

SFGate

111 things to do with kids in San Francisco

by Amy Graff

Print this out, post it on your fridge and start exploring the city.

1. Eat an ice cream treat at the [St. Francis Fountain](#), open since 1918 on lower 24th Street in the Mission District.
2. Stick a penny into “Laffing Sal” at the [Musée Mecanique](#). She’s creepy but a classic who came from The Funhouse at San Francisco’s Playland at the Beach.
3. Bike along [Golden Gate Park](#)’s John F Kennedy Drive on a Sunday when the street is closed to traffic.
4. Walk across the [Golden Gate Bridge](#).
5. Build a sandcastle at [Baker Beach](#).
6. Rent a rowboat at [Stow Lake](#) in Golden Gate Park.
7. Step inside [Mission Dolores](#), the oldest intact building in San Francisco. The neighboring Cemetery is the final resting place for numerous Ohlone, Miwok and other First Californians.
8. Race your friend on the double slide and fly high on the swings at [Julius Kahn Playground](#) in Presidio Heights.
9. Take the [Alcatraz](#) tour. Tickets sell out weeks in advance all summer long, but in winter you can score same-day tickets.
10. Pick out a pastry at [La Victoria Mexican Bakery](#) on lower 24th Street in the Mission District.
11. Fly a kite at [Crissy Field](#)—and then walk over to the [Beach Hut Café](#) to see the five wind turbines out front that will teach you about wind generation.
12. Hike the [Coastal Trail](#) where some of the most intact natural habitat in the Presidio harbors rare plants.

13. Visit North Beach's Washington Square Park in the early morning and watch the groups practicing Tai Chi.
14. Enjoy a picnic at [Dolores Park](#) and shoot down the 40-foot super slide. You'll go faster if you lift up your feet.
15. Walk along the one-mile [Lover's Lane](#) in the Presidio. U.S. soldiers once used the trail to visit their lovers in the city.
16. Look for the [wild parrots on Telegraph Hill](#). (Can't find them? Try Upper Fort Mason, near the Golden Gate National Recreation Area headquarters.)
17. Wade in the Bay at [Crissy Field](#) Beach.
18. Visit the kittens and puppies at the [SFSPCA](#).
19. Check out books from the [Children's Center at the Main Library](#).
20. Slurp up a bowl of pho (Vietnamese noodle soup) at [Turtle Tower](#) in the Tenderloin.
21. Gaze at the Foucault Pendulum until it knocks over a pin at the [California Academy of Sciences](#). (Don't miss a show at the [Morrison Planetarium](#).)
22. Step inside [City Hall](#) and stand under the dome, one of the tallest in the world. Look up and scream "Wow!"
23. Take a walk down the Mission District's [Balmy Alley](#) and Clarion Alley, where you'll find the most colorful collections of murals in the city.
24. Look for turtles in the pond at the [San Francisco Botanical Garden](#).
25. Climb over the moon bridge in the [Japanese Tea Garden](#).
26. Attend a sing-along movie at the [Castro Theater](#). *Sound of Music* plays over the Thanksgiving holiday; other favorites include *Mary Poppins* and *Mamma Mia*.
27. Shop for vegetables in [Chinatown](#) and use them to make a stir-fry at home.
28. Ride the [cable cars](#) all the way from Union Square to Fisherman's Wharf.

29. Walk the one-block stretch of Lombard that twists and turns between Hyde and Leavenworth.
30. Zip down the slides, climb up the rope structure and swing across the monkey bars at [Golden Gate Park's Children's Quarter](#), originally built in 1887 and recognized as our nation's first-ever public playground.
31. Attend the Meet the Animals presentation put on at the [Randall Museum](#) every Saturday at 11:15 a.m. Pet a snake, feed a turtle, feel a rabbit's soft coat.
32. Explore [Cayuga Park](#) in the Excelsior. Gardener Demitrio Braceros has transformed this spot right next to the Bart tracks into a magical land with winding paths, wooden sculptures and flowers.
33. Go out for dim sum on Clement Street. Try [Wing Lee Bakery](#) or [Good Luck](#).
34. Shop for art supplies at [Flax](#) on Market Street. (Great place for birthday gifts too.)
35. Lick an ice cream from [Mitchell's](#) in Noe Valley.
36. Drive to the top of Twin Peaks.
37. Fill up on French toast with Nutella and fresh strawberries at [The Ramp's](#) weekend brunch. Kids can watch the boats cruise by at this waterfront eatery.
38. Stroll Ocean Beach in the early morning and look for sand dollars.
39. Buy chocolate malt balls at [Miette](#) in Hayes Valley.
40. Check out the [Fire Department Museum](#) where you can see an engine from 1810.
41. Spend your savings at [Ambassador Toys](#), [The Ark](#) or [Jeffrey's](#) where you can still find classic, well-made toys.
42. Order the Bullet Train children's meal at [Mifune](#) in Japantown. It comes with cold soba noodles and tempura served on a toy train.
43. Zip down the 25-foot tube slide at the [Yerba Buena Gardens Play Circle](#).
44. Glide across the ice at the [Yerba Buena Ice Skating Center](#).
45. Knock down some pins at [Presidio Bowling Center](#).

46. Take a whirl on the carousel at [Golden Gate Park](#).
47. Watch the 4 p.m. giraffe feeding at the [San Francisco Zoo](#).
48. Hike the [Lands End Trail](#), from the Cliff House to the Palace of the Legion of Honor. Stop in the Lands End Lookout Visitor Center and Cafe for a bowl of clam chowder.
49. Go for dinner at the [Beach Chalet](#) at Sunset.
50. Order whatever is fresh out of the fryer at [Bob's Donuts](#) and Pastry Shop on Polk, and then walk down to Aquatic Park and watch the swimmers and ships pass by.
51. Ride to the top of the tower at the [De Young Museum](#). It's free.
52. Take a class at the [Cartoon Art Museum](#).
53. Check out the Golden Gate National Recreation Area's [Battery Chamberlin](#), the last six-inch "disappearing gun" of its type on the West Coast. On the first full weekend of each month, take part in demonstrations of the gun.
54. Visit [Fort Point](#). Attend the Cannon Loading Demonstration to find out how soldiers were taught to load and fire a Napoleon 12-pounder cannon during a Civil War artillery drill.
55. Pet the baby sharks (they don't bite!) at the [Aquarium of the Bay](#).
56. Attend a family program at the [Asian Art Museum](#).
57. Say hello to the sea lions at [Pier 39](#).
58. Catch a Giants game at [AT&T Park](#).
59. Ride a [ferry](#) to [Angel Island State Park](#). Pack a picnic. Go for a hike.
60. Volunteer at the [San Francisco Food Bank](#).
61. Check out the three-story-high mosaic portrait of an African girl composed of some 2,100 photos at the [Museum of African Diaspora](#).
62. Attend a service at [Glide Memorial Church](#) in the Tenderloin.
63. Marvel at the 100-year-old giant Imperial Philodendron inside the [Conservatory of Flowers in Golden Gate Park](#).
64. Walk around the expansive lobby of the [Hyatt Regency](#).

65. Visit the [Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory](#) in Chinatown.
66. Chow down on pizza at [Giorgio's](#) in the Inner Richmond. Vinyl booths, red-check tablecloths and a children's night when little hands get to make their own pies.
67. Watch the trains circle round the tracks maintained by the [Golden Gate Model Railroaders](#) in the basement of the Randall Museum.
Saturdays only.
68. Suck on a fruity Popsicle from [Bi-Rite Creamery](#) in the Mission District. (You don't need to wait in the long ice cream line!)
69. Step aboard the [Balclutha](#) at the [Hyde Street Pier](#). The 1886 three-masted ship once transported cargo between California and the British Isles via Cape Horn.
70. Learn what makes San Francisco's famous cable cars move on a tour of the [Cable Car Museum](#).
71. Get a free balloon at one of the cities many [Cole Hardware](#) stores.
72. Create gigantic bubbles at the [Exploratorium](#).
73. Let your imagination run wild during an art class at [Precita Eyes](#) in Bernal Heights.
74. Watch [Jackie Floyd Jones](#) perform swinging 1920s tunes on her musical saw and guitar with her pal, a dancing pink wooden cat, at the [Saturday Alemany Farmers' Market](#).
75. Visit [Coit Tower](#)—and ride the elevator that takes you to the top of the 210-foot tower in the elevator.
76. Attend one of [SFMOMA's Family Sundays](#) when admission is free for kids and docents lead family-friendly gallery tours.
77. Watch the break-dancers at the Powell Street Cable Car turntable.
78. Stroll the halls of the [Ferry Building](#) while noshing on a baguette piece from [Acme Bread](#). Outside wave to the boats coming and going.
79. Listen to the ocean's song at the [Wave Organ](#), just east of the yacht club on Bay Street. When the waves crash over the sculpture of PVC pipes, sound is created.

80. Watch the remote-control model boats sail around [Spreckels Lake](#) in Golden Gate Park.
81. Walk by the Painted Ladies, a row of elaborately painted Victorians facing Alamo Square Park on Steiner Street. Afterward, play in the park.
82. Catch one of the free summer performances at [Stern Grove](#).
83. Read inspiring words from Martin Luther King Jr. behind the cascading fountain at [Yerba Buena Gardens](#).
84. Attend a family concert at the [San Francisco Symphony](#).
85. See a Concord Coach used by Wells Fargo in the 1860s at the [Wells Fargo History Museum](#) on Montgomery.
86. View the Diego Rivera mural, “Making a Fresco,” at the [San Francisco Art Institute](#) on Russian Hill.
87. Feed the ducks at [Mountain Lake](#) in the southern edge of the Presidio.
88. Order an ice cream cone at the first-ever [Swensen’s](#) on Russian Hill.
89. Tap your toes to live jazz on Friday evenings at [Bird & Beckett Books](#) in Glen Park. Also browse the wonderful selection of children’s picture and chapter books.
90. Take a docent-led tour of the [Haas-Lilienthal House](#), the city’s only Victorian house museum.
91. Zoom down the [Winfield Street Slide](#), nestled among the trees and curvy streets of Bernal Heights, on a piece of cardboard.
92. Spread out a blanket at Russian Hill’s lovely [Michelangelo Park](#). Enjoy a picnic and then take a nap.
93. View the collection of works by El Greco, Rubens, Rembrandt, Monet, Matisse, and Picasso at the [Legion of Honor](#). Say “hello” to “The Thinker.”
94. Savor scones spread with clotted cream and finger sandwiches at [Lovejoy’s Tea Room](#) in Noe Valley.

95. Explore Justin Herman Plaza's Vaillancourt Fountain with walkways that allow you to walk over, under and through its waterfalls.
96. Chow down on a burger and fries at one of the city's old-fashioned [Mel's](#) diners.
97. Splash around in the [Carl Larsen Sava Pool](#), one of the city's nicest, cleanest public pools.
98. [Kayak](#) along the waterfront.
99. Go for a hike and watch the hang-gliders at [Fort Funston](#).
100. Sit on the dock of the bay at [India Basin Natural Area](#) in Hunter's Point, known for its sun, birds, stunning views and fishing dock.
101. Take the [ferry](#) to Sausalito.
102. Pay your respects to artist [Keith Haring's](#) "Three Dancing Figures"—an abstract sculpture featuring brightly colored figures with their arms and legs intertwined—at Moscone Center between Howard and Third.
103. Walk down—or up—the Lyon Street Steps in Pacific Heights.
104. Eat a burrito at [La Taqueria](#) on Mission Street.
105. Bike ride along the Embarcadero, passing under the Bay Bridge.
106. Make a claymation movie at the [Children's Creativity Museum](#) in Yerba Buena Gardens.
107. Jump for joy at the [House of Air](#) indoor trampoline park in the Presidio.
108. Explore the steep trails of [Glen Canyon](#), while keeping an eye out for the coyotes.
109. Hike around the 61-acre [Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve](#).
110. Take in views of the Pacific through the [Camera Obscura](#) at Ocean Beach. Based on a 15th century design by Leonardo da Vinci, this unusual device produces live 360-degree images of the Seal Rock Area.
111. View American bison in [Golden Gate Park](#).