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12 THINGS TO DO AT FORT MASON CENTER

By Cindy Hu

During World War II, more than 1,640,000 military personnel deployed from [Fort Mason](https://www.fortmason.org) (<https://www.fortmason.org>), then the headquarters for the San Francisco Port of Embarkation. They probably never imagined that some 75 years later Fort Mason, located in the [Marina District](https://www.sftravel.com/article/where-eat-and-drink-marina-district) (<https://www.sftravel.com/article/where-eat-and-drink-marina-district>), would be the hub of a lively arts and culture center that draws more than 1.4 million visitors to thousands of performances, events

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and exhibitions.

Over 100 years old, in 2012 Fort Mason Center embarked on an ambitious plan developed by Team West 8 to revitalize the Center and transform it into a leading arts and culture destination and enhance the campus' public spaces.

The latest chapter in the area's evolution includes a name change, the addition of [a new arts emporium](https://www.fortmason.org/event/fort-mason-art/) (<https://www.fortmason.org/event/fort-mason-art/>), and the opening of a new gallery space, [the Haines Gallery](https://www.hainesgallery.com). (<https://www.hainesgallery.com>).

Here are more than a dozen things to experience at Fort Mason Center now:

Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture (2 Marina Blvd., Landmark Building A, Main Office)

First of all, let's explain a recent name change and define what actually falls under the Fort Mason Center umbrella. "For Arts & Culture" was recently added to the name for Fort Mason Center, signaling to the public a reaffirmation of the Center's mission from its inception in 1977 when they partnered with the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) to create a cultural, educational and recreational complex. Most of the tenants are located in four main buildings. The 13-acre campus also provides 12 venue options offering 75,000 square feet of meeting space as well as two theaters.

Gallery 308 (2 Marina Blvd., Landmark Building A)

Formerly maritime trade and repair shops at Fort Mason, this 4,000-square-foot [gallery](https://www.fortmason.org/venue/gallery-308/) and event space (<https://www.fortmason.org/venue/gallery-308/>), which opened in November 2015, still pays homage to its industrial origins. Restored by Jensen Architects, the designers of SFMOMA (<https://www.tickets.com/en/san-francisco-museum-of-modern-art-sfmoma-tickets-l145908/?partner=sftravel>), its acclaimed rooftop garden, the light-filled space features views of San Francisco Bay and the [Golden Gate Bridge](https://www.sftravel.com/article/8-things-do-near-golden-gate-bridge) (<https://www.sftravel.com/article/8-things-do-near-golden-gate-bridge>).

Greens Restaurant (2 Marina Blvd., Landmark Building A)

Walk into [Greens](https://www.greensrestaurant.com) (<https://www.greensrestaurant.com>), with its long communal tables, sunlit interior and low-key vibe (which may owe something to its owners, the [San Francisco Zen Center](https://www.sfzc.org) (<https://www.sfzc.org>)), and you might be surprised that this vegetarian restaurant has garnered multiple honors since opening in 1979. A Michelin Guide recommendation, top 100 Bay Area restaurant according to the San Francisco Chronicle and one of Zagat's best restaurants in America, Greens has been at the forefront of the American food revolution. Much of this is due to the acclaimed chef and author Annie Somerville, who is a pioneer in working directly with local, organic farmers that include the Zen Center's Green Gulch Farm in Marin County. On a tight schedule? Check out [Greens to Go](https://www.greensrestaurant.com/greens-to-go), (<https://www.greensrestaurant.com/greens-to-go>) offering pastries, espresso drinks, chili, soup of the day and sandwiches.

Radhaus (2 Marina Blvd., Landmark Building A)

San Francisco is known for many things, but a Bavarian beer hall with sweeping bay views? Why not! [Radhaus](http://www.radhausf.com/) (<http://www.radhausf.com/>) is a hopping place that offers reasonably-priced beers (from light to dark) and wursts, schnitzel, spätzle, and more. It's an ideal spot to gather with friends or to bring a date to catch the sunset. Head inside to enjoy the bay views. Radhaus is open daily.

The Interval (2 Marina Blvd., Landmark Building A)

Located adjacent to Greens, [The Interval](https://www.theinterval.org) (<https://www.theinterval.org>) is a bar, a café, a museum and the home of [The Long Now Foundation](https://www.longnow.org) (<https://www.longnow.org>), whose mission is to foster long-term thinking and responsibility for the next 10,000 years. Your I.Q. will likely rise a few notches when you enter this spacious cavern filled with books and mechanical wonders, including a clock engineered to last 10,000 years. But who's keeping track of the time? You'll want to grab a stool, order something from the expansive cocktail menu and listen to Brian Eno's (one of the founding members of Long Now) music. Behind the bar, Eno's ambient painting is a generative work of art that goes through millions of vibrant color compositions without repeating. This is also the home of Long Now's acclaimed ticketed lecture series, [Long Now Talks](https://www.longnow.org/talks/) (<https://www.longnow.org/talks/>), which happens at 7:00 p.m. (sharp!).

BATS Improv (2 Marina Blvd., Building B, Third Floor, Bayfront Theater)

The largest and longest-running improv theater and school in Northern California, [BATS](https://www.improv.org) (<https://www.improv.org>)

performs [shows every weekend at its Bayfront Theater](https://www.improv.org/shows/) (<https://www.improv.org/shows/>) and [classes are offered year-round](https://www.improv.org/school/) (<https://www.improv.org/school/>) for students at all levels. Show performances, which change every month, are every Friday and Saturday.

Goody Cafe (2 Marina Blvd., Landmark Building C, First Floor)

A cozy cafe serving everything from coffee drinks to house made paninis and wraps, [Goody Cafe](https://fortmason.org/resident/goody-cafe/) (<https://fortmason.org/resident/goody-cafe/>) is a great place to stop if you're strolling through Fort Mason or want to check out the rotating display of local art. It's a cozy hidden gem with outdoor picnic tables. They might even be playing your favorite album on their record player! Goody Cafe is open daily.

Museo Italo Americano (2 Marina Blvd., Building C, First Floor)

The first museum in the U.S. devoted exclusively to Italian and Italian-American art and culture, [Museo Italo Americano](https://www.museoitaloamericano.org) (<https://www.museoitaloamericano.org>) researches, collects and displays the works of Italian and Italian-American artists. Two galleries and lively exhibitions are not the only draws; there are also language classes, lectures and frequent film series. Find Italian-themed gifts at their [online gift shop](https://www.museoitaloamericano.org/shop/) (<https://www.museoitaloamericano.org/shop/>).

Flax Art & Design (2 Marina Blvd., Landmark Building D, First Floor)

Start making your shopping list for inspiration at [Flax Art & Design](http://www.flaxart.com/) (<http://www.flaxart.com/>). Not only are the

shelves stocked with art supplies—ranging from spray paint for urban art to Cavallini & Co. stationery—there are also gift items, including Rickshaw totes and adult coloring books. And if you're suddenly inspired to capture some of the bayside scenery, head outdoors.

Sign up for a [workshop \(https://www.flaxart.com/workshops-events/\)](https://www.flaxart.com/workshops-events/), too. (They fill up quickly!).

Magic Theatre (2 Marina Blvd., Landmark Building D)

An incubator for new plays and playwrights, the [Magic Theatre \(https://www.magictheatre.org\)](https://www.magictheatre.org) is the perfect venue for audiences to experience new work up close, often with a global perspective. Not only does the Magic Theatre schedule a number of events, including Friday night actor "TalkBACKS" and the New Performances Program with playwrights and directors, but it also offers a robust repertory of plays year-round.

Off the Grid

Billed as California's largest weekly evening street food market, [Off the Grid \(https://www.offthegrid.com/event/fort-mason-center/2022-11-4-5PM\)](https://www.offthegrid.com/event/fort-mason-center/2022-11-4-5PM) at Fort Mason features the area's best food vendors every Friday from 5 to 10 p.m. In addition to local wines and Magnolia beers, there are DJs from 5 to 7:30 p.m. followed by live music from 8 to 10 p.m. If you're from out of town, this is a great way to meet residents and maybe get a few tips on what to do while you're here.

Farmers Market

Discover the bounty of the Bay Area's microclimates, the North Bay's organic farms and San Joaquin Valley's

finest harvests. Held every Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. [this bustling market \(http://www.cafarmersmkts.com/fort-mason-center-farmers-market\)](http://www.cafarmersmkts.com/fort-mason-center-farmers-market) features more than 35 farmers and food providers. Pick up some fresh fruit, a sandwich and a cup of locally roasted coffee and head for one of the benches overlooking San Francisco Bay or the Great Meadow in Upper Fort Mason.

Fort Mason Fast Facts

How to Get There

From downtown, the 30-Stockton bus will get you there. Disembark at Chestnut and Laguna streets and either walk four blocks or transfer to the ~~#28~~ #43-Masonic bus and disembark at Marina Blvd. and Laguna St.

[Public transit information \(https://www.sftravel.com/article/how-get-around-san-francisco-transportation-basics\)](https://www.sftravel.com/article/how-get-around-san-francisco-transportation-basics), including [Muni service \(https://www.sftravel.com/article/transportation-basics-how-use-muni\)](https://www.sftravel.com/article/transportation-basics-how-use-muni) to Fort Mason, is available free 24/7 by calling 511 from anywhere in the Bay Area or at www.511.org.

Parking

Paid parking is available from 7 a.m. to midnight daily and starts at \$3 per hour (slightly higher on weekends). There is also short-term free parking adjacent to Marina Green.

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