

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

By Renee Brincks



An orange and pink glow extends across the Saturday-evening sky while the sun sinks slowly behind the Marin Headlands. I lift my smartphone and center the Golden Gate Bridge on the screen, snapping photos as the remaining rays of daylight reach over the hills and sparkle across San Francisco Bay.

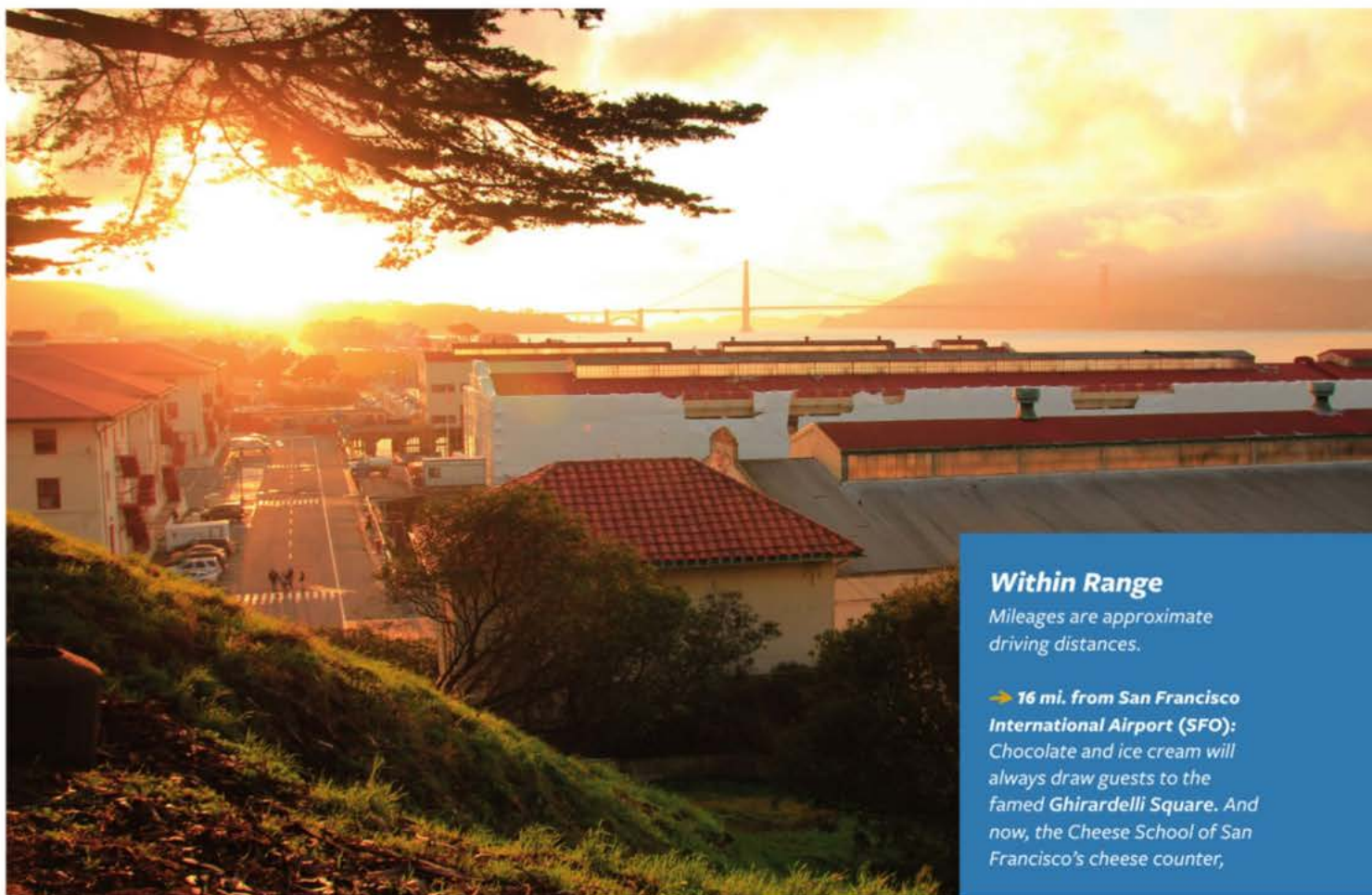
My friend and I are the only sightseers standing at the northern end of San Francisco's 21-acre Fort Mason, which has views of much of the north part of the bay, including Marin County, Alcatraz Island and beyond. We listen to

the waves before walking a short distance to a refurbished warehouse on Pier 2. In a few minutes, we'll take our seats for a flamenco show at Cowell Theater on the pier.

As we stand at the fort, admiring the bay views, I also think of the city that unfolds behind me to the south. San Francisco, with its numerous charms, encompasses ever-popular areas such as Fisherman's Wharf, a short walk away, and quieter locales, such as the ocean beaches at the edge of the city. In the Bay Area, urban retreats such as



Fort Mason features (clockwise from top) events such as the *Renegade Craft Fair*; *Radhaus* beer hall and restaurant; *Equator Coffees*; art at the *West Coast Craft* show; and views of the bay.



Within Range

Mileages are approximate driving distances.

➔ **16 mi. from San Francisco International Airport (SFO):** Chocolate and ice cream will always draw guests to the famed *Ghirardelli Square*. And now, the *Cheese School of San Francisco's* cheese counter,

California



BOTTOM LEFT: ANDY TAN HONG WEI / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; ALL OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY THE RESPECTIVE ENTITIES

Fort Mason, as well as day-trip destinations near the major population centers, showcase the cultural, historical and recreational dynamism of this corner of California.

Fort Mason served as a crucial military post and logistical hub before it was folded into the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1972. Today, arts venues and cafes fill its repurposed structures, and picnic blankets dot the former parade grounds on sunny afternoons.

A narrow staircase near a bluff-top eucalyptus grove connects the upper and lower segments of Fort Mason. The lower campus holds Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture, plus a branch of the San Francisco Art Institute and about 20 nonprofit organizations. It welcomes guests for gallery exhibits, concerts, dance performances and stage produc-

tions. Nearby, you can search for vintage books and records at the San Francisco Public Library's Readers Bookstore, or sample local produce and pastries at the Fort Mason Center Farmers' Market each Sunday.

Greens Restaurant, a vegetarian icon housed in a former machine shop, is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a monthly dinner series scheduled through December 2019. A neighboring beer hall and Bavarian restaurant, Radhaus, serves German beers with Golden Gate Bridge views. Equator Coffees, which pours single-origin espresso and tea, operates in a renovated U.S. Army gatehouse.

On Fort Mason's vast upper campus, self-guided walking tours highlight the park's military history and architecture of historical buildings.

At Martial Cottle Park, about 60 miles southeast of Fort Mason, or about 9



miles southeast of downtown San Jose, agricultural history takes center stage. Martial Cottle Park is a peaceful 287-acre oasis with multiuse trails, gardens and green space. Descendants of Edward Cottle lived and worked here for 150 years before donating land to create the park that links visitors to the area's farming roots. Lush apple, apricot and cherry orchards once flourished in this corner of today's Silicon Valley; wheat, carrots, peppers and



cafe, wineshop and educational space offers more tasty reasons to visit the square. San Francisco Brewing Co. opened a beer garden in the complex in 2018. East of the square is **Fisherman's Wharf**, where quintessential activities include eating Dungeness crab at a seafood restaurant and browsing the numerous shops along the piers.

➔ **8 mi. from Oakland International Airport (OAK):** Oakland-based Local Food Adventures offers a three-hour walking-and-tasting tour of restaurants and small-batch breweries in the **Jack London Square District**.

➔ **39 mi. from OAK:** Head northeast from Oakland to reach **Mount Diablo**, which can

be explored via hiking trails or by road. Clear-day views from the state park's 3,849-foot summit extend west to the Pacific Ocean's Farallon Islands and east to the Sierra Nevada range. Survey the scene from the exterior observation deck, and then explore the mountain's natural and cultural history at the visitor center at the peak.

➔ **5 mi. from San Jose International Airport (SJC):** The **Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose** opened its renovated LeRoy Neiman Art Studio in July, introducing new rotating painting, collage, printmaking and sculpture activities for children ages 4 and up. The museum has more than 150 science-and-art-oriented exhibits and programs.



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California



SANTA CLARA COUNTY PARKS

Martial Cottle Park, near San Jose, spotlights local farming history. Schoolchildren at the park participate in a mock cow-milking activity.

onions grew in the fields that now make up the park.

I like to start at the Martial Cottle Park Visitor Center, where seasonal displays introduce the park's founding family and spotlight local plants and animals. An outdoor timeline places the farm's evolution in the context of national and international events. Four miles of paved trails wind past herb gardens and organic vegetable plots, and interpretive signs detail what's still growing in the fields.

Martial Cottle Park will host a fall festival on October 5. And, a year-round lineup of plant sales, ranch talks, children's activities and sunset hikes offers enticing reasons to return and explore. Set apart from the busy tech campuses of metropolitan San Jose, the park is a reminder that, in the Bay Area, great attractions may be found outside the urban centers, as well as within the major cities. ✈

Learn more about San Francisco Bay Area attractions at sftravel.com, visitsan-jose.com and visitoakland.com. Alaska Airlines (alaskaair.com) provides regular service to San Francisco (SFO), San Jose (SJC) and Oakland (OAK).