



san francisco

From hippies to techies to foodies, this Californian city is ever evolving, forever interesting

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THE SCARLET HUNTINGTON,
SAN FRANCISCO, SUPPLIED

San Francisco's iconic Golden Gate Bridge, shrouded in fog. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The Plinko game wall at Hotel Zetta San Francisco; an artwork by Nick Gentry made from old stiffy disks; an egg dish from The Cavalier; the hotel's bedrooms are fun but comfortable.



‘If you’re going to San Francisco, be sure to wear some flowers in your hair,’ sang Scott McKenzie in what became an ode to 1967’s ‘Summer of Love’ and the broader hippie movement, not just in the United States but globally. San Francisco, its suburb of Haight-Ashbury in particular, occupies a special place in the development of this subculture in the 1960s and is seen by many as the birthplace of the movement. By the 1980s the city was best known for its ‘Silicon Valley’ moniker – a reference to all the high-tech businesses and corporates that still flourish there today.

Now a new movement is afoot to grant this county yet another claim to fame – this time for its culinary prowess.

Here are our picks of where to sleep, eat and enjoy yourself in San Fran.

HOTEL ZETTA SAN FRANCISCO

This waggishly sophisticated hotel blends the city’s Silicon Valley heritage and its culinary future in one spot – plus its downtown address drops you right in the middle of shopper’s paradise, with Union Square and Westfield a handbag hurl away.

Dubbed an ‘urban retreat’, Hotel Zetta San Francisco sells itself as ‘ideally located for connecting authentically with San Francisco’s leading cultural, entrepreneurial and tech-savvy communities’. To make good on that promise it boasts a number of edgy meeting areas and tongue-in-cheek ‘play’ spots – such as The Playroom, in which you can amuse yourself with Ping-Pong, pool and shuffleboard or toss a soccer ball down the huge Plinko game wall. The room also holds enough Wii U games to keep the most active inner child appeased. The S&R Lounge (Salvage & Rescue), a cocktail bar and the hotel’s lobby, is a popular meeting place for locals and guests alike.▷



The decor, be it in the common room or a bedroom, is fun but comfortable – think Big Jambos by Jawbone in every room alongside patchwork Persian rugs and crisp white linen.

Contemporary local art is everywhere and includes the #ZettaMurals project, which began as a competition on Instagram and now exists as a permanent installation of graffiti, painting and design throughout the hotel's seven-storey stairwell.

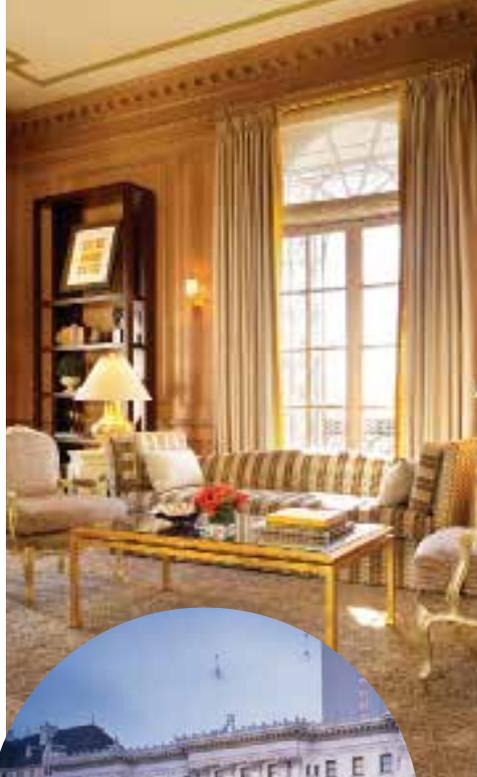
While you can eat at The Playroom and S&R Lounge it's British bistro-style venue The Cavalier that earns top marks for culinary excellence. Be warned: it's always packed – and with good reason. Tuck into roast-beef marrow bones with garlic and chilli oil, salsa verde and toast; the tastiest of fish with crispy polenta batter, thrice-cooked chips and the most delicate minted peas; and rhubarb apple crumble or chocolate fudge cake to round things off. Executive chef Jennifer Puccio's version of classics such as the Scotch egg (she uses a duck egg) and Welsh rarebit (it's a soufflé) also deserve attention. The extensive wine list is a curated fortress of sought-after wine and champagne.

viceroymotelgroup.com/en/zetta

THE FAIRMONT SAN FRANCISCO

For those of you old enough to have seen a young Michael Douglas be his inimitable self in *The Streets of San Francisco*, you'll remember that this is a city of steep hills and dips, best navigated on foot if you're fit or by cable car if you're not. The Fairmont is at the top of Nob Hill, a shortish but distinctly uphill walk from the downtown shopping precinct. It commands quite the view over both the city and the bay.

First opened in 1907, this grand dame is now happily ensconced within the▷



COLLAGE Scenes from The Fairmont San Francisco, where you'd be forgiven for thinking you've cabbed it back in time – until you encounter the hotel's subtle mod-cons.



3 THINGS YOU MUST DO IN SAN FRANCISCO

The stuff of books, movies and documentaries: the once notorious Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary sits in solitary, right in the middle of San Francisco Bay. Take an audio tour to make the most of your visit.

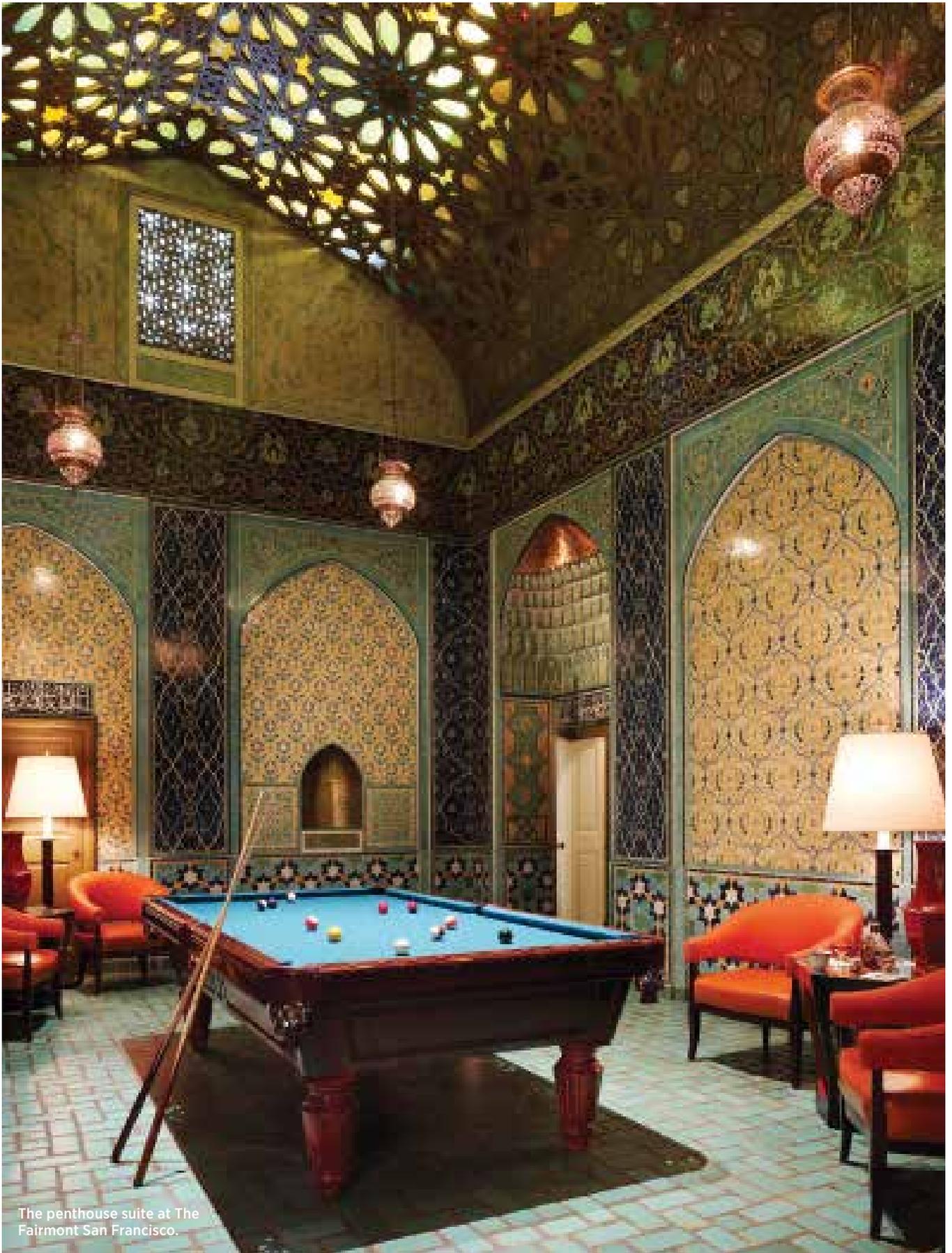


Find more must dos online at houseandleisure.co.za

Cycle over the Golden Gate Bridge, which is surely the most iconic structure in the city. Hire a bike from Blazing Saddles, cycle from the outlet along Fisherman's Wharf and across the bridge, then cruise downhill to Sausalito. Stop at Salito's for its trademark crab cakes before catching the ferry back. blazingsaddles.com



Take a Foot! walking tour through The Castro, the city's gay district. Steeped in the history that helped carve San Francisco's reputation for spearheading gay rights, it's an entertaining and informative experience. footours.com



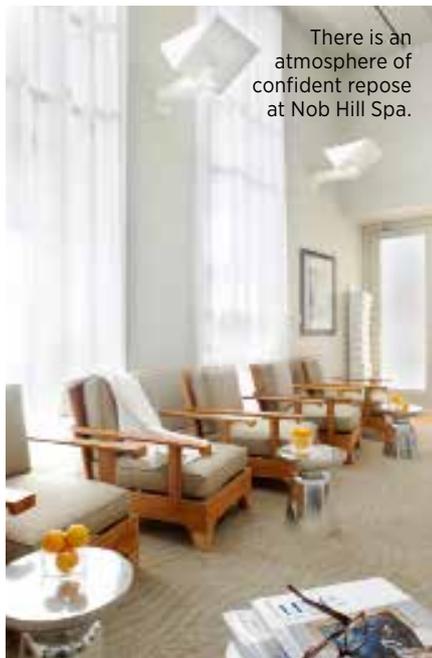
The penthouse suite at The Fairmont San Francisco.

Fairmont Raffles Hotel International brand. With 592 bedrooms and suites, as well as meeting rooms, ballrooms, wedding venues, restaurants, bars, a health club and spa, it's a big property with big history but it's not stuck in the past: the refurbished bedrooms in the main building combine 'classic ambience with modern amenities' so you'll find a big marble bathroom in the grand tradition of luxury hotels with toiletries from cult brand Le Labo.

A visit to The Tonga Room & Hurricane Bar is like stepping onto the set of *Blue Hawaii* starring Elvis Presley – within this archetypally tropical setting even the band plays from a moveable stage on a body of water in the middle of the room. It's worth visiting for the Pacific Rim cuisine alone: the varied menu includes dishes such as Hawaiian poi dumplings, huli-huli chicken and the royal pupu platter – fare you're unlikely to find anywhere else in the county. fairmont.com

THE SCARLET HUNTINGTON, SAN FRANCISCO

When you're ready for a break from all that walking, shopping and eating, head to Nob Hill Spa at The Scarlet Huntington, San Francisco. (If hipster luxe is your bag you'll want to check in for a night or two once you're there.) Stretching over three levels, the spa's facilities include a swimming pool, sauna and steam rooms, and you're offered everything from pedicures, massages and facials to couple's packages and jet lag rejuvenation sessions. nobhillspa.com ◻



There is an atmosphere of confident repose at Nob Hill Spa.

FOOD TOURS

As part of the city's culinary push, food tours have become a big attraction and provide a great way to see what's on offer in a short space of time. Avital Ungar was an early adopter of the trend and now hosts tourists in various areas under the banner of Avital Tours. Opt for the Haight-Ashbury tour, which means you also get to walk this previously infamous district – taking in the former home of rock legends The Grateful Dead en route.

First stop is The Alembic with its unruly garden at the back providing fresh ingredients – such as pineapple sage and lemon verbena – for the experimental cocktail makers within. With names such as Switched at Birth, Bitter Buffalo and Coffin Nail, its cocktails are not your standards. Likewise, the small plates of food designed for sharing as you imbibe, including jerk-spiced duck hearts with pickled pineapple and thyme salt, and the signature pickled quail eggs, indicate you're in true foodie territory. 'The chefs are pushing the boundaries here – in the hippie spirit,' says Avital.



The Alembic's Southern Exposure cocktail – gin, mint, lime and celery juice – is splendid with pickled quail eggs. TOP AND INSET Ice Cream Bar has many a trick up its sleeves.

The Alembic, one of the city's first openly gay bars, remains an ideal spot to sample locally produced and infused vodkas and gins. BELOW Pirozhki are closer to buns than the pies we're accustomed to.



Then it's onwards to The Market Place, a food hall next door where you can sample everything from soft-serve organic ice cream and buckwheat crêpes to Burmese food. Be sure to try a freshly baked Russian pocket pie known as a pirozhok. With combinations such as potato and onion, beef and cheese, or kale and mushroom, these filled pastries are best washed down with a Russian soda or a Magnolia beer from Second Act.

San Francisco's food halls are the next step on from food trucks. Bacon Bacon Cafe up the hill began as a food truck; now the owners have three food trucks, a trailer and the café, and they sell various pork products. 'We just keep waiting for bacon to plateau,' says the café manager. Everything here has bacon in it – even the Mexican style hot chocolate, which includes chocolate-covered bacon...

Our final stop on the tour is the old-fashioned Ice Cream Bar, which, despite its straightforward image and decor, has some ultra-modern offerings on the menu. Take the Dublin Honey: a concoction of Guinness stout, caramelised honey ice cream, Valrhona-chocolate syrup and a 'float' of Graham's 10 Years Old Tawny Port, it's not for the faint-hearted. avitaltours.com

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A view over the city to San Francisco Bay – the Golden Gate Bridge, with its trademark international orange paintwork, is visible in the distance on the left.



GETTING THERE

British Airways launched its inaugural flight from Heathrow in London to San Francisco International Airport in the USA in March this year. For us South Africans this is a real boon: the route – which departs seven days a week from OR Tambo International Airport in Joburg – is the most convenient way to get to this Californian city.

Getting to fly in one of British Airways' newly added Airbus A380 aeroplanes on this route is an extra bonus worth booking. The Airbus A380's seating configuration is spread over two levels, and includes four sections: First, Club World (business class), World Traveller Plus (premium economy) and World Traveller (economy). The First suites offer more space, longer beds and greater privacy than other planes, while World Traveller Plus seats have increased legroom. Opt for Club World and you'll get flat beds that promise a good night's rest.

Splurging on an upgrade also means access to the airline's new Elemis Travel Spa at Heathrow. Lie back and enjoy a First Class Power Shave or a Jet Set Power Polish, either of which is guaranteed to set you up for a sleek arrival when you step on the tarmac in 'Frisco'. britishairways.com

