

THE BAY AREA BUCKET LIST

By Angela Petersen ([@angelafpetersen](#)) of [Far & Wise](#)

Here are more than 110 things to do that will help introduce you to the Bay Area, in addition to some recommendations to *start* you off in wine county and for nearby day and weekend road trips.

If you don't know where to start, look for the stars (★). They're highly recommended by me!

IN SAN FRANCISCO

Fisherman's Wharf

- ☐ Sip an Irish Coffee at Buena Vista Cafe. ★
- ☐ Play games at the Musée Mécanique.
- ☐ Catch the sea lions lounging around at Pier 39.
- ☐ Try some sourdough at the Boudin Sourdough Factory and Museum.
- ☐ Have clam chowder on the wharf.
- ☐ Eat an ice cream sundae at Ghirardelli Square.
- ☐ Bike across the Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito. Start from Fisherman's Wharf. ★

Near the Presidio

- ☐ Enjoy the magic at the Walt Disney Family Museum.
- ☐ See the Palace of Fine Arts.
- ☐ Walk along the water from Marina Green to Chrissy Field, past the Warming Hut to Fort Point at the base of the Golden Gate Bridge. ★
- ☐ Go to Off the Grid's food truck Sunday afternoon picnic.
- ☐ Climb the Lyon Street steps and enjoy the views.
- ☐ Snap photos of the Golden Gate Bridge from Baker Beach. ★
- ☐ Wander out to the Wave Organ to see if you can hear the music and for a ground-level bay view.

Union Square

- ☐ Ride the St. Francis Hotel glass elevators to the top of Union Square.
- ☐ Try the famous Swedish pancakes at Sear's Restaurant in Union Square.
- ☐ Ice skate on the Union Square ice rink at Christmastime.
- ☐ Shop among the throngs of tourists to your heart's content.

Nob Hill

- ☐ Have oysters, chowder, Dungeness crab, and seafood galore at Swan Oyster Depot. ★
- ☐ Visit Grace Cathedral, stay for yoga on the labyrinth.
- ☐ Get Bob's Donuts in the middle of the night.
- ☐ Channel your inner conductor at the Cable Car Museum.

- ☐ Go to movie night at Top of the Mark.
- ☐ See the life-sized Gingerbread House at the Fairmont Hotel during Christmas.

Embarcadero

- ☐ Run along the Embarcadero while doing your best to not run *into* anyone. ★
- ☐ Try every sample offered at the Ferry Building.
- ☐ Visit the Saturday morning Ferry Plaza Farmer's Market (in back too). ★
- ☐ Sail or cruise on the bay.
- ☐ Check out the Exploratorium (very kid friendly).
- ☐ Take a tour of Alcatraz. (Night tours are especially fun.)

North Beach — Chinatown — Telegraph Hill

- ☐ Visit the Fortune Cookie Factory in Chinatown. ★
- ☐ Explore Chinatown on foot, and try Golden Gate Bakery's egg tarts.
- ☐ Climb the stairs to the top of Telegraph Hill, and see the murals in Coit Tower. ★
- ☐ Grab picnic provisions from Molinari on Columbus. ★
- ☐ Have a sandwich at Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Café.
- ☐ Come early to get focaccia at Liguria Bakery, before they run out for the day.
- ☐ Taste the French toast at Mama's
- ☐ See Beach Blanket Babylon.
- ☐ Pick up something by Jack Kerouac at City Lights Bookstore. ★

Near Golden Gate Park

- ☐ Hike in Land's End out to the Sutro Baths. ★
- ☐ Shiver on Ocean Beach, and stop at the Cliff House for a drink.
- ☐ Spend a lazy Sunday in Golden Gate Park.
- ☐ Check out the bison paddock. ★
- ☐ Play horseshoes at the Horseshoe Pits.
- ☐ Rent a rowboat on Stow Lake.
- ☐ Visit the California Academy of Sciences living roof.
- ☐ Visit the de Young Museum to see the permanent collection (not just the free observation deck).
- ☐ Eat a tea leaf salad at Burma Superstar. (Try B Star, if packed.)
- ☐ Pick up BBQ pork buns from one of the many Asian bakeries on Clement Street. ★

The Sunset

- ☐ Try Trouble Coffee's infamous cinnamon toast.
- ☐ Go to the Stern Grove Festival.
- ☐ Trek up the stairs to Grand View Park. ★
- ☐ See the eye-catching designs on the 16th Avenue Tiled Stairs. ★

SOMA

THE BAY AREA BUCKET LIST

- ❑ Soak up some modern art at the SFMOMA (now closed for renovation).
- ❑ Walk the Barbary Coast Trail walking tour. ★
- ❑ Go to a Giants game at AT&T Park.
- ❑ Visit current and past startup offices: Dropbox, Twitter, Instagram, Square, TechCrunch, and more; all started in SOMA (South Beach).
- ❑ Overhear a VC-startup negotiation at The Creamery. ★
- ❑ Attend a tech keynote at Moscone for Apple, Microsoft, or Google (bonus for all three).
- ❑ Stop in at the Museum of the African Diaspora or the Jewish History Museum.
- ❑ Try the off-menu \$28 burger at Alexander's Steak House.
- ❑ Have a drink at the Pied Piper bar in the Palace Hotel.
- ❑ Sample the old-school cocktails and San Francisco history in underground speakeasy, Local Edition. ★
- ❑ Have (another) drink in The View lounge atop the Marriott hotel at 4th & Mission.
- ❑ Celebrate San Francisco's diversity over dinner and a show at AsiaSF.

Hayes Valley & The Haight

- ❑ Go thrift shopping on Haight Street.
- ❑ See the Painted Ladies from the credits of Full House. ★
- ❑ Run, dress up, or just watch the spectacle that is Bay to Breakers (city-wide really).
- ❑ Hope you'll get lucky and the wait at Nopa won't be too long. ★
- ❑ Try the (infamous) \$4 dollar toast at The Mill.
- ❑ Channel peace, hope, and love from the '60s at the corner of Haight and Ashbury.
- ❑ Get a slow brew drip coffee at the Blue Bottle Kiosk. ★

Near the Mission

- ❑ Find a favorite taquería in the Mission; eat lots of tacos. ★
- ❑ Take a walking tour with Precita Eyes to learn about the murals in the Mission.
- ❑ Enjoy people watching in Dolores Park, preferably with Bi-Rite ice cream.
- ❑ Take a chocolate class, or just get a hot chocolate at Dandelion Chocolate. ★
- ❑ Eat pan dulce at Mexican bakery La Victoria on 24th Street.
- ❑ Watch a movie at the Castro Theater. Get there early enough to enjoy the organ.
- ❑ Slide down the Seward Street slides.
- ❑ Try a sandwich from Ike's Place.
- ❑ Take Anchor Brewing Company's tour and tasting. ★
- ❑ Drive down the actual curviest street in San Francisco. Vermont Street, FTW.

- ❑ Watch the sun set from the top of Twin Peaks. ★
- ❑ Get a fancy cup of coffee and watch the hipsters at Four Barrel on Valencia.
- ❑ Stroll down Castro Street from Market to 18th.
- ❑ Get ready to dance at the Badlands and get a feel for the Castro's famous nightlife.
- ❑ Don your rainbow colors or outlandish costume, and go out to watch San Francisco's Pride Parade.

AROUND SAN FRANCISCO

North Bay | Across the Golden Gate Bridge

- ❑ Don't miss Muir Woods. End of the day is less crowded. ★
- ❑ Hike in the Marin Headlands. ★
- ❑ Take the ferry from Sausalito to San Francisco.
- ❑ Visit the Tourist Club for beers and a post hike picnic.
- ❑ Visit Point Reyes and the lighthouse. ★
- ❑ Eat oysters on Tomales Bay.
- ❑ See the sunset at Stinson Beach.
- ❑ Hike Mount Tamalpais.
- ❑ Test your strength and mettle on the Dipsea Trail.
- ❑ Bike around Angel Island State Park.
- ❑ Visit downtown Mill Valley and enjoy a summertime performance in Old Mill Park.
- ❑ Swing on the Hippy Tree in Tiburon.
- ❑ Sunday Farmer's Market in San Rafael. ★

East Bay | Across the Bay Bridge

- ❑ Shop the Alameda Point Antiques Faire, first Sunday of the month.
- ❑ Shop the Treasure Island Flea Market.
- ❑ See a concert at the Greek Theater in Berkeley.
- ❑ Enjoy a beautiful day on Lake Temescal, Lake Anza, or Lake Merritt.
- ❑ Shop and wander around Jack London Square. ★
- ❑ Stay at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley (or just enjoy the spa and pool).
- ❑ Hike Mount Diablo. ★
- ❑ Take a foodie tour through Berkeley's Gourmet Ghetto. ★
- ❑ See a play at the outdoor California Shakespeare Festival in Orinda.
- ❑ Have a drink at Albatross Pub, Berkeley's oldest pub
- ❑ See horse races at Golden Gate Fields.
- ❑ Visit Livermore's wineries.
- ❑ See the campus of UC Berkeley.

South Bay & Along the Peninsula

- ❑ Visit Winchester Mystery House in San Jose.
- ❑ Enjoy the Hakone Japanese Gardens in Saratoga.
- ❑ Cheer at a 49ers game in Santa Clara.
- ❑ See Stanford's campus.
- ❑ Tour Filoli country estate in Woodside.

THE BAY AREA BUCKET LIST

WINE COUNTRY

- ❑ Eat at Bouchon Bistro and Bochon Bakery in Yountville. ★
- ❑ Tour the French Laundry's garden.
- ❑ Do the barrel tasting at Del Dotto.
- ❑ Sit by the pool at Coppola's vineyard in Geyserville.
- ❑ Kayak lazily on the Russian River.
- ❑ Visit the Spanish mission and eat lunch at The Girl & The Fig in Sonoma Square. ★
- ❑ Take a hot air balloon ride over wine country.
- ❑ Take a tour of the Cowgirl Creamery in Petaluma.
- ❑ Spend some time at small, out of the way vineyards in and around Napa and Sonoma.
- ❑ Watch the World Championship Grape Stomp at the Sonoma County Harvest Fair.
- ❑ Relax in a mud bath and mineral water pool at Indian Springs in Calistoga. ★
- ❑ Walk through Oxbow Public Market in Napa.
- ❑ Take a cooking class at the CIA.

DAY TRIPS

- ❑ Drive down the Pacific Coast Highway (US Highway 1). ★
- ❑ Half Moon Bay — See the swells at Mavericks (from the boat). ★
- ❑ Pescadero — Eat olallieberry pie at Duarte's Tavern. See Pigeon Point Lighthouse. ★
- ❑ Santa Cruz — Ride the Giant Dipper and play games on the 100-year-old boardwalk, and sun yourself on the beach while watching some of the nations best surfers.
- ❑ Take a whale watching day cruise out to the Farallon Islands.
- ❑ Hike in Big Basin State Park.
- ❑ See the elephant seals at Año Nuevo State Reserve. ★
- ❑ Tour the Jelly Belly Factory in Fairfield.
- ❑ Go berry picking in Watsonville.

WEEKEND TRIPS

- ❑ Tahoe — Take a trip to Tahoe in both the winter and the summer. ★
- ❑ Monterey and Carmel — Point Lobos, Monterey Bay Aquarium, downtown Carmel, Pebble Beach, and more. ★
- ❑ Big Sur — Bixby Bridge, Nepenthe, Henry Miller Library, and Big Sur Roadhouse.
- ❑ Gold Country — Visit the gold rush towns of Coloma, Grass Valley, and Nevada City.
- ❑ Humboldt County — See Avenue of the Giants in Humboldt Redwoods State Park. ★

- ❑ Yosemite Valley — See El Capitan and Half Dome, and eat brunch at The Awhahnee. ★
- ❑ Sequoia National Park — General Sherman Tree, Crystal Cave, and Grant Grove.
- ❑ San Luis Obispo — Stay at the Madonna Inn, see the mission and the sand dunes, and explore downtown on foot.
- ❑ See the monarch butterflies migrating through Santa Cruz or Pacific Grove. ★
- ❑ Go tubing on the American River near Sacramento.