

## Experiencing San Francisco

by HAROLD TRINKUNAS | Naval Postgraduate School

For those of you who have never been to San Francisco, it is best understood as a city of neighborhoods. Every neighborhood has its own character, and its own set of local institutions and public spaces. For San Franciscans, their neighborhood is their “patria chica.” The city is relatively small—7 x 7 miles—but the hills can make it challenging to get around. Still, it is well worth exploring San Francisco’s neighborhoods on foot with the occasional aid of taxis, trains and buses. One of the local newspapers, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, has a comprehensive guide to the city’s neighborhoods on its website <<http://www.sfgate.com/neighborhoods>> and this is probably a good place to familiarize yourself with the city. What follows is a brief introduction to what to do (or how to find out what to do) when you want to get away from LASA.

### Walking

Although every neighborhood has its charm, the following four are both easy to walk and particularly good introductions to San Francisco’s diversity.

#### Downtown

Walk north from the conference hotel, cross Market Street and take Stockton Street. After two blocks, you will arrive at *Union Square*, the center of San Francisco’s high-end shopping district. Whether you recoil at or embrace the display of unbridled capitalism at work here, if you continue your walk north on either Stockton or Grant (one block to the east of Union Square), you will find yourself entering San Francisco’s *Chinatown*. To enjoy the sights, sounds and food of this neighborhood, walk along Grant Avenue. The *R&G Lounge* (631 Kearny Street) is a highly regarded Cantonese restaurant, and

*Great Eastern* (649 Jackson Street) is frequently recommended for dim sum. You will eventually arrive at Columbus Avenue, the main thoroughfare in North Beach, San Francisco’s traditional Italian neighborhood. A right turn on Columbus will take you to *City Lights Bookstore*, made famous by its association with the Beat movement. A left turn on Columbus will lead you to a large number of restaurants and cafes, many with Italian themes. *Ideale* (1309 Grant Street) is particularly well thought of. This is a relatively lengthy walk, so on the way back you may want to keep an eye out for the number 30 Muni public bus (which runs down Columbus and will eventually drop you at Powell and Market near the conference hotel) or a taxi.

#### The Embarcadero

If you walk a half block north from the conference hotel to Market Street, the downtown boulevard that transects San Francisco, turn right and walk northeast towards the Bay. After five or six blocks you will arrive at the *Embarcadero*, the San Francisco waterfront, and a beautiful view of the Bay. The *Ferry Building* will be immediately in front of you where Market intersects the Embarcadero, and inside you will find a very diverse assortment of cafes, restaurants and food stands. The Ferry Building can be a great place to experience the wide range of cuisines available in the Bay Area, from the informal cheese bar at *Cow Girl Creamery* to the high-end Vietnamese cuisine of the *Slanted Door*. You can also catch a ferry to Sausalito, an attractive beach town across the Bay from San Francisco, or to *Jack London Square*, bursting with food and entertainment options on the Oakland waterfront.

#### The Castro

Still the heart of San Francisco’s gay community, this neighborhood is frequently sunny, a relatively flat place to walk, and full of sights, restaurants, cafes and entertainment both day and night. It can be reached from the Congress hotel by walking one block north and taking the F surface train westbound on Market Street, or by taking one of the outbound underground trains from the nearby Powell/Market Muni station. A good way to get to know the neighborhood is by starting at the corner of Church and Market streets and walking west to Castro Street. After about four blocks, you will arrive at the epicenter of the Castro, the corner of 17th and Market. If you look south from this corner, you will see the beautiful and historic *Castro Theater*. This movie theater frequently features independent films and film festivals, and hosts live performances. Its website <[castrotheater.com](http://castrotheater.com)> is a good place to see what will be showing while you are in town. Continue your walk south on Castro towards 18th street, which is the other main street of this neighborhood. Turning left here provides an interesting stroll past a diverse array of boutiques and shops that will eventually take you to *Dolores Park*, a large open space with a fantastic view of San Francisco from its upper slopes. Overall, the Castro is not well known by San Franciscans as a restaurant destination, but even so, *Bisou* (2367 Market), *Poesia* (4072 18th Street) and *Destino* (1815 Market) are worth the visit.

#### The Mission

One of the warmest of San Francisco’s neighborhoods, it is also the center of the city’s Latin American and Latino community. From the meeting hotel, it is

probably easiest to get to the Mission by taking the underground Muni J subway train (\$2 fare) from the Powell/Market station. The train will eventually emerge from the underground and travel down Church Street southbound. Get off at the corner of 18th and Church streets, and walk east into the Mission. As you walk down 18th street, you will find two ways to experience the Mission. If you walk three blocks to Valencia Street, you can turn right and find yourself in San Francisco's hipster central, with a burgeoning number of cafes, bookstores, restaurants and alternative stores (warning: irony may be in short supply here). If you walk one more block past Valencia, you will arrive at Mission Street proper. Turn right and walk towards 24th Street to get the full flavor of the neighborhood. The Mission is packed with excellent restaurants and cafés. The neighborhood is famous for its numerous *taquerías* that offer a peculiarly San Franciscan interpretation of traditional Mexican food. For sit-down dining, it is worth checking out *Limón* (524 Valencia), *Osha* (819 Valencia), and *Garçon!* (1101 Valencia). For high-end California cuisine, *Range* (824 Valencia) and *Foreign Cinema* (2534 Mission) are notable (but make a reservation!) There is an amazing view of San Francisco from the sky terrace restaurant at *Medjool* (2522 Mission), located on the top floor of the *Elements* hotel. It is also worth viewing the large number of vibrant murals in the Mission, many of which you will stumble upon as you walk around the neighborhood. You can check out <www.precitaeyes.org> for more information on mural locations and organized tours.

## Dining

San Francisco takes its food very seriously. The city allegedly has the highest per capita density of restaurants in the world. Under such circumstances, we are lucky that San Francisco is highly wired, and there a number of free and searchable websites —<opentable.com>, <urbanspoon.com>, and <yelp.com>—that provide reviews of city restaurants and even indicate the availability of reservations. The area immediately around the Congress hotel has the typical mix of high-end restaurants and fast food that you would find in many urban downtowns. *Restaurant Lulu* (816 Folsom), *COCO500* (500 Brannan), and *South Park Café* (108 South Park) are all good (if pricey) bets for fine dining nearby. However, if you are looking for wonderful dining options at a range of prices, it is really worth heading down to the Ferry Building (see *Embarcadero Walk*). Keep in mind that most San Francisco restaurants do not stay open late. With limited exceptions, 9 or 9:30 PM is frequently the latest seating you will be able to reserve for dinner on most nights.

## Museums

Fortunately, one major cluster of museums is located within a block or two of the LASA Congress hotel. These include the *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art* <sfmoma.org> and *Contemporary Jewish Museum* <thecjm.org>, both of which are worth the visit. I also recommend venturing further afield to *Golden Gate Park*, where you will find the *DeYoung Museum* <deyoung.famsf.org> and the *Arboretum*, both of which are superb. The DeYoung and the Arboretum can be reached by taxi or via the number 5 Muni bus, which you can catch westbound at the intersection of 5th and Market streets a

half block north of the meeting hotel. Get off at the intersection of 8th Avenue and Fulton and walk south into the park to reach these museums.

## Entertainment

San Francisco is not noted for its late nights, but there is certainly a very wide range of entertainment options. There are some notable music venues, such as the *Fillmore*, *Great American Music Hall*, and *Slim's* <www.slimspresents.com> that constantly showcase excellent contemporary live music. Yoshi's is a well known venue for live jazz <yoshis.com>. The websites of its local daily and independent weekly newspapers are often the best place to get information on what is happening: the *San Francisco Chronicle* <sfgate.com>, *SF Weekly* <sfweekly.com> or the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* <sfbg.com>. Both the SF Weekly and the Bay Guardian are available free in newspaper dispensers on many street corners, and they appear every Wednesday.

## Outdoors

The Bay area has any number of beautiful outdoor recreation areas. For first time visitors, I would recommend checking out *Crissy Field*, located in the old *Presidio of San Francisco*, *Golden Gate Park*, and *Alcatraz*. Crissy Field offers a beautiful walk along the beach and Bay with views of the *Golden Gate Bridge* and the *Marin Headlands*. It is frequently windy, so wear layers (good advice for San Francisco in general) especially if you are planning to walk all the way to *Fort Point* immediately under the Bridge. More information is available at <http://www.parksconservancy.org/visit/park-sites/crissy-field.html>. Golden Gate Park has a high density of

## SECTION NEWS

## The China Factor in Mexico-U.S. Relations

LASA Section for Asia and the Americas

cultural centers. In addition to the *DeYoung* and *Asian Art* museums, it is also worth visiting the *California Academy of Sciences* and the *Arboretum*. Mainly it is just a beautiful place to walk around and feel temporarily removed from the City. More information on Golden Gate Park is available at <<http://www.golden-gate-park.com>>. Alcatraz is also a very interesting destination, both for historical reasons and for the views, although it is necessary to secure tickets in advance <<http://www.nps.gov/alca/index.htm>>.

## Getting Around

Although San Francisco is relatively small, its large number of hills makes getting around a challenge. Public transit is provided by the city via Muni. This is an institution San Franciscans love to complain about, but it is really one of the best ways for visitors to get around the city. It is safe and offers transportation city-wide via buses, trolleys and the subway for a \$2 fare. You are allowed to transfer between most Muni lines during a two-hour period after the purchase of your fare. I've found that the best way to use Muni efficiently is to consult <[nextmuni.com](http://nextmuni.com)> for information on when the next bus or train is due to arrive at your location. Taxis are available as well, but they can rarely be hailed on the street outside of the immediate downtown area. It is best to call for one when you need it (415-333-3333). For longer-range local travel, BART trains depart for Berkeley and Oakland from the Powell/Market station near the conference hotel. For public transit to destinations south of San Francisco, Caltrain provides train service departing from 4th and Townsend streets, which is within walking distance of the hotel. ■

## Sponsored by Open Society Foundations

## Hosted by the Center for Latin American Studies

## University of California-Berkeley

Tuesday May 22, 2012

This pre-Congress workshop will examine key challenges facing Mexico-U.S. relations in light of China's rise. Participants will discuss emerging tensions and policy approaches to trilateral engagement in two panels.

**Panel 1: Trade.** In 2010, Mexico recorded a \$93 billion merchandise trade surplus with the United States, a \$40 billion deficit with China, and a \$3.3 billion deficit with the world overall. Critics of NAFTA argue that overdependence on exports to the United States has impeded industrial innovation in Mexico and prevented Mexican authorities (public and private) from formulating coherent policies toward China. This panel examines how China's international trade and investment strategies are influencing Mexico's position in global production networks, how this is impacting U.S.-Mexico economic cooperation, and whether NAFTA may offer much-needed opportunities for improved trilateral cooperation engagement.

**Panel 2: Policy.** As China's trade and investment relations with the United States intensify, Mexico's advances, mistakes, and prospects in raising tariffs and building a "strategic partnership" with China may harbor useful lessons. U.S. policymakers may also draw lessons from the inability of their Mexican counterparts to stem the inflow of Chinese contraband, including via the United States. Is there any substance to recent media reports that this phenomenon is linked to the trafficking of arms into Mexico, and of drugs and people to the United States? How might policymakers in Mexico and the United States seek to harness the entrepreneurial capacities and international networks of resident Chinese communities for national benefit?

## Contact:

Adrian H. Hearn  
<[adrian.hearn@sydney.edu.au](mailto:adrian.hearn@sydney.edu.au)>

Enrique Dussel Peters  
<[dussel@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:dussel@servidor.unam.mx)>

Co-Chairs, Section for Asia and the Americas ■