



Sunset

Travel Guide

Best of San Francisco:
Dining, Hotels, and Attractions 2010

Sunset Travel Guide



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Pizzetta 211, home of the magnificent Margherita
RIGHT Keith Freilich turns out tasty pies at Emilia's



clamoring for his thin, stretchy crust. **PIE TO TRY** There's only one—the oversize Margherita with mozzarella, basil, and fresh tomato sauce—followed by a shower of parmesan when it comes out of the gas oven. If you must gild the lily, choose from the brief list of toppings. **INSIDER TIP** You have to be fast; whenever the dough runs out, Freilich closes. Check Twitter for updates. \$; cash only; closed Sun–Mon; 2995 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley; 510/704-1794.

Flour + Water

WHAT'S SPECIAL This noisy new restaurant has everyone trekking to an otherwise abandoned corner of the Mission, for dough peppered with flavor from the fire, dressed with whip-fresh tomato sauce and worthy of worship. **PIE TO TRY** The blistered radicchio with chiles and pancetta. **INSIDER TIP** When they unlock the door at 5:30, be there to snag a chair at the bar built from reclaimed redwood. \$\$; 2401 Harrison St., San Francisco; 415/826-7000.

Tony's Pizza Napoletana

WHAT'S SPECIAL Tony Gemignani is the only American winner of the World Pizza Cup in Naples, and he knows how to flaunt it. But we'll stomach the oversize menus trumpeting his awards, for the American-, Italian-, Neapolitan-, Roman-, and Sicilian-style pies coming out of his four ovens. **PIE TO TRY** The Margherita is the house specialty. Gemignani always makes 73 a day—no more, no fewer. **INSIDER TIP** Four words: deep-fried meatball calzone. \$\$; closed Mon–Tue; 1570 Stockton St., San Francisco; 415/835-9888.

Pizzeria Picco

WHAT'S SPECIAL Ingredients come from local farms, mozz is hand-pulled in-house, and

Pizza rises in SF

Pies have become haute cuisine. Read 'em and eat!

Pizzetta 211

WHAT'S SPECIAL This is the sweetest little restaurant in all of San Francisco, with just four wooden tables inside, a scattering of sidewalk seats, and blankets for bundling up in the fog while you wait beneath a tree strung with white lights. Pizzetta 211 has left people swooning since 1999—long before artisanal pizza was the trend that it is today. **PIE TO TRY** The amazing Margherita—

tomato, mozzarella, and basil; adding pepperoni might bring you to tears. **INSIDER TIP** Go for lunch. It's less busy. \$\$; cash only; 211 23rd Ave., San Francisco; 415/379-9880.

Emilia's Pizzeria

WHAT'S SPECIAL Chef-owner Keith Freilich has tossed dough at some of the best places, including New Jersey's beloved Grimaldi's. His new storefront-of-a-parlor has folks



Delfina diners
RIGHT Pizzaiolo's
 pie with rapini
 and housemade
 sausage



you can get peppery arugula salad piled on any pizza. Plus, crusts are exceptionally flavorful. Mario Batali, no slouch in the pizza department, once declared Picco's the best pizza in the country. **PIE TO TRY** The Cannondale, with homemade sausage and roasted red peppers and red onions. **INSIDER TIP** Pick up the flash-frozen to-go pizzas and reheat them at home (order 24 hours ahead). \$\$; 316 Magnolia Ave., Larkspur, CA; 415/945-8900.

Pizzeria Delfina

WHAT'S SPECIAL Craig Stoll elevated the pizza scene in San Francisco when he opened his first to-die-for pizzeria in 2005. Lines formed out the door for his thin-crust pies baked at 770° in a gas-fired brick oven. He opened a second location in 2008, with a third—a pop-up-style stall—opening this summer in Hayes Valley. **PIE TO TRY** The broccoli rabe—a thing of blistered beauty topped with the leafy

green from Star Route Farms, plus black olives, fresh mozz, cacioavallo cheese straight from Campania, and just enough red chile flakes. **INSIDER TIP** If the wait is unbearable, grab a ball of dough for \$3.50 and re-create the magic at home. \$\$; two San Francisco locations: 3611 18th St. (415/437-6800) and 2406 California St. (415/440-1189).

Gialina

WHAT'S SPECIAL Chef-owner Sharon Ardiana's ethereally thin crusts adorned with local ingredients like Niman Ranch pork belly have put this neighborhood spot on the national radar. **PIE TO TRY** Wild nettles with pancetta, aged provolone, mushrooms, and slivers of red onion. **INSIDER TIP** Save room for dessert: cappuccino Italian ice and a salty-sweet dessert pizza, spread with Nutella. \$\$; 2842 Diamond St., San Francisco; 415/239-8500.

Pulcinella

WHAT'S SPECIAL Over-the-top Italianness, with a Bay of Naples mural, a small band playing "O Sole Mio," flirtatious service—but with pizza cred. Owner Luigi Pucci hails from the Caputo family, makers of Italy's premium pizza flour. **PIE TO TRY** Soft, creamy eggplant and zucchini slices fried and scattered over a crust made with that peerless flour. **INSIDER TIP** You can actually make reservations. \$\$; closed Mon; 641 Vallejo St., San Francisco; 415/829-7312.

Howie's Artisan Pizza

WHAT'S SPECIAL Finally, South Bay suburbanites have an artisanal pizza place they can call their own. Welcome Howie's, which opened in November '09 with a sleek bamboo-wood interior, a gas-fired oven, puffy-edged crusts, and a commitment to local, seasonal ingredients—even a website that aims to educate. **PIE TO TRY** The house-made pancetta, red onion, and mozzarella, spiked with red chiles. \$; 855 El Camino Real, Ste. 60, Palo Alto, CA; 650/327-4992.

Pizzaiolo

WHAT'S SPECIAL Pizzaiolo has been an Oakland classic since Charlie Hallowell quit the Chez Panisse kitchen to create this airy, exposed-brick restaurant. People pile in for the housemade pastas, famous meatballs—and pizzas pulled from the wood-fired oven. His new Oakland pizza spot, **Boot and Shoe Shine Service** (\$\$; closed Sun–Mon; 510/763-2668), opened in December '09 and is already a hit. **PIE TO TRY** The smoky Monterey Bay squid, with slightly charred cherry tomatoes and garlicky aioli. **INSIDER TIP** Doors open at 8 a.m. for doughnuts (cross your fingers for custard-filled with chocolate icing) and Blue Bottle coffee. \$\$; closed Sun; 5008 Telegraph Ave., Oakland; 510/652-4888.



Dinner at the Magic Curry Kart

Top food trucks

Putting SF's culinary art in the cart

A dead-end alley in San Francisco's Mission District is the last place you'd expect to find a man in a toque and crisp chef's whites torching crème brûlée from a cart. But it's just another Friday night for Curtis, aka Crème Brûlée Guy, who's one of the most colorful personalities behind the food-cart revolution hitting the streets of San Francisco.

No longer limited to tacos and tamales, food carts—some with surprisingly gourmet

fare—are popping up all over the city. Carts are the most cost-effective way for aspiring chefs to step into the culinary scene in a bad economy, after all. Though many operate without permits and appear sporadically, that's not stopping crowds of curbside diners, who log on to Twitter for up-to-the-minute cart-location updates leading them to the cheapest alfresco meal in town.

Watch out around town for these carts.

» Long lines testify to the hot and spicy Thai curry from the **Magic Curry Kart** (\$5; twitter.com/magiccurrykart). The cart's curry master, Brian, a psychotherapist by day, learned the recipe on a recent trip to Bangkok. You might notice his uncanny resemblance to Crème Brûlée Guy. That's because they're brothers, and they occasionally park their carts next to each other. At \$3 a pop, it's hard not to polish off a torched-to-order vanilla, lavender, chocolate raspberry, or, say, Bailey's from the **Crème Brûlée Cart** (\$3 per cup; twitter.com/cremebruleecart) to tide you over while you're waiting for your curry.

» The Brothers Brûlée and Curry are attracting carts hoping to pick up overflow customers. Commonly in the pack: **Amuse Bouche**, serving Dixie cups of chai with mini muffins (\$1 for tea and a muffin; twitter.com/amusebouchesf); and the **Sexy Soup Cart** with organic soup and baguettes (\$4; twitter.com/sexysoupcart).

» The Mission isn't the only neighborhood getting in on the action. There are scores of other carts—and more showing up each week—on corners around town. Recently spotted: **CookieWag** (twitter.com/cookiewagsf) feeding downtown with cookies and other treats, **Sam's ChowderMobile** (twitter.com/chowdermobile) cruising the streets with fish tacos and fish and chips, and **Thai Shaved Ice** (twitter.com/thaishavedice) making the rounds in Dolores Park on sunny days.

» More established chefs are breaking out of their four walls too. Laurent Katgely, who opened the French bistro Chez Spencer in 2002, now also operates (the entirely legal) **Spencer on the Go** (6 p.m.–midnight Wed–Sat; Seventh St. at Folsom St.; twitter.com/chezspencergergo), the perfect answer to those odd late-night cravings for sweetbreads and frog legs. The truck—decorated with potted plants, a handwritten menu, tea lights, and a tempting cookie display—is conveniently positioned across the street from Terroir Natural Wine Merchant. The bar not only welcomes you to carry in your buttery escargot-puff “lollipops” but also will pair them with an appropriate French white.

INFO Check for the latest developments on the food-cart scene at twitter.com/streetfoodsfx



Fun for foodies

Don't miss the epic meals at more of our favorite San Francisco restaurants



Ame's Thai-spiced pork ribs and ABOVE Waterbar's elegant aquarium decor

Alembic. This place takes its drinks seriously without getting ponderous about it. Here, on a slightly scruffy stretch of Haight Street, is a warm, welcoming joint whose menu includes about 40 bourbons, 20 American ryes, and an impressive roster of single malts. As for cocktails, they range from nicely done classics (a mean Manhattan) to cutting edge (the coffee-based Vice Grip). Alembic has good bar food too. Try the house-cured charcuterie or the truffle mac 'n' cheese, which is made with cheeses from Cowgirl Creamery and Three Sisters Farmstead

Cheese. \$\$; 1725 Haight St.; 415/666-0822.

Ame. The sharp Asia- and California-inspired cooking in this sleek restaurant in the St. Regis hotel has garnered dizzyingly swooning reviews since opening night. While dining-room entrées fetch as much as \$39, the small-plates menu served at the bar in the spacious lobby lets you try Ame's inventive flavors with sprightly dishes like fried rock shrimp, Thai-spiced pork ribs with mint and cabbage salad, and hamachi crudo, drizzled with salt, olive oil, and Meyer lemon—each about half of the price of an entrée. You can also order whatever you like off the restaurant menu. \$\$\$; 689 Mission St.; 415/284-4040.

The Beach Chalet and Park Chalet. At the Beach Chalet (\$\$), watch the sun set over churning whitecaps as you taste your way through a sampler of house-brewed beers and snack on ahi tuna tartare or buttermilk-



Outside Coi **ABOVE** Bright and cheery at Canteen **LEFT** Epic's beef tartare

fried calamari. Downstairs, the more casual, kid-friendly Park Chalet (\$) has no ocean view, but it does have a stone fireplace and glass doors that look out on Golden Gate Park. 1000 Great Hwy.; 415/386-8439.

Canteen. A teeny 20-seat diner gone gourmet, Canteen has the best brunch in town (Sat–Sun only). Oatmeal with fresh pear and walnuts makes a hearty start. At dinner, perch on a stool at the counter and watch the cooks pull bubbling gratin with yellowfoot mushrooms and crescenza cheese out of the oven. Make a dinner reservation or be prepared to wait; the place has a rabidly loyal following. \$\$\$; closed Mon; 817 Sutter St.; 415/928-8870.

The Cliff House. Come for the spectacular

views of the ocean and the Sutro Baths ruins, the renovated historic building, and modern takes on seafood dishes like seared herb-marinated sea scallops salad with poached shrimp at **Sutro's** restaurant (\$\$–\$\$\$\$). Or opt for the more casual **Bistro** restaurant (\$–\$\$\$), with classic, simple fare like crabcakes. 1090 Point Lobos Ave.; 415/386-3330.

Coi. Daniel Patterson's superb, cerebral cooking is shown off with an 11-course tasting menu that ranges from spiny lobster salad with fennel and chervil to quince parfait with huckleberry and thyme. The Michelin guide recently handed the place two coveted stars. Why the bar is even better: A table in the tiny dining room requires a hard-to-land reserva-

tion, not to mention several hours of your evening. Less commitment is required in the adjacent lounge, which has its own menu of easygoing dishes like roast chicken, duck rilette, and udon noodles in mushroom dashi broth. The setting is relaxed, with plush throw pillows and cushy banquettes, but the service is impressively attentive. \$\$\$\$; closed Sun–Mon; reservations recommended even at bar; 373 Broadway; 415/393-9000.

Epic Roasthouse. A splashy split-level downtown steakhouse on the edge of the bay, Epic does everything big, with a 14 oz prime rib for \$39 and a 1/2-pound burger for \$20. The indulgent dinner menu is available no matter where you sit. In the upstairs Quiver Bar, a clubby space with up-close views of the Bay Bridge, you can also pick more human-size options like barbeque pork sliders (\$5) or grilled steak and mushroom skewers with sauce Bordelaise (\$5). \$\$\$–\$\$\$\$; 369 The Embarcadero S.; 415/369-9955.

The Franciscan Crab Restaurant. For half a century, the Franciscan has been serving famous and not-so-famous patrons the old standards, including the renowned whole Dungeness crab, along with a few surprises like housemade burrata cheese and cured meats. The glamorous luxury-liner decor and the views of the bay and city skyline are unparalleled. \$\$\$; Pier 43 1/2; 415/362-7733.

Greens. The gold standard for fine vegetarian cuisine, with gorgeous views of the bay. Reservations recommended for the restaurant; there's also a take-out counter. \$\$\$; Bldg. A, Fort Mason; 771-6222.

Hog Island Oyster Company. Inside, the bar is bustling and urbane; outside, it's serene at the water's edge. Suggested combinations might include 12 Sweetwater oysters with a glass of Muscadet. \$\$; Ferry Building, on the Embarcadero; 415/391-7117.

Just for You Café. Brunch at this Southern cuisine-tinged comfort food joint involves Creole crabcakes over perfect poached eggs. \$; 732 22nd St.; 415/647-3033.

Memphis Minnie's Bar-B-Que Joint. It's not hard to find an excuse to visit this award-winning bbq place. But we'll give you one anyway: brunch, a weekend-only treat beloved by barbecue fiends. Among the tasty treats served are smoky chicken hash with poached eggs, South Carolina-style shrimp and grits, and amazing corn hoecakes hot from the griddle. Consider yourself warned: this may become a Saturday morning habit. \$; closed Mon; 576 Haight St.; 415/864-7675.



Cliff House's spectacular setting
ABOVE Inventive vegetarian cuisine
 at Greens **LEFT** Sushi with a side of
 freestyle at Yoshi's

Mission Pie. There's no need to feel guilty if you order the banana cream pie and the mixed-berry galette and a savory spinach-and-feta Mystipie. That's because with each delicious bite, you're promoting local, sustainable agriculture. And you're showing a group of kids—the self-proclaimed “piesters”—that yes, hard work pays off. For the past three years, inner-city teens have been spending one day a month working at Pie Ranch, a coastside farm dedicated to educating urban youth about agriculture. Now these same kids work behind the counter at sister business Mission Pie, recommending pies that they helped make. So go ahead, buy another slice. \$; 2901 Mission St.

(entrance on 25th St.); 415/282-1500.

One Market Restaurant. Upscale comfort food in chic dining room in the Southern Pacific Building. \$\$\$; 1 Market; 415/777-5577.

Serpentine. Oysters and cocktails make this place feel like a glamorous saloon. \$\$\$; closed Sun; 2495 Third; 415/252-2000.

Spruce. A neighborhood restaurant turned up a notch, this casually chic outpost is the hottest evening hangout in well-heeled Presidio Heights. Chef Mark Sullivan's refined spins on homey cooking, like roasted monkfish and honey-lacquered duck breast, pair perfectly with the setting, a graceful space accented with brown mohair banquettes. \$\$\$\$; 3640 Sacramento St.; 415/931-5100.

Top spots to swirl and sip

Terroir. At last count, the cellar had more than 700 wines, all imported. The warehouse-y SoMa space, which doubles as a wine shop focused on organic and sustainably farmed bottlings, is massive by wine-bar standards. \$\$; 1116 Folsom St.; terroirsf.com or 415/558-9946.

Hotel Biron. Look under the B sign in the alley behind Zuni Café for this hard-to-find underground wine bar with a distinctly Parisian feel and list specializing in off-the-beaten-path varietals from around the world. \$\$; 45 Rose St.; hotelbiron.com or 415/703-0403.

18 Reasons. Every Thursday evening, 30 or so wine lovers drift into this Mission District tasting room and arts space to sample boutique wines. Every week or so, 18 Reasons invites a passionate winemaker to pour and answer questions from the curious and chatty crowd. \$10 donation suggested (\$5 for members); call for hours; 593 Guerrero St.; 18reasons.org

Yield. The look is part living room, with cozy low couches, and part laboratory, with tall tables and barstools for those seriously sniffing and sipping their way through the global cellar of “green” wines (meaning they're sustainably grown, organic, or biodynamic). \$\$; closed Sun; 2490 Third St.; yieldsf.com or 415/401-8984.

Waterbar. Splurge on wood oven-roasted sea bass or soft-shell crab while you watch a massive eel and its fishy friends swim around pier pilings in twin 19-foot-high aquariums. More affordable bites can be had at the showy raw bar. \$\$\$\$; 399 Embarcadero; 415/284-9922.

Yoshi's Jazz Club & Japanese Restaurant. Ambient lighting, intimate tables for two, and views of the gleaming Steinway Grand from every seat make this a haven of late-night cool. Like the famed Oakland original, the newer Yoshi's located in SF's revitalizing Fillmore District hosts some of the biggest names in jazz—and serves up some mean sushi, too, which you can eat while enjoying the show. \$\$\$; 1330 Fillmore St.; 415/655-5600.

Zuni Café. Fantastic roast chicken, Cali-Mediterranean-style dishes, and bloody Marys. \$\$\$; 1658 Market; 415/552-2522.

2223 Restaurant. Cozy neighborhood place with upscale American cuisine. \$\$\$; 2223 Market; 415/431-0692.



Killer views from Hotel Vitale's terrace
RIGHT Cavallo Point's incredible setting



Romantic retreat 20 minutes from the city

Cavallo Point is so close to the city, you could walk across the Golden Gate Bridge for a glass of bubbly on the porch, where rocking chairs and couches are positioned for a view of those red towers jutting above the Marin Headlands. This WWI-era Army base turned luxe lodge has an **Ultimate Date Night Package** that—when you break it down—is quite a deal: \$450 buys a four course dinner for two at the elegant Murray Circle; breakfast the next morning; parking; and a room with a fireplace, original pressed-tin ceilings, and a front-row seat to the San Francisco skyline. Plus, free yoga in the former base chapel and hikes around Marin County in between. *Ultimate Date Night Package from \$450; cavallopoint.com or 415/339-4700.*

Sweet dreams

Check in at our favorite San Francisco hotels

The Argonaut Hotel. The rooms have a nautical flavor, with good reason. The Kimpton Boutique Hotel is in the remodeled, historic Haslett Warehouse, part of the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. In the hotel lobby is the park's visitor center (9:30–5 Sep–May, 9:30–5:30 Jun–Aug; free), so you can get oriented to its attractions—from the ships at the Hyde Street Pier (\$5 entrance fee) to the Maritime Museum. *From \$295; www.argonauthotel.com or 800/790-1415 for the hotel; www.nps.gov/safr for the park.*

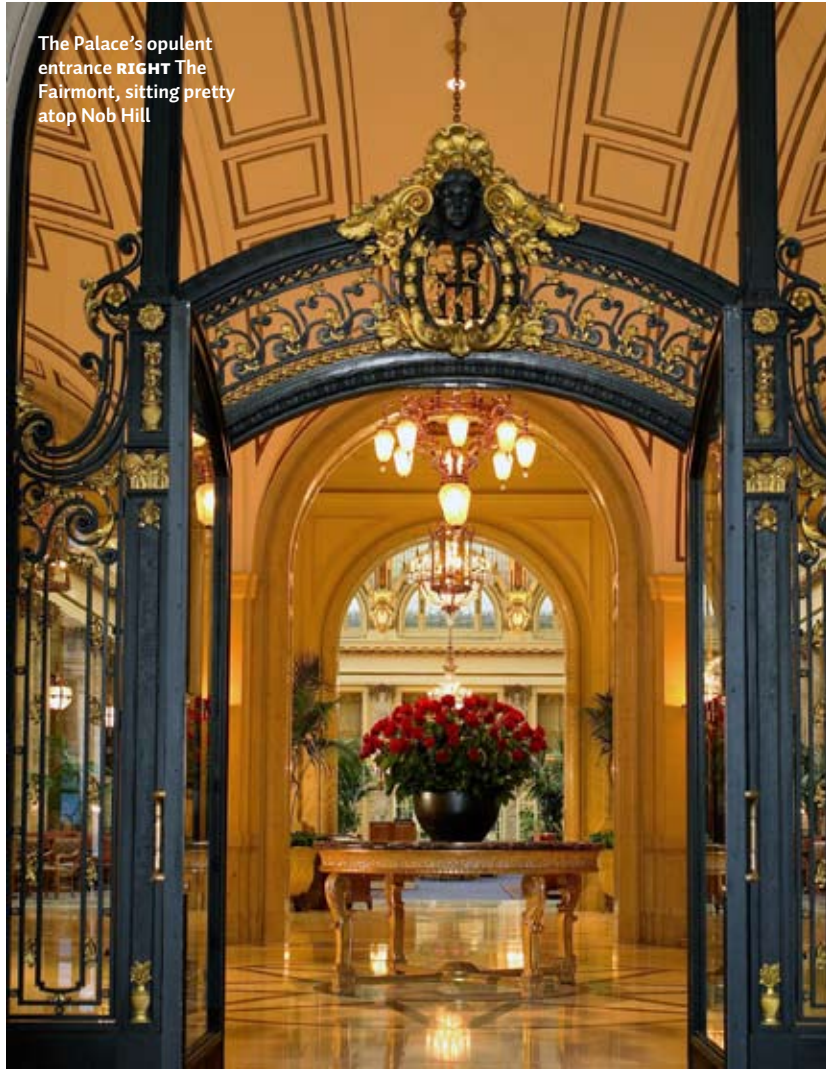
From \$169; carriageinnsf.com or 415/552-8600.

Best Western Carriage Inn. Rooms are outfitted in a deco meets bohemian style, with vintage artwork, glossy chartreuse lacquered dressers, and typewriters from the 1930s. *From \$169; carriageinnsf.com or 415/552-8600.*

The Fairmont San Francisco. Regally situated atop Nob Hill, the 1907 Julia Morgan–designed building was the first property to reopen after

the 1906 earthquake and fires leveled every hotel in the city. Nearly a century later, renovations restored the original pale marble floors and gold-leaf Ionic columns of the lobby. *From \$229. 950 Mason St.; www.fairmont.com or 800/527-4727.*

Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco. A few blocks from the Moscone Center and next to Yerba Buena Gardens, the 277-room hotel brings this side of the city to new luxurious heights. Rooms are enormous and have floor-to-ceiling views. Fitness buffs will appreciate access to the adjoining San Francisco's Sports Club/LA, a 100,000-square-foot facility with more than 100 exercise classes, an indoor junior Olympic-size pool, and a full-service spa. *From \$395. 735 Market St.; www.fourseasons.com*



The Palace's opulent entrance **RIGHT** The Fairmont, sitting pretty atop Nob Hill



fourseasons.com/sanfrancisco or 415/633-3000.

Hilton San Francisco Financial District. What you may remember as a frumpy Holiday Inn reopened (\$55 million later) as a snazzed-up Hilton in 2007. A contemporary, elegant Asian look plays on the themes of earth, fire, and water. *From \$159. 750 Kearny St.; sanfranciscohiltonhotel.com* or 415/433-6600.

Hotel Del Sol. Once a '50s-style motor lodge, the property has been transformed into a stylish and family-friendly boutique hotel. *From \$179. 3100 Webster St.; www.jdvhotels.com, 877/433-5765, or 415/921-5520.*

Hotel Drisco. Among the manses of tony Pacific Heights—and far from the chaos of Union Square—you'll find this civilized hill-top spot surrounded by city views and chichi boutiques. The hiking trails and vistas of Presidio national park are just three blocks away. Recently remodeled, rooms are elegantly appointed with comfy double-

poster beds. *From \$249, including continental breakfast and wine-and-cheese hour; jdvhoteles.com/hotels/sanfrancisco/drisco* or 800/634-7277.

Hotel Palomar. Set in an elegantly renovated century-old building, the chic rooms overlook Market above the Old Navy store. *From \$220. 12 Fourth St.; www.hotelpalomar.com* or 415/348-1111.

Hotel Vertigo. Set down your suitcase at this barely year-old hotel with hints of Hollywood style, like orange leather wing chairs, porcelain horse-head table lamps, and croc-patterned bathroom tiles. *From \$159; hotelvertigosf.com* or 415/885-6800.

Hotel Vitale. Enjoy the restful, contemplative mood the hotel cultivates: nature-inspired rooms that feature spectacular views, glassed-in limestone showers, and custom bedside tables with river stones underneath glass tops. For those whose culinary curiosity extends even beyond the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market across the street, a copy of Patricia

Unterman's *San Francisco Food Lover's Guide* is in every room. Look high and low for two other favorite features: At street level, *Americano* restaurant and bar (\$\$\$) showcases modern Italian cuisine. And on the rooftop, a spa offers free yoga for guests, plus outdoor tubs overlooking the bay. *From \$299; 8 Mission St.; www.hotelvitale.com* or 415/278-3700.

Hyatt Regency San Francisco. The 17-story modern hotel appeared in Mel Brooks's *High Anxiety*. Better yet, it's located across the street from the Ferry Building's gourmet goodies. *From \$175. 5 Embarcadero Center; www.hyatt.com* or 415/788-1234.

Palace Hotel. Opulent rooms in the grande dame of San Francisco lodging, which has weathered earthquakes, fire, and the curses of tenor Enrico Caruso—all with unshakable grace. The skylighted Garden Court is a must-see, along with the Pied Piper Bar, featuring Maxfield Parrish's mural *Pied Piper of Hamelin*. *From \$204. 2 New Montgomery St.; www.sfpalace.com* or 415/512-1111.

The Ritz-Carlton. For decades visitors have chugged up Nob Hill on the California Street cable car to this lavish, historic hotel. *From \$409. 600 Stockton St.; www.ritzcarlton.com, 800/241-3333, or 415/364-3540.*

Union Street Inn. Sipping a glass of wine on the love seat in the rose garden, shaded by a New Zealand tea tree, you'll feel far from the urban scene. Garden-side rooms in this 1903 Edwardian house are quietest, but the two street-side rooms are more elegant; the Carriage House has its own private garden. A lavish breakfast can be served in the garden. *From \$199. 2229 Union St.; www.unionstreetinn.com* or 415) 346-0424.

Westin St. Francis. Built in 1904, the St. Francis offers afternoon teas just off the lobby in the Compass Rose lounge (415/774-0167), restored to its original splendor with wood-paneled walls, crystal lamps, and fluted columns. Plus it's within steps of great shopping and the Cable Car. *From \$170. 335 Powell St.; www.westin.com* or 800/937-8461.



Eclectic wares at Asian Image
RIGHT Soothing sips at Blest Tea

Chinatown

Visit a neighborhood reborn with chic shops and a hip spa

Many of the old souvenir shops, dim sum eateries, and herb stores are still there. But a new wave of modern boutiques, approachable tea shops, plus a futuristic spa have opened up too, keeping people coming back in search of a new discovery.

Shop

Banish from thought any gilt dragon mirrors—this shopping trip is all about afford-

able, not tacky, Chinatown spoils. Many of the shops worth a browse are under the same ownership, it turns out. East meets West at the two-story **Asian Image** (800 Grant Ave.; 415/398-2602), where high-style items like embroidered silk cell-phone holders, laptop bags, and vibrant bedding come at reasonable prices. For elegant women's and children's clothing, visit **Asian Trends** (742 Grant; 415/788-3828); stop by **Asian Image Boutique** (607



Grant; 415/398-8017) for colorful, graphic wall prints and teacups that double as decorative objects. **Asian Styles** (808 Grant; 415/788-6828) arrays its home decor as simply as museum artifacts. Tabletop fountains create a Zen sensibility without going over the top.

Snack

Wavy white walls and glass tile make **TuttiMelon** the prettiest frozen-yogurt joint in the neighborhood. Try the litchi and green-tea gelato flavors, the peach black-tea tapioca (boba) drink, or the tart self-serve fro-yo topped with bite-size mochi. 601 Broadway; tuttimelon.com

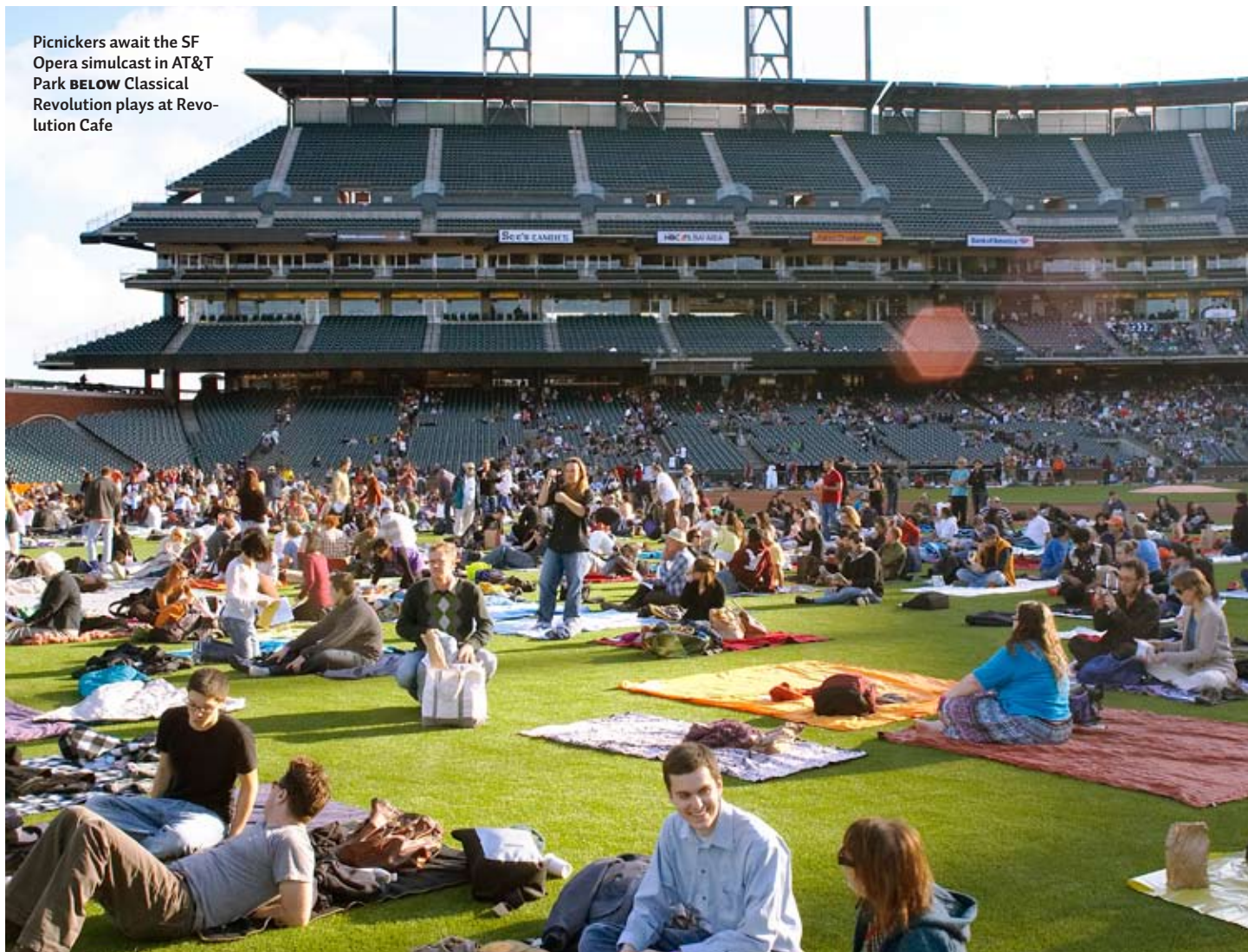
Relax

When you hit sensory overload, duck into the sleek and minimalist **Tru** spa in the Hilton. A tank of jellyfish sets the mood (complimentary sparkling wine and snacks don't hurt, either). Get a pedi (from \$45) or splurge on the Jungle Love body treatment (\$160) in the Tropical Rainforest room, a simulated cave where piped-in birdsong whisks you to paradise as you stand beneath a rock waterfall. 750 Kearny St.; truspa.com or 415/399-9700.

Sip

Skip the touristy tea-tasting spots, and grab a stool at the long, narrow bar at **Blest Tea**, a teeny, clean-lined shop with about 40 blends. Try the Blue Angel oolong for energy (or a stubborn hangover), the stress-busting and toxin-fighting Orchid Green—or ask the tea experts to choose one for you. There's even Slim, dubbed the "skinny" green tea, perfect post-meal. If you don't have time to sit and linger, order a cup to go at the walk-up window. 752 Grant; 415/951-8516.

Picnickers await the SF Opera simulcast in AT&T Park **BELOW** Classical Revolution plays at Revolution Cafe



High art for a low price

Opening-night gala tickets not in the budget? Try these affordable strategies



Strategy 1: Swoop on a deal

» **American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.)** offers one Pay What You Wish/Bring What You Can performance per season play. For these events, donate non-perishable food items requested by the San Francisco Food Bank (sffoodbank.org) and you can choose the price you pay for a ticket. Bring donations to the box office at 6 the night of the performance. act-sf.org

» At the **San Francisco Museum of Modern**

Art, admission is half price Thursday evenings. For less than the price of a movie, you can catch the exhibits, a Curator Talk and an indie or a classic film. 6–8:45 Thu; \$9; sfmoma.org/pages/visit

» Check out the **Conservatory of Music**, where student recitals are absolutely free. sfc.edu

Strategy 2: Try an unstuffy venue

» On September 24, the **San Francisco Opera's** live performance of *Aida* at the War Memorial Opera House will be simulcast on the big screen at AT&T Park—for free. Spread out a blanket on the field or hit the stands and munch on a hot dog while you take in Giuseppe Verdi's timeless tale of passion. Register at sfopera.com to get tickets.

» **Classical Revolution** takes chamber music out of the hushed auditorium and into city cafes and bars. String quartets pop up a



Enjoying intermission at A.C.T. **RIGHT** At the Academy of Sciences's Nightlife event



couple of times a week around town, including Sunday nights at the **Revolution Café** (\$; 3248 22nd St.). classicalrevolution.org

Strategy 3: Pay with time, not cash

» Usher at the **War Memorial Opera House**, and you can take in an opera or ballet without even cracking your wallet. After training sessions, you spend an hour and a half on performance night guiding patrons to their seats, and stand duty during intermission. In return, you get a roost yourself (unless no seats are left—then you have to stand). groups.google.com/group/OHUG

» Theater more your thing? **A.C.T.** has a similar ushering program. 415/439-2349

Strategy 4: Hit an arty party

Shindigs at the city's art museums not only let you hit the galleries after work and get you in cheap but also add a party vibe.

» On select Thursdays at the **Asian Art Museum**, people step out of the tranquil galleries to sip cocktails to a DJ soundtrack. If you want to see the exhibit, it's \$5 extra. 5–9 Aug 13, Oct 28; \$10; asianart.org

» **Friday Nights at the de Young Museum** lures a young crowd with live music, dance performances, poetry readings, and a cash bar, plus access to the galleries. 5–8:45 Fri through Nov; \$10; famsf.org/deyoung

» On Thursday nights, check out the **California Academy of Sciences's NightLife** event, where visitors can blend science with cocktails and DJ tunes as they mingle among the live rainforest, aquariums, and other exhibits. 6–10 Thu; \$12; www.calacademy.org

Strategy 5: Get on your feet

» On the day of a performance, **San Francisco Opera** hands out standing-room-only tickets at the box office starting at 10 a.m. It's cash

only; get there early because the tickets sell out. Savvy regulars stand at attention at the back of the orchestra until the lights go down, then slip into untaken seats. \$10; sfopera.com
» Once the **San Francisco Ballet** season starts in January, the ballet, too, will offer standing-room-only tickets on performance day. \$20; sfballet.org

Strategy 6: Eavesdrop on a rehearsal

» **A.C.T.'s** preview performances offer another chance to see a nearly perfect production for a fraction of the price. From \$14; act-sf.org

» At the **Conservatory of Music**, watch as a master teacher tutors a handful of students on their instruments. Starts in Sep (check website for dates); free–\$20; sfc.edu

Strategy 7: Meet other movie buffs

» Every other month, indie film junkies and filmmakers mingle at the nightclub Mezzanine as part of the **San Francisco Film Society's Film Arts Forum**, discussing topics like how to go to Sundance or how to think like a funder. Filmmakers pre-sent clips from works in progress and answer questions. At Laptop Shop, attendees can bring their own fledgling films on a laptop to share with other film lovers in a digital free-for-all. Check website for dates; \$8; sffs.org

» At the film society's **SF360 Film+Club**, also at Mezzanine every other month, the audience watches an indie film, then discusses it. \$12–\$20; sffs.org

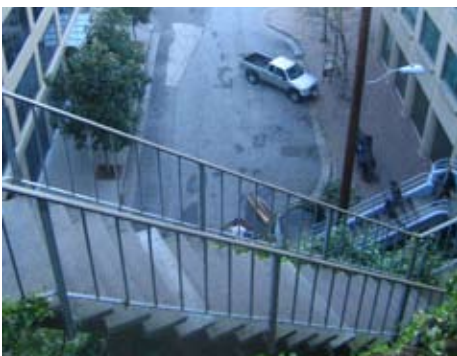
» On some Sundays at 10 a.m., members of the **Cinema Club** file into the Sundance Kabuki Cinemas to screen an about-to-be-released and usually indie flick, then say what they think with a film expert moderating. Sep 19, Oct 3, 17, and 31, Nov 14, Dec 5 and 19; register at thecinemaclub.com

Crissy Field, the ultimate recreation spot **BELOW** Break a sweat on the Filbert Street Steps



A feeling-good getaway

Savor a healthful trip in fall, when summer weather prevails



At home, you're a model of good health. Eating right, exercising—healthy habits you work hard to keep up. Then, vacation: Don't head for frozen drinks and lounging by a pool! Plan a trip that will leave you refreshed and revitalized (instead of a few pounds heavier).

In October, when San Francisco's summer fog makes way for bright, clear days, residents celebrate by heading out—to the glistening waterfront, to the golden hills, and, of course, to the great restaurants.

Consider your breakfast

You'll take nothing for granted at the supremely new age but sweet-humored **Café Gratitude** (\$\$; 2400 Harrison St.; 415/830-3014). This casual vegan spot serves breakfasts called I Am Great (buckwheat granola and almond milk) and Yo Soy Bonita (steamed rice with avocado, salsa, cilantro, and pepitas). Word to the wise: Just order your pick by name, even though it seems goofy. Otherwise, your server may gently prod you into doing so. Top off the meal with a hearty glass of the refreshing I Am Healthy juice (kale, celery, cucumber, lemon) or I Am Worthy (zingy with kale, beet, celery, apple, and ginger).

THOMAS J. STORY, RICK (ON FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)

The view from Tennessee Valley Trail **BELOW** Indulge at Range **LEFT** Ferry Plaza Farmers Market bounty



Get the heart pumping

No stair machine in any gym can compare to the **Filbert Street Steps** (*Filbert at Battery St.*) in the Italian North Beach neighborhood, which reward with glimpses of pocket gardens, rock sculptures, and 19th-century cottages clinging to the cliff. Don't be surprised if the surrounding Monterey cypress trees speak to you—they're full of wild parrots, as featured in the award-winning documentary *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*. At the top, savor views of Coit Tower, built in 1933 with funds donated by local socialite Lillie Hitchcock Coit as a tribute to the fire department and to beautify the city she loved.

Fun along the waterfront

Bring a picnic—or just your running shoes—to **Crissy Field** (*entrance on Marina Blvd. west of Baker St.; crissyfield.org*) for knockout views of the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, and Marin County. The park, part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, was once covered in asphalt and trash, which is hard to believe after you've visited this ribbon of green along the water. The wind can blow hard, so definitely bring a sweatshirt, and if it gets too chilly, stop in for a hot chocolate (and souvenirs) at the park's **Warming Hut** (\$; 415/561-3040).

Plan a picnic

Shop in the sunshine at the **Ferry Plaza Farmers Market** (*Embarcadero at Market St.; ferrybuildingmarketplace.com*), which overflows with picnic-worthy picks on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Sip Blue Bottle Coffee brewed one cup at a time, as you sample the region's freshest produce (including apples, persimmons, and the last of the season's tomatoes), sweet butter from Andante Dairy, Frog Hollow Farm fruit conserves, and Acme sourdough bread (the best in the city).

Worth the calorie splurge!

Husband-wife team Phil and Cameron West adapt the menu daily at **Range** (\$\$\$; 842 Valencia St.; 415/282-8283) to reflect what's in season in California. On a typical day: Slow-cooked leeks meet a poached egg in a gorgeous dish studded with grainy mustard and cheddar shavings; pear harmonizes in a salad with celery root, fromage blanc, watercress, and rosemary vinaigrette; and three kinds of pork—housemade sausage, a single rib, and braised pork belly—form a trifecta of lusciousness.

Go wild across the bay

Just across the Golden Gate Bridge, the **Marin Headlands** (*nps.gov/goga*) offer shoreline views, crashing surf, and a surprising wildness. The **Tennessee Valley Trail**—named after the SS Tennessee, which collided with the shore at this spot in 1853—winds 2.2 miles (one way) past rolling hills toward a secluded beach awash with green and black basalt pebbles.

Where to stay

At **Hotel Vitale** (*see Sweet dreams, page 9*), you'll wake to waterfront vistas and Ferry Building gourmet treats across the street. Schedule time in the hotel's spa (*from \$60*) for a uniquely urban experience; terrace hot tubs are surrounded by skyscrapers, yet cleverly tucked away with plantings of bamboo for privacy.



Surfers head in from the shore after a pit stop at Java Beach Café

3 more ways to make like a surfer

- » Wet Wednesdays at the **Riptide** bar include free surf movies, bar grub, and some seriously authentic local color. 9 p.m.–2 a.m. Wed; 3639 Taraval St.; 415/681-8433.
- » Hobnob with the snowy plovers and help preserve San Francisco's natural beauty during the **Surfrider Foundation's** monthly beach cleanup day. 10 a.m. on select Sundays; check sfsurfrider.org for dates.
- » Grab some warm, fresh fish tacos at **La Playa Taqueria** (\$; 3817 Noriega St.; 415/681-2007), bundle up, and discover the dunes at the end of Noriega, where people spend hours wave-gazing.

Playa Park, soon to include a bocce ball court.

FEEL LIKE A SURFER, EVEN IF YOU AREN'T At **Mollusk Surf Shop** (4500 Irving St.; 415/564-6300), a gallery and store dedicated to all things wave-related, you can shop for a long-board, get a limited-edition T-shirt, or attend an art opening. Ability to hang 10 not required.

GET OFF TO A GOOD START **Trouble Coffee Company** (4033 Judah St.; troublecoffee.com) takes its java seriously. The tiny space is outfitted with a driftwood bar and decorated like a curio shop, but it serves fresh squeezed grapefruit juice (ask for the Yoko), tea, and a few pastries. No decaf, so don't ask. Try the "Build Your Own Damn House"—a whole young coconut, a cup of the house blend, and a thick slab of cinnamon toast.

A REAL SLICE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD The **Pizza Place on Noriega** (\$; 3901 Noriega St.; 415/759-5752) became an institution the moment it opened in 2007, and it's already been expanded twice. The counter is often lined with dudes in hoodies digging into hand-tossed brick-oven pies like the "Dimi-tri" (named after the local produce guy).

THE YEAR'S MUST-TRY DINNER SPOT Beach-combers have always had a reason to venture west. Now food lovers are making the pilgrimage too, to try the fish stew, braised pork shoulder, garlic soup, and other wintry comforts at **Outerlands** (\$; closed Sun night; 4001 Judah St.; 415/661-6140). Add to that beer served in mason jars and an always-changing lineup of desserts, such as flourless chocolate cake and seasonal fruit tarts, and this eight-table restaurant paneled with driftwood is excuse enough to make the trek.

Outer Sunset

New restaurants and cafes put the Avenues on the map

WHY GO On clear days, the Pacific sparkles and the views stretch all the way to Point Reyes.

CATCH THE ACTION Great waves make Ocean Beach a surfer's paradise.

UNOFFICIAL NEIGHBORHOOD UNIFORM Hoodie sweatshirt, jeans, and flip-flops.

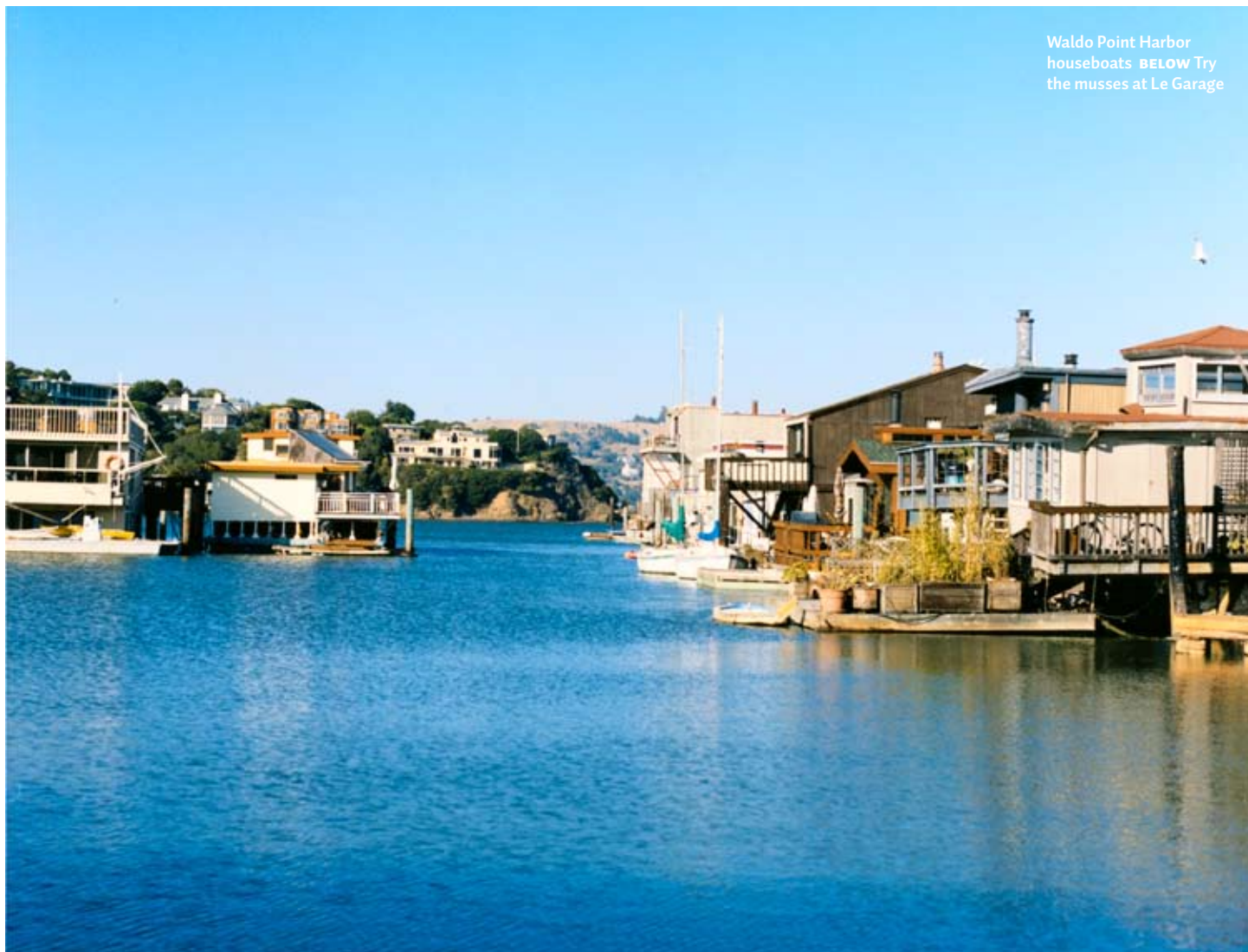
NEWCOMERS' UNIFORM As local artist Brian Kanbayashi notes, "the hipsters have discovered surfing," so tattoos, skinny jeans, and secondhand chic are also on display.

LOCAL TRANSPORT Bikes rigged to tow surfboards, or the N Judah streetcar, which runs

the length of the neighborhood to the beach.

PICK UP A SOUVENIR Don't blink or you'll miss the tiny **Last Straw** gift store (4540 Irving St.; 415/566-4692), with handmade jewelry, felted hats, and other trinkets and doodads.

CATCH THE SURFING VIBE When the wetsuits come off, surfers head to **Java Beach Café** (\$; 1396 La Playa St.; 415/665-5282), which feels like a neighborhood community center. Pints of Guinness are popular, as is the live music on weekends. And on a warm day, you can carry your sandwich across the street to tiny La



Waldo Point Harbor houseboats **BELOW** Try the mussels at Le Garage

Discover secret Sausalito

The top five experiences you won't read about in guidebooks



Far too many Sausalito travelers don't make it much beyond Scoma's restaurant, an oldie but goodie along the town's well-visited southern waterfront, and that's a shame. Just off the main drag lie some of the town's best discoveries.

LOCALS' BEACH Schoonmaker Beach is a bit farther from downtown, but still doable on foot and well worth finding. While away a sunny morning here, wading in the bay and watching sailboats. **Le Garage**, a French bistro

steps from the sand, is hands down, the best new restaurant in town in ages. Grab a seat next to the roll-up glass garage door and definitely try the mussels Provençale.

OFF-THE-PATH PIER You'll want a bike or a car to get to the **Fort Baker** fishing pier, which sits in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge and has unbeatable views across the bay to San Francisco. In summer, foghorns bellow loudly from here, while closer to winter, fishermen and pelicans are more the order of the day. A short walk north is eco-luxe **Cavallo Point, the Lodge at the Golden Gate**. Even if you don't stay there, stop for a glass of wine in the clubby **Farley Bar**.

UNDISCOVERED HIKE You can't spend time in Sausalito and not make it to the **Marin Headlands**, just a mile outside town—it'd be like going to Yosemite and missing Half Dome. So

RACHEL WEILL (2)



Hiking in the Marin Headlands
BELOW Sailboats at Schoon-
 maker Beach **LEFT** Browsing at
 Pinestreet Papery



48 hours in Sausalito

FRIDAY Check into **Cavallo Point**, the Lodge at the Golden Gate, the first major new luxury hotel in a national park in years (see *Sweet dreams*, page 9). The Fort Baker fishing pier is a 10-minute walk toward the bridge, past the resort and the Coast Guard station. Loop back for a glass of wine at **Farley Bar** (\$\$; at Cavallo Point, 601 Murray Circle), then have dinner in town at **Sushi Ran** (\$\$\$; 107 Caledonia St.; 415/332-3620).

SATURDAY Drive to the **Marin Headlands** for an early hike to **Black Sands Beach** (download a map at nps.gov/goga), then get a friendly “Ciao” with your veggie frittata during brunch at **Poggio** (\$\$; 777 Bridgeway; 415/332-7771). In the afternoon, wander the galleries and shops on and around Caledonia Street: **Flying Oliver Books** (215 Caledonia; 415/332-1532), **McCloud Design** (closed Sun; 1201 Bridgeway; 415/331-2178),

Pinestreet Papery (42½ Caledonia; 415/332-0650), and **Sausalito Picture Framing** (closed Sun; 310 Caledonia; 415/331-3567). Then watch the sailboats from **Schoonmaker Beach** (at the end of Liberty Ship Way) and dine at **Le Garage** (\$\$\$; 85 Liberty Ship Way; 415/332-5625).

SUNDAY Take in Sausalito coffee culture at **Caffe DiVino** (\$) (37 Caledonia; 415/331-9355) before exploring the houseboats at **Waldo Point Harbor** (at the end of Gate Six Rd.; waldopointharbor.com). Afterward, browse tableware at the **Heath Ceramics** factory store (400 Gate Five Rd.; 415/332-3732), then walk across the street to **Fish** (\$-\$\$\$; 350 Harbor Dr.; 415/331-3474) to fuel up on Dungeness crab rolls and fish tacos.

join the parade of cars winding up twisty Conzelman Road to Hawk Hill, but don't stop there. Drive a bit farther to the beach parking area on your left, and you'll see signs for the trail to **Black Sands Beach**. The 0.75-mile hike down (slightly rickety) steps is sure to put the rosy in your cheeks, and the narrow strip of beach is windy, wild, and stunning. Our secret? Instead of starting from the beach parking area, we like to drive past the Marin Headlands Visitor Center, turn right on Bunker Road, and start at the historic rifle range. It's worth the extra 1.5 miles over the ridge for the views you'll have all to yourself. **BEST SHOPPING STREET** There's more to Sausalito shopping than the chintzy souvenir

shops that line the main drag downtown. Just a 10-minute walk north of the waterfront lies leafy **Caledonia Street**, home to several locally owned galleries and framing shops, plus **Flying Oliver Books**, where we always find deals on used cookbooks. We love to look at the black-and-white photography at **Sausalito Picture Framing** and pick up letterpress cards and fashionable ribbons and papers at **Pinestreet Papery**. And one block to the east on Bridgeway is **McCloud Design**, with streamlined modern container gardens, hand-crafted fountains, and outdoor furniture. **HIDDEN HARBOR** Sausalito wouldn't be Sausalito without its houseboats. Among several houseboat communities in town,

Waldo Point Harbor stands out for its hilarious, only-in-Sausalito message board at the harbor entrance. On our all-star list: “Lost: Plywood dinghy, battered blue” (alongside a charmingly rakish drawing of the poor lost boat) and “Want to exchange your houseboat with mine in Paris for a week?” Impressive feats of container gardening—succulents, roses, lemon trees—line the boardwalk, and residents are often out watering plants in the early morning. Truth be told, we did once catch a minibus of Japanese tourists being let off in this area, but that was in the height of summer, and they seemed to walk right past **Issaquah Dock**, our favorite spot.

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Time out in Tahoe

Clear, blue, and still a classic: Lake Tahoe sparkles along the California-Nevada border. This autumn, enjoy off-season quiet and still-magnificently sunny days. Go for a sunset sail, enjoy a brisk hike, or find a slice of beach and take in the to-die-for beauty.

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