



Walking the Streets of San Francisco Healthy Living Today

This unique, adventurous city offers walking tour options for every taste

The best way to really get to know any city is to walk its main thoroughfares, ramble down its side alleys, and immerse yourself in the day-to-day activities taking place on the streets its locals frequent. San Francisco is no exception. Plus, as an added bonus, the city's numerous hills will make you more fit in the process.

Do It Yourself with a Self-Guided Tour

If you want to do it yourself, the **San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau** offers printable PDF files of five favorite walking tours in San Francisco including Union Square, Chinatown, and Fisherman's Wharf. You can download these illustrated guides directly from their website, but you'll need Adobe Acrobat Reader software to view the files. Another option is **Diverse City Destinations**, which offers a series of ten self-guided walking itineraries for tours such as "Jazz & Blues," "Art to Architecture," and "Soul of the City."

If you'd rather use a print book as your guide to walking San Francisco, there are several good options. *Walking San Francisco* by Liz Gans (Falcon) guides you through 18 popular walks, including several in the scenic Golden Gate National Recreation Area. *Lunchtime Walks in Downtown San Francisco* by Gail Todd (Wilderness Press) shows you 33 short walks that offer a great way to see popular San Francisco areas by foot, even when you're short on time. *Stairway Walks in San Francisco* by Adah Bakalinsky (Wilderness Press) offers detailed itineraries for 27 walks through San Francisco's little-known stairways. These walks are a great way to discover "hidden" San Francisco and get a great workout at the same time.

Let a Guide Show You the Way

If you're looking for a guided walking tour, **San Francisco City Guides** offers the best deal in town on guided San Francisco tours—they're free. With over 30 different offerings, City Guides takes you to all the usual destinations such as Chinatown, Haight Ashbury, and North Beach as well as to lesser known but equally intriguing areas of the city. Tours such as "Ghost Walk at

City Hall,” “Bawdy & Naughty,” and “Gold Rush City,” reflect the city’s colorful past. City Guides is a nonprofit organization sponsored by the San Francisco Public Library.

Another option is the **Victorian Home Walk**, which takes you on a 2-1/2 hour tour past more than 200 Victorians and includes a visit inside a Queen Anne Victorian as well as a scenic cable car ride. Tour price is \$20 per person.

The **Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco** offers two docent-led walks of Chinatown. The Chinese Heritage Walk is a guided cultural tour of Chinatown priced at \$17 per person. The Chinese Culinary Walk emphasizes culinary Chinatown and includes a dim sum lunch for \$40 per person.

Coffee lovers should appreciate **Javawalk**, a two-hour guided tour of San Francisco’s best coffeehouse culture at \$20 per person. If the thought of all that java is making you hungry, check out the **Wok Wiz** tours. This tour company offers several tours including the “Wok Wiz Daily Tour,” the “I Can’t Believe I Ate My Way Through Chinatown Tour,” and the “Ciao Chow – Chinatown and North Beach Tour.” Prices vary based on tour.

Unique, Unusual, and Out of This World

Interested in visiting some of San Francisco’s most notorious haunted homes? The **San Francisco Ghost Hunt** just might be the ticket. This tour takes you on a three-hour visit of Pacific Height’s haunted past and includes an inside tour of one of its most famous haunted mansions. The tour price is \$20 per person.

If San Francisco’s vampire lore intrigues you, give the **Vampire Tour of San Francisco** a try. Led by 127-year-old vampress Mina Harker, as portrayed by a local actress, the tour provides a guided visit of Nob Hill mixed with vampire fantasy. As legend has it, Mina was embraced by Count Dracula himself in 1897 and has lived in the tunnels under Nob Hill ever since. Popular with both locals and tourists, the tour costs \$20 per mortal.

The Great Outdoors

If you’re interested in getting out of the city, check out the **Sierra Club’s** offerings. With hundreds of hikes and walks per year for all fitness levels, the club also provides the opportunity to meet and mingle with the locals. A few of the scheduled hikes are in the city itself, like the city stairways hikes, but most take you to scenic locations outside San Francisco such as Mount Tamalpais or Point Reyes.

City Hikes arranges hikes of scenic San Francisco locations for groups of eight or more. Options include Golden Gate Park, Presidio-Crissy Field, Fort Mason-Marina, and Fort Funston-Ocean Beach. Occasionally, they also schedule public hikes for which individuals can sign up.

San Francisco is a great walker's city, offering an eclectic mix of walking tour options. Whether you're an urban aficionado, a nature lover, or a seeker of the unique and unusual, San Francisco will entertain you and keep you in shape at the same time.

Note: Original article contained photography and a resources sidebar.