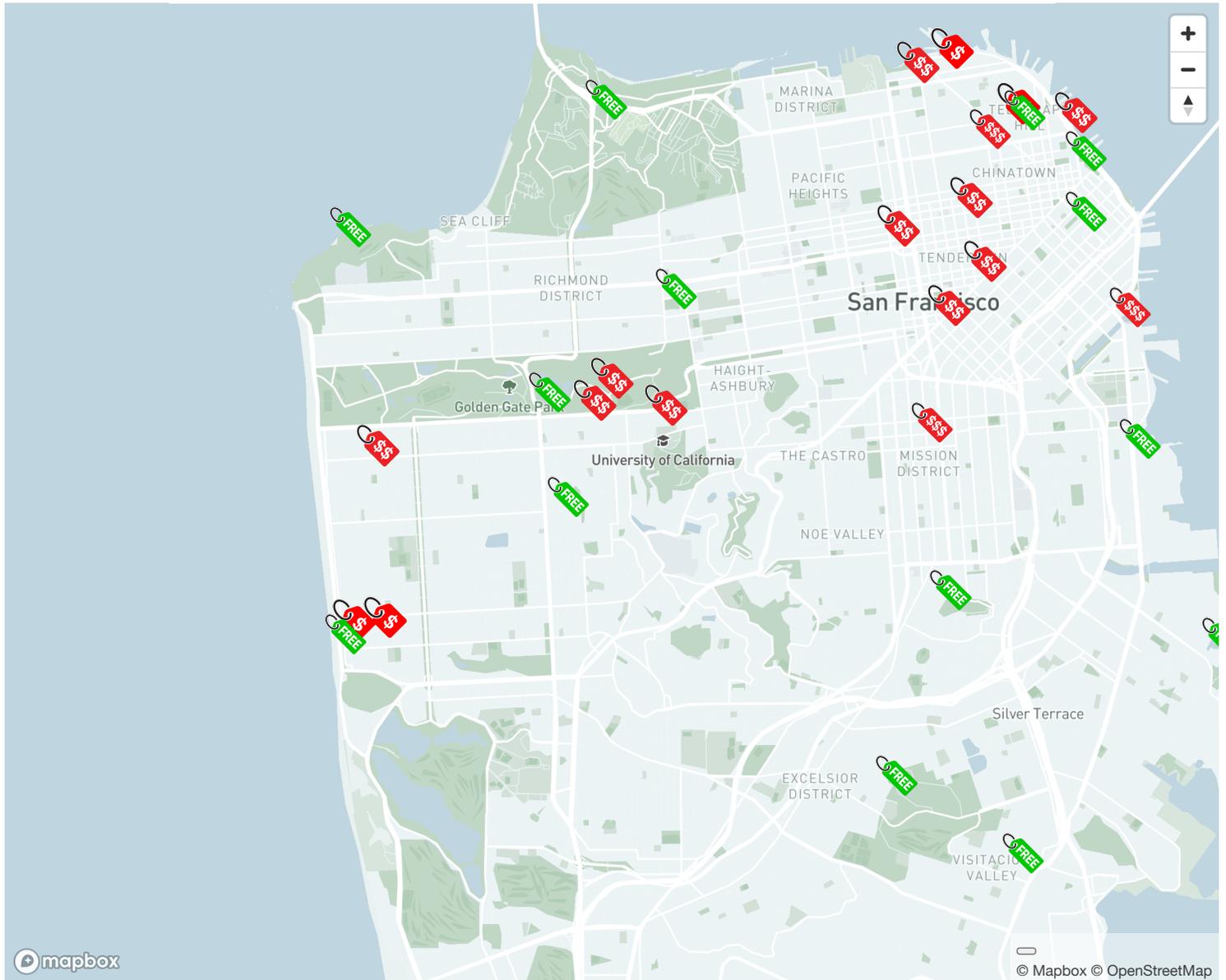


32 San Francisco things everyone should do in 2022

 Free  Cheap  Affordable  Pricey



FREE

Stroll from Heron Head Park to the Hunters Point Crane

NEW! Heather's pick: Heron's Head Park has been a hidden gem for decades, home to hundreds of birds and dozens of happy human bird-watchers, who line the shores of the Bayview open space. But in late

2021 it became a more family-friendly destination with the arrival of the [Nature Exploration Area](#), designed by children and including stumps, boulders and other objects that kids will want to scale. We recommend starting at the park and walking south along the Hunters Point Shoreline to get a close look at the [Hunters Point Crane](#), which used to repair World War II-era battleships and test Polaris missiles.

Cargo Way and Jennings St.

AFFORDABLE

Take a City Guide tour

NEW! Reader Armando Basarrate pick: The City Guides program of local tours, run through the San Francisco Public Library, is one of the gems in the city, and should be embraced by locals as much as tourists. The program was created in the 1970s by City Librarian Gladys Hansen, and is a wonderful way to meet people, learn local history and get some exercise in our beautiful city. There are hundreds of guides and more than 80 tours, including popular tourists spots, deep dives into lesser-heralded neighborhoods and a new Salesforce Transit Center walk. Each walk is 90-120 minutes with a suggested \$15 donation.

Various locations. Sign up for tours and learn more at the [City Guides site](#).

AFFORDABLE

Experience NightLife at the Cal Academy

NEW! Chronicle reporter J.D. Morris pick: The California Academy of Sciences has been staying open late on Thursday for years, and the [21-and-older NightLife program](#) has a speakeasy/romantic vibe that plays well with young adult patrons not usually associated with aquarium field trips and penguin exhibits. Guests can listen to a DJ, purchase craft cocktails and see how the reptiles, fish and other animals party down after hours. NightLife requires a separate ticket [available here](#).

55 Music Concourse Dr., S.F. www.calacademy.org

FREE

Commune with S.F.'s past at the Columbarium

NEW! Reader pick by @NoCarXXX on Twitter: Today, San Francisco has no cemeteries within the city and county's boundaries, but the remains of hundreds of citizens still reside at the San Francisco Columbarium. The Greco-Roman design is beautiful, as are the stories of many of the dead from years and decades past who arranged for their ashes to rest in the structure a half-block from Geary Boulevard

near Arguello. Many niches have glass fronts that display artifacts, writing and other creative signs of the personalities of the departed.

1 Loraine Ct., S.F. Call ahead for a tour 415-221-1838 or drop by for a visit [during business hours](#).

AFFORDABLE

Go to an SF City FC match at Kezar Stadium

NEW! Reader **Pete Bogdis** pick (@PeteBogdis13 on Twitter): Kezar Stadium is best known for its connection to the past, as the first field of the San Francisco 49ers, and a key location in the first “Dirty Harry” film. The stadium remains home for the mighty SF City FC soccer team, competing in the semi-professional USL League 2 with a small but dedicated fan base that owns the team. (The spirited Lado Norte supporters wave flags and sing throughout the game.) Kezar is wonderful to visit in 2022, with both orange seats from Candlestick Park and 49ers-era wooden bleachers, plus a stellar view of Sutro Tower on clear days. [Schedules and team information available here](#).

670 Kezar Dr., S.F. After two years of suspended games, [SF City FC returns May 2022](#).

AFFORDABLE

Hop a Water Taxi at Fisherman’s Wharf (and grab an Irish Coffee at BV Cafe)

NEW! Heather and reader **Jeremy Whiteman** pick: [The San Francisco Water Taxi](#) looks like something from a Pixar short film: The small enclosed boat holds a maximum of 20 passengers and chugs between Hyde Street Pier and the Ferry Building with stops at Pier 39 and the Exploratorium. It runs throughout the day with prices as low as \$5, and \$15 for all-day unlimited service. Heather Knight suggests grabbing an Irish coffee to-go from the Buena Vista Cafe and hopping the Water Taxi over to the Ferry Building, where Gott’s serves good cheeseburgers and hopefully [Marc Coleman is performing](#).

Pickup at Hyde Street Pier. [More information here](#).

FREE

View the observatory ruins on Strawberry Hill

NEW! Peter's pick The Sweeny Observatory was a monument to excess — and the power of Mother Nature when it comes to hubris. The fortress-like party pad was built in the 1890s on the top of

Strawberry Hill above Stow Lake, ruining views in Golden Gate Park. The 1906 earthquake knocked it to the ground, but the foundation is still visible if you climb to the top of the hill and look carefully. The observatory is also on The Chronicle's history-packed [Secrets of Golden Gate Park](#) audio tour.

Stow Lake Drive East, Golden Gate Park, S.F. [Purchase the tour here](#) or [via the VoiceMap app](#), and take the tour any time.

FREE

Enjoy the artwork at Pier 24 Photography

NEW! Reader Kathryn Ma pick (@Kathryn_E_Ma on Twitter): The city is filled with galleries that can be perused with or without an appointment, but it's hard to find a better value than Pier 24 Photography. Set up in the old Nelson Steamship company, the huge space is a great example of resurrecting old buildings along the waterfront for new uses. The gallery is showing a ["Looking Back" and "Looking Forward" anniversary retrospectives](#) in 2022, and includes work by Diane Arbus, Richard Avedon and Dorothea Lange.

Pier 24, The Embarcadero, S.F. [Set up an appointment here.](#)

AFFORDABLE

Listen closely at the Audium theater of sound

NEW! Readers Walter Bielski and Michael Smith pick (@skibuSmith on Twitter): The Audium theater is a classic in the genre of odd, only-in-San Francisco attractions. In the late 1950s, sound designers converted a former bakery into an immersive sound theater, with more than 150 speakers creating a complex and changing audio experience for just 49 seated patrons who sit in the dark. It's not a polished or swank room, but the business model has held strong for more than six decades, teaching new generations to rethink perception and space.

1616 Bush St., S.F. Tickets available [on the Audium site.](#)

CHEAP

Buy a beer (in cash) at the Riptide Bar

NEW! Peter's pick: For those who say San Francisco is changing too fast, we recommend a stop by [the Riptide Bar](#) near Ocean Beach in the Sunset District, where the vibes remain squarely in the 1970s —

down to the cash-only bar. The Riptide emerged from its pandemic closure nearly unchanged, with live music and the city's most affordable drinks. The Taraval Street dive is a great place to stop after [exploring the Great Walkway](#).

3639 Taraval St., S.F. [More information here](#).

CHEAP

Ride the 39 Coit Muni line end to end

Peter's pick: The 39 Coit through North Beach is the shortest neighborhood Muni route and, after the cable cars, the best way to feel like a tourist in your own town. It's filled with spectacular views, landmarks and iconic sights — and it costs less than one-tenth the price of any local tourist bus.

For the \$2.50 Muni fare you'll ride around Fisherman's Wharf and Washington Square Park, past Joe DiMaggio playground and up to Coit Tower, where you can pay to go to the top or check out the 1930s murals inside the tower's base for free. Be sure to applaud your Muni driver when they make that impossible-looking hairpin turn at the end of Telegraph Hill Boulevard.

Coit Tower, 1 Telegraph Hill Blvd. www.sfmta.com

AFFORDABLE

Join a yoga class at the San Francisco Botanical Garden

Heather's pick: The Botanical Garden quickly became a pandemic MVP in 2020, as San Franciscans discovered the serene 55-acre park-within-a-park is a wonderful and safe place to feel lost in nature in the big city.

Along with annual events including the Flower Piano and magnolia bloom, the Botanical Garden offers vinyasa-style yoga on the main meadow the first Thursday of each month — free to members, \$15 for others — led by vinyasa-style yoga instructor Nicolette Telech, who is also executive assistant at the Botanical Garden. [Register here](#).

Botanical Garden, 1199 Ninth Ave. sfbg.org/events-1/yoga-in-the-garden-10

FREE

Climb the Grandview Park stairs at sunset

Peter's pick: The mosaic steps off 16th Avenue near Grandview Park should be one of the top tourist destinations in the city, but their distance from the hotels and most major transit lines have kept the 163-step stairway in Golden Gate Heights a quiet neighborhood place.

Walk up the steps just before the sun sets, look west over the Sunset District, and enjoy one of the most inspiring views in the city.

Moraga Street at 16th Avenue

CHEAP

Play a Wurlitzer orchestrion at Musee Mecanique

Peter's pick: Musee Mecanique is known for clown-that-haunts-our-dreams Laffin' Sal, a solid collection of vintage video games and strange electromagnetic machines from San Francisco's Sutro Baths and Playland-at-the-Beach entertainment era.

But our favorite devices to plug quarters into are the orchestrions — carefully restored one-man-band machines from the early 1900s that play piano, flute, violin and drums. One of them even plays The Beach Boys' "Surfin' Safari." Bring some change and discover which one for yourself.

Musee Mecanique, Fisherman's Wharf (Pier 45). museemecanique.com

CHEAP

Have musubi from Avenues on the sand

Chronicle restaurant critic Soleil Ho's pick: Ho chooses a quick stop at the breakfast/lunch spot Avenues San Francisco for its Spam or tofu musubi. The Taraval Street cafe near the beach also has avocado toast, banh mi and a three-cheese grilled cheese sandwich.

"One thing I really like to do is buy a musubi at Avenues in the Sunset and eat it on the beach," Ho wrote. "(I don't know) how S.F. that is, but it's a lovely thing to do."

Avenues San Francisco, 3606 Taraval St., www.avsf.co

PRICEY

Watch "Dear San Francisco" at Club Fugazi

Heather's pick: The city mourned when “Beach Blanket Babylon” departed at the end of 2019, but it turned out to be a blessing on multiple fronts.

It allowed the musical revue to bow out to full crowds before the pandemic changed entertainment — and it opened the doors for “Dear San Francisco,” a circus and music extravaganza that has plenty of local ties of its own.

“Ultimately, ‘Dear San Francisco’ is a love letter not just to the city but also to the human body,” The Chronicle’s Lily Janiak wrote in [her review](#), “reminding even the much less lithe among us that our arms and legs are tools and shapes we perhaps forget to use creatively.”

Club Fugazi, 678 Green St. www.clubfugazisf.com/dear-san-francisco

FREE

Bike on the Great Walkway with the wind at your back

Chronicle theater critic Lily Janiak's pick: Janiak is known for biking everywhere — including occasional trips to watch Shakespeare in Ashland, Ore. She recommends a bike ride on the Great Highway on a weekend or holiday afternoon in the direction of the prevailing winds.

“You’ll feel like you’re barely expending effort, so smooth is the ride,” Janiak says. “You’ll have a dorky smile plastered on your face, and you won’t be able to pry it off, but don’t worry — everyone else is in the same sitch.”

Great Highway and Noriega Street

AFFORDABLE

Ogle the Exploratorium cow eyeball dissection

Peter's pick: The Exploratorium’s half-century-old recipe for education and fun has yielded one of the strangest traditions in the city: watching a cow eyeball dissection. Since the exhibit launched in the mid-1970s, generations of Bay Area youth have crowded around as Exploratorium “explainers” cheerfully take apart cow eyes with a scalpel.

Cow eyeball dissections happen most days at the Exploratorium; schedules are available upon arrival.

(And look for other Exploratorium classics including the discover-in-the-dark Tactile Dome, designed by August Coppola AKA Nicolas Cage’s dad.)

Exploratorium, Pier 15. exploratorium.edu/learning_studio/cow_eye

FREE

Hike to McLaren Park water tower

Peter's pick: Officially the La Grande Water Tank, this blue tower in the northwest corner of McLaren Park next to the Excelsior neighborhood marks the most underrated view, in the most underrated park in the city.

Through what seems like a visual trick using mirrors, you can see the Pacific Ocean, Sutro Tower, Marin Headlands, downtown San Francisco and the western span of the Bay Bridge all from the same point. We discovered this on the latest Peak 2 Peak walk — an annual hike through San Francisco for members of WalkSF. You can access the water tower quickly from Excelsior Avenue or John F. Shelley Drive near the McLaren Upper Reservoir — but we recommend a stroll through the park, starting at the Philosopher's Way trailhead at Visitacion Avenue and Mansell Street.

John McLaren Park, 100 John F. Shelley Dr. ca-sanfranciscorecandparks.civicplus.com/716/McLaren-Park

FREE

Explore the Lands End Labyrinth

Chronicle business reporter Roland Li pick: Li, who is also a photographer and an MVP contributor to [our best discover-S.F. projects](#), picks one of the most mysterious and rewarding hikes in the city. The 35-foot-diameter labyrinth made out of rocks, at the end of Lands End Trail, [was created in 2004](#).

“The Lands End Trail has surprises around every corner, with views of shipwrecks, gun batteries and the Golden Gate,” Li says. “The hike culminates with the mysterious labyrinth, which appears both of the earth and otherworldly.”

(The labyrinth is not there as of March 2022, but look for a comeback soon. The labyrinth has disappeared and been rebuilt over the years.)

680 Point Lobos Ave.

AFFORDABLE

Hop the ferry to Treasure Island

Heather's pick: Ferry service from the [San Francisco Ferry Building to Treasure Island](#) has begun. Commuters travel on 48-passenger aluminum boats that offer faster access to a neighborhood with incredible views and huge potential for growth.

Heather Knight made this pick with Treasure Island's new wineries in mind; the ferry stop is walking distance to Sottomarino Winery and VIE Winery. Or stroll north along Avenue of the Palms and visit Mersea Restaurant, which offers burgers, tacos and other comfort food in a kid- and bike-friendly setting that includes a putting green and plenty of patio seating.

sanfranciscobayferry.com

FREE

Earthquake shack hunt in Bernal Heights

Peter's pick: After the 1906 earthquake and fire, more than 5,600 earthquake shacks were built in San Francisco parks to house the newly homeless, and many were later moved throughout the city and Bay Area.

Miraculously, there are dozens left today in San Francisco, with the largest cluster visible in Bernal Heights. Use our detailed [earthquake shack map](#) to take a walk through this hilly neighborhood — and let us know if you discover any that aren't on our list.

AFFORDABLE

Catch the Christmas concert at Grace Cathedral

Heather's pick: Heather Knight chose this holiday tradition, [which goes back 75 years](#), and focused for decades around the Grace Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys, but now includes a brass and organ presentation, the jazz and storytelling-infused Soulful Joy concerts and a children's program.

The Nob Hill cathedral returned to live performances for 2021, and tickets remain affordable — most are between \$5 and \$25.

"Every Christmas I think of this and every year I don't do it, so this year I'm committing," Knight says. "Of course, I'm going to get there on a cable car."

Grace Cathedral, 1100 California St. gracecathedral.org/christmas

FREE

Amble through Crane Cove in Dogpatch

Chronicle urban design critic John King's pick: While the Warriors captured the biggest headlines moving into Chase Center, there's another big ticket addition to the recently transformed neighborhoods in Mission Bay and Dogpatch.

King explains: "The last thing you might expect south of China Basin is a sandy beach with large lawns perched between Mission Bay and a ghostly drydock, but that's the scene at [this surprisingly seductive park](#) that opened last year alongside Pier 70. If you haven't been, you're overdue."

Crane Cove Park, 699 Illinois St.

PRICEY

Bring a friend to a "Golden Girls Live!" performance

Peter's pick: "Golden Girls Live! The Christmas Episodes," drag performances of episodes from TV's "The Golden Girls" presented [by Oasis SE](#), has been a favorite since its 2007.

The entire vibe at the Victoria Theatre in the Mission District is off-the-charts positive, with Christmas carol sing-alongs, post-performance photos with the cast (including D'Arcy Drollinger as Rose and Heklina as Dorothy) and generous wine pours from the bar. Raise a toast to Betty White, and make this your new tradition.

Victoria Theatre, 2961 16th St. www.victoriatheatre.org

FREE

Pay respects to Mr. Iguana at the Presidio Pet Cemetery

The Presidio is filled with fun adventures, whether it's the base's still-operational bowling alley, the Walt Disney Family Museum and Presidio Theatre, the 14-acre Tunnel Top (opening soon) or just throwing a Frisbee on the vast lawns of the parade ground.

But the most San Francisco spot in the park is the [Presidio Pet Cemetery](#), a 70-year-old final resting place for hundreds of dogs, cats, birds and at least one lizard named Mr. Iguana. The small fenced-in cemetery and its strong Stephen King vibes are free to anyone who wants to pay respects and check out the charming headstones.

(There's no room for more pets, but you can spread your dearly departed's ashes any time.)

667 McDowell Ave, San Francisco

AFFORDABLE

Eat a hoagie from Palm City Wines on the beach

Chronicle wine critic Esther Mobley's pick: It's a special kind of hive mind that two Chronicle food and wine section critics, independent of each other, chose something delicious to bring to Ocean Beach. Mobley picked her pairing from [Palm City Wines](#) — [star of a recent Best Day Ever](#).

"The best hoagie at Palm City is the roast pork — it has pickled pepper aioli, broccoli rabe and Point Reyes Toma cheese," Mobley says. "They usually have colorful cans of very hoppy IPAs from great breweries like Humble Sea."

Palm City Wines, 4055 Irving St. www.palmcitysf.com

FREE

Stroll through Salesforce Park

Chronicle urban design critic John King's pick: King recommends [Salesforce Park](#), one of San Francisco's newest public parks in the Rincon Hill-area "East Cut" neighborhood (we'll never get used to that name). It's filled with walking paths, amphitheaters, board games and a water feature that "chases" the buses running below.

"No other city has gardens and meadows floating amid towers 70 feet in the air, atop a three-block-long transit center," King says. "The name, by the way, is the result of a sponsorship deal: Thank the landscape architecture firm PWP and Pelli Clarke & Partners architects for downtown's most stress-free retreat."

Salesforce Park, 425 Mission St.

AFFORDABLE

Experience the chaos at a Neo-Futurists performance

Chronicle theater critic Lily Janiak's pick: [The Neo-Futurists](#) perform energetic and unexpected productions "rooted in chance and chaos," with new works onstage at PianoFight every Friday and Saturday night 50 weeks out of the year.

"(It's) a show with audience participation you'll actually want to participate in, because it's not scary, just fun and collaborative," Janiak says. "You'll walk out feeling like you want to be a theater artist, too."

After mostly digital shows in 2020 and 2021, look for live performances in 2022.

PianoFight, 144 Taylor St. www.sfneofuturists.org

FREE

Climb the Filbert Steps in Telegraph Hill

Chronicle urban design critic John King's pick: King calls the Filbert Steps “a time-worn fave,” and we need a few of those on the list. [The staircase](#) is a secret even to some longtime San Franciscans, starting on Sansome Street near the Embarcadero and ending at Coit Tower.

“Walk the Filbert Steps from Levi’s Plaza north to the top of Telegraph Hill,” King says. “Every step and all the surroundings will remind you why this city is like no other, all its problems aside.”

Sansome and Filbert streets

PRICEY

Sit in the most S.F. seats at Oracle Park

Peter’s pick: General rule for San Francisco baseball tickets: The more money you spend, the less you feel connected to the city.

Our favorite seats aren’t in the Club section or behind home plate, but high up on the right field line in View Reserved, between sections 304 and 308. They’re among the cheapest seats on the resale market, but you get the best views, with McCovey Cove, the Bay Bridge and Yerba Buena Island and a little bit of the city skyline. Nothing feels more omniscient at a baseball game than seeing the batter and the kayaks waiting for a splash hit.

Oracle Park, 24 Willie Mays Plaza

FREE

Explore the Visitacion Valley Greenway (on the Crosstown Trail)

Peter’s pick: We love the entirety of the [Crosstown Trail](#), the 17-mile walk through San Francisco that starts at Candlestick Point and finishes at Lands End.

But our [favorite wonder](#) on the trail is the Visitacion Valley Greenway, a tiered series of gardens, stairs, artwork and creativity that spans six blocks; each one making an increasingly strong case for Vis Valley as the most underrated neighborhood in San Francisco.

Visitacion Valley Greenway, 186 Arleta Ave. www.visvalleygreenway.org

Credits

Reporting

Peter Hartlaub • phartlaub@sfchronicle.com • [@peterhartlaub](https://twitter.com/peterhartlaub)

Editing

Sarah Feldberg • sarah.feldberg@sfchronicle.com • [@sarahfeldberg](https://twitter.com/sarahfeldberg)

Design and Development

Todd Trumbull • ttrumbull@sfchronicle.com

Alex K. Fong • alex.fong@sfchronicle.com • [@alexkfong](https://twitter.com/alexkfong)

Additional Contributions

Lily Janiak, John King, Heather Knight, Roland Li, Esther Mobley

San Francisco Chronicle

TO TOP

ABOUT

[Our Company](#) [Terms of Use](#)
[Privacy Notice / Notice at Collection](#) [Careers](#)
[Your California Privacy Rights](#) [Advertising](#)
[Interest Based Ads](#)

NEWSROOM

[Ethics Policy](#) [News Tips](#)
[How We Cover Politics](#) [Newsroom News](#)
[Endorsement Process](#)

CONTACT

[Customer Service](#) [Newsroom Contacts](#)
[FAQ](#)

CCPA

[Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)

SERVICES

[Subscriber Services](#) [Archives](#)
[e-Edition](#) [Membership](#)
[Reprints & Permissions](#) [Store](#)
[Corporate Subscriptions](#) [Subscription Offers](#)
[App](#) [sfgate.com](#)

HEARST *newspapers*

©2022 Hearst