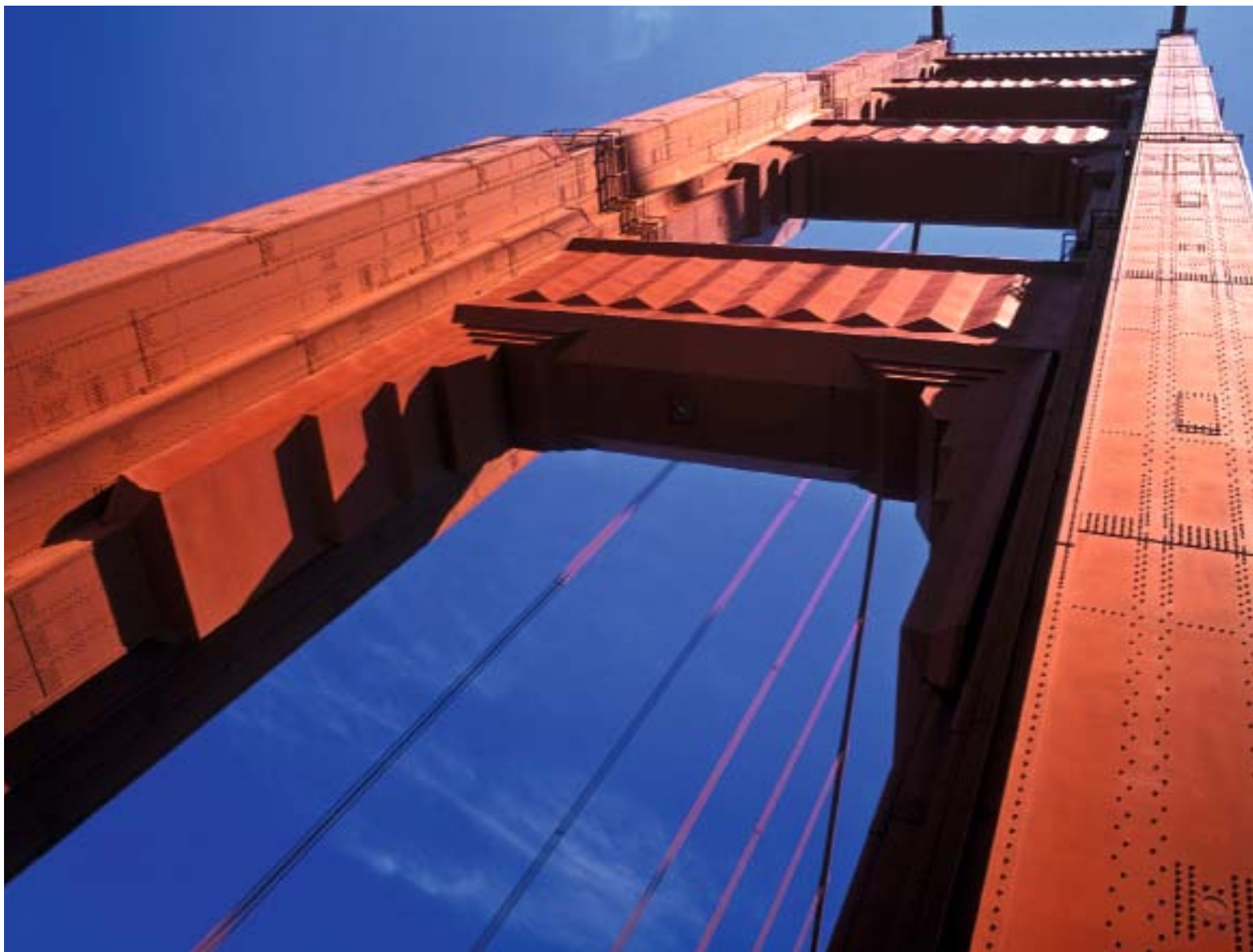


# CINEMATIC SAN FRANCISCO

You've seen the car chases, the prison escapes, the bridge... Time to take in the reel thing



Film sets don't get more spectacular than this: pan out to the churning cobalt-blue bay, that bridge and a sweep of vertiginous streets, all cloaked in wispy fog. Cue lighting to pierce the haze with golden rays. Now focus on dramatic towers, eerie islands and colourful characters. It's had a role in countless movies, but the *real* star of the show is always San Francisco.

By Jill Starley-Grainger



## WHAT TO SEE & DO

● Movie moments montage in your mind – *The Maltese Falcon*, *Superman*, *A View to a Kill* – as you stare up at Golden Gate Bridge's vermillion towers (① on map). The only (affordable) way to see it from this angle is on a two-hour Champagne Cruise (Pier 39, Dock C, Fisherman's Wharf; 00 1 415 378 4887, sailsf.com; £40pp; ②). The sailboat thunders beneath the iconic structure, then skirts the quaint town of Sausalito, and the spot where Clint Eastwood plunged into the bay in *Escape from Alcatraz*.

● Fast-forward to 2013, and Alcatraz (15-minute ferry from Pier 33; nps.gov/alca; alcatrazcruises.com; £20 incl ferry; ③) is no longer home to criminals like Al Capone and Frank Morris (the real-life escapee portrayed by Eastwood). The last prisoner left 'The Rock' in 1963, but as you peer through the bars to their cots, hear cells clanking shut and listen

to the crackly voices of former inmates and guards on the atmospheric audio guide, it all feels eerily off-the-moment.

● Eastwood was on the right side of the law (sort of) in *Dirty Harry*, when he nearly nailed a serial killer during a shootout at Saints Peter and Paul (666 Filbert St; sspeterpaulsf.org; ④), a Neo-Romanesque church built in 1924. Strike a defiant pose in front of the twin spires, just like Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio did. The Pope wouldn't let the divorcees marry inside, so they tied the knot at the nearby City Hall (1 Dr Carlton B Goodlett Place; sfgsa.org; free tours; ⑤), a magnificent domed Beaux Arts building, but came back to the church's front steps for their wedding snaps.

● From the church, it's a five-minute walk up to Coit Tower (Telegraph Hill; £2; ⑥), an Art Deco beacon. In *Doctor Dolittle*, Eddie Murphy

persuades a tiger not to jump from the top, but the feline was probably just admiring the view, which takes in the whole sweep of the city, from Golden Gate Park in the west to the university town of Berkeley in the east.

● The tower's elegant facade also stars – along with Golden Gate Bridge and the Old Masters at the Legion of Honor (Lincoln Park, 100 34th Avenue; legionofhonor.famsf.org; £7; ⑦) – in *Vertigo*, Hitchcock's stalker-esque love letter to the city. Follow in his footsteps on a free 90-minute walking tour (sfcityguides.org): you'll glimpse Kim Novak's apartments and get a taste of James Stewart's obsession as you trundle through the streets of Nob Hill.

● Fly like a *Bullitt* through the rollercoaster roads of Russian Hill. In the film, Steve McQueen drove a Mustang, but it's more fun (no seriously!) on an electric bicycle (00 1 415 346 2453,

Roll camera!: from left, for the best view of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge, go under it; Coit Tower and Telegraph Hill; wiggly Lombard Street; a cable car trundles through Nob Hill

baycitybike.com; £35/24 hours; ⑧). From the vintage cable-car turntable (corner of Taylor and Bay; ⑨), zoom up Taylor to re-enact the chase scene through early-20th-century residential avenues. Pause to watch cars snake down curvaceous Lombard Street (⑩), then eye-spy Alcatraz and the pointy TransAmerica building (600 Montgomery St; ⑪).

● An old WWII cargo ship, *SS Jeremiah O'Brien* (Pier 45; ssjeremiahobrien.org; £8; ⑫) is now moored in the harbour not far from the sea lions at Pier 39 (⑬). It was the engine-room double for *Titanic* in Cameron's film. Climb aboard to experience the thudding underbelly of this huge metallic beast and for views from the deck over the bay to Sausalito. >



## CINEMATIC SAN FRANCISCO



## WHERE TO STAY

**Golden Gate Hotel** (775 Bush St; 00 1 415 392 3702, goldengatehotel.com; (14)). Trundle up the antique birdcage lift to your knick-knack-filled room. Expect chintz, homemade oatmeal cookies and visits from the resident ginger tomat in this comfy-cosy abode in Nob Hill. Doubles from £95, B&B, with shared bathrooms.

**Hotel Bijou** (111 Mason St; 00 1 415 771 1200, hotelbijou.com; (15)). 'Pacific Heights', 'Star Trek IV', 'Interview with the Vampire': all the simple, spacious rooms in this hotel are named after movies set in the city, with nightly free screenings of them in the private mini-cinema. Doubles from £120, room only.

**Mystic Hotel** (417 Stockton St; 00 1 415 400 0500, mystichotel.com; (16)). The chef-owner has lavished most of his affection (and design budget) on the popular Prohibition-style bar-restaurant on the first floor. But rooms in this 1904 building, one of the city's oldest, have been given a whisper of an update via a single bare-brick wall and an acrylic chair by the desk. Doubles from £185, B&B.

**Cavallo Point** (601 Murray Circle, Fort Baker, Sausalito; 00 1 888 651 2003, cavallpoint.com; (17)). This former military base has been reworked as a *Top Gun*-style retreat, just over Golden Gate Bridge. Sip iced tea from the rocking chair on your front porch as you watch the city lights twinkle across

the bay. Inside, warm up by the wood-burning stove at the foot of your bed in the officers' quarters. Doubles from £244, room only.

**Hotel Zetta** (55 5th St; 00 1 415 543 8555, viceroyhotelgroup.com; (18)). Old-school stylings – floppy-disk collages, shuffleboard, beanbag chairs – are respun at this new boutique hotel. Murals of retro imagery (hardback books – remember those?) decorate guestrooms, and the play-lounge features snooker. Doubles from £260, room only.

**Fairmont San Francisco** (950 Mason St; 00 1 415 772 5000, fairmont.com; (19)). Film fans won't care that this five-star's decor has hardly changed since it starred in an episode of *Murder, She Wrote* in 1990. The walls are lined with posters of movies filmed here – *The Rock*, *Junior*, *Towering Inferno* – and snaps of guests, from Orson Welles to Obama. Upper-floor rooms have views of the bay to Alcatraz and beyond. Doubles from £335, room only.

**SOMA Street Food Park** (428 11th St; somastreetfoodpark.com; (20)). Food-truck fans flock to this cluster of airstream vans and caravans. The dozen or so vendors vary daily, but if you luck out, The Burr-Eatery will be dishing up its buttery burritos. Mains around £5.

**Nopalito** (306 Broderick St; 00 1 415 535 3969, nopalitosf.com; (21)). Crunch salsa-and-Cotija-cheese-smothered tortilla chips, then munch

pork *carnitas*, braised with orange, beer, cinnamon and milk at this Cali-Mexican joint by Golden Gate Park. Mains around £8.

**Namu Gaji** (499 Dolores St; 00 1 415 431 6268, namusf.com; (22)). The delectable shiitake mushroom dumplings and tangy, spicy potato puffs have foodies lining out the door for a chance to perch at the counter of this 'New Korean American' eatery in Mission, the city's trendiest nightlife district. Order two to three small plates, around £10 each.

**Foreign Cinema** (2534 Mission St; 00 1 415 648 7600, foreigncinema.com; (23)). Crowd-pleasing dishes – lavender-baked *fromage blanc*, sesame-seed fried chicken – keep this large industrial-mod dining room packed out. Sit in the courtyard to dine against a Technicolor backdrop: films are projected onto a big screen, and crackly dialogue echoes out of the drive-in movie speakers. Mains around £18.

**Waterbar** (399 The Embarcadero South; 00 1 415 284 9922, waterbarsf.com; (24)). On a sunny weekend, there is no finer place for brunch than this seafood restaurant by Bay Bridge. You'll be dazzled by the light glinting off the water and the just-so scrambled eggs with grilled artichokes and hollandaise. Dinner mains around £24.

**Commonwealth** (2224 Mission St; 00 1 415 355 1500, commonwealthsf.com; (25)). Watch chefs whip up seaweed-sprinkled crisps, root veg cooked in ash with truffle froth and lamb

**Sets & the city: from left, the Fairmont San Francisco has seen its share of film shoots; balsamic eggs come with a side order of silver screen at Foreign Cinema; the (new) old-school Hotel Zetta**

smoked over eucalyptus in this hip open-plan Mission dining room. Save room for the worth-the-calories peanut butter ice cream wrapped in chocolate and caramel. Six-course menu £50.

## BARS &amp; CLUBS

**The Chapel** (777 Valencia St; (26)). *Pal Joey* plays on a small TV above the till while bartenders whip up sassy drinks (try the Valencia: tequila, agave, lime and chilli). Once a mortuary, this bar-cum-music-venue is dark, divey and just the place for an all-nighter.

**Café International** (508 Haight St; (27)). A woman sings an ode to a melon. A man with a blue wig and doll-face make-up promises to 'transform your dreams'. You'll either find Friday's open-mic nights deep and meaningful – or so bad they're funny. Worth it either way.

## SHOPPING

**City Lights Booksellers & Publishers** (261 Columbus Ave; (28)). Peruse higgledy-piggledy shelves of diverse titles, from Beat poetry to irreverent 'children's' books (*Go the Fuck to Sleep* by Adam Mansbach), at the place where Jack Kerouac and co hung out in the '50s.

**31 Rax** (3309 Mission St; (29)). Retro dressers should beeline to this vintage emporium for paisley blouses and trilby hats at bargain prices. ■

## Ask the local



Sean Brown is a California native who lives in The Mission and works at Hotel Vertigo (hotelvertigo.sf.com)

'Scenes from *The Birds* were filmed in Union Square (30), but it's pretty bland. Head instead to sceney Valencia Street (31), or The Haight, where the Silicon Valley set pack out grown-ups' toy store Super7 (1427 Haight

St; (32)) for *Star Wars* memorabilia. Book ahead for high-camp singalongs – *Grease*, *Beauty and the Beast* – at The Castro Theater (429 Castro St; 00 1 415 621 6120, castrotheater.com; from £10; (33)), an ornate '20s movie palace. In The Mission, stop at Humphry Slocombe (2790A Harrison St; humphryslocombe.com; (34)) for *Wonka-style ice cream* – try 'cornflakes and whiskey'. And don't miss a chance to see my team in action: the San Francisco Giants (AT&T Park, 24 Willie Mays Plaza; sanfrancisco.giants.mlb.com; tickets from £5; (35)) are baseball's reigning World Series champions.'



## Get me there

## GO INDEPENDENT

**Virgin Atlantic** (0844 209 2770, virgin-atlantic.com) flies non-stop from Heathrow to San Francisco from £718 return. Or fly the same route with **BA** (0844 493 0787, ba.com) from £550, or with **United** (0845 607 6760, united.com) from £564.

## GO PACKAGED

**American Sky** (0843 636 4588, americansky.co.uk) has

six nights at the Fairmont, from £999pp, room only, with Heathrow flights. **America As You Like It** (020 8742 8299, americaasyoulikeit.com) has seven nights in San Fran and Napa Valley from £970pp, room only, with Heathrow flights and car. **Vacations to America** (01582 469662, vacationstoamerica.com) has 10 in San Fran, Napa Valley and Carmel from £1,795pp, B&B, with Heathrow flights and car.

## GET AROUND

**Muni** ('Municipal Railway'; sfmta.com; from £1.50, one-way) is the city's public transport network, including cable cars and light rail.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Check out **Visit California** (020 7257 6180, visitcalifornia.co.uk) and **sanfrancisco.travel**. For insider tips, try **7x7.com**, **sfgate.com** and **sf.eater.com**.