



# TAKE YOUR HEART TO SAN FRANCISCO



BY LIZ LAING

**S**an Francisco has long been hailed as one of the most romantic cities in the country. Whether or not you've left your heart there before, you're sure to discover new places to ignite or rekindle a flame. Try this perfect Valentine getaway to the City by the Bay.

**FRIDAY:** Check-in at The Ritz-Carlton in the prestigious Nob Hill area and get pampered from the get go. If you really want to impress your significant other, book the Valentine's Romance package and get a Deluxe Room on Club Level where you'll have five complimentary food presentations (and drinks) each day. The package also includes champagne and strawberries upon arrival, late checkout, Sunday brunch and a half bottle of wine at the bar. Snag some hors' d'oeuvres and champagne at check-in, and head to your room. 800.241.3333, [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com).

Once you've relaxed and regrouped, begin to explore the city with a ride on one of San Francisco's famous cable cars. Jump on the Powell-Hyde line, which will take you down to Aquatic Park, just below Ghirardelli Square. Walk around the edge of the park and follow the pathway over the hill through Fort Mason, noticing

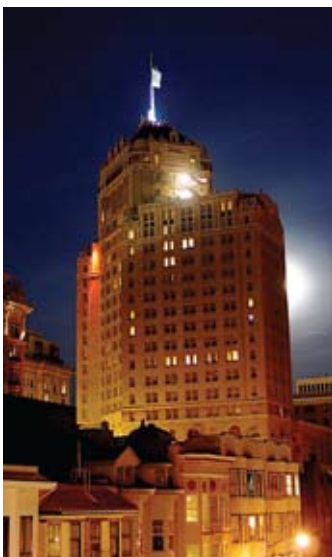


the fantastic views of Golden Gate Bridge. Keep heading west to the marina and turn around when you get tired. Bring a sweater or jacket, as the weather can get quite chilly.

Stroll over for an intimate dinner at Le Colonial, where you'll find exquisite French-Vietnamese cuisine in a lush, romantic setting. Just eight blocks from the hotel, it's located at the former site of historic Trader Vic's. 415.931.3600, [www.lecoloniaisf.com](http://www.lecoloniaisf.com).

Another nearby option is Fleur de Lys, considered by many to be the most romantic dining room in the city, with a menu that includes such delicacies as foie gras, truffles and caviar. 415.673.7779, [www.fleurdelysf.com](http://www.fleurdelysf.com).

Either way, skip dessert and head over to North Beach (Little Italy) to Caffé Greco, one of the most authentic Italian cafés in the city. Relax on a red leather banquette (perfect for Valentine's Day!) and indulge in award-winning homemade tiramisu, cannoli or gelato. Tel. 415.397.6261, [www.caffegreco.com](http://www.caffegreco.com).



In the mood for live music? You can't go wrong at Yoshi's Jazz Club, featuring two shows per night, seven nights a week. 415.655.5600, [www.sf.yoshis.com/sfjazzclub](http://www.sf.yoshis.com/sfjazzclub).

**SATURDAY:** After breakfast, take a cab to Golden Gate Park's Conservatory of Flowers, which recently underwent a \$25 million renovation. Walk hand-in-hand among more than 1500 rare and beautiful tropical plants and flowers from around the world. Stop for a kiss on the glass bridge and head over to the deYoung Museum, where you'll see flowers turned into fashion at the Yves St. Laurent Exhibition. 415.750.3600, [www.famsf.org/deyoung](http://www.famsf.org/deyoung).



For the best Chinese lunch ever (and perhaps least impressive ambience), try The House of Nanking, a local institution with a constant line out the door (across from the Hilton Hotel, financial district). Ask to order off the menu, and trust the chef to tantalize your taste buds with amazing flavors. Don't expect great service, but know that the food is worth any slight inconvenience. 415.421.1429.

Ascend new heights in relaxation with an afternoon couples massage at the Huntington Hotel's Feng shui-designed Nob Hill Spa. Complete your relaxation with a therapeutic steam or sauna, then dive into the infinity pool, which offers a heavenly



view of downtown through 18-foot high windows. 415.474.5400, [www.huntingtonhotel.com/nob\\_hill\\_spa](http://www.huntingtonhotel.com/nob_hill_spa).

For an unforgettable gourmet dinner experience, choose Millennium, where a creative vegetarian menu will intrigue even the staunchest carnivore. 415.345.3900, [www.millenniumrestaurant.com](http://www.millenniumrestaurant.com).

A more intimate Nob Hill dining option is Rue Lepic (900 Pine Street at Mason). 415.575.6070, [www.ruelepicsf.com](http://www.ruelepicsf.com). Because this is such a special day for romance, many restaurants may be booked well in advance and have prix fixe menus, so be sure to reserve ahead.

After dinner, take in a nightcap and an incredible 360-degree view of the city at Top of the Mark. This famous sky lounge is located on the top floor of the Mark Hopkins Intercontinental Hotel (California at Mason), 415.616.6916.

**SUNDAY:** Linger over room service breakfast and the *Chronicle*, then take a stroll around the nearly 30 art galleries surrounding Union Square. They're interspersed with dozens of designer boutiques, where a small token of a special somebody's affection just might catch your eye. [www.unionsquarshop.com](http://www.unionsquarshop.com).

If you have time, stop by the Palace of Fine Arts in the Marina district, off the 101 near the Golden Gate Bridge, before heading back south to L.A. A popular wedding locale replete with swans gliding along the water surrounding the rotunda, this iconic, dome-shaped nature retreat was heavily influenced by Roman and Greek architecture. It's also home to the Exploratorium, a fantastic, interactive science museum. Open Sundays 10am-5pm. 415.561.0399, [www.exploratorium.edu](http://www.exploratorium.edu).

Ready to hit the road? You wouldn't be the first to leave your heart in San Francisco. It's never too early to plan your next trip, but in the meantime, whisper sweet nothings in your partner's ear and be sure to notice how fabulous your sweetheart is looking (yes, even after all those desserts!). Romance is a state of mind. As your magical weekend comes to a close, embrace the memories you created and Cupid is sure to follow you home. ♦