

San Francisco Tour Guide Guild

Muir Woods Training

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**The following information is excerpted from Jason Cohen's Trip School
*Training Manual for San Francisco***

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Sausalito

Introduction

- Sausalito is a very pretty small town (population 7,000) overlooking San Francisco Bay, just north of the Golden Gate Bridge. With houses hugging the steep hillsides, it is somewhat reminiscent of the Amalfi Coast of Italy.
- The commercial district visited by tourists is located along the waterfront and features souvenir shops, clothing stores, and restaurants.
- A visit to Sausalito is typically included as part of a Muir Woods excursion, but can also be part of a city tour, and is often used as a scatter lunch stop. Some itineraries include a ferry boat ride between Sausalito and San Francisco.
- Unfortunately, the town is overcrowded with visitors during the summer, especially in the afternoons.

Logistics

- Northbound motor coaches typically access Sausalito using the Alexander Avenue exit from Highway 101 after crossing the Golden Gate Bridge.
 - Signage can cause some confusion-- coaches that have crossed the bridge, perhaps stopping at the North Vista, and are returning to San Francisco cannot use Alexander Avenue to turn back -- they must continue northbound on the highway to the Spencer Avenue exit and turn back there. However, Alexander Avenue is the proper exit if going to Sausalito.
- Access to Sausalito from the north is via the Marin City/Sausalito exit from Highway 101.
- To depart Sausalito after a visit, coaches must drive northbound on the main street (Bridgeway) and access the highway at the north end of town (North Bridge Blvd). This is an indirect route to San Francisco, but is required by city ordinance.
- Coaches are expected to purchase a parking ticket (\$8) from the vending machine at the motor coach parking area on Humboldt Avenue behind Bank of America.
- Tip: The section of Sausalito most interesting to tourists is quite crowded in summer. Tour directors/guides seeking a quieter location for their own lunch might prefer the commercial district along Caledonia Street, about 10 minute walk north of the tourist area.

History

- Sausalito, and Marin County in general, were home to the Coast Miwok Native American tribe for thousands of years.
- During California's Mexican era, Sausalito was part of a large land grant given to William Richardson, an English sailor who settled in the area. Richardson sold fresh water from springs on his land to visiting ships.
 - The name of his Rancho Saucelito evolved into Sausalito and translates as "small willow trees."
 - Later, the arm of San Francisco Bay facing the town was named Richardson Bay in his honor.
- One reason for Sausalito's popularity has always been that the weather is often nicer than in San Francisco. The hills that rise behind the town generally block the fog, leading (usually) to a warm, sunny climate. One of the hillside neighborhoods is even known as the "Banana Belt."
 - With its nice weather and beautiful views, the median list price for houses in Sausalito today is \$1.75 million.
- In the Victorian era Sausalito's hillsides became popular for summer homes for San Francisco elites, but with a less restrictive atmosphere than San Francisco itself. It was somewhat of a party town!
- One of the wealthy early residents was William Randolph Hearst, who began building what might have become Hearst Castle in Sausalito. However, Hearst's strong-willed mother objected to his living publicly with a mistress, which may have led to his leaving town.
- At the same time that the hillside community was wealthy, the waterfront district was industrial, with boatyards, commercial fishing, and saloons serving soldiers from nearby military bases. Workers included immigrants from Portugal and China, among others.
- Before the Golden Gate Bridge was built, a railroad terminated at Sausalito's ferry landing. Cargo would be transferred from trains onto boats to be transported to San Francisco. The automobile ferry from Fisherman's Wharf terminated here, and long lines of cars waiting to board ferries crowded the town.
- During Prohibition, liquor smugglers sailed out to international waters to buy whiskey from Canadian supply ships, and then used Sausalito to move the liquor to San Francisco.
 - A Sausalito mayor and boatyard owner built boats for the Treasury Department to pursue smugglers, but at the same time he smuggled liquor himself, and was sent to prison! (He was then pardoned by President Herbert Hoover and re-elected mayor!)
 - The gangster Baby Face Nelson spent time in Sausalito smuggling liquor.
- The town briefly became quieter after the Golden Gate Bridge opened in 1937 since the railroad and ferry were no longer needed. Some boosters had wanted the highway leading to the bridge to be built along the waterfront (thus, the main street was renamed Bridgeway), but it was instead built on the hill above town, and the business district was bypassed.

- However, with the United States' entry into World War II, Sausalito became home to a huge shipyard, called Marinship, and the town was busy 24 hours/day through the war. In fact, in 3-1/2 years, Marinship built 93 ships, mostly oil tankers and "fleet oilers," to refuel naval vessels.
 - On the other side of San Francisco Bay in the City of Richmond, Kaiser Industries' four shipyards built 743 Liberty ships to carry cargo. Overall, the San Francisco Bay area was the largest shipbuilding center in the world during the war, and, on average, built *one ship per day* throughout America's participation in the war!
 - Just north of Sausalito is the community of Marin City, built as worker housing for the shipyard. Many of the workers were African Americans who came here from the southern U.S. and had limited housing options after the war due to restrictive zoning. Today, Marin City's population is about 25% African American, in contrast to Marin County overall, whose population is less than 3% black.
 - In 1943 an African American shipyard worker, Joseph James, sued Marinship and one of the shipyard unions for discrimination. Future U.S. Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall argued the case before the California Supreme Court and won. The court unanimously ruled that labor unions cannot discriminate on the basis of race or other arbitrary conditions.
 - Wartime shipbuilding was one of the industries in which women had the opportunity to work in skilled labor jobs, the famous "Rosie the Riveters." In reality, riveting was too slow, so the ships were welded together, but the term "Wendy the Welder" never caught on. About 40% of all welders at Marinship were female.
 - Marinship was at the northern end of Sausalito, where today there are a variety of maritime related businesses and artist studios, along with marinas for the city's famous floating homes.

Floating Homes

After the war, Sausalito became popular with bohemian artists and writers, beatniks and hippies, including authors Shel Silverstein and Alan Watts, actor Sterling Hayden, and artist Jean Varda. With help from a sympathetic property owner, many of these free thinkers created a community of people living on boats around the old shipyard. This community still exists.

- Originally, people were living on actual boats that were repurposed, i.e., houseboats, but, especially in recent decades they are more likely to be purpose-built structures on top of concrete barges and are known as floating homes. However, the terms houseboat and floating home are often used interchangeably.
- They truly are floating and thus rise and fall with the tide (sitting on mudflats at low tide), but they are permanently docked-- no one takes their house out for a sail.
- The floating home community and its residents, along with people who lived on boats "anchored out" in the bay, were often controversial. Some of their more affluent, conservative neighbors (the "hill" dwellers) considered the floating homes to be eyesores and their residents to have too wild a lifestyle. This led to the "houseboat wars," which lasted for decades.

- Eventually, via lawsuits and legislation, compromises were reached, and today the homes are completely legal. They are connected to city utilities (water, sewerage, electricity), and they pay dockage fees and property tax.
- There are about 400 of the homes. Prices might start at \$500,000, but can easily be over \$1,000,000, even though there is no land included. Many are available for rent.
- Logistics: Views of the houseboat community can be seen when departing Sausalito on the local road, and also when traveling past the town on Highway 101. A stroll around the houseboat community could work for a tour in a small vehicle, but not in a motor coach, and it is too far to walk there from the main tourist area.

Musical History/Culture

- While spending a week relaxing on one of the floating homes in 1967, singer Otis Redding was inspired to write the song *Dock of the Bay*.
- On shore, but near the floating home community, was the Record Plant, an important music recording studio from the 1970s to the early 2000s. Artists who recorded there include Fleetwood Mac, Greg Allman, Stevie Wonder, Prince and many others.
- In the tourist district in the center of Sausalito is the Trident Restaurant. In the 1960s the Trident was owned by the folk music group the Kingston Trio and became a famous hippie hangout, a favorite of Jerry Garcia, Janis Joplin, Joan Baez, etc. Robin Williams worked there as a busboy. A short walk away is the "No Name Bar," which has served a similar clientele since 1959.

Sally Stanford

- One of Sausalito's most famous residents was Marsha Owen, better known by one of her many aliases, Sally Stanford. (After hearing that Stanford University won a football game, she thought it would be a good name.)
- Sally first became famous as the proprietor of upscale houses of prostitution in San Francisco in the 1930s and 40s. She claimed to have many important men among her clients.
- Eventually the authorities forced her out of the city and she moved to Sausalito, where she became owner of a restaurant in 1950. She entered local politics, but was defeated in her first five campaigns. However, when she ran for Sausalito City Council in 1972, she was elected. She said, "Us sinners never give up!"
- Sally became mayor of Sausalito in 1976, earning the nickname "Madam Mayor." Most people felt that she did a good job in office. (After all, she had good people skills!)
- Among her famous quotes:
 - "If you are being run out of town, get in front of the crowd and make it look like a parade!"
 - Regarding her five marriages she said "One's better off just being a friend. Then you do things because you want to. When you're married, it's a duty."
 - "Madaming is the sort of thing that happens to you—like getting a battlefield commission or becoming the dean of women at Stanford University."

- When she died in 1982, an obituary headline read, "As madam and as mayor, Sally was public servant."
- A water fountain at the Sausalito ferry dock is dedicated to her and bears the inscription "Have a drink on Sally."

Miscellaneous

- In the center of the tourist area is the tiny Viña Del Mar Park, which features sculptures of two elephants (Jumbo and PeeWee) and a fountain, brought here at the conclusion of San Francisco's 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition.
- Sausalito has long been a center of boat building and maritime services for both work boats and recreational sailing. The tradition of building hand-crafted wooden boats continues today in several businesses at the north end of town. Sausalito and the nearby town of Tiburon have always been popular for yachting.
- From 1947-50, a group of artists known as the Sausalito Six studied and worked together here in the abstract expressionist style. The group's most prominent member was Richard Diebenkorn, whose artwork is in the collections of museums throughout the United States.
- Pepperidge Farm has a cookie called the Sausalito, but there is no connection to the city other than the name.

Ferries

- A ferry ride to or from Sausalito is a good experience, with excellent views of Alcatraz, the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco skyline.
- Sausalito is served by two ferry operators-- the Blue and Gold Fleet, which sails to Pier 41 at Fisherman's Wharf, and Golden Gate Ferry, which sails to the Ferry Building at the foot of Market Street.
- Tour operators may have wholesale arrangements with Blue and Gold. These tickets can be obtained at the yellow ticket kiosk located between piers 39 and 41 at Fisherman's Wharf. It is not possible to pick up these group tickets in Sausalito. Tour director/guide is comped with 20 tickets purchased.
- For the Golden Gate Ferry, tickets must be purchased at vending machines at the Ferry Building in San Francisco or the dock in Sausalito. Up to 32 tickets can be purchased on each transaction. There is no comp for the tour director/guide.
- Note that the two ferry companies accept each other's tickets, which provides flexibility.
- For both companies, the tickets are valid for any departure, but do not guarantee space on a particular trip. It is very unusual for any trip to sell out, but especially on summer weekends, it would be wise to join the boarding line 20 minutes before departure. There are separate lines for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- A popular activity is to rent bikes at Fisherman's Wharf, pedal across the bridge, and take the ferry back from Sausalito. Unlike pedestrians, there is usually not enough room for all the bikes, and bicyclists may have to wait several hours to board a ferry.
- The ferry schedules shift based on the season, so it is important to check the companies' websites when planning an itinerary. Most of the trips are direct and take 30 minutes, but some Blue and Gold sailings have other stops along the way and take longer -- see the website to verify.
- In Sausalito, Golden Gate Ferry vessels board on the lower deck but use the middle deck to exit in San Francisco. There are elevators for mobility challenged passengers, which must be operated by the ferry crew. For Blue and Gold, the lower deck is used both in Sausalito and San Francisco, but the view is much better if people walk upstairs during the trip.
- Both companies' vessels have restrooms, snack bars, and indoor and outdoor seating.