

Exploring San Francisco: City's Basic Layout

You are living in one of the most visited and culturally rich cities in the world. From upscale Pacific Heights to edgy, creative South of Market, the city offers something for everyone. Explore and enjoy your city, but keep in mind personal safety! Go explore with a friend, know some of the major streets in the neighborhood you are going to, and be sure you can both safely get back to campus together.

The City's Basic Layout

Central San Francisco—Union Square, Financial District, Civic Center, Chinatown, North Beach, Russian Hill, and Fisherman's Wharf.

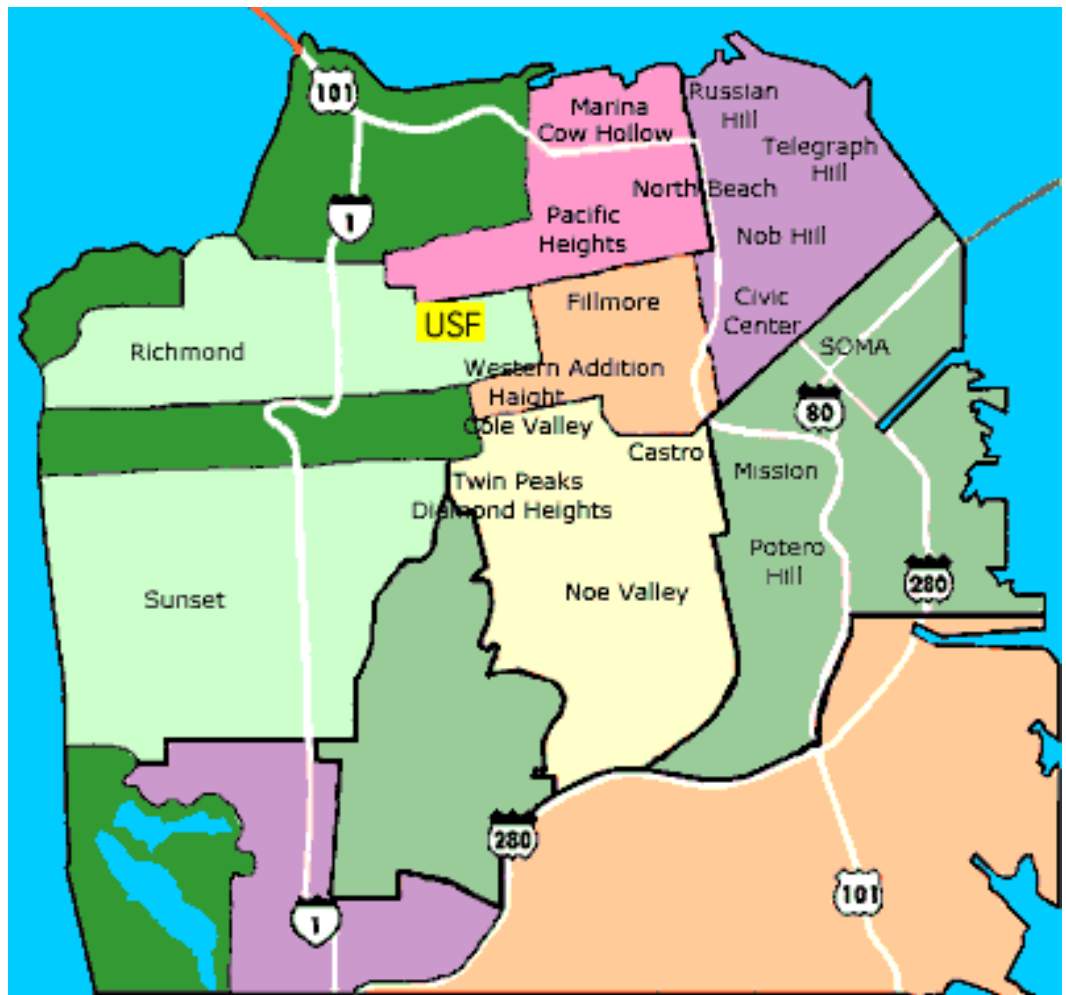
South San Francisco—South of Market (SoMa), the Mission, the Castro.

Van Ness to the Coast—USF, Pacific Heights and the Marina, Japantown, the Haight, the Presidio, Lincoln Park, Golden Gate Park, the Richmond, the Sunset.

Central San Francisco

Union Square

Union Square is known for its prestigious and upscale stores, which include such names as Neiman-Marcus, Macy's, Disney, Border's Books and Music, Nike, and the new Levi's flagship store. Other attractions in this area include art galleries, flower vendors, and glamorous hotels. San Francisco's theater district is located at the edge of Union Square and includes Geary Theater, the Curran Theatre, the Orpheum Theatre, and the Alcazar Theatre, among others.



Exploring San Francisco:

Central San Francisco



The Financial District

East of Union Square and Chinatown lies the Financial District, the city's center for banking and finance. Visit the Financial District for a thrilling architectural and business-minded romp. During the day, the Financial District is frantically busy and filled with taxis, buses, delivery trucks, business people and swift bike messengers. Buildings of particular interest include the Pacific Heritage Museum, formally the Old Mint Building that was partially destroyed in the 1906 earthquake. The luxurious Palace Hotel, located on the corner of Market and New Montgomery Street, stands as an elegant tradition and is worth a visit.

Civic Center

With the reopening of City Hall in 1999, the Civic Center is in the process of reviving its beauty and attraction. Visit City Hall and take in its beautiful renovation. In addition, many fine restaurants are opening in the Civic Center neighborhood and cater to the symphony and opera crowds attending Davies Symphony Hall or the War Memorial Opera House. Other places of attraction include the Veterans Building, the State Building, the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, the San Francisco Art Commission Gallery, which puts on small contemporary art exhibits, and the New Main Library. The Main Library, besides its expansive interior, also offers cozy reading rooms designed for your special interests: African-American Center, Chinese Center, James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center, and the Center for San Francisco History.

Chinatown

Chinatown offers wonderful roaming experiences and sights. Have a taste for Chinese food? Grant Avenue is packed with restaurants frequented by tourists. If you are in the mood for more local fare, venture down Stockton Street and try some of the Chinese delicacies available in fish markets and butcher shops.

North Beach

North Beach was traditionally a working class Italian neighborhood. A good time to visit is on weekdays when you can see some of the local fare: old-world bakeries, elderly Chinese practicing Tai-chi in Washington Square, poets, freethinkers, and visitors talking over coffee in the cafes. Saint Peter and Paul Church, the largest church in San Francisco, overlooks the square. Lawrence Ferlinghetti's bookstore, City Lights, keeps the torch burning for the era of the Beat poets. Also make a visit to Coit Tower for a view of the city and to take in the tower's Public Works murals.



Nob Hill

Nob Hill is the classy district sitting on top of one of the city's famous hills. Such fine

Exploring San Francisco:

South San Francisco

hotels as the Mark Hopkins, The Huntington, Stanford Court, and The Fairmont continue to offer Old World elegance and service. Grace Cathedral, modeled after Notre Dame, is also located on Nob Hill.

Fisherman's Wharf

Fisherman's Wharf screams tourism, but looking beyond the many visitors and T-shirt shops, you can take in the natural beauty of the bay views. The restaurants and street markets offer tasty seafood caught directly from the bay. Visit the Maritime Museum to see one of the city's most diverse collections of public art works. What's a visit to Fisherman's Wharf without exploring Ghirardelli Square with its shops and, of course, the many chocolate treats and fudge-topped ice cream. Pier 39 offers many different kinds of shops as well as a Venetian carousel, the Cinemax Theatre, and Underwater World marine aquarium. Walk out to the end of the pier and see the best free attraction on the Wharf (besides the bay views and views of Alcatraz): the colony of sea lions taking up residence at the docks.



South San Francisco

South of Market (SoMa)

South of Market is actually made of up of several unique neighborhoods: the area south of the Embarcadero is now home to AT&T Park; Multimedia Gulch is a neighborhood mostly centered around South Park; Yerba Buena Gardens and SFMOMA between 4th and 5th Streets and Mission and Howard; a nightclub district clusters around 11th Street; and a variety of edgier bars and night spots dot the neighborhood. SoMa, like much of San Francisco, continues to undergo gentrification, but it still offers an unpolished urban atmosphere.

The Mission

The Mission is a large district holding three distinct neighborhood flavors. Dolores Street, lined with well-tended homes, exudes quiet politeness along its tree-lined boulevard. Valencia Street holds the grittier bars, coffeehouses, international restaurants, and lesbian-owned businesses that make the Mission one of the city's hippest neighborhoods. Mission Street is home to the most colorful Latino commercial businesses, including fruit markets and tasty (and affordable) taquerias. Be sure to take in the murals painted on outer walls and buildings, as well as some of the alley walls, for a great example of beautiful art made possible by community effort.

Exploring San Francisco: Van Ness to the Coast

The Castro

Though gays and lesbians live in all parts of the city, “The Castro” is the hub and the home of most gay political and community organizations. It is the city’s “gay neighborhood,” though, of course, others make the neighborhood their home as well. The street scene is hopping almost continually and offers fun shopping, delicious meals, and relaxing coffeehouses. Places of particular interest include Harvey Milk Plaza and the Castro Theatre.



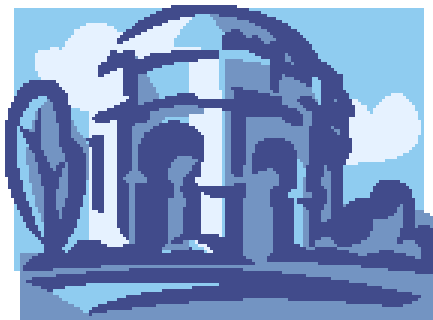
Noe Valley

Located south of the Castro, Noe Valley is home to beautiful Victorians and pedestrian-friendly shopping areas, particularly 24th Street. Stroll along 24th Street and take in the shops, coffeehouses, and restaurants.

Van Ness to the Coast

The Presidio

The Presidio occupies the northwest corner of San Francisco. Originally a Spanish military base, it later became a US military base and operated as such for many decades. It remains today mostly undeveloped and offers a quiet, parklike escape from the busy city. The Presidio is a popular place for walking, biking, and jogging. Fort Point offers spectacular views of the Golden Gate Bridge. In addition, the Presidio Museum (Funston and Lincoln Blvd.) documents the history of California and West Coast.



Lincoln Park

Lincoln Park offers visitors a nine-mile trail called the Coastal Trail. It stretches from Cliff House to Lands End. The walk offers wonderful views of the Golden Gate Bridge and other coastal vistas. The Palace of the Legion of Honor, a beautiful building designed after the Palais de la Le’gion in Paris, has a world class collection of medieval to twentieth century art. The museum also hosts various art exhibits throughout the year.

Golden Gate Park

A breath of fresh air in the city, Golden Gate Park offers plenty of green space and gardens as well as museums (California Academy of Sciences-scheduled to open in 2008, M.H. de Young Memorial Museum), tennis, rollerblading, walking/hiking trails, bike routes, and buffalo (yes, buffalo!). Be sure to see the Japanese Tea Garden, which offers teas and light snacks, as well as its showcase gardens.

Exploring San Francisco: Van Ness to the Coast

Pacific Heights

Some of the grandest and most extravagant homes in San Francisco are located in Pacific Heights. The views along the neighborhood's east-west ridge are striking. Fillmore Street offers interesting boutique shopping, restaurants, and coffeehouses.



Japan Town

Japan Town peaks with lively events during the two-weekend Cherry Blossom Festival in April. At the festival you'll find music, dancing, children's programs, a food bazaar, and a Japanese parade. The Japan Center offers shopping, excellent Japanese restaurants, and the eight-screen Kabuki Theater.



Haight-Ashbury

Leisurely walks through "The Haight" will bring you to one picturesque Victorian home after another. And, of course, the neighborhood will always be remembered for its psychedelic bands and Summers of Love in the 1960s and early 1970s. Activities you'll enjoy include hanging out in a funky café, people-watching, shopping for retro clothing, and browsing through unconventional

25 Cheap and Easy City Excursions

Listed below are 25 cheap (many free!) activities, sights, and excursions throughout San Francisco. Great adventures for a couple college students on a limited budget!

1. Tour the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) for free on the first Tuesday of the month.
2. Enjoy the view of the city and the bay from the base of Coit Tower (a ride to the top costs \$3.00) and take in the superb WPA murals painted on the interior walls of the tower.
3. Take a book, newspaper, or other favorite reading and enjoy the many neighborhood parks throughout the city. A sample: Alta Plaza, Alamo Square, Mission Dolores Park, and McKinley Square.
4. Visit the Museum of the City of San Francisco at Fisherman's Wharf. Admission is free.
5. Walk Pier 39 at Fisherman's Wharf and enjoy the colony of sea lions.
6. Tour the Levi Strauss Factory located at 250 Valencia. Free tours are given on Wednesdays, 10:30 am or 1:00 pm.
7. After the Levi's tour, explore Balmy Alley in the Mission (between Folsom and Harrison Streets and 24th and 25th Streets) to see the murals, which are Mission District landmarks.
8. Walk the Vallejo Steps in North Beach (near Vallejo and Montgomery) and take in the view.
9. Which street is steeper? You decide: Filbert Street between Leavenworth and Hyde on Russian Hill, or the block of 22nd Street between Church and Vicksburg in Noe Valley.
10. Tour Grace Cathedral on Nob Hill. Built from 1927 to 1964, it takes its inspiration from Notre Dame in Paris. The rose window was made in Chartres, and the altarpiece, The Life of Christ, is by Keith Haring.
11. Visit Fort Point in the Presidio and enjoy some of the best views of the Golden Gate Bridge and the bay. The museum is open Wednesday and Sunday; entry is free.
12. Go fly a kite. Or take a walk, jog, or bike ride along Marina Green and enjoy the waterfront.
13. Literary Romps on Russian Hill: Russell Street, #29 is where Jack Kerouac drafted *On the Road*. Macondary Lane and its steep stairway is the model for Armistead Maupin's Barbary Lane in his *Tales of the City* series.
14. Hit the beach, Baker Beach, that is. Located along the ocean side of the Presidio, this beach is said to be the city's most picturesque.
15. Who founded this city anyway? Captain Juan Bautista de Anza did, and his statue is just opposite the Ferry Building, at the foot of Market Street.

25 Cheap and Easy City Excursions (continued)

16. Check it out. The New Main Library offers an intriguing interior with a spiral staircase. It also has cozy reading rooms.
17. Francophile? Belden Street, between Bush, Pine, Montgomery, and Kearny Streets is a bit of France in the middle of San Francisco. Walk this little street for a taste of France.
18. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (across the street from SFMOMA) is free the first Thursday of the month and open until 8:00 pm. The garden area (always free) includes an open-air cafe, a Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial, and flowers, flowers, flowers.
19. Visit Lincoln Park (in the Richmond) and take a walk along the path, which is part of the 9-mile Coastal Trail. You'll see terrific views of the ocean and Golden Gate Bridge.
20. Temple Emanu-El (Lake Street and Arguello Blvd.) has a dome modeled after the 6th-century Aya Sophia in Istanbul. The temple is open Monday to Thursday, 1:00-3:00.
21. Bank of America Castro branch has a permanent display of some of the panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a memorial to the tens of thousands of people lost to AIDS.
22. A Streetcar Named...F Line? That's the line that uses antique streetcars from all over the world. The cars have been refurbished and hail from such cities as Milan, Kansas City, Los Angeles, St. Louis, and other cities. You can ride the line from the Castro stop all the way to Fisherman's Wharf, all for only \$1.50.
23. Three views you won't want to miss: Twin Peaks, Golden Gate Vista Point (on the other side of the Golden Gate Bridge), and Tank Hill. Tank Hill is located close to USF. Follow Shrader on the other side of Golden Gate Park. It winds uphill and leads to quite a view.
24. The Palace of the Legion of Honor, located in Lincoln Park, is not only a beautiful building to behold, but also affords great views of Lincoln Park and the bay. The museum has a world class collection of medieval to 20th-century European art, including a large Rodin collection.
25. Visit the bison (buffalo) in Golden Gate Park or the "wild" parrots of Telegraph Hill.

Bonus: Batter Up! AT&T Park has free viewing areas in the back of the ball park.

Of course, don't forget the obvious freebies: a walk across the Golden Gate Bridge, the 1000 block of Lombard Street ("most crooked street in the world"), bike rides through the Presidio, walks on the beaches. You no doubt have a few of your own favorite places and activities that only San Francisco offers. Share them with a friend and make some memories.