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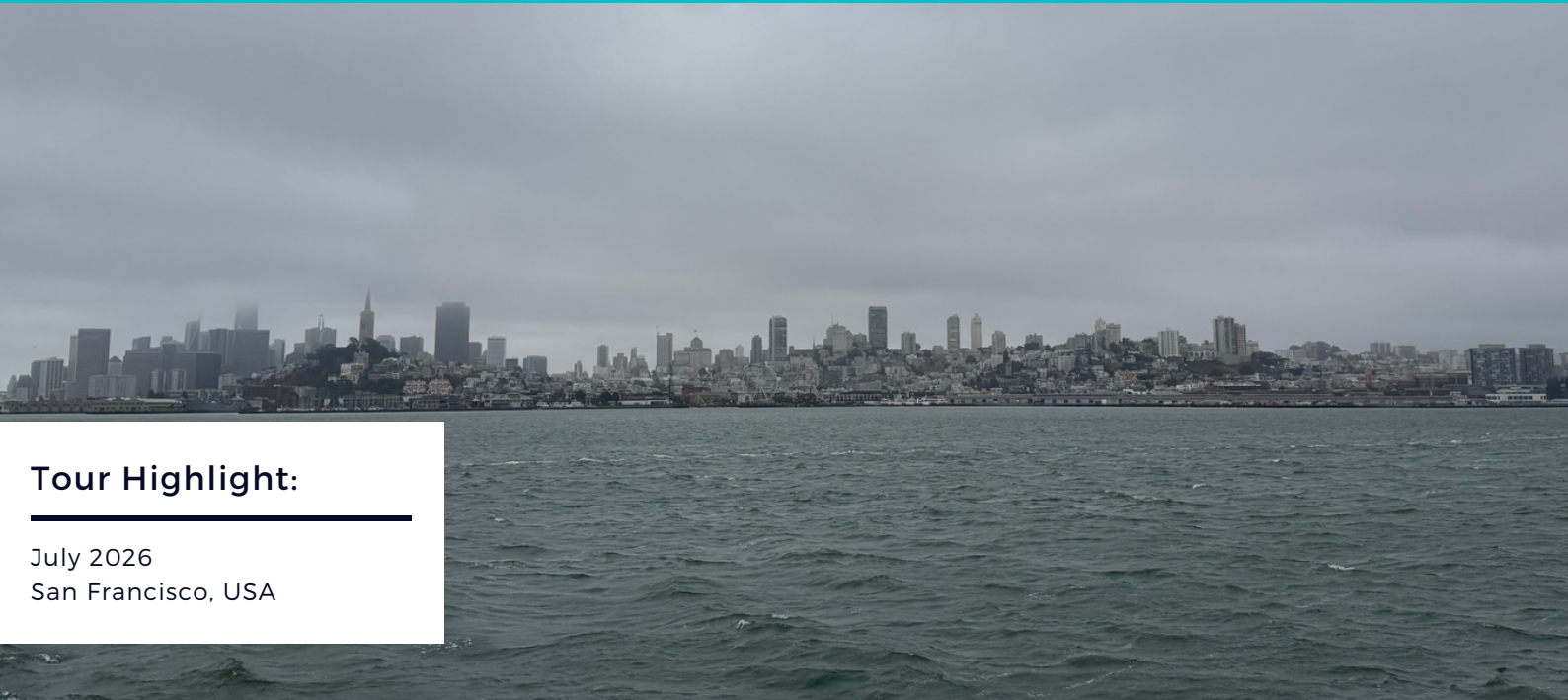
TOUR UPDATE



The Newsletter of mikesworldtours

Tour Highlight:

July 2026
San Francisco, USA



From Cable Cars to Driverless Cars

Contributed by Michael Davis



A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

San Francisco was founded in 1776 by Spanish settlers who were led by Juan Bautista de Anza. During the 1800s trade increased in the area, and the Gold Rush in 1849 led to high population growth. This led to new businesses and services established in the city. Chinese immigration also increased to help build in the transcontinental railroad in 1865. After the railroad was completed Chinese immigrants settled in the city's Chinatown neighborhood for employment. The 1906 Earthquake caused buildings to collapse and fire destroyed 75 percent of the city. The 1960s brought the hippie movement to the city being based in the Haigh Ashbury neighborhood. The city had a status as a technology hub due to the proximity of defense contractors and semiconductor firms. The invention of the computer increased the number of technology companies and brought venture capital firms to the city.

San Francisco, USA



Some quick tips for San Francisco :

- The hills are no joke, pack a pair of good walking shoes
- The summer weather is mild, bring layers and expect to wear a coat most of the day
- The fog is heavy, don't be disappointed if it ruins the views of your favorite sites

FOOD

IN-N-OUT

The first meal on my mind after landing in San Francisco was In-N-Out. After a 12 year hiatus, I really forgot how much I had been missing out. San Francisco only has one location in Fisherman's Wharf. but like all In-N-Out locations it is a classic and extraordinary. Make sure to get the fries animal style which includes cheese, grilled onions, and their signature sauce. The San Francisco location was packed and it in a pretty touristy area. The wait is not super long, but it was really hard to find a seat. I opted to find some nice outdoor seating nearby and enjoy my burger and fries with some fresh air. It really is unfair that the West Coast gets to gatekeep these burgers from the rest of the country.



JUNIPER

If you are looking for a morning coffee and pastry before a day of exploring or you need some carbs to quell a hangover this is your place. Make sure to get there early (like before 9am) because there will be a long line, but it is worth it. I had a Mexican Street Corn Danish and Black Forest Choux. Shout out to the guy in line that recommended the Choux. It was so good. It has cream inside and is the perfect size and cream to pastry ratio. The Danish was also really good. The cold brew also was underrated, I always appreciate a coffee shop that has cold brew with a little flavor.



TAQUERIA EL FAROLITO

We had a few dishes at the Chinatown Night Market (more on that soon) but wanted a little snack after. Taqueria El Farolito had great tacos for a very fair price. Under \$3 for a taco in San Francisco is such a steal, especially in this economy! The tacos were also great, I got the crispy tacos and they were filled to the brim with all of the toppings, exactly the way that I like it. They have a bunch of locations throughout the Bay Area. They are famous for their burritos as well, but that might have made my stomach explode. It's a great excuse to have to go back next time I am in the Bay Area.



San Francisco, USA

CHINATOWN NIGHT MARKET

The second Friday of every month from May to October, parts of Grant Avenue close for an outdoor night market. It is from 5-9PM and is really cool. There were street performers and so much food to choose from. We got chicken skewers, dumplings, and dim sum. All of the food was really good and the vibes were the best part. Everyone is walking around and having a good time. I debated putting this in the experiences section, but it is mostly food focused. San Francisco has a large Chinese influence (many signs throughout the city are in English and Mandarin). The night market is a great way to sample a bunch of snacks from a cuisine with a huge influence on the city.



MATCHA



In addition to the Chinese influence, there is also a large Japanese influence in the city. We explored some shops in Japantown and decided to stop and get matcha. This reaffirmed my need to go to Japan and try matcha from the source. There were so many options for types of matcha that it was almost a little overwhelming. I opted for the traditional one with soy sweetener. It was in a goo-ish form but added some good sweetness. For matcha lovers, this is a definite stop during your trip to San Francisco.

EXPERIENCES AND SITES

There is such a wide range of activities to do in San Francisco. The city's public transit infrastructure makes it super easy to get around which makes up for the impossible hills you have to climb to go from each site. The temperature is also mild so it is never too hot or cold and it does not rain a lot. There are so many great parks and outdoor spaces that you can be confident you will have good weather to enjoy.

GHIRARDELLI SQUARE

Did you know that your favorite chocolate originated in San Francisco? In 1849 Domenico Ghirardelli opened a store in the city after moving there from Italy during the California Gold Rush. During the 1850s he perfected his chocolate recipe and grew his company. In 1893 they bought the current location of the Square to accommodate business growth. In 1965 the city decided to mark Ghirardelli Square as an official city landmark. This was also when they started to sell ice cream sundaes. In the square you can visit the store to buy chocolate as well as the restaurant connected to it and enjoy a sundae.



San Francisco, USA

“FULL HOUSE” HOUSE

A staple of my childhood was watching the Tanner family on the TV series Full House. The house used in the show is located at 1709 Broderick Street. There are people that live in the house, and there is a sign to respect their privacy. There were a lot of people taking pictures outside which I assume they are used to. The house has been painted since the show so it looks a little different. If you want the complete Full House experience walk over to Alamo Square and the Painted Ladies (more on that soon) which is also constantly featured in the show.



ALAMO SQUARE & PAINTED LADIES



Built in the victorian style these iconic homes are a staple in San Francisco. Many of the homes were painted in gray during World War 1 and 2 due to a surplus in paint from the Navy. In the 1960s an artist added colors to his home to increase the appeal and many neighbors began copying the style. The most famous homes are the painted ladies across from Alamo Square Park and are often used in TV and movies. Alamo Square Park is also gorgeous and I would highly recommend walking around the park and enjoying the outdoors while admiring the homes. The park is a hill so you also get great skyline views.

PALACE OF FINE ARTS

Originally built for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition it was rebuilt from 1964 to 1974. It is a massive outdoor structure that towers over you. For the exhibition it was intended to be a quiet area that visitors could use to escape the crowds of the convention. It takes inspiration from Greek and Roman architecture and looks like it could be ruins in a far away European destination. It definitely feels really random for where it is, but is really peaceful and beautiful to walk through. It is also connected to a long walking path in the Marina District so it is a great stop to include on a morning walk while taking in the sites.



San Francisco, USA

GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

Unfortunately it was really foggy the whole time I was there, so I never got the iconic views of the Golden Gate Bridge. Either way it was still super cool to look at. There is a really pretty walking path west of the Marina District that takes you along the bay and provides constant views of the bridge. It is recognized as a modern wonder of the world and connects the city to other areas across the bay. It opened to the public in 1937 and has been upgraded for safety in subsequent years. When it opened it was the longest and tallest suspension bridge in the world, but has been dethroned of both those titles.



GOLDEN GATE PARK



This over 1000 acre park is the third most visited urban park in the United States. We visited the Botanical Garden first. If you get there before 9am entry is free, otherwise you can purchase a multi-entry pass that you can use to visit other areas within the park. We also went to the Japanese Tea Gardens which were so beautiful and cool to walk around. They had this funky bridge that was fun to walk over. I have a soft spot for Japanese Gardens and these lived up to the hype. There is a cafe inside that serves matcha and snacks. It is rumored that the first ever modern fortune cookie was served in these Tea Gardens in the early 1900s.

WAYMO

San Francisco is known for its transportation with the iconic trolleys that still take tourists up the hills in the city. One of the new famous forms of transport is with the driverless car company Waymo. You order a Waymo just like an Uber or Lyft and a car shows up to pick you up, but there is no driver. It was really cool to watch the wheel move by itself. It was equally terrifying to know that no human was operating the car and that we were at mercy of the machine. The widespread availability of Waymo means that the price of them is really not that much more expensive than an Uber or Lyft and is sometimes even cheaper.



CABLE CARS



One of the most iconic forms of transportation in the United States are San Francisco's cable cars. It is the world's last manually operated cable car system. Today the system mostly serves tourists and a single ride costs \$9 (\$12 starting next year). There is also a long wait time for the cars in heavy tourists areas and people sometimes wait over an hour just to get on a car. Other areas the wait time is much shorter. I opted to just admire the cable cars running on the street instead of the ride. The cable cars also have the highest accident per capita out of any public transit system in the United States so stay safe!

San Francisco, USA

ALCATRAZ

One of the most iconic places to visit in San Francisco is Alcatraz Island. In 1863 citizens accused of treason were held on the island, and in 1867 a jailhouse was built. It was officially designated a prison in 1907 and the current jail block that still stands today was built in 1909. In 1934 the island began to hold the most notorious prisoners which included bank robbers and murderers. Some of its famous inmates include Al Capone and Machine Gun Kelly. It was claimed no one successfully escaped the prison and 36 prisoners made 14 escape attempts in its history. 23 were caught alive, six were shot during the escape, two drowned, and five went missing and were presumed drowned. The 1962 escape is famous as the closest success since the prisoners bodies were never recovered nor were they found. In 1963 the prison closed due to high costs and lack of freshwater on the island. In 1969 a group of Native Americans and college activists occupied the island to protest federal policies towards Native Americans. They claimed the island belonged to Native Americans from a treaty in the 1800s and wanted the government to adapt facilities on the island for Indian education and cultural activities. They occupied it for almost two years, and it was purchased by the National Park Service in 1972. You can purchase a ferry ticket online to visit the island, just make sure to do it early because time slots fill up. AlcatrazCityCruises is the cheapest option, but you can sometimes find other time slots on sites like GetYourGuide. There is a free audio tour of the prison and you can walk around areas of the island as well as visit several museums. The ferry ticket allows you to take any ferry back to the mainland, and you can spend as much time as you want on the island.



See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!