

# San Francisco – The Happiest and the Healthiest City

San Francisco refuses to fit a mold. It climbed hills while other cities spread out. It encouraged immigrants to guard their ethnic distinctions while other cities assimilated them. It rejects urban freeways because they're unsightly and renovates dusty keepsakes (an archaic cable car system, an abandoned factory, an antiquated cannery) with felicitous results.



Such ingenuity has made San Francisco the top city in many categories. In October 2009 the readers of Condé Nast Traveler magazine voted San Francisco Best U.S. City in their annual Readers' Choice Awards; San Francisco has held its number one position for the 17th consecutive year in Condé Nast's Best U.S. City award.

Last fall San Francisco was also named one of "The World's Happiest Cities" in an article posted September 2009, on Forbes.com. San Francisco, which ranks seventh out of 10 listed cities, is the only city in North America to be included in what the magazine calls "urban centers closely associated with unmitigated joy."

The "city by the bay" was also named the third healthiest city in the United States by BestPlaces.net. Cities were selected based on key factors including health status, nutrition and exercise, plus mental health and life balance. It was also named the most "walkable" city in the nation by the Web site WalkScore.com in 2008. The city scored 86 out of 100 based on residents' proximity to services and amenities. Bicycle enthusiasts can enjoy easy pedaling along the Golden Gate Bridge or through the Panhandle. But if you appreciate a good bike workout, San Francisco provides the perfect uphill battle.

San Francisco is congenitally worldly, inherently irrepressible. Its verve is contagious.

"You know what it is?" John Steinbeck said of San Francisco. "It is a golden handcuff with the key thrown away."



The City's a cinch to explore. Confined to 47 square miles, it's "America's Leading Compact." You can stroll from its shopping center, Union Square, to its Neapolitan-flavored nightlife belt, North Beach, taking in Chinatown and Wall Street West en route. Public transport will whisk you from Golden Gate Park to the Embarcadero, from Ocean Beach to the East Bay. Ferries will carry you to the resort-like ports of Sausalito and Tiburon, the isles of Angel and Alcatraz and their terminal at Larkspur near Pt. San Quentin.

Any compendium of local attractions should list RESTAURANTS in large type. There are more than 3,400 of every nationality. This is one of the great eating towns of the world, famed for its cuisine since the days of the railways barons and bonanza kings.



San Francisco's glittering tradition is the performing arts. Generally acknowledged to be the cultural capital of Northern California, it has its own opera, ballet, symphony and drama (American Conservatory Theater) companies, all of exceptional caliber.

The country's oldest international film festival is held here annually. Movie houses and special-interest film festivals proliferate. The city supports four public art museums – the Asian, de Young, Palace of the Legion of Honor and Modern Art. There are at least 34 other repositories of culture and local lore, ranging from vintage ships to a 200-year-old mission, from a car barn (cable) to an island (Alcatraz) of unusual interest.

Photos: San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau

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