

San Francisco, Miami, Las Vegas

■ San Francisco

Brief history of San Francisco

Francis Drake anchored his ship off Point Reyes in 1579, yet he failed to discover San Francisco Bay. Much later, in 1769, Gaspar de Portola led a Spanish expedition overland and he found the bay. Then, in 1776, Juan de Anza led a group of settlers to San Francisco Bay and they built a fort called Presidio. In 1797 a mission was founded.

In the early 19th century whaling ships and traders came to the bay. An Englishman called William Richardson founded a settlement by San Francisco bay in 1835. He called it Yerba Buena. During the 1830s and early 1840s many Americans came to live in the new settlement. The little settlement of Yerba Buena was renamed San Francisco (after the bay) on 30 January 1847. At that time San Francisco only had a population of about 800. However, in 1848, a man named James Marshall discovered gold. News of the find reached New York in December 1848. As a result, people went to San Francisco in thousands and the population boomed. In 1849 the population of San Francisco reached 25,000.

On 18 April 1906 an earthquake struck San Francisco. It measured 8.25 on the Richter scale and it caused widespread devastation, yet the fires that followed caused even more destruction. They raged for 3 days. Afterwards, about 28,000 buildings were destroyed and

250,000 people were made homeless. The exact number of dead is not known.

Today it is a multi-cultural city.

Tourist attractions in San Francisco

San Francisco is located at the tip of a peninsula between the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific coast. A compact city of steep, rolling hills surrounded on three sides by water, it is renowned for its summer fogs, Victorian architecture, cable cars and beautiful vistas.

1. Golden Gate Bridge

The Golden Gate Bridge is a suspension bridge spanning the Golden Gate, the strait between San Francisco and Marin County to the north. The bridge took seven years to build, and was completed in 1937. The Golden Gate Bridge was the longest suspension bridge span in the world when it was completed, and has become an internationally recognised symbol of San Francisco and California. The famous red-orange color of the bridge was specifically chosen to make it more easily visible through the thick fog that frequently shrouds the bridge.

2. Fisherman's Wharf

One of the most popular tourist attractions in San Francisco and even the US. Tourist attractions at the wharf include museums, souvenir stores, historical buildings, scenic vistas over the Bay and the famous sea lions at Pier 39.



3. Alcatraz

Often referred to as The Rock, the small island of Alcatraz in addition to the Lady Knox Geyser served as a lighthouse, a military fortification, and as a prison. It was home to some of the most notorious criminals of the time including Al Capone and Machine Gun Kelly. Surrounded by the freezing water of San Francisco Bay, it was believed to be impossible to escape from Alcatraz. The most famous attempt was carried out by Frank Morris, and brothers John and Clarence Anglin using an inflatable raft made from several stolen raincoats. Today, the island is a popular San Francisco tourist attraction and a historic site.

4. Cable Cars

The world-famous Cable Cars run on three lines in the steep streets of San Francisco between Market Street and Fisherman's Wharf. These cars are a fun ride, especially if you get to stand on the running board. They are a bit impractical for everyday use though residents do, in fact, use them on a regular basis. The cable car is such an attraction that,



especially on weekends, it takes longer to wait in line to ride up Powell Street than it does to walk the short but sloping distance.

5. Golden Gate Park

Once an area of sand dunes, Golden Gate Park is a large urban park with windmills, museums, lakes and a carousel among its many attractions. At 1,017 acres, it is about 20% larger than New York's Central Park, so, unless you have a bike, you'll want to plan which part you want to visit. A popular tourist attraction is the Japanese Tea Garden with beautiful plants, ponds, bridges, and Japanese-style structures including a tea house.

6. Lombard Street

Lombard Street is famously known as the "crookedest street in the world" although it is neither the crookedest street in San Francisco (Vermont Street is) nor the steepest. The one-block portion of Lombard Street that contains eight hairpin turns was created to reduce the hill's natural steep slope. The speed limit in this section is only 8 km/h.

7. Transamerica Pyramid

Located in the heart of the Financial District, the Transamerica Pyramid is San Francisco's other famous icon besides the Golden Gate. According to its architect, William L. Pereira, a pyramid is the ideal shape for skyscrapers, offering the advantage of letting more air and light into the streets below. Finished in 1972, the Transamerica Pyramid is 260 metres high and is still the tallest building in the San Francisco skyline.

8. Alamo Square

The Alamo Square is a residential neighbourhood and park that is best known for the famous Painted Ladies row of Victorian houses on its east side along Steiner Street. It is often the subject of many a San Francisco postcards.

9. San Francisco's Chinatown

Established in 1840s, San Francisco's Chinatown is reputed to be the oldest and one of the largest and most famous of all Chinatowns outside of Asia. Many of the Chinese who settled here were merchants or immigrant workers, working on either the

transcontinental railroad or as mine workers during the Gold Rush. The tourist section of Chinatown is mainly along Grant Avenue, from Bush to Broadway.

10. Palace of Fine Arts

The only structure remaining from the 1915 World's Fair, the Palace of Fine Arts features a classical Roman rotunda with curved colonnades situated in an idyllic park setting with a classical European-Style lagoon. It's a great place to unwind, have a picnic, and watch the swans float elegantly by. It also has a theatre offering a variety of shows, musical and cultural events.



■ Miami

Brief history of Miami

Miami gets its name from word 'Mayaimi' that means 'a big lake.' This lake may be Lake Okeechobee, which is near the city. Native American groups named Tequesta occupied the area when the first European ships landed on the coast of South Florida. A Spanish explorer named Ponce de Leon came to this place in search of the fountain of vitality and wealth but he claimed the place for his native country, Spain. He called the area Pascua de Florida, which meant a feast of flowers. Florida was under the control of Spain for almost two and a half centuries after that. The Spanish introduced modern weaponry and brought with them diseases that caused the native Tequestas to disappear.

The United States bought Florida from Spain in 1821 for \$5 million. The modern history of Miami began in 1896, when Henry Flagler constructed the railroad. With this construction, there was rapid development in the city and the City of Miami was included in the state in that year. After a century, various drainage canals were built. There was a large growth in real estate in the 1920s. Many troops arrived in the area during the Second World War for training. After the war, Miami turned into a wonderful resort, with its advanced transportation network.

Tourist attractions in Miami

One of the most vivacious cities in the USA, Miami is best known for its Latin culture and

sizzling nightlife. Located in southeastern Florida off the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, Miami is also a major port city managing the world's largest number of passenger cruise ships. Attracting tourists from all over the planet, Miami is a melting pot of ethnic cultures with a wide variety of sensational attractions and activities.

One of Miami's main showplaces is its sunny beaches that range from family resorts to party scenes and offer everything from sunbathing and water sports to shopping, dining and entertainment. Across the bay from Miami, on a barrier island, is Miami Beach, known for its Art Deco architecture and glamorous South Beach.

Additionally, Miami has numerous museums featuring science, history and art exhibits, while amusement parks, zoos and aquariums all offer endless family fun.

A visit to the beautiful Vizcaya Estate provides a glimpse into South Florida's early 20th century history.

With professional sports teams like the Miami Dolphins, Florida Panthers, Miami Heat and the Florida Marlins, sports lovers can watch a game or tour a stadium. Miami's nightlife scene is blazing with scores of bars, nightclubs, lounges and dance clubs as well as theaters and entertainment venues.

A must-do is a visit to the Everglades National Park to see one of the country's most unique ecosystems that consists of swamps, sub-tropical jungles and flooded wetlands that are home to crocodiles, manatees and Florida panthers.



■ Las Vegas

Brief history of Las Vegas

For hundreds of years Native Americans lived in the area where Las Vegas now stands. Then, in 1829, a Spanish trader named Antonio Armijo, led a group of men through the area. They called it Las Vegas (Spanish for 'The Meadows').

A permanent settlement began in 1865, when a man named Octavius Gass set up a ranch, while in 1905 a railroad was built through the area. As soon as it was completed, a new town was founded. The city of Las Vegas was incorporated in 1911. At that time it was a small settlement with a population of about 1,500. However, it soon grew much larger. In 1931 work began on building the Hoover Dam.

As a result, the population of Las Vegas boomed. Meanwhile, the state of Nevada legalized gambling in 1931 and casinos were founded in Las Vegas.

In 1941 El Rancho Vegas opened as the first resort on The Strip. After the Second World War, Las Vegas thrived on gambling. Its population boomed. By 1960 Las Vegas had more than 64,000 people. Today Las Vegas continues to thrive on tourism, gambling and weddings, with a population of nearly 600,000.

Tourist attractions in Las Vegas

Springing up from the desert in southeastern Nevada, Las Vegas is a major US city world

renowned for its casinos, luxury hotels, comedy acts, musical productions and extravagant shows. Most of the city's main attractions are all concentrated within the area commonly referred to as the "Strip".

In addition to gambling, Las Vegas offers plenty more to suit people of all ages and interests. One of the must-see sights in the city is the dazzling displays of dancing water, light and music at the Fountains of the Bellagio Hotel. Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum showcases wax figures of famous people like Michael Jackson, John F. Kennedy and John Wayne. Other museums exhibit collections of sports memorabilia, aircraft, art and natural history. Theme parks like Adventuredome offer daring roller coasters, clown shows, bumper cars and more.

Siegfried & Roy's Secret Garden and Dolphin Habitat is a great family attraction in which tigers, lions and dolphins are the stars of the show. The Las Vegas Zoo is an excellent place where adults and children alike can see more than 150 animals, birds and reptiles as well as stroll through beautiful botanic gardens.

Golfers will be happy to know there are more than 55 golf courses in and around Las Vegas. Just outside the city are state parks offering rock climbing and hiking trails. Also nearby is Lake Mead, which provides tourists with a variety of water sports.

