

March 2019

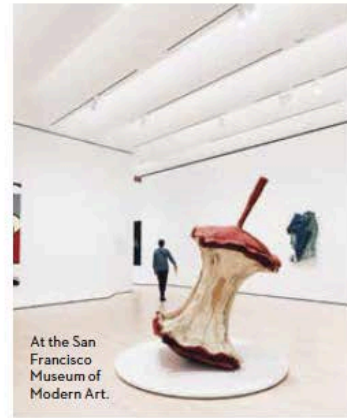


Circulation: 50,119

VOGUE VOYAGE



The lobby of the San Francisco Proper is filled with Kelly Wearstler's vintage finds.



At the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.



Victorian splendour on the streets of San Francisco.

## Bay and beyond

If you look past the glossy logos on the high rises and quaint cable cars, you'll see the true enterprising spirit of San Francisco lies in its emerging cultural pockets. By Yeong Sassall.

It's become almost a cliché to conflate the essence of San Francisco with a kind of tech bro culture, no doubt a result of the city's proximity to Silicon Valley. Yes, the greater Bay Area is known for incubating some of the most innovative companies whose products we use on a daily basis (Apple, Uber, Google, Netflix, Facebook *et al*), but San Francisco is so much more than just the sum of its clever tech parts. Perhaps owing to its counterculture history and youthful energy, there's a vibrant culture of food, art, design and winemaking that's just as boundary-breaking and disruptive as any of the apps you might see on your phone.

Stereotypes aside, it's clear the city has been transformed by the flood of tech investment and can-do dynamism of its inhabitants, who are working to carve out new urban subcultures in every neighbourhood. From the Ferry Building markets stacked with artisanal food stalls to the up-and-coming delights of the Dogpatch area, if you venture beyond the usual tourist haunts it's easy to see an entirely new side to San Francisco – far beyond the usual Fisherman's Wharf, Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge triangle. As a second-time visitor to this famously foggy city,

I swapped bridge cycles and seal watching for exploring parts unknown, and rediscovered San Fran's truly chameleonic qualities.

Accommodation-wise, it's hard to overlook the art-decorated walls of the Proper Hotel ([properhotel.com](http://properhotel.com)). A Kelly Wearstler-designed landmark straddling Market and McAllister streets, the hotel is housed in a unique flatiron building dating back to the 1900s. Inside, it boasts colourfully graphic, Instagram-baiting decor and a seriously great rooftop bar named Charmaine's. Styled in Wearstler's eye-catching bower-bird style, the boutique hotel is located in an rapidly changing neighbourhood, but once you step inside you'll instantly be transported into a salon somewhere in Europe. Designed to reflect the eclectic, progressive and liberal-minded vibes of San Francisco, it's a comforting nightly respite from your daily explorations of the city.

While no visit to San Francisco is complete without procuring a selfie in front of the scene-stealing bridge, a stroll along the bay and even an afternoon at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), if you're willing to delve a little deeper, the Bay City is full of hidden surprises.

RICHARD LEE PEI RETRON MARK S ABIBAN  
ANSON SMART ALEXANDRA SPARK





Charmaine's, the rooftop bar at the Proper.



In the lobby of the Proper.



The Mission District is street-mural central.



The Proper's eclectic lobby restaurant, Villon.

## OVER HILLS AND VINES

### NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Be sure to spend a leisurely morning exploring the heritage sights of the Ferry Building marketplace, the California-certified farmers' market specialising in local produce and artisanal goods. From there, head south to Dogpatch, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in San Francisco. Located just 15 minutes downtown via tram, the former industrial suburb has enjoyed a recent resurgence. Craft-beer fans should schedule a stop at Triple Voodoo Brewery for a taste testing.

### FOOD FIGHT

The city has no shortage of Michelin-starred restaurants, but for a truly cult foodie experience, direct your map towards the Mission district. Avital ([avitaltours.com](http://avitaltours.com)) offers four-course walking tours of the area, dropping in at places such as Mexican fusion joint West of Pecos, cheese (and beer) sampling bar Mission Cheese, organic vegan Mexican joint Gracias Madre (yes, the same one famed in LA) and the iconic Bi-Rite ice-creamery. Don't forget to pop into the Dandelion chocolate shop for a cocoa fix, and join the crowds outside lining up at Tartine bakery, which is renowned for its sourdough and croissants.

Come evening, China Live's casual market-style dining hub is a portal to the city's best Chinese. Grab a whisky cocktail upstairs at Cold Drinks before descending downstairs and tucking into a modern banquet. Up for something even more laidback? Parklab Gardens in Mission Bay is a creative reimagining of a fledgling urban space that blends gourmet food trucks and bars with outdoor games and a nearby urban mini-golf range.

### SNEAK IN SOME SONOMA

Sonoma County is an easy hour's drive from San Francisco, making it an stress-free choice for a day trip. The wine region itself is huge, offering high-end cellar doors such as Ram's Gate Winery through to smaller outfits like Russian River Vineyards, which also boasts a lush on-site garden that warrants a stop for lunch. If you're staying overnight, book a table at Valette in the picturesque town of Healdsburg. Owned by two brothers, the restaurant is a love letter to Sonoma County produce and wine, and is also located opposite the three-Michelin-starred Single Thread. If glamping is your jam, consider spending a night at Boon Hotel & Spa ([boonhotels.com](http://boonhotels.com)), a tiny, charming hotel nestled in close proximity to some of Russian River's ancient redwood forestry.

### GETTING THERE

Qantas introduced direct flights between Melbourne and San Francisco in September 2018 to complement its direct flights from Sydney. QF49 departs Melbourne four times a week on a Dreamliner. It's worth it just to avoid the hassle of a harried transit through LAX. Go to [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)