

ITINERARY FOR SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, U.S.

This itinerary should be read in conjunction with the online map which includes more details on cafes, restaurants, parking spots and other suggestions.

Days: 9 (This itinerary is organised based on a 9-days-trip assumption. Feel free to edit it to suit your purposes)

Airport: San Francisco International Airport (SFO)

Location of accommodation: Japantown

Some extra places to visit if you have more time: North and South of San Francisco, Oakland, Angel Island and Alcatraz Island.

Day 1: Golden Gate walk

A walk through some posh residential, quite hilly, neighbourhoods heading, then down, towards the waterfront and Golden Gate bridge. This walk gives a number of different experiences, hilly topography, long distance sea views, great scale infrastructure and neighbourhoods with architectural interest. Some important stops:

1. PACIFIC HEIGHTS
2. MARINA DISTRICT
3. CRISSY FIELD MARSH
4. GOLDEN GATE

This route could be done by walking (ideally early morning). The most challenging part is in Pacific Heights, due to landscape, and it is a downhill after. Then, you can take a lift from Fort National.

There are a number of viewpoints towards the Golden Gate bridge, and you can climb the stairs right after the West Bluff picnic area. However, those points tend to be very crowded with tourists, especially during the weekend, so the Fort Point National is a good alternative with close-up views to the bridge.

Day 2: Waterfront walk (touristic side)

The northern part of the waterfront, from the Ghirardelli Square to the Ferry Building, is the most touristic one. It accommodates a variety of uses for instance entertainment, food and beverage, museums, art and music. This part of the waterfront is quite active, whilst port operations also take place in some piers. Make sure you take your time, while walking along, to appreciate the great vistas towards the sea, as well as to the city, high-rise buildings in the financial centre and the hills. Some important stops:

1. GHIRARDELLI SQUARE & surroundings
2. FISHERMANS WHARF (including Pier 39)
3. EMBARCADERO (Pier 7)
4. FERRY BUILDING

This route could be done by walking (both morning and afternoon hours). It is a fun walk with lots of things to do and see.

You can also take the tram which runs along the waterfront and takes you all the way to the Ferry building. It is a great way to see the place without walking. I would definitely recommend this for afternoon time.

Day 3: Green walk

Before seeing the rest of the waterfront, a 'green' break is what is needed to appreciate the nature within the urban fabric. The city is in close proximity to great natural assets; however, a series of parks and green spaces unfolds within the city itself as you walk through. Some important stops:

1. JEFFERSON PARK
2. ALAMO SQUARE
3. THE PANHANDLE
4. GOLDEN GATE PARK
5. OCEAN BEACH

This route could be done by walking (ideally early morning). Then, you can take a bus home and take a glance through the residential areas (e.g. Richmond as well). Japantown is a very strategic place to stay as it is in the crossroad of most of the bus routes.

Day 4: A day at the beach

This walk takes you along the western side of the city to enjoy the ocean views. It celebrates freedom, sand, and the sea. For a moment, you will forget you are in a metropolitan city, and you will be fully integrated into the picturesque scene. This walk includes viewpoints from different levels to get the full range of views to the sea. Some important stops:

1. OCEAN BEACH & southern parts towards the zoo
2. OUTER RICHMOND HIGH STREET
3. SEA CLIFF
4. CHINA BEACH
5. BAKER BEACH
6. GOLDEN GATE OVERLOOK

Be prepared for some strong winds.

This walk cannot be done entirely on foot. It would be best to arrive to Outer Richmond by car/bus, and then explore the beach. Then, get a lift to Seacliff and continue on foot to Baker, China beach and viewpoint. This part is better experienced during sunset time.

If you also want to visit the southern parts of Ocean beach towards the zoo, this might be best to be done on another day, to split the walking hours.

Day 5: Downtown

And finally getting to the city centre. Embrace yourself. This walk takes you through high rise developments, squares of monumental scale and boulevards; all reminiscences of the City Beautiful movement which was advocating for monumental scale interventions to improve the aesthetics of the cities. While walking along the streetscape, have a look around you and try to grasp the scale of the buildings and the feel of openness in the area due to the low levels of enclosure. Some important stops:

1. CIVIC CENTRE
2. MARKET STREET
3. UNION SQUARE & shopping malls
4. SALESFORSE PARK
5. THE FERRY BUILDING

Homelessness is evident in some parts of the city centre, especially around Tenderloin.

Walking is easy in this area since there is no challenging topography. The entire area is flat.

If you have extra time, you can also visit Chinatown, North Beach, and Telegraph Hill areas. The latter is better visited during morning hours to clearly see the views towards the city and the sea.

Day 6: Hills and great contrasts

This is a walk of great contrasts. It takes you through vibrant and family neighbourhoods, as well as more rough areas and through hilly and flat topographies. Some important stops:

1. THE CASTRO. A neighbourhood synonymous with gay culture. The high street is full of colours, activity, shops, bars and restaurants. Great views towards Twin Peaks.
2. NOA VALLEY. A quaint, in-demand place to live that is geared towards young families. The area features tidy rows of Victorian and Edwardian homes, and thanks to the hills, has some of the city's sunniest weather. The high street is stocked with bakeries, wine and cheese shops and cafes.
3. MISSION DISTRICT. One of the longest stretches of a high street. It is an exuberant, evolving neighbourhood with Latino routes and a hipster vibe. Old-school taquerias and eclectic live-music clubs mix with chef-driven eateries and cocktail lounges. Quite a different character from Noa Valley, full of life and activity.
4. 4th- 6th & MISSION STREET. One of the main issues that SF faces is homelessness. People living on the streets, doing drugs on plain sight is not a pleasant situation to be around. However, they can be avoided, to an extent, as they tend to concentrate in particular streets. Indicatively, Mission St & 4th-6th & Tenderloin (O'Farrell St, Geary St).

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Walking the entire route could be challenging due to topography. I would recommend taking a bus to Castro, walk to Mission Park and then take another bus to Noa Valley. Then, walk some parts of the Mission district and then take Bart to reach Market Street (and avoid the rough areas).

Day 7: Waterfront walk (mixed use redeveloped areas)

Finally, getting close to the waterfront again. But this time, the experience is very different compared to the northern part. Most part of this walk are going through, or went through, regeneration and redevelopment and thus, it feels like parts of it are brand new and others under construction. In general, the industrial character prevails as most parts of the waterfront are, or used to be, under port operational use. Some important stops:

1. RICH POINT
2. SOUTH BEACH
3. ORACLE PARK
4. MISSION BAY
5. DOGPATCH
6. HUNTERS POINT

Walking the entire route could be challenging. I would recommend walking to Mission Bay and then take T-line tram to Dogpatch (hop off and on if you want to spend some time in the area) and Hunters Point. T-line goes along the main streets, so you can take a glimpse of those areas without even getting off.

Day 8: North of San Francisco

Heading north, will offer an entirely different feel from the city centre in terms of surroundings and climate. To the north, you have the opportunity to get close to nature, seaside towns and vineyards. Some important stops:

1. MUIR WOODS. *Make sure you book a parking spot online before the day of your visit, as you cannot buy a parking ticket there and it often gets very crowded during weekends. The route from the city offers some outstanding views along Golden Gate bridge, to meandering lanes within the north side in the mountains and country houses along the hills.*
2. RIDGE VINYARDS.
3. SAUSALITO. Seaside town with great fish restaurants.

The Golden Gate overlook viewpoint could also be included into this day, after Sausalito, during sunset hours.

Day 9: South of San Francisco

Heading south, will again offer an entirely different feel from the city centre in terms of surroundings and climate. To the north, you get to experience the 'suburbs', the family towns, student towns and 'tech' towns; all the above in one day. Some important stops:

1. REDWOOD CITY. Family town with a central square.
2. PALO ALTO & STANFORD UNIVERSITY
3. MOUNTAIN VIEW & GOOGLE CAMPUS

This day trip would be best to be done by car. Make an early start and visit Redwood City for breakfast, Palo Alto for a quick walk and a walk around the university and then Mountain View for lunch. If it is a weekday, I would also recommend visiting the Google Campus (during weekends is empty).