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INSIDER'S GUIDE TO SAN FRANCISCO

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NOVEMBER 2013
USA $5.99
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Sensational!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW

Victorian row-houses in the Castro district.

ESSENTIAL SAN FRANCISCO

See the lights. To celebrate the Bay Bridge's 75th anniversary, artist Leo Villareal has festooned its cables with 25,000 LED lights. From dusk until 2 a.m. nightly, the bridge becomes a dazzling light show, with never-repeating patterns dancing across its western span (thebaylights.org).

Stroll along the bay. Take in views of the Golden Gate Bridge at Crissy Field, a public park hugging San Francisco Bay. It's currently home to eight sculptures by Mark di Suvero, on loan from SFMOMA while the museum is under renovation (parksconservancy.org).

Stock your larder. Located on the Embarcadero, the Ferry Building is a spacious Beaux Arts hall where vendors peddle local olive oils, cheeses, chocolates, and fresh produce (ferry buildingmarketplace.com).

WHAT TO SEE

California Academy of Sciences, *55 Music Concourse Dr.; 415-379-8000; calacademy.org:* This natural history museum's stunning reconstruction by Renzo Piano includes a roof made of local plantings that blends in with surrounding Golden Gate Park.

De Young Museum, *50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr.; 415-750-3600; deyoung.famsf.org:* Housed in a striking Herzog & de Meuron building, this museum has extensive collections of American painting and decorative arts.

Museum of Craft and Design, *2569 Third St.; 415-773-0303; sfmcd.org:* The neighborhood of Dogpatch is the new home of this decade-old gallery. Its roster of rotating exhibitions pays tribute to iconic artists, sculptors, and industrial designers, and showcases the best of new West Coast design.

Proxy SF, *432 Octavia Blvd.; proxysf.net:* A two-block conglomeration of repurposed shipping containers that shelter an ice cream stand, a juice bar, retail boutiques, and a *biergarten.*

WHERE TO STAY

The Battery, *717 Battery St.; thebatterysf.com:* This Ken Fulk–designed members-only club is a fun house of color and whimsy. Staying in one of its 14 hotel suites gives you access to many of the private spaces.

Cavallo Point Lodge, *601 Murray Cir., Sausalito; 415-339-4700; cavallopoint.com:* A former army base at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge has been turned into a luxurious hotel, with spacious suites in new and historic buildings.

Hotel Des Arts, *447 Bush St.; 415-956-3232; sfhoteldesarts.com:* Each of the 51 rooms in this funky downtown hotel was painted by a local artist—you might find yourself sleeping under a Rousseau-like landscape or a pair of Mexican wrestlers.

Hotel Vitale, *8 Mission St.; 415-278-3700; hotelvitale.com:* This hotel's minimalist aesthetic and soothing, spa-like atmosphere counterbalance the rush of nearby Market Street.

Hotel Zetta, *55 Fifth St.; 415-543-8555; viceroyhotelgroup.com:* A newcomer to the chic SoMa area, with 116 ultra-contemporary rooms offering high-tech amenities.

WHERE TO EAT

Bar Jules, *609 Hayes St.; 415-621-5482; barjules.com:* The menu at Jessica Boncutter's cozy Hayes Valley restaurant changes daily, but count on fresh American standards.

The Cavalier, *55 Fifth St.; 415-321-6000; thecavaliersf.com:* Ken Fulk designed this restaurant at the Hotel Zetta that wittily cribs from English pub style.

Coqueta, *The Embarcadero, Pier 5; 415-704-8866; coquetasf.com:* Michael Chiarello's Spanish tapas restaurant has a paella so tasty, it may distract you from the view of the bay.

Cotogna, *490 Pacific Ave.; 415-775-8508; cotognasf.com:* Michael Tusk won a James Beard award for his menu of superlative Italian dishes, served in a romantic Jackson Square space.

Craftsman and Wolves, *746 Valencia St.; 415-913-7713; craftsman-wolves.com:* Don't look for cupcakes at this postmodern patisserie. Instead, try the Rebel Within: a sausage-and-cheese muffin wrapped around a soft-cooked egg.

Foreign Cinema, *2534 Mission St.; 415-648-7600; foreigncinema.com:* This Mediterranean-themed restaurant serves a stellar selection of oysters. Independent and foreign films are screened each night in the courtyard.

Mission Chinese Food, *2234 Mission St.; 415-863-2800; missionchinesefood.com:* Chef Danny Bowien serves such whacked-out versions Chinese as stir-fried pork jowl and radishes, and salt-cod fried ric

Rich Table, *199 Gough St.; 415-355-9085; richtablesf.com:* Locally sourced, inventive cuisine (peach-le cured halibut, garganelli pasta with squab) from the husband-and-wife team of Evan and Sarah Rich.

The Slanted Door, *Ferry Building; 415-861-8032; slanteddoor.com:* Charles Phan's flagship restaurant is the place to go for original, highly addictive Vietnamese fusion dishes.

State Bird Provisions, *1529 Fillmor St.; 415-795-1272; statebirdsf.com:* The menu at Stuart Brioza and Nicole Krasinski's sensational restaurant is a cross between dim sum and tapas—look for creations like smoked trout, egg, and potato porridge.

Sweet Woodruff, *798 Sutter St.; 41 292-9090; sweetwoodruffsf.com:* A charming all-day restaurant, with a long lunch counter overlooking the kitchen. Salads, sandwiches, and American classics prepared simply.

WHERE TO SHOP

Carrots, *843 Montgomery St.; 415 834-9040; sfcarrots.com:* High-st clothing, jewelry, and homewares.

Casa Acanto, *1101 Clay St.; 415-567-6632; casaacanto.com:* Andrew Fisher and Jeffry Weisman's adventu ous shop was inspired by the renovation of their Mexican home.

Cavalier, *1035 Post St.; 415-440-7300; cavaliergoods.com:* Designe Jay Jeffers thoughtfully mixes his own furniture designs with vintage pieces and one-of-a-kind artwork.

Coup D'Etat, *111 Rhode Island St.; 41 241-9300; coupdetatsf.com:* Antiqu dealer Darin Geise's shop stocks an always-surprising assortment of fu niture, lighting, and curiosities.

D. Zelen, *1228 Sutter St.; 415-583-0461; danzelen.com:* Specializing garden ornaments and containers, Dan Zelen's design shop is housed ir striking 1910 Moorish-style building.

Little Nibs, *807 22nd St.; 415-489-2882; recchiuti.com:* Artisanal confections by Michael Recchiuti, in a petite Dogpatch shop.

Mira Mira, *3292 22nd St.; 415-648-6513; miramirasf.com:* A standout among the Mission District's bou-tiques, with hip fashions and jewelr

The NWBLK, *1999 Bryant St.; 415-621-2344; thenwblk.com:* Innovativ designs, from furniture to bicycles.

Reliquary, *537 Octavia St.; 415-431-4000; reliquarysanfrancisco.com:* Intriguing fashions, jewelry, and global folk art in Hayes Valley.