jazz; others cross the Bay Bridge to the **Fox Theater** (www.thefoxoakland.com) in Oakland for headliners in a retro venue.

Outdoor adventure

If the sun's rays conquer the fog that blankets the bay, make like a local and spend time at **Crissy Field**, where dog-friendly **Baker Beach** and green lawns beckon. Sail around Angel Island with **Ruby Sailing** (www.rubysailing.com) or take a narrated **Segway Tour** (www.electrictourcompany.com). Those

with green fingers will delight at the **San Francisco Botanical Garden**, which also offers Sunday-morning birding tours. Weather permitting, take a ride aboard the legendary **cable cars** that traverse the undulating hills. Of the charming neighbourhood parks, **Alta Plaza** in Pacific Heights has tennis courts, and in Dolores Park, multicoloured Victorian homes line one side of **Alamo Square**.

Fitness fanatics

After climbing the city-wide hills, treat your body to an in-room massage at **Mandarin Oriental, San Francisco**; although the hotel does not have a spa, the staff can arrange this service. Make time for a quick workout in the hotel gym, or grab a day pass at fitness centre **Equinox** (www.equinox.com) across the street.

Foodie heaven

Let the culinary journey begin with Pacific Rim-influenced cuisine by Rick Bartram, Executive Chef of **Silks** at Mandarin Oriental, San Francisco. For handmade pasta in a chic space, **Quince** (www.quincerestaurant.com) in Jackson Square will not disappoint. Oenophiles can pick from hundreds of wines thanks to Michael Mina's **RN74** (www.michaelmina.net/rn74) wine bar and restaurant in SoMa. Fans of Balthazar in NYC will be right at home at **Café des Amis** (www.cafedesamis.sf.com), a new brasserie in Cow Hollow, owned by the visionaries behind **Spruce** (www.sprucesf.com). For a slice of heavenly pizza, try **Pizzeria**



Above: artworks at SFMOMA, the city's first stop for photography, sculpture and paintings. Right: a treasure trove of retro fashion at Torso Vintages



Delfina (www.pizzeriadelfina.com) in Pacific Heights, after shopping on Fillmore Street, or get your fill from a multitude of artisanal fare at the **Ferry Building Marketplace** (www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com).

Show business

Sip cocktails at **Sloane** (www.sloanesf.com) in SoMa, or with the hipsters at the Financial District's **Rickhouse** (www.rickhousebar.com). It won't just be the 360-degree views that catch your eye at **Harry Denton's Starlight Room** (www.harrydenton.com) – the *Sunday's a Drag!* performance and brunch features famous drag queens. Watch movies at **Sundance Kabuki Cinema** (www.sundancecinemas.com) in Japantown, and go bowling at the beloved **Presidio Bowling Center** (www.presidiobowl.com). For quintessential San Francisco, get tickets to the long-running music revue, Steve Silver's **Beach Blanket Babylon** (www.beachblanketbabylon.com). Finally, enjoy a Lychini cocktail in **MO Bar** back at the hotel before turning in for the night, or unwind in the sultry surroundings with a tawny port.



At the day's end Enjoy a Lychini cocktail in MO Bar before turning in for the night, or unwind in the sultry surroundings with a tawny port