



A swordfern frond unfolds at Muir Woods.

The view from Mount Tamalpais, looking northeast to Bolinas Ridge. Left: Blue heron.



Young visitors examine the hidden world of Golden Gate. Activities for children and families are available at park visitor centers.



The Presidio's former enlisted men's barracks date from the 1890s. Along with echoes of San Francisco's military past, the Presidio has much to offer recreation lovers. Top: Golden Gate Bridge from Crissy Field.

Whether you are a visitor to the Bay Area or a lifelong resident, Golden Gate National Recreation Area offers you experiences you can find nowhere else. This national park area has some world renowned destinations—Alcatraz and Muir Woods, for example—as well as some places where you might not encounter another human being. Everywhere there are surprises, from the ridgetop where Spanish explorers first sighted San Francisco Bay to a Cold War-era missile site.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area begins where the Pacific Ocean meets San Francisco Bay—but it does not end there. “If we in the Congress do not act,” warned U.S. Rep. Philip Burton in 1972, “the majestic area where sea and bay and land meet in a glorious symphony of nature will be doomed.” Established that year, Golden Gate has grown to more than 75,000 acres. Along with other public lands and waters in the region, it enjoys recognition by the United Nations as the Golden Gate Biosphere Reserve.

To make the most of your visit to Golden Gate it is a good idea to plan your time. Use the activity chart below or chart your own course. Whatever path you choose to follow, let Golden Gate enliven your senses: sun-baked scents of sage and bay laurel, cool morning fog, waves crashing on the headlands, a tapestry of native spring wildflowers. The National Park Service invites you to enjoy, explore, and appreciate.

### Planning Your Visit

#### If you have an hour:

- Walk the Esplanade at Ocean Beach.
- Stroll through the Great Meadow at Fort Mason.
- Watch ships at Fort Baker's Battery Yards.
- Watch the sunset at Cliff House.
- Tour the visitor center at the Presidio.
- Walk beside restored coastal habitat at Crissy Field.
- Hike along the old railroad bed at Lands End.
- Watch swimmers at Aquatic Park.
- Tour the Nike Missile Site in the Marin Headlands.

#### Two or three hours:

- Look for migratory birds of prey soaring above Marin Headlands on Hawk Hill (in fall).
- Visit the Bay Area Discovery Museum.
- Spot whales at Muir Beach Overlook during their winter migration (December-February).
- Hike to the Point Bonita Lighthouse (limited hours).
- Take a wildflower walk at Fort Funston (in spring).
- Bicycle through the Presidio.
- Take a walking tour of the Cliff House area.
- Listen to voices from California's past at the Marin Headlands Visitor Center.
- Walk through the Redwood forest at Muir Woods.

#### Half day:

- Hike through the Phleger Estate.
- Mountain bike on Mount Tamalpais.
- Hike through the hills at Marin Headlands.
- Kayak in Tomales Bay.
- Hike, bicycle, or ride a horse on the Tennessee Valley Trail.
- Fish at Fort Point, Baker Beach, or Ocean Beach.
- Hike the Rift Zone Trail in Olema Valley.
- Take the ferry to Alcatraz (reserve ahead!).
- Hike to the San Francisco Bay Discovery Site at Sweeney Ridge.
- Walk from Fort Mason to Fort Point, across the Golden Gate Bridge, to Sausalito, and return by ferry.

**Getting Information** With most sites less than an hour's drive from San Francisco, there's a lot you can see in a day at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. To make the most of your time, stop first at one of the information centers, located at Cliff House, Crissy Field, Marin Headlands, Muir Woods, or the Presidio. There is an information center (open weekdays) at Fort Mason for the National Park Service's Pacific West Region. The Pacifica Visitor Center (650-355-4122) has information and exhibits about the southern section of Golden Gate and the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. For locations, see the map on the other side of this brochure. *Park Adventures* ([www.nps.gov/goga/parknews](http://www.nps.gov/goga/parknews)) lists current park activities and special events. *The Guide to the Parks* and other publications are produced by the Golden Gate National Parks Association. This and other nonprofit organizations work in partnership with the National Park Service. Golden Gate is one of the most-visited national park areas in the nation. Consider going to the more remote areas at the far north and south of the park, shown on map at right. The areas nearer the city (see inset) are detailed on the other side.

**Getting Around** San Francisco's Municipal Railway (MUNI, 415-673-MUNI; [www.sfmuni.com](http://www.sfmuni.com)) has bus and trolley service to most park sites in San Francisco. MUNI bus and metro lines and the Hyde Street and Mason Street cable cars provide the most frequent service from downtown to shoreline destinations. Several MUNI lines connect to other Bay Area transit systems such as Golden Gate Transit (GGT, 415-455-2000) in Marin County; Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART, 650-992-2278), and Alameda/Contra Costa Transit (A/C Transit, 510-817-1717 weekdays) in the East Bay; and CalTrain and San Mateo County Transit (Sam Trans, both at 800-660-4287) in the Peninsula area. Ferries serve Alcatraz and Angel Island State Park (415-705-5444). Bus service is not available to most park destinations in Marin and San Mateo counties.

**For a Safe Visit** In an emergency, dial 911 or call the Park Communications Center at 415-561-5656. • Dogs on leashes are allowed in most areas of the park; check locally for regulations. Clean up waste. • Check tide tables before walking on isolated beaches. Rising water can trap you against a cliff with no escape route. • Be prepared for sudden and extreme weather changes. Wear layered clothing. • Carry plenty of water when hiking. • Coastal cliffs may crumble and slide. Do not climb on them. Keep away from the edges! • Many trails cross lands owned by other public agencies. Please respect signs and be aware of regulations. • Watch out for poison oak. • Swimming is not recommended in most park waters. Ocean currents off the coast are dangerous. • Wildlife, bird nests, tidepool creatures, and wildflowers are tempting to collect, but please enjoy these wonders in their natural habitat and leave them undisturbed.

**Accessibility** Individual site listings on this brochure give specific accessibility information for visitors with disabilities. Call 415-561-4700 (TDD 415-556-2766) for additional information.

**More Information** Golden Gate National Recreation Area is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

Golden Gate National Recreation Area  
Fort Mason, Building 201  
San Francisco, CA 94123  
415-561-4700  
[www.nps.gov/goga](http://www.nps.gov/goga)

### Golden Gate National Recreation Area



All photographs are National Park Service images.

Most major park destinations are described on the map on the other side. Here are a few of the more out-of-the-way places, north to south:

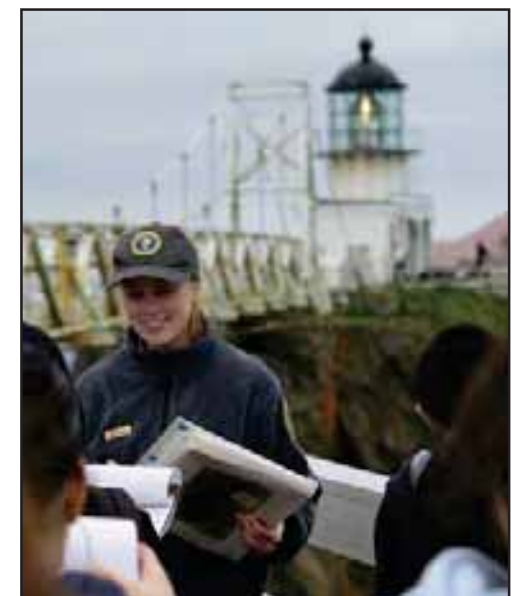
**Olema Valley**  
Follow Highway 1 (Cal. 1) or the Rift Zone Trail along the San Andreas Fault Zone from Tomales Bay to Bolinas Lagoon. Ridgetop trails have spectacular ocean views. 415-464-5100.

**Bolinas Lagoon**  
Look for birds and marine mammals in this rich wetland habitat. Nearby Audubon Canyon Ranch, a nonprofit wildlife sanctuary, is home to great egrets and great blue herons. 415-499-6405.

**Milagra Ridge**  
Military use of this land helped to protect the natural habitat from commercial development. Habitat restoration for the endangered Mission blue butterfly is ongoing. 650-355-4122.

**Sweeney Ridge**  
From this ridgetop in 1769, a scouting party under Gaspar de Portolá became the first Europeans to see San Francisco Bay. A monument marks the approximate location. 650-355-4122.

**Phleger Estate**  
This 1,300-acre site was home to the prominent Phleger family starting in the 1930s. It became part of Golden Gate NRA in 1995. Access is from Huddart County Park near Woodside. 650-355-4122.



Every year, over 20,000 K-12 students take part in Parks As Classrooms educational programs.

# Exploring the Parks at the Golden Gate

Web Edition



**You Can Be a VIP**  
Consider the opportunities in the Volunteers in Parks program: Plant native vegetation on hillsides overlooking the ocean. Monitor endangered Mission blue butterflies. Introduce visitors to prison life at Alcatraz. Whatever your interests, there is a place for you in the park as more than a visitor. Golden Gate has one of the largest and most diverse volunteer groups of any national park in the nation. Call the VIP Hotline, 415-561-4755, or visit [www.nps.gov/goga/supportyourpark/](http://www.nps.gov/goga/supportyourpark/).



## North of the Golden Gate



Muir Woods National Monument

**Muir Beach**  
This sheltered cove gives you a chance to relax and enjoy the coastal scenery. Varied hiking opportunities. *Dangerous swimming conditions; no lifeguards.* 415-388-2595.

**Tennessee Valley**  
Popular with hikers, cyclists, and horseback riders, this well-maintained 1.7-mile trail meanders through hills and past a quiet lagoon to a remote black-sand beach. At low tide you can see the remains of the SS *Tennessee*, wrecked in 1853. Primitive campsite (reservations required). 415-331-1540. Horse rentals at the Miwok Livery, 415-383-8048.

**Marin Headlands**  
Stop first at the visitor center for an overview of this area's wildlife and human history. From Rodeo Beach or Hawk Hill, watch for some of the 300 species of migratory and resident birds. Explore historic military structures, including a Cold War-era Nike missile site. Hike out to the Point Bonita Lighthouse, where bay meets ocean (limited hours). Park Partners such as the Marine Mammal Center, the Headlands Center for the Arts, and the Marin Headlands Hostel are open to the public. Visitor center, trails, camping. 415-331-1540.

**Fort Baker**  
The Battery Cavallo earthworks, along with fortifications at Fort Point, Alcatraz, and Fort Mason, date from the Civil War. Sheltered from wind and often fog-free, this is an excellent place to view the Golden Gate bridge, bay, and city skyline. Fishing piers, picnic area, and boat launch. 415-331-1540. The Bay Area Discovery Museum (415-339-3900) offers hands-on activities for all ages.

**Stinson Beach**  
This three-mile sandy beach offers facilities and services for many kinds of water recreation. 415-868-0942.

**Mount Tamalpais**  
Marin County's highest mountain has dozens of trails that take you through redwood forests, grasslands, and wildflower meadows in spring. Visitor Center, hiking trails, picnic areas, campground. Lodging and food service are offered seasonally. For information call Mount Tamalpais State Park, 415-388-2070.

**Muir Woods National Monument**  
"This is the best tree-lovers monument that could possibly be found in all the forests of the world," wrote John Muir of this old-growth stand of coastal redwoods. Visitor center, paved and level walking paths, hiking trails, food service. No picnicking. Entrance fee. Expect large crowds and very limited parking. 415-388-2595; [www.nps.gov/muwo](http://www.nps.gov/muwo).

**Muir Beach Overlook**  
This site of a former U.S. Army coastal observation post (base end station) has spectacular coastal views. Watch migrating whales in winter. Picnic area. 415-388-2595.



Red crab  
NPS/Dan Ng

## South of the Golden Gate

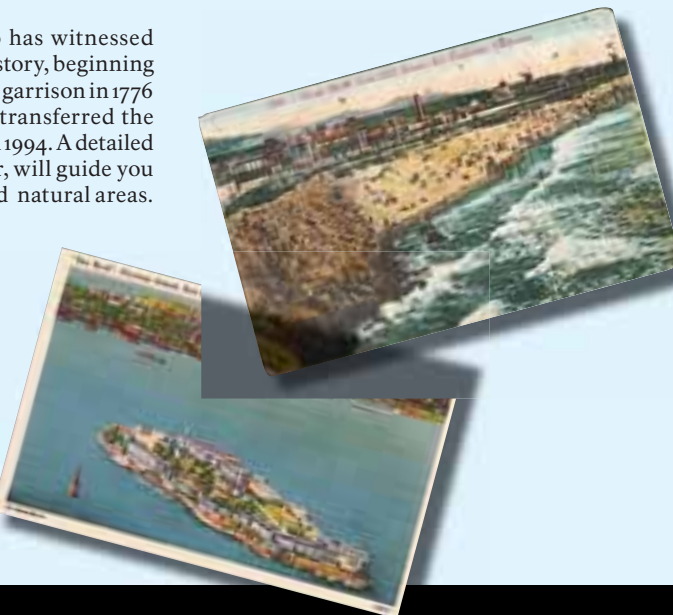
**Fort Mason**  
Dating back to the Civil War, this former U.S. Army post is now a national historic landmark housing Golden Gate National Recreation Area's headquarters, an NPS regional information center, and the Golden Gate National Parks Association. At water level is Fort Mason Center (415-441-5706), with galleries, performing arts spaces, exhibit areas, shops, restaurants, and nonprofit organizations. The Great Meadow has a statue of U.S. Rep. Philip Burton, who was instrumental in creating the park. 415-561-4700; [www.nps.gov/goga/playourvisit/](http://www.nps.gov/goga/playourvisit/).

**Crissy Field**  
The Crissy Field shoreline once consisted of dunes, lagoons, and tidal marshes. Today this area showcases the park's habitat restoration efforts, including a 22-acre tidal marsh. At Crissy Field you can learn about aviation history, walk paths through coastal habitats, and enjoy waterfront recreation. Food is available at Crissy Field Center and at the Warming Hut. 415-561-4323.

**Fort Point National Historic Site**  
The only Civil War-era casemated fort on the West Coast, Fort Point never saw combat. Because of its excellent design and superb masonry construction, it was spared demolition during the building of the Golden Gate Bridge. Exhibits, bookstore, tours. 415-556-1693; [www.nps.gov/fopo](http://www.nps.gov/fopo).

**The Presidio**  
San Francisco's famous Presidio has witnessed more than 200 years of military history, beginning with the arrival of the first Spanish garrison in 1776 and ending when the U.S. Army transferred the land to the National Park Service in 1994. A detailed map, available at the visitor center, will guide you through the Presidio's historic and natural areas. 415-561-4323; [www.nps.gov/prsf](http://www.nps.gov/prsf).

Right: An early postcard describes Alcatraz as "one of the Government's Great Federal Prisons." Far right: Postmarked 1915, a postcard depicts Ocean Beach, already a popular resort.



All photographs are National Park Service images.

**Baker Beach**  
This beach is popular for fishing and shore recreation. Battery Chamberlin, built in 1904, has an operational "disappearing" gun; check the park schedules for demonstration times. Picnic area with grills, drinking water, restrooms. *Dangerous swimming conditions; no lifeguards.* 415-561-4323.

**China Beach**  
In the late 19th century Chinese fishermen anchored their boats in this wind-protected cove and camped on the shore. Picnic area with grills. *Dangerous swimming conditions; no lifeguards.* 415-561-4323.

**Lands End**  
This area is justifiably famous for its ocean views. Look for shipwrecks at low tide. Eagles Point overlook has good views of the entrance to the Golden Gate. The USS *San Francisco* Memorial honors those who fought in the World War II Battle of Guadalcanal. Nearby West Fort Miley has historic gun emplacements as well as a picnic area. 415-561-4323.

**Cliff House**  
This has been a tourist destination since the first Cliff House was built in 1863. Today's Cliff House, built in 1909, is the third to occupy the site. The Victorian-era resort complex includes nearby Sutro Baths and the restored Sutro Garden. 415-561-4323.



Baker Beach enclosed within the San Francisco cityscape, is a place of refuge, reflection, and recreation.

**Ocean Beach**  
This wild, windy beach stretches four miles from Cliff House to Fort Funston. *Cold water and rip currents make swimming here extremely dangerous! Many people have drowned.* The Esplanade provides for an enjoyable walk along the shore. Watch for the snowy plover, an endangered bird that the park is working hard to protect. 415-561-4323.

**Fort Funston**  
Continuous strong winds make these coastal headlands ideal for hang-gliding. Trails take you along the bluffs and down to the beach. Wildflowers abound in spring. Explore the World War II-era Battery Davis. Visit the nursery where native plants are grown for the park's coastal habitat restoration program. Hiking trails. 415-561-4323.

