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BUSINESS TRAVELLERS' GUIDE

San Francisco

STORY BY CHANEY KWAK

FROM GOLD rush speculators to tech visionaries, far-out hippies to outdoorsy financiers, San Francisco has long lured dreamers of all stripes. Whether you're braving the roller-coaster streets or sailing on the spectacular bay, you'll soon fall victim to the city's romance. Endowed with a West Coast can-do mindset and a smart workforce produced by nearby Stanford and Berkeley universities, San Francisco has evolved from a railroad boom town full of entrepreneurial immigrants, such as jeans pioneer Levi Strauss, into the world's tech capital where that twentysomething in a hoodie next to you might just be a social media billionaire.

The city has faced its share of challenges lately, with the soaring price of housing locking young people out of the market and a rising homeless population. But with the election of pro-business mayor London Breed, San Francisco is getting ready to shift gears again, promising new opportunities and more residential and commercial spaces, as well as development in and around the Mid-Market area, where Twitter's headquarters is located.

Through it all, the city has retained its historic idiosyncrasies: 19th-century cable cars that race the latest electric vehicles on downtown's Market Street and pastel Victorian homes set against a skyline full of skyscrapers. With a multicultural community and diverse landscapes stretching from the Pacific Ocean to San Francisco Bay, the Golden Gate City, at 122 square kilometres, is more navigable than its sizeable reputation would suggest.

San Francisco days often start with fog, which rolls in again in the late afternoon, particularly during summer.



Population

884,363

Increasing to about a million when commuters come to work.



Language English is the lingua franca, with Mandarin, Spanish and Cantonese also used widely.



Currency US dollar

AU\$1=US\$0.72

(subject to change)



Average temperatures

Winter	8°C	14°C
Spring	10°C	16°C
Summer	10°C	18°C
Autumn	12°C	20°C

Between meetings



If you have a couple of hours...

Right in the heart of the city, the reimagined wing of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (sfmoma.org) opened two years ago, tripling the exhibition space, but you can still take in its highlights in just a few hours if you're selective. Unwind on a terrace beside an Alexander Calder sculpture and a nine-metre-high living wall or lose yourself in contemplation inside Richard Serra's labyrinthine sculpture, *Sequence*.

If you have half a day...

Golden Gate Park, the city's 4.8 kilometre-long green lung, embodies both nature and nurture with winding paths that cut through eucalyptus woods and hands-on museums such as the California Academy of Sciences (calacademy.org). Survey the city from the

California Academy of Sciences, one of two museums in Golden Gate Park

observation tower of the de Young Museum (deyoung.famsf.org) and visit the nearby Japanese Tea Garden (japaneseteagardensf.com).

If you have a day...

Connected to the city by the Golden Gate Bridge, the Marin Headlands offers the region's bucolic best with gently rolling hills suddenly culminating in dramatic sea cliffs. After a stop on 280-metre Hawk Hill for a gander at the variety of bird species, including eagles and ospreys, set your compass for Bolinas, the coastal town of clapboard homes and bobbing fishing boats that, to protect its offbeat character, has famously refused road signs.

If you have a weekend...

In 2017, a landslide closed off a section of Highway 1 for more than a year but, thankfully, the coastal road from San Francisco to Big Sur reopened last July. This quintessential American road trip will take you right through the Monterey Bay region, a laid-back area hugging its namesake bay teeming with otters and seals. The non-profit Monterey Bay Aquarium (montereybayaquarium.org) not only leads sustainability initiatives but also offers stunning exhibits like its Open Sea window and Kelp Forest. The newly opened Spa at

Sanctuary Beach Resort (thesanctuarybeachresort.com), meanwhile, pampers with natural treatments such as a sea-salt exfoliation. Further down the coast, thousands of colourful monarch butterflies spiral in Pacific Grove's open-air sanctuary in wintertime (pgmuseum.org). After a stop at Asilomar State Beach for its tide pools harbouring brilliant starfish and sea anemones, make your way to Carmel-by-the-Sea (carmelcalifornia.com), an upscale resort village with a wealth of wine-tasting rooms – and no parking meters, street lights or even addresses. ●

NEW HOTEL

Housed in a renovated 1890s brick army barracks, Lodge at the Presidio (presidiolodging.com) offers 42 old-world-meets-modern-amenities rooms, some with glorious Golden Gate Bridge views. About six kilometres from the CBD, it feels a world away.



Business-card etiquette Business cards are still passed around but update your LinkedIn profile before arriving as you'll inevitably be asked to be connected on the popular business network.



Tipping culture Tips are expected for all restaurant services (18 per cent to 20 per cent – 25 per cent for exceptional service – on the pre-tax subtotal) and bellhops (a couple of dollars per bag). Uber and Lyft suggest tip amounts after rides.



Dining custom Generally the party that initiates the meeting picks up the bill.