

The 10 Best San Francisco Parks

1



Mission Creek Park: Mission Bay along Mission Creek between Third and Fifth Streets

This newly completed park has it all: neatly trimmed grass, lots of sunshine, a new Philz Coffee adjacent to the new public library on Third St. (have an iced mint coffee and hit the lawn), café tables perfect for picnicking, the cleanest public bathrooms ever and views of the Bay and the creek, which is filled with sun-burned kayakers and decades-old houseboats—an enchanting contrast to the shiny new condo towers rising all around.

2



Dolores Park: Mission District Dolores Street between 18th and 20th Streets

It's doubtful that the hoards of hipsters, cruisers and burners who flock here on every given sunny day know that they are right next to the old Mission Dolores, established in 1776 as Misión San Francisco de Asís and now SF's oldest standing structure, but there's plenty to entice them besides the history. Apart from the sun, the lunchroom-like sociability and the proximity to park-perfect treats like Bi-Rite Creamery and Tartine Bakery, the view from the top of the 14-acre park is unbeatable.

3



Huntington Park: Nob Hill California Street between Cushman and Taylor Streets

This dignified little green space (exactly one square block) atop Nob Hill has some impressive statues and fountains to go along with the plots of grass, trees and small playground. It's surrounded on all four sides by some of the city's most famous structures: Grace Cathedral, the Huntington Hotel, The Fairmont Hotel, The Pacific Union Club and the Mark Hopkins Hotel.

4



Bernal Hill: ringed by Bernal Heights Blvd.

If you are the kind of person who feels the need to earn your views and time in the sun, head over to Bernal Hill. The dusty path may not look like much from the bottom, but as you climb—and you will climb—the scenery only gets better, ending with a stunning view of the city. A great place to take a stir-crazy child or dog and let them wear themselves out.

5



Mountain Lake Park: Inner Richmond 11th Avenue, between California and Lake Streets

While those who like to lounge around may be looking for the sunniest spots in the city, the sporting types prefer to take their air where it's cooler. With tennis courts, a dog park, a jungle gym for kids and a workout course that has 14 stations and water fountains at every turn, this is a great place to get your exercise on. Winding jogging trails and bike paths will lead you under the shade of giant redwoods.

6



Land's End: Outer Richmond, Point Lobos Avenue

This moderate three-mile coastal hike hugs the cliff line between the Legion of Honor museum and the Sutro Baths. The sandy path offers breathtaking views of the Golden Gate Bridge and Marin Headlands with each bend. Be sure to reward yourself with some tasty popovers at The Cliff House. Land's End can be accessed numerous places, but for the best experience start at the 32nd Ave. entrance and end at the Sutro Baths.

7



Crissy Field: Marina District, 603 Mason Street

If you ever wonder why the city is full of such fit, good-looking folks, head down to Crissy Field on a Saturday morning. Not a hangover in site, you'll see hundreds running, biking, playing soccer, and doing calisthenics in view of the Golden Gate Bridge. Hike over the hill of Fort Mason and you'll even find brave souls in the icy bay, swimming laps. The former asphalt airfield was transformed with the addition of tidal marshes, grasslands and cypress trees with help from thousands of volunteers.

8



Alamo Square: Between Haight Ashbury and Hayes Valley, Hayes and Steiner Streets

Views from this park have been made famous thanks to countless magnets, mugs and postcards, not to mention the idyllic opening shot of the sitcom 'Full House.' The Painted Ladies still draw droves of tourists, but the park also offers a maze of paths through the boucolic hills and pair of public tennis courts that feels naturally air conditioned thanks to the thick cover of trees and the fog that rolls in mornings and evenings.

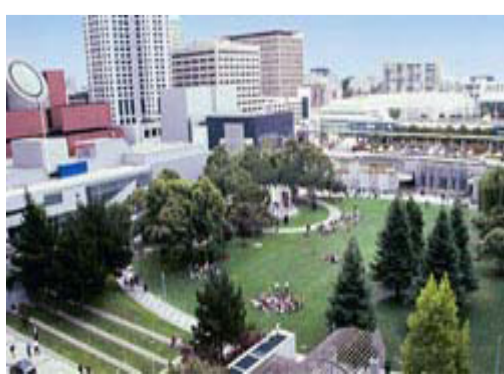
9



Cayuga Park: Excelsior District, Cayuga and Naglee St.

Cayuga Park is an unlikely destination because it's tucked under a well-traveled section of BART track. But what draws people into the 11-acre sanctuary is the striking wood carvings created by the park's caretaker, Demetrio Bracerros.

10



Yerba Buena Gardens: SoMa, Third and Mission Streets

Bordered by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Museum of Craft and Folk Art and the new Contemporary Jewish Museum, Yerba Buena Gardens is over five acres of green space consisting of meadows, trees, flowers, falling water, public art, and small cafes. It was designed in 1993 by MGA Partners and Romaldo Giurgola, FAIA.