

# LEISURE & TRAVEL



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Constructed between 1933 and 1937, the spectacular Golden Gate Bridge links San Francisco to California's northern counties. PHOTO: SIDNEY DONALDSON

## Leave your heart in San Francisco



For a sweet stop, try a sea salt caramel sundae at the Ghirardelli Soda Fountain and Chocolate Shop in Ghirardelli Square. Yum!

PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON

■ It's easy to fall in love with northern California's city by the bay

**CATHY DONALDSON**  
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

For those of a certain age, iconic images of California's "City by the Bay" are forever etched in the brain thanks to that '70s police drama *The Streets of San Francisco*.

A dapper Karl Malden (Mike Stone) and a dashing Michael Douglas (Steve Keller) played homicide detectives constantly chasing bad guys over the city's steep terrain in an unmarked brown Ford LTD. Filmed entirely on location in San Francisco, the show usually involved at least one vehicle practically taking flight after cresting a ridge at breakneck speed.

Along with extremely hilly roads, the city's iconic cable cars also seemed ever-present in the show.

And there were at least a few glimpses of Alcatraz, the infamous federal prison located on an island just offshore.

Decades have passed since the TV show aired but those who market the city appear happy to preserve San Fran's symbolic appeal. A recent tourism campaign pegs the city as "Never the same. Always San Francisco."

During my family's inaugural visit to "Frisco" earlier this year, I sensed the juxtaposition of an intriguing past and vibrant present at every turn.

The mix is working.

The San Francisco Travel Association reports that the city welcomed 16.9 million visitors in 2013, an increase of 2.3 per cent over the previous year. Good news for a place where tourism is the key industry.

With all "SF" has to offer, it's not surprising tourists flock in droves. Dubbed "Everybody's Favorite City," San Francisco oozes scenic beauty, cultural attractions, diverse communities and world-class cuisine.

In addition to icons mentioned, this very walk-able metropolis is dotted with landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge, the largest Chinatown in the United States, Union Square and a host of 40-plus neighbourhoods to discover.

One of those neighbourhoods – Nob Hill – was the central base for our stay.

Once the home of silver kings and railroad barons, Nob Hill is graced by Grace Cathedral, a replica of Notre Dame in Paris; Huntington Park, site of many art shows and a replica of a 16th-century Roma fountain; and several



Fog City, a cosy yet sophisticated restaurant near San Fran's Embarcadero, serves up a delicious variety of creative dishes – many of which are meant to be shared. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

### If you go...

- For information on hotel packages and reservations, events, activities and transportation in San Francisco, visit [sanfrancisco.travel](http://sanfrancisco.travel). For lodging reservations by phone, call (888) 782-9673 toll free within North America.

grand hotels.

We unpacked our bags at one of those magnificent hotels – the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco.

The property's neo-classical architecture – making it arguably the best-looking accommodation in the city – dates back to 1909. Designers have since created a modern, inviting and stylish setting for guests.

My family was definitely impressed. Marble buffed to a high sheen throughout the lobby area. Crystal chandeliers draped fashionably in fabric. An ultra-chic lounge with a large, glowing, white marble bar featuring a burgundy acrylic front and LED backlighting. The "wows!" were non-stop.

PLEASE SEE → CITY'S, G2



A historic cable car crests a San Fran hill while the famed island of Alcatraz lies in the distance. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

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# City's cable cars form the world's last manual system still in full-time operation

CITY'S → G1

From the time we left our rental with one of the Ritz-Carlton's top-hat-sporting valets until we collapsed onto super-comfy beds in a luxurious, beautifully-appointed room (with lovely views of San Francisco Bay), our foursome felt spoiled to bits. The Ritz-Carlton certainly lives up to its reputation for quality and high-end customer service. (The property earned a AAA Five Diamond award for the 20th consecutive year in 2014.)

The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco, is the perfect starting point to city exploring. Courteous and friendly hotel staff (many of whom have an uncanny knack for remembering names) are happy to point you in the right direction.

To make things easy, climb aboard a historic cable car, which makes a stop right outside the doors of the Ritz-Carlton. San Francisco's cable cars are the world's last permanently operational, manually operated cable car system, at least in the sense of a tram whose cars are pulled along by cables embedded in the street.

Despite being refurbished and equipped with new tracks, cables and the like, they apparently operate pretty much as they did in 1873 when Andrew S. Hallidie guided the first car down the city's Clay Street grade.

For our big sightseeing day, my family chose an open-top, hop-on/hop-off bus to tour the city.

As we meandered from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, our guide described San Francisco's colourful past, beginning with its founding in 1776 when Spanish colonists established the first European settlement.

What was a small community became a major city after California's gold rush in the mid-1800s. The event transformed San Francisco into the principal banking and finance centre of the west coast.

Our guide also conveyed in dramatic detail the massive earthquake (estimated at 8.1 on the Richter scale) that rocked San Fran in 1906 and the subsequent "Great Fire" that burned for three days. Much of the city was destroyed but the rebuilding plan was so successful that the city hosted a world's fair in 1915. Talk about resilience!



Fisherman's Wharf is a neighbourhood known for its fresh seafood, and is home to popular tourist attractions like an aquarium and wax museum. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Of course, our guide also touched on more recent developments; from the "beat" generation, to the hippies of the late 1960s, to the region's large gay and lesbian population, all of whom have contributed to making San Francisco the fascinating place it is today, a city boasting a population of more than 825,000.

When it comes to arts and culture, you name it and you've got it. Take in the theatre, opera, symphony, ballet, museums or any of a multitude of other world-class choices.

San Francisco is also considered one of America's greatest dining meccas. Widespread cultural influences, a proximity to fresh ingredients and a plethora of creative chefs result in unforgettable dining experiences.

One of our favourite eateries was the aptly named Fog City, a cosy, eclectic restaurant on the Embarcadero, the eastern waterfront and roadway of the

Port of San Francisco. A former diner, it was re-imagined by chef and owner Bruce Hill along with the restaurant's founders and now offers innovative menus in a sophisticated, warm environment.

Menu options – many of which are meant to be shared – are varied. Our top pick was the whole chicken, roasted to perfection in a wood oven and served piping hot in a cast-iron frying pan with potatoes and a finger-licking sauce. After a day of touring, we were hungry; our tummies were more than pleased.

If seafood is your thing, check out items like clam chowder and Dungeness crab at San Francisco's famed Fisherman's Wharf. The place gets its name from the city's early days when Italian immigrant fishermen hit the bay to take advantage of the population influx due to the gold rush.

Fisherman's Wharf is perhaps best

known as the locale of Pier 39, a popular shopping and tourism venue, as well as other attractions such as Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum, the Wax Museum, the Aquarium of the Bay, a sea lion colony adjacent to the pier and nearby Ghirardelli Square.

As a member of a family of chocoholics, a stop to the square's Ghirardelli Soda Fountain and Chocolate Shop for a sweet treat was a foregone conclusion. (If you go, grab a hot fudge sundae – possibly the best ever created!)

Overindulged? Work off a few calories by renting a bike and taking a jaunt across the Golden Gate Bridge. Constructed between 1933 and 1937, the orange-coloured span with its 227-metre-tall towers, links San Francisco to California's northern counties. It's an easy bike ride across the bridge, great for beginners and experienced riders. Take your camera – the views are spectacular.

For those keen on history, set sail on Alcatraz Cruises from Pier 33 and head for "The Rock" (a.k.a. Alcatraz), which operated from 1934 to 1963. The short cruise takes visitors to the island, now a national park, where you can walk the cell blocks where the Birdman of Alcatraz and Al Capone spent time, learn about notorious escapees, and also hear about Alcatraz's period as a military prison.

With its rich history and lively present, it's easy to be swept up by all that San Francisco has to offer.

We left our hearts there – we'll be back.

## Cathy Donaldson

A travel writer and communications consultant, Cathy Donaldson is based in Moncton. Watch for more articles in her series on California family travel in upcoming editions of the Times & Transcript.



The modern and inviting Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco is a perfect, central base for city exploring. Courteous and ultra-friendly staff are happy to help visitors plan their expeditions. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT



The Russian Hill neighbourhood is home to Lombard Street, considered 'the crookedest street in the world.' PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

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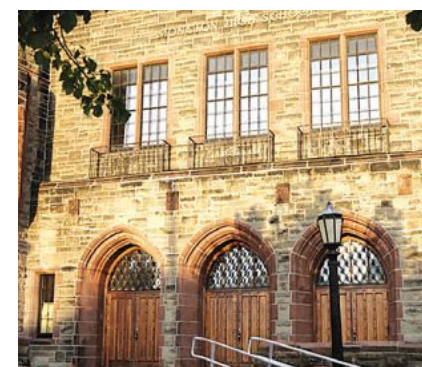
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## REUNIONS

→ **The McCrea Family** holds its 75th Reunion continuing Saturday and Sunday, July 5-6 at McCrea Farms, Route 705, Shannon, N.B. Activities are planned over the weekend. The family meeting is at 1:30 p.m. at the Shannon Church, followed at the lake by fun, games, treats, and a hay ride. Bring food for the potluck supper. A registration fee of \$25 per family is requested to help cover costs. For more information, call the reunion committee at 506-485-5600 or check the 'Events' page at mcreafarms.com.

→ **École Clément-Cormier Class of 1984** will hold their 30th high school class reunion on Saturday, July 12, from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. at the Kent County Gun Club in Bouctouche. For more information, call Shirley Maillet Collette at 506-855-7161 or Danny Collette at 506-382-5735.

→ **Moncton High School Class of 1964** will hold their 50th year reunion on Friday, July 18, from 5:30 p.m.-12 midnight at Curl Moncton. Enjoy a full buffet dinner and music by Eddie Chase and Graffiti4. Cost is \$30 per person. For more information, visit mhs1964.ca or call



Moncton High School  
PHOTO: TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

506-536-0506 or 506-536-0164.

→ **Harrison Trimble High School Class of 1969** will hold their 45th year reunion on Saturday, Aug. 2, with a Meet & Greet at 6 p.m. at Cheers, 63 Brandon St. To register, call Wendy at 384-5504 or Diane at 382-8708.

→ **Plume Family reunion and potluck supper** will be held on Sunday, Aug. 10, from 2-8 p.m., at the home of Dennis and Donna Halliday, 261 River Glade Rd. For more information, call Danny at 372-5618.