

# North Beach



## SAN FRANCISCO'S BEST NEIGHBORHOOD?

*One of the reasons Joie de Vivre Hotels decided to write these guides was because most travel books or periodicals strain to be editorially correct by being objective. Rarely will you see a guide pan some popular restaurant or steer you away from some tourist trap. And, how often do you see a guide crown a neighborhood as "the best?" We may offend some San Franciscans by calling North Beach the best (well, we did add a question mark to our opinion), but no one can argue that this fascinating collection of streets has not seen its share of bizarre characters. Whether it was the 50's beatniks, or the jazz greats who have played on Columbus, or the city's first secretive gay bars, or the first generation Italians who started businesses in the neighborhood (or, more recently, the first generation Chinese), North Beach has been a home for all of San Francisco's eccentricities. Carol Doda became a household name (at least in some households) when she broke history by going topless in the Condor at ground zero in North Beach (Broadway and Columbus). And, you know this neighborhood represents the heartbeat of San Francisco when the 49ers win the Super Bowl and the whole Bay Area converges on Broadway and Columbus to celebrate.*

## The Beat Lives On

*The Beat Generation of the 50's and early 60's found North Beach before they discovered the Haight-Ashbury. Many remnants remain from this landmark time when San Francisco was on the forefront of literary and intellectual pioneering.*

### CITY LIGHTS BOOKSTORE

Just off Broadway on Columbus. Lawrence Ferlinghetti's bookstore was the heartbeat of the Beat movement with poetry readings and constant happenings. The store still has an enormous poetry, radical political, and alternative spiritual selections. 261 Columbus Ave., 362-8193 • citylights.com

### VESUVIO

Across the alley, Henri Lenoir founded this funky bar, and it's a great place to read the book you just purchased at City Lights. 255 Columbus Ave., 362-3370 • vesuvio.com

### SPEC'S TWELVE ADLER MUSEUM CAFÉ

Also opened by Henri Lenoir, this bar is a treasure trove of interesting, and merely bizarre, junk. 12 William Saroyan Place (a.k.a. Jack Kerouac Alley), 421-4112

### TOSCA

Unlike the bars listed above, this place is still a hot hangout. Great character. From rouge-colored décor to the jukebox playing exclusively opera, Tosca has attracted the arts crowd, both young and old, for years. 242 Columbus Ave., 986-9651

### CAFFE TRIESTE

Opened in 1956, this is where Jack Kerouac worked on his beat classic, *On The Road*. Still a great place to sip an espresso while reading the paper. On Saturday afternoons the owners entertain with operatic selections. 601 Vallejo St., 392-6739 • caffetrieste.com

### CONDOR, HUNGRY I

These places helped define the Beat Generation and Broadway, yet they've been reincarnated in rather distorted ways. The topless Condor, 300 Columbus Ave., is now just a tacky bar with too much visibility on the street. The Hungry I, 546 Broadway, is now topless (used to be a great music/comedy joint and birthplace of many top acts).

### GRANT AVENUE—YOU WANNA GET FUNKY?

Starting at Columbus, Grant Avenue cuts a path toward Telegraph Hill and drastically changes in personality from Chinatown Grant. Full of funk, spunk and drunk, this little stretch has been compared to a S.F. version of New Orleans' French Quarter.

## PURPLE ONION

Super cool performance club with history (Phyllis Diller, Struther's Bros., Kingston Trio among others). It is nestled underground and is intimately small with a 70s spirit. They are still booking some top talents and unique acts. 140 Columbus Avenue (415) 956-1610  
caffemacaroni.com

## SALOON

It's easy to miss this little bar, but as San Francisco's oldest bar, it is a piece of local history. Opened way back in 1869. 1232 Grant Ave., 989-7666

## NORTH BEACH PIZZA

Both locations serve up some of the best pies in town. 1310 and 1499 Grant Ave., 433-2444

## OLD VOGUE

Check out the retro finery offered at this boutique. You'll find everything from vintage Hawaiian shirts to leather bomber jackets and more. 1412 Grant Ave., 392-1522

## BOCCE CAFE

A popular restaurant and bar off the corner of Green and Grant. There's a nice back patio, popular when the weather is good. More upscale than most of the others on Grant. 478 Green St., 981-2044 • boccecafe.com

## SAVOY TIVOLI

Great place to get picked up if you're in your early 20's and have a European accent. Pool tables, and lots of harsh-looking models. 1434 Grant Ave., 362-7023

## CAFÉ JACQUELINE

How about some French cuisine in the middle of North Beach? This tiny place serves the most heavenly soufflés in an intimate setting. We promise you this is the best! Great for a romantic evening. 1454 Grant Ave., 981-5565

## *That's Amore! Finding Italy in North Beach*

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*While some of the romantic Italian influence in North Beach has worn off, you can still see bocce ball being played at North Beach playground or you can stop by the Portofino Caffè on Columbus to see a group of septuagenarian Italian men play poker without a word of English being spoken. Here are some other reminders of the old country:*

## CAPP'S CORNER

Even though they have a new sign out front, this family-style Italian restaurant hasn't really changed much in decades. 1600 Powell St., 989-2589

## STELLA PASTRY / MARCO OF VENICE HAIRSTYLISTS

These two retail establishments, which are next door to each other, are full of Italian ambiance and elderly, stately Italian women. 446 Columbus Ave and 454 Columbus Ave • stellapastry.com

## BIORDI ITALIAN IMPORTS

Great Italian imported tableware and art in this little Columbus Avenue storefront. The kind of place your grandma would love. 412 Columbus Ave., 392-8096

## MOLINARI DELICATESSEN

This place, which is over 100 years old, verges on being a landmark as it has become a hangout for all the local Italians. Great meatball sandwiches. 373 Columbus Ave., 421-2337

## LIGURIA BAKERY

This family owned and operated bakery does one thing and does it to perfection—focaccia. Baked fresh daily, this bread is molto bene! 1700 Stockton St., 421-3786

## North Beach Landmarks

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*Some of the best landmarks in North Beach are people, but since they're not stationary we won't list them here. The landmarks listed below have become legendary in North Beach folklore.*

### WASHINGTON SQUARE & ST. PETER & PAUL CHURCH

The square is the heart of North Beach and the site of frequent art shows, demonstrations and communal tai chi exercises. The church, which offers mass in Italian, is beautifully lit at night and is the sight of many Italian weddings. The church is at 666 Filbert St., the Square lies between Filbert, Columbus, Union and Stockton.

### CLUB FUGAZI

The site of the long-running Beach Blanket Babylon, this classically designed club is a fixture in North Beach. 678 Green St., for tickets call 421-4222. • [beachblanketbabylon.com/Where.cfm](http://beachblanketbabylon.com/Where.cfm)

### MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE

Having been in this spot for over 100 years, this strangely named restaurant/bar is definitely a landmark. Stop in for a yummy focaccia sandwich and watch the locals practicing their tai chi in the park across the street. 566 Columbus Ave., 362-0536

## Hidden Treasures of North Beach

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### CAFFÉ MACARONI

At the foot of Columbus in the shadow of the Transamerica Pyramid lies this idiosyncratic Italian café that specializes in strange ingredients: buffalo and alligator, for example. 59 Columbus Ave., 956-9737. And just up the street is Caffè Macaroni Sciuè Sciuè at 124 Columbus Ave. 217-8400

### MICHELANGELO CAFÉ

Paintings, of varying quality, cover every inch of wall space in this busy restaurant. Try to get here early so you can grab a window table and enjoy the view of Washington Square while you dine. Be sure to watch for the beautiful hand-painted goblets that are used to serve wine. 579 Columbus Ave., 986-4058.

### L'OSTERIA DEL FORNO

A tiny rustic eatery serving some of the best food in the neighborhood. You can't go wrong with their focaccia sandwiches, grilled meats, or house-made pastas. 519 Columbus Ave., 982-1124.

### SAN FRANCISCO BREWING COMPANY

Rumor has it that boxer Jack Dempsey used to be a bouncer here when it was the Albatross Saloon. Great old mahogany bar with tasty house-brewed lagers. 155 Columbus Ave., 434-3344

