THE PLATINUM CONCIERGE
ART OF SERVICE

TOP 21

things to do in

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco,
Open Your Golden Gate!

The Platinum Concierge welcomes you to the City by the Bay. Whether it's your first visit or your fiftieth trip, the San Francisco Bay Area has so much to offer, and there is always something new to see. **The Platinum Concierge** is proud to be celebrating our 20th anniversary and in honor of this achievement we have created this *Top 21 Things* guide for the City.

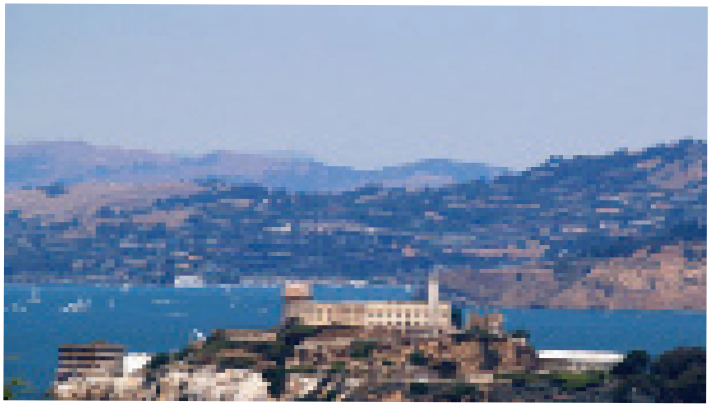
We hope you'll have the chance to explore all of San Francisco and that our guide gets you started on a great adventure. And remember, when you're ready to schedule your next experience, contact us and let us design a tour like no other. You'll explore all the city has to offer in style and be treated like royalty. Only with **The Platinum Concierge**!

And without further ado, our guide to the best of the City ...

1. Golden Gate Bridge

First and foremost, you have to visit the iconic Golden Gate Bridge. Take a scenic drive over the bridge into Sausalito, but don't make the drive yourself. Parking is extremely limited near both ends of the bridge. Your best bet is to take Golden Gate Transit (routes 30, 70, and 101) from downtown. All buses stop at the northbound Toll Plaza. From there, you can visit the welcome center for historical information, sign up for a guided walking tour, or walk or bike along the bridge and back.

Extend your day by relaxing on the lawn at Crissy Field, or explore the wooded Presidio hills. If you have kids in tow, take them to the House of Air indoor trampoline park, located in an old airplane hangar.'



2. Alcatraz Island

While gazing across the bay from the Golden Gate Bridge, you can see Alcatraz Island in the near distance. Even locals agree it's a must-see. Best known as a federal penitentiary, Alcatraz was also a Civil War fortress, a bird sanctuary, and home to the first west coast lighthouse. The only way to get to the island is by private ferry via Alcatraz Cruise, departing from Alcatraz Landing at Pier 33. Be sure to book well in advance, as tours do sell out.

3. Golden Gate Park

You could spend a weekend or even longer in Golden Gate Park and still not run out of things to do. The third most visited U.S. park, this attraction includes two museums — deYoung Museum and California Academy of Sciences — as well as a botanical garden, the Conservatory of Flowers, and the Japanese Tea Garden, all worth a visit

In between these sites, from "the panhandle" that borders Haight Ashbury down to the Pacific Ocean three miles away, you can find grassy meadows, paved and dirt running trails, waterfalls, gardens, lakes, a few playgrounds, a couple of historic windmills, and buffalo — American bison, actually, located midway through the park in a grassy field near Spreckels

Lake. Spend an afternoon at the Japanese Tea Garden, followed by a pedal boat ride in Stow Lake. Explore the Conservatory of Flowers, and then bike down and along the Great Highway paralleling the ocean. (Hint: The park is closed to car traffic on Sundays.) If you're hungry, visit Beach Chalet (best for breakfast) or Park Chalet, both on the Great Highway at Fulton

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4. Cable Cars

Cable Cars were introduced in 1873 to help locals contend with the many hills the city is built on. Today, the few remaining cable cars offer tourists a great way to explore the city in historic fashion. Since 1964, these tram-like vehicles have had the unique distinction of being the only public transport system to be declared a historic monument.

The **Powell-Mason** and **Powell-Hyde** are the most scenic routes. The cable cars will also get you to the major tourist attractions such as **Fisherman's Wharf**, **Ghirardelli Square**, the **Ferry Building**, **Nob Hill**, and **Lombard Street**. Tickets can be purchased onboard the cable car, or, if you are planning on more than a couple of rides or are going to be sightseeing for a few days, consider buying a pass.

5. Chinatown

You may have been to Chinatown in other cities, but San Francisco's Chinatown is a whole other realm. It is both the largest Chinatown outside of Asia and the oldest of its kind in North America. Almost completely

destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, Chinatown was rebuilt entirely in the Chinese style and was soon even more attractive than before the disaster.

Now with its temples, theaters, workshops, small businesses, stores, antique and souvenir shops, teahouses, and traditional pharmacies, visiting Chinatown has become one of the top things to do in San Francisco.

If you are traveling through San Francisco during an important Chinese holiday or event, you can expect to see an elaborate celebration. **Chinese New Year celebrations** are often considered the best in North America. The main street in Chinatown for tourists is **Grant Avenue**, with the Chinatown Gateway at Grant Avenue and Bush Street.

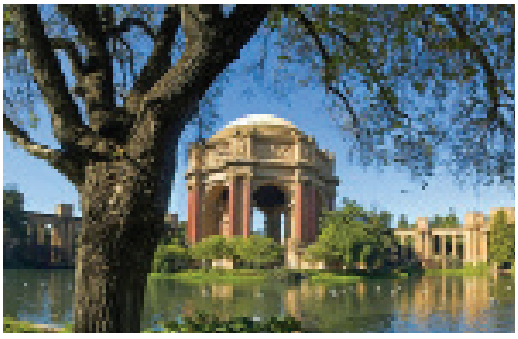
6. Legion of Honor

An impressive Neoclassical Beaux-Arts building in an amazing setting, the **California Palace of the Legion of Honor** is San Francisco's most exquisite museum. The Legion of Honor was the gift of the socialite, philanthropist, and patron of the arts Alma de Bretteville Spreckels. Because of her love for all things Parisian, the museum was designed as a replica of the Palais de la Légion d 'Honneur in Paris. The Legion of Honor museum has a superb collection of European decorative arts, sculpture, and paintings, along with antiquities from the Mediterranean and Near East. Admission to this museum also gives you same-day admission to the **de Young Museum**.

The museum is in **Lincoln Park**, a gorgeous green space with a golf course and coastal woodlands and a wonderful place for a leisurely walk. Just outside the museum, visitors may follow the path along Lincoln Highway, which boasts spectacular ocean vistas and perfect outlooks onto the Golden Gate Bridge.

Those seeking a more adventurous hike can head to the **Land's End Trail**. This winding cliffside trail in a wild, rugged terrain offers sweeping Pacific Ocean views and panoramas of the Golden Gate Bridge.

7. Palace of Fine Arts



The Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco is the last remaining structure from the **1915 Panama Pacific Exposition**. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this classical looking building is beautifully situated on a lagoon that reflects the mirror image on the surface of the calm water, while ducks and geese drift by.

The palace has been restored, along with the grounds, and today hosts art exhibitions and performances. The Palace of Fine Arts Theatre seats approximately 1,000 patrons.

8. SFMOMA

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is one of the city's top museums, with 170,000 square feet of exhibition space spread across 10 floors. The museum focuses on 20th-century art, in all forms, and the innovative and interesting exhibits are constantly changing. The permanent collection consists of 33,000 pieces, and one of the more interesting collections are contained within the Fisher Collection.

The museum is housed in a modern, architecturally stunning building that was extensively renovated and expanded in 2016. The light and airy building is a pleasure to wander about.

Should you work up an appetite, grab a bite at Café 5 in the museum's Jean and James Douglas Family Sculpture Garden. For a more refined dining experience, try and secure a table at the Michelin-starred In Situ restaurant.

9. Twin Peaks

These two uninhabited hills, more than 900 feet high, have one of the finest views out over the city and bay. Access is easy – you can drive to the north peak parking area, park your car, and soak up the amazing vista.

For those looking for a bit of activity, take a hike along trails over the north and south peaks. This is some of the best hiking in San Francisco. While up here, you may be forgiven for thinking these are the highest of San Francisco's 43 hills; however, that lofty distinction belongs to Mount Davidson, which is 33 feet higher.

The Twin Peaks are the only hills in San Francisco not to have been built over and remain in their original state. The Spaniards called them "Los pechos de la Chola" or the Breasts of the Indian Maiden. Even on warm days, strong, cool breezes blow in from the Pacific, especially in the late afternoon.

10. Oracle Park

Home of the **San Francisco Giants**, Oracle Park is a fun place to take in a baseball game while visiting the city. If you want to gaze out over the ball park to the sublime view of the ocean, buy tickets along the 1st base or 3rd base lines or behind home plate.

If you aren't able to see a game, consider taking a 90-minute ballpark tour for a behind-the-scenes look at places off limits to most people. You can learn about the historic moments that have taken place here and explore the architecture. Tours are scheduled around games and do not run every day so check the online calendar in advance.

11. Day Trip to Napa

Less than 1.5 hours from San Francisco, Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley are the two best-known and largest grape-growing areas in California. Many people day trip to this area to enjoy the scenery and stop in at some of the sites along the way.

Situated at the southern end of the valley of the same name, some 52 miles from San Francisco, Napa is one of the largest Californian towns north of San Francisco. This is an incredibly scenic area with a drier climate than the coastal regions. Within Napa, there are 150 types of soil, out of 300 in the world. Napa was founded in 1848 and bears the name of the long extinct Napa Indians. Napa is surrounded by the Mayacamus Mountains on the west and the Vaca Mountains on the east. The Howell Mountains form the eastern boundary of Napa County and they also protect the valley from storms.

12. Ferry Building Marketplace

As San Francisco is such a 'foodie' city, no visit can be complete without stopping by the lively Ferry Building Marketplace on the Embarcadero. Inside its Beaux Arts building are around fifty food vendors, local farmers, and small restaurants that offer tasty treats and delicious dishes.

Since opening in 2003, the market has been a firm favorite with locals and tourists due to its wide variety of coffee shops, snack stands, and grocery stores selling artisan products from around the world. It also hosts a fantastic farmers market three times a week which sells fresh produce and street food.

13. Presidio of San Francisco

A former military base that was closed but destined to become a high end real estate development project. The Presidio ws turned into a national park due to the efforts of the residents of San Francisco in their desire to create more open green spaces. The Presidio occupies the northern tip of the San Francisco Peninsula. As part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, it boasts attractive architecture, excellent outdoor activities, and epic views.

Once out-of-bounds to the public, it now has pockets of woods, rolling hills, and coastal bluffs that offer phenomenal views over Golden Gate Bridge and the Pacific Ocean. Visitor centres house interesting exhibits on its history and ecosystems, and you can also check out the old fort, batteries, and art projects.

14. Japanese Tea Garden

The gorgeous Japanese Tea Garden can be found within Golden Gate Park. Lovingly landscaped, its grounds are home to pretty ponds, a traditional tea house, and a towering pagoda.

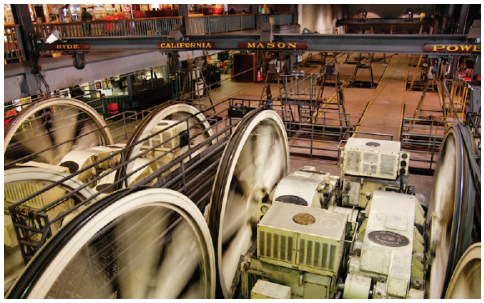
The first Japanese garden established in the States, since 1894 it has delighted countless generations with its serene scenery, fantastic flowers, and soothing water features. While strolling its winding paths you'll come across stone lanterns and sculptures with charming koi ponds, cherry blossoms, and a lovely Zen garden.

15. San Francisco Botanical Gardens

Lying alongside both the Japanese Tea Garden and de Young Museum is the San Francisco Botanical Garden. Boasting a collection of colorful flowers, plants and trees, its tranquil paths are a delight to walk along and have different areas and ecosystems for you to explore.

Since opening in 1940, the garden's grounds have expanded considerably and now contain nearly 9,000 kinds of plants from all around the world. As such, you can be strolling amidst savanna and succulents one minute, and then suddenly find yourself surrounded by tropical trees and cloud rainforest the next.

16. Cable Car Museum



One of San Francisco's most famous features is its charming old cable cars that lend the city such a distinctive look and feel. Aside from simply riding up and down its steep streets in one, visitors can learn all about the history and technology behind the streetcar system at this magnificent museum.

In addition to interesting exhibits, old photos and mechanical displays, the Cable Car Museum also showcases vintage streetcars that date to the 1870s. As it offers such a fascinating look into the inner workings of the transport system, the museum has long been a popular tourist drawcard and can be found in the affluent Nob Hill neighborhood.

17. Lombard Street

Located between Hyde and Leavenworth streets, Lombard Street is famously known as the "crookedest street in the world" although it is neither the crookedest street in San

Francisco (Vermont Street is) nor the steepest.

The one-block portion of Lombard Street that contains eight hairpin turns was created to reduce the hill's natural steep slope. The speed limit in this section is a mere 5 mph (8 km/h).

18. California Academy of Sciences

One of the biggest and best museums in the States, the California Academy of Sciences contains a staggering 46 million specimens with incredible artifacts, animals and exhibits. Located in Golden Gate Park, the massive natural history museum boasts an aquarium and planetarium, as well as its own indoor rainforest.

Established in 1853, the academy's captivating collection now resides within a majestic modern building that even has its own living green roof. Inside is a treat to explore as you wander past shark lagoons and coral reefs, before emerging in galleries full of fossils and minerals. One of its main highlights is the enormous rainforest exhibit which houses over 1,600 live animals, plants, and amphibians.

19. The Castro

The Castro District, commonly referred to as the Castro, is a neighborhood in Eureka Valley in San Francisco. The Castro was one of the first gay neighborhoods in the United States. Having transformed from a working-class neighborhood through the 1960s and 1970s, the Castro remains one of the most prominent symbols of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) activism and events in the world. You will find lively bars, exciting shops and great food here.

And for the kids...

20. Exploratorium

Play with the wonders of science at the Exploratorium, located at Pier 15 on the Embarcadero. The museum features more than 600 hands-on exhibits. Step inside a tornado, turn upside down on a curved mirror, and walk across a fog bridge. Hint: Go on a weekday (except Monday) or early Sunday to avoid the crowds.

21. Children's Creativity Museum

Located in SoMa, the Children's Creativity Museum is a hands-on space where children can design clay motion animations, invent a new machine, and tackle any number of multimedia projects. Artists and educators staff studios and exhibits, giving your children expert guidance when they need it.

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