San Francisco

From Collins English Dictionary

n
1 a port in W California, situated around the Golden Gate: developed rapidly during the California gold rush; a major commercial centre and one of the world’s finest harbours. Pop: 751,682 (2003 est)

Summary Article: San Francisco
from The Columbia Encyclopedia

(săn frân’sē’skō), city (1990 pop. 723,959), coextensive with San Francisco co., W Calif., on the tip of a peninsula between the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay, which are connected by the strait known as the Golden Gate; inc. 1850. The city is the heart of the San Francisco Bay region and with Oakland and San Jose comprises the fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States.

Economy
Tourism is the economic mainstay, with service industries supporting the large number of annual visitors. For most of its history, San Francisco was the financial center of the West Coast, but in the late 20th cent. the city began to compete with Los Angeles for this distinction. Finance remains one of the most important activities; the city is still headquarters to two of the country’s largest commercial banks as well as a Federal Reserve bank and the Pacific Stock Exchange. Many insurance companies are based there. Printing and publishing, food processing, and oil refining are important, and the city’s manufactures include textiles and apparel, computers, chemicals, communications equipment, and machinery.

San Francisco is also the marketplace for a large agricultural and mining region and the focus of many transportation routes. Along with the busy port of Richmond across the bay, San Francisco and the Bay Area form one of the largest ports on the West Coast and are a major center of trade with East Asia, Hawaii, and Alaska. The area’s transportation needs are served by an extensive highway and rail network and the interurban Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system.

Landmarks and Institutions
The city is renowned for its all-encompassing fogs; soaring bridges; cable cars; busy Market St., with its department stores and office buildings; the Embarcadero, crowded with docks, ships, and cargoes as well as the restored Ferry Building; Fisherman’s Wharf, with its seafood restaurants and the center of the city’s seafood industry; Chinatown, with its Asian architecture, tearooms, and temples and one of the largest communities of Chinese in the United States; Telegraph Hill; Russian Hill; and Nob Hill, the home of millionaires. Other points of interest are Mission Dolores (1782; at first called San Francisco de Asís); many old mansions built by railroad and mining kings; the Cliff House on Point Lobos, overlooking the Pacific and the rocks, 100 ft (30.5 m) offshore, inhabited by sea lions; and the civic center, with a distinctive Renaissance-style city hall, a modern public library completed in 1996, and the municipally owned opera house, where performances of the symphony orchestra and ballet and opera companies are held. The Presidio, formerly the largest (1,542 acres/624 hectares) military encampment in an
American city and now part of the national park system, was headquarters of the Sixth Army and is the site of a national military cemetery; a Disney museum is there.

In Golden Gate Park the California Academy of Sciences building includes a natural history museum, an aquarium, and a planetarium; the city has a zoo and an interactive science museum, the Exploratorium, as well. Art museums include the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (the M. H. De Young Memorial Museum and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor), the Asian Art Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The city also has an arts and garden complex, the Yerba Buena Gardens. Institutions of higher learning in the city include two branches of the Univ. of California (the medical campus at Parnassus Heights and Hastings College of the Law), San Francisco State Univ., the Univ. of San Francisco, and several theological seminaries. The city's professional sports teams are the Giants (National League baseball) and 49ers (National Football League; playing in Santa Clara since in 2014). The 2013 America's Cup yacht race was hosted by the city and held in San Francisco Bay.

History
The city was founded in 1776, when a Spanish presidio and a mission were established at a location chosen by Juan Bautista de Anza. The little settlement called Yerba Buena was still a village when the Mexican War broke out and a naval force under Commodore John D. Sloat took it (1846) in the name of the United States. It was then named San Francisco.

When gold was discovered in California in 1848, San Francisco had a population of c.800; two years later it was incorporated with a population of c.25,000. The rush of gold seekers, adventurers, and settlers brought a period of lawlessness, when the Barbary Coast flourished and the vigilantes were organized to keep peace. The city took on a cosmopolitan air, with newcomers arriving from all over the world. In this period the first Chinese settled in the city. In the years after the gold rush, San Francisco continued to grow as California became linked overland with the East, by the pony express in 1860 and by the transcontinental railroad in 1869.

On the morning of Apr. 18, 1906, the great San Andreas fault, which extends up and down the California coast, shifted violently, and San Francisco was shaken by an earthquake that, together with the sweeping three-day fire that followed, all but destroyed the city. Earthquakes have since continued to plague the city and its environs.

The opening of the Panama Canal, a boon to the city's trade, was celebrated by the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915. The spectacular San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge was opened in 1936 and the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937. By the time of the Golden Gate International Exposition (1939–40) the whole San Francisco Bay area was heavily industrialized; it had become the leading commercial center of the West Coast. During World War II, San Francisco was the major mainland supply point and port of embarkation for the war in the Pacific. The United Nations Charter (1945) was drafted at San Francisco, and the Japanese Peace Treaty (1951) was signed there.

San Francisco's natural beauty and mild climate have made it attractive as a residential city, but it is increasingly split between areas of wealth and of urban impoverishment. Among the more well-known contemporary neighborhoods are Haight-Ashbury, famous in the 1960s and 70s for its youth ("flower children"), music, and drug cultures; and a large homosexual community that has principally grown around Castro Street.
George Moscone, the city's mayor, and Harvey Milk, the first openly gay city supervisor, were assassinated in 1978. A severe earthquake hit the Bay Area in Oct., 1989.; the Marina district was the site of the most severe damage in San Francisco. In 1995 the city elected its first African-American mayor, Willie Brown, Jr., a former speaker of the state assembly.

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