

San Francisco: See the Sights with 5 Must Sees

Make the most of any time you are able to spend in San Francisco. Here's how! Whether you are just driving through or have sometime to walk around, San Francisco truly is the place to be. Visit these five sights and take it all in along the way:

1. Chinatown

In the heart of San Francisco is Chinatown. If you didn't already think you were in another country observing narrow streets, cable cars, unique architecture of tight knit buildings, and ambivalent pedestrians everywhere, you will surely find the Chinese culture as inviting as the America that attracts such ambiance. Take in the artistry of colors, music, and sculptures. Upon seeing it, you will want to plan some extra time to fully enjoy the people, the shops and the foods you may discover here. Today we're just driving through, but brush up on your parallel parking skills and bring enough fare, because a whole day could be spent enjoying Chinatown, the next time you are lured to San Francisco.

2. Lombard Street

On we go, to the famous Lombard Street, with its seven curves in one city block. It is practical in its necessity to negotiate the steep grade you will wind down. But there is just no other street like it in the whole world. Perhaps a passing fancy to enjoy as you won't be able to stop on it, but as an extra you will notice the varicolored Victorian style mansions that border your viewing. Across the way you can see Coit Tower, a monument that looks like a fire hose nozzle, in remembrance of the San Francisco fires of 1908. Tours are available. From the bottom of Lombard Street it is surreal to look back and behold it. As though taking in a picturesque painting of flowering gardens landscaped by Lombard Street itself, encased by homes like those prominently displayed in the old sitcom, "Full House," be assured it is as lovely as it is real. If the beauty of San Francisco hasn't yet convinced you to stay a little longer, perhaps this dizzying descent has put you in the mood to get out of the car.

3. Fisherman's Wharf

Take advantage of the sights and sounds with a stroll around Fisherman's Wharf. Fresh sour dough bread and clam chowder is wafting on the sea breeze. On a hot California summer day, you have just found San Francisco to be the perfect coastal location, not too hot and not too cold. Find Pier 39 if you've got the time. A festival marketplace with more than 110 stores and 11 classy restaurants await you. Or come with me up the shore where you may find an hour-long tour boat waiting to take you around Alcatraz. The infamous island is within view, beyond the ships at dock, the nearby beach park with it's swimmers in the alcove, and the sailboats in the channel. On colder days fog will fill the sea's corridor. A beautiful view of these things can still be taken in from our next stop:

4. Ghirardelli Square

What can't chocolate soothe? The Ghirardelli factory's cures come in shakes, sundaes, chocolate bars and candies. A new flavor of music will also put you in the tourism mood as you approach street performers on their daily corners. They really are quite cordial and seem to enjoy the city in which they make their living. Can you blame them? Park below and get your parking validated by enjoying some seafood at McCormick's in the square above. It opens at 11:30 A.M., has an exquisite menu as well as view of the sea. The setting is elegant within and without.

5. Golden Gate Bridge

Hope you won't just take my word for it. Experience these sights for yourself and they will become a staple of your visits to San Francisco. As you can see, whether you stop by, or whether you are just passing through, there are more than enough things to do in San Francisco. Even if you are just nearby, the grand structure of the Golden Gate Bridge awaits your arrival or your departure with bustling traffic in the day and foghorn sounds in the night. On the far side of the bridge is a viewing area to take pictures of the bridge, the bay, and the city. Below the bridge lies Point Fort, built during the Civil War to protect the novelties of a great city in the making. Tours here will reveal maps with locations to sunken warships in the depths of the bay.

Whatever you do, don't let time keep you from seeing the sights of San Francisco if you are anywhere close by. Pick at least one of these five stops to really spend some quality time with, but if it is your first time or a friend's first time, incorporate all of these must sees into your trip. Make San Francisco the place for you to return, again and again. One taste and you will want to come back to mix and match the key spots that allow you to enjoy all that is San Francisco in between, whether at length or not.