

Help! It's Raining



HAVING FUN DESPITE THE ELEMENTS.

Expecting California sunshine only to be deluged with perspiration from the heavens? While we can't control the weather, we can give you some suggestions that will distract you from the raindrops falling on your head.

Gearing Up for the Weather - Where to Buy the Necessities:

If you're like most visitors to California, you probably didn't plan for San Francisco's often windy, foggy and damp weather, and you may need to pick up an umbrella, slicker, or other protective accessory. You should be able to find what you need at the following stores:

ABERCROMBIE & FITCH • Westfield San Francisco Centre, 1st floor, 284-9276

NORTH FACE • 180 Post, 433-3223

MACY'S • Union Square, 397-3333

Escape to a Great Movie Palace

Let's face it, on a rainy day what we really want is to escape, so why not experience that great American pastime for escaping—the movies. San Francisco has its share of grand old movie palaces of landmark stature, as well as some pretty nifty newer facilities that offer the latest in comfort and cinema technology:

CASTRO THEATER

A grand movie palace with theater organ played at night. 429 Castro St., 621-6120.

EMBARCADERO CINEMA

Four theaters playing what some would call 'art films'. 1 Embarcadero Center, Promenade Level, 267-4893.

SUNDANCE KABUKI 8

A big plus to this eight-screen movie theater is the adjoining Kabuki Hot Springs & Spa (see listing below). Post & Fillmore Streets, 922-4262.

THE RED VIC

A really laid-back atmosphere for viewing of eclectic film fare. 1727 Haight St., 668-3994.

LUMIÈRE THEATER

Art house and rep films screen at this small venue. 1572 California St., 267-4893

1000 VAN NESS

14 screens with comfy 'love-seat' stadium seating and loads of leg room. 1000 Van Ness Ave., 922-4262.

Shop Your Troubles Away

San Francisco has only one traditional weatherproof suburban-like mall, Stonestown, out in the western part of the city on 19th Avenue. But there are four non-traditional malls on the periphery of downtown which allow you to shop without getting wet:

EMBARCADERO CENTER

Located at the east side of the Financial District (between Clay and Sacramento), these four office towers have a collection of well-known retailers anchoring its lower floors (The Gap, Ann Taylor, Banana Republic, Pottery Barn, etc.). While the feeling of the place is a little sterile and cold (especially when it's damp outside), you can stroll from building to building without a drop touching you. As an added treat, you can go marvel at the Hyatt Regency's enormous atrium while sipping a latte, or take in a little culture at the Embarcadero Cinema.

CROCKER GALLERIA

This odd little mall in the middle of the Financial District gets points for the fact that it's all enclosed and is accessible from Union Square, even though its retailers tend to turn over as fast as the fog rolls in on a summer evening. Located between Post and Sutter just off Kearny Street.

WESTFIELD SAN FRANCISCO CENTRE

Once inside this enormous structure that recently expanded to include a Bloomingdales and incredible food court you'll have no idea whether it's sunny or raining outside. Venture to the top floor to try Spa Nordstrom (a massage and facial sounds pretty good on a yucky day). Or spend the afternoon exploring the eclectic boutiques, which encircle the elegant curving escalators on the lower floors. Market and 5th Streets, across the street from the cable car turnaround.

SONY METREON

This four-story mass of stores, eateries, cinemas, and amusement centers is definitely not traditional. The focus is on high-tech gadgetry and entertainment. There are some unusual stores, like the International Spy Shop, and good restaurants. And there are plenty of things for the kids, including Where The Wild Things Are and The Airtight Garage. You could definitely spend several warm and dry hours here, and due to the nearly all-glass façade, still be able to dash outside as soon as the sun emerges again. The Metreon is at 101 4th Street, and is open from 10a.m. to 10p.m.

Gaze at Great Art

San Francisco is blessed with a number of excellent museums, all of which offer shelter from the elements while providing nourishment for the soul. (Most of these also have on-site cafés for nourishment of a different sort.)

ASIAN ART MUSEUM • 200 Larkin St., 581-3500

CALIFORNIA PALACE OF THE LEGION OF HONOR • Lincoln Park, 34th Avenue and Clement, 863-3330

CENTER FOR THE ARTS AT YERBA BUENA GARDENS • 701 Mission St., 978-2787

M. H. DE YOUNG MEMORIAL MUSEUM • Golden Gate Park, 863-3330

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (SFMOMA) • 151 3rd St., 357-4000

Get Lost in the Stacks

Spend the day exploring the wonders of our huge Main Library. Besides the enticement of thousands of books, there are the special exhibits and video presentations, as well as lectures and discussions. (You may recognize the interior from several scenes in the Nicholas Cage/Meg Ryan film *City of Angels*.) 100 Larkin St., 557-4400.

What Would Mark Twain Do in the Rain?

Mark Twain was a big fan of San Francisco, although he is often attributed with having said “the coldest winter I ever spent was a summer in San Francisco.” In that spirit we suggest these uniquely San Francisco diversions that even he might find enjoyable...

WALK THE LABYRINTH AT GRACE CATHEDRAL

Rainy days are made for contemplation and there's no better place to do it than Nob Hill's majestic church at California and Jones; the stained glass windows and magnificent architecture are wonderful, but the Chartres-inspired labyrinth is a great way to retreat from the world—literally and figuratively. This spiritual emporium also includes an AIDS Memorial Chapel with the late artist Keith Haring's gold leafed triptych “The Altarpiece.”

ENJOY A POLYNESIAN RAINSTORM

Well, if you're going to experience rain, you might as well do it in the tropics at The Tonga Room, a kitschy and elegant (are these mutually exclusive?) bar where you can enjoy pupus (Hawaiian appetizers) while marveling at a Don Ho look-alike on a raft in the middle of an indoor pool/lake, with an occasional rainstorm to punctuate the fantasy. Sounds pretty amazing, doesn't it? It will definitely make you forget that it's raining outside. Located in the Fairmont Hotel, 950 Mason St., at the top of Nob Hill. 772-5000.

CATCH A LITTLE CULTURE ON SATURDAY MORNING

Every Saturday morning from 10a.m. to noon, Sedge Thompson performs “West Coast Live,” a nostalgic live radio show, which beams to radio stations all over the west coast, offering an eclectic variety of theatrical and musical art, as well as the occasional celebrity interview. It's fun, irreverent, and very San Francisco. At various Bay Area locations. Call 664-9500 for tickets. (Reservations highly recommended).

EXPLORE WITH THE KIDS

Hands-on science is available at the Exploratorium in the romantic Palace of Fine Arts; great science exhibits for adults and kids, as well as the unusual Tactile Dome. This museum is good for a two- to four-hour trip until the weather clears up a bit. And if it's not raining too hard, be sure to walk around the lake. 3601 Lyon St., 397-5673.

SOAK THE DAY AWAY

The Kabuki Springs & Spa offers an experience that's sure to change your outlook on a gloomy day. Designed with an eye toward all things harmonious, this spa offers a collection of services, including massages, body scrubs, facials, acupuncture and Ayurvedic rebalancing. Unique to this facility are the traditional communal baths open to women Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays; to men Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays; and to both sexes on Tuesdays (suits are required on co-ed day). The Kabuki is open daily 10a.m. and 10p.m. 1750 Geary Blvd. Call 922- 6000 for appointments and information.

CONTEMPLATE NATURE'S BEAUTY

Drizzly days can be the best time to explore the beautiful Japanese Tea Gardens in Golden Gate Park. The gardens are at their least crowded on these damp days, and the moisture helps bring the fragrance of the exotic plantings to life. Duck under the shelter of the teahouse for a warming cup of jasmine tea and some sweet cookies.

STUFF A BEAR

The Basic Brown Bear Factory is a terrific place to take kids on a rainy day. Tour the cutting and sewing areas and stuff your very own bear at this fun factory. 2801 Leavenworth St., 409-2806.

PRETEND YOU'RE SONJA HENIE

Practice your spins and jumps as you glide gracefully across the ice at the Yerba Buena Rooftop Gardens. Not only is this ice-skating rink NHL regulation sized, it also boasts floor to ceiling windows with fabulous downtown views. And if you're lucky you may catch champion skater Brian Boitano on a practice session! Open daily. Call 777-3727 for hours.

SIP SOME SUDS

Okay, so the point of the Anchor Steam Brewery tour is to see how the beer is made, but an added benefit is the tasting that wraps up the tour. This San Francisco brewery has been making malted beverages for over 102 years and they'd like to show you how! This is a very popular tour, so call in advance! Call 863-8350 for reservations.

