

San Francisco: Groovy Place to Meet

Destinations

BY COURTNEY PETER ON MARCH 31, 2017



Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love throughout the Bay Area

Ingrained in [Bay Area iconography](#) to the point of cliché, the San Francisco hippie is no caricature. The vanguard figure emerged from a counterculture movement that bound artists, musicians, free thinkers and radicals into a community that ignited nationwide social change. The movement's seminal season spanned 100 days in 1967—dubbed the Summer of Love—during which nearly 100,000 young dreamers and activists descended upon the city.

Beyond peace, drugs and free love, the counterculture represented a segment of society determined to build a better world through the power of hope and togetherness, yet deeply concerned about pervasive matters such as war, politics, race and women's issues. Musicians including Big Brother and the Holding Company with Janis Joplin, The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Jimi Hendrix played an essential role in spreading the message, as well.

Fifty years later, [groups traveling to the Bay Area](#) can explore museum exhibits, schedule specialty tours and visit hallowed sites that evoke the provocative, volatile and powerful history of the 1960s.

Counterculturalists might chafe at being cast in the lead role of so conventional a celebration as a golden anniversary. But to heed such objections would be to forfeit an opportunity to recognize the wide-ranging role the period played in shaping the Bay Area, from Silicon Valley's cradle of innovation to the East Bay's early activists to the North Bay's musical pedigree.

San Francisco

In San Francisco, the intersection of Haight and Ashbury streets served as the crossroads of the counterculture movement. Major musicians and nonconformist neighbors lived side by side. "You were making a statement just by where you lived," says Adam Hirschfelder, director of strategic initiatives at California Historical Society. "The Haight- Ashbury will always stand as a place for people willing to challenge conventional thinking."



Magic Bus

A uniquely San Franciscan destination for groups. The Haight is full of brightly colored Victorian homes, vintage clothing boutiques, bookshops, record stores and a lingering countercultural presence. Magic Bus 50th Anniversary Summer of Love tours cover The Haight, Chinatown, North Beach and Golden Gate Park.

San Francisco's 1,000-acre urban backyard also figured prominently in the counterculture movement. Frequently cited as the catalyst of the Summer of Love, the Human Be-In on January 14, 1967, drew tens of thousands to Golden Gate Park's Polo Fields for a day of music, fellowship and drug experimentation. Live music and massing crowds became park fixtures. One sloping meadow earned the nickname Hippie Hill.



Electric Tour Company

Today, the park is home to California Academy of Sciences, de Young Museum, Conservatory of Flowers, Japanese Tea Garden and more. Electric Tour Company Segway tours allow groups to cover maximum acreage.

Groups can soak in the local atmosphere from the water with Hornblower Cruises & Events, which offers locally focused, customizable luxury boat tours departing from San Francisco, as well as Berkeley.

Many bars, nightclubs, dance halls and theaters where influential musicians of the '60s performed no longer exist. The Fillmore is one of the few historic performance venues that survive. Colorful concert posters paper the walls in nostalgia, making the Fillmore a captivating choice for a group outing or private event.



Samsung Hall at Asian Art Museum of San Francisco

Museums citywide are examining the countercultural phenomenon from a variety of angles. Many also double as event spaces, complete with creative design and built-in entertainment.

From April 8 to Aug. 20, de Young Museum presents The Summer of Love Experience: Art, Fashion and Rock & Roll, featuring iconic rock posters, interactive music and light shows, photographs and ephemera.

On May 12, Summer of Love: A Photographic Journey lands at California Historical Society. Through Sept. 8, visitors can experience the Summer of Love through pictures from the season that set off a cultural revolution.

"The Summer of Love didn't come out of nowhere," Hirschfelder says. "The pieces were in place in the Bay Area. San Francisco attracted many Beat Era poets and writers, bohemians and offbeat, creative types. That artistic ferment fueled a lot of the early energy around the Summer of Love."

North Beach served as the local headquarters of the Beat Generation, a social and literary movement born in the '50s. Groups can peruse memorabilia at Beat Museum, then head to nearby literary landmark City Lights Bookstore.

With Flower Power, running June 24 through Oct. 1, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco offers a crosscultural examination of the symbolism and inspiration blooming forth from botanical imagery.

There's more going on in San Francisco than reminiscing. Moscone Center will add 157,340 sq. ft. of event space, including rooftop terraces, a third level of meeting rooms and a new 50,000-squarefoot ballroom.

The project will wrap in 2018; in the meantime, the center remains open for business. "We will go dark in Moscone North and South in April through October this year. Moscone West will stay open that entire time," says John Reyes, executive vice president and chief sales officer of San Francisco Travel.

Additional developments include Transbay Transit Center, a state-of-the-art "Grand Central of the West" expected to serve up to 45 million passengers annually. The complex, opening in fall 2017, will also feature a 5.4-acre park, retail and dining options, and lifestyle activities for convention attendees to enjoy.

In January, the NBA's Golden State Warriors broke ground on Chase Center, a new 18,064-seat arena that will bring a fresh venue option to the market in 2019.

San Francisco will welcome four new hotels in 2017. The Mid-Market area will gain technology-focused Yotel San Francisco and San Francisco Proper Hotel, topped by a rooftop restaurant and bar. Hotel Via San Francisco, a 159-room luxury boutique hotel, is set to debut in South Beach. Virgin Hotels San Francisco will add 169 rooms to South of Market.

"These hotels take the hotel stay to the next level with cutting-edge design and technology," Reyes says.

San Francisco

Cow Palace

Iconic Bay Area venue in Daly City; built in 1941; indoor arena and multiuse event center; 252,000 sq. ft. of total building space; main arena contains 16,500 seats and 30,000 sq. ft. of floor space.

Embassy Suites by Hilton San Francisco Airport Waterfront

Spanish-style architecture; located in Burlingame; 340 guest rooms; nearly 11,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; free airport shuttle; 4-acre park with lagoon.