



REVIEW:

Golden Gate Ferry San Francisco-Sausalito

Take in the city from a totally different vantage point.



Alamy

Reviewed by [MEGAN MCCREA](#)

Tell me: What's this place all about?

The Blue & Gold Fleet, San Francisco's largest ferry company, takes passengers to big-name destinations around the bay: Alcatraz, Tiburon, Angel Island. In 1997, the company launched a San Francisco to Sausalito ride. That route quickly became a traveler favorite, earning a nod from the Society of American Travel

Writers as the second most exciting ferry in the world—besting ferries that run among Norway’s fjords, Alaska’s glaciers, and the Greek Isles. Tickets are required for the half-hour ride, with passengers admitted on a first-come, first-serve basis. (Read: Arrive early to make sure you snag a seat.)

What’s it like being there?

The moment you step off Pier 41 and onto the ferry, you’re on a boat, and there’s a sort of unshakeable jubilation that comes along with that: floating free, unmoored from worldly cares. You’ll hear a lot of laughter around you and, gazing over the glittering bay, you can’t help but grin. It’s boat physics!

Who comes here?

Given that it provides views of Alcatraz, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the San Francisco skyline, the ferry, naturally, draws tourists from around the country and the world. That said, it’s also beloved by locals, going on dates, celebrating birthdays, or, simply, taking a break from the everyday. As one binocular-wielding passenger—who rides the ferry religiously once a week—explained: “It’s amazing—there’s always something new to see.”

Did it meet expectations?

The journey begins, really, at the departure point: Fisherman’s Wharf. This is the city’s thrumming tourist heart: bicycle taxis fly down the street, aspiring soul-savers hand out pamphlets, the Silver Man poses for photos, and vendors sell T-shirts and knit caps and wallets and mini-backpacks. Hot dogs sizzle on carts, and the air is alive with the cries of seagulls, and the pulsing beat of stereos. Once you board the ferry, though, you’ve entered another realm. The engine rumbles to life, and you’re heading out onto the bay. The sounds of the pier fade gradually; then suddenly, all you can hear is the water splashing off the ship, and the low hum of the motor. As the boat cuts through the water, the city starts to shrink and fade, the familiar forms of Coit Tower, Salesforce Tower, and the Transamerica Pyramid growing ever smaller, the rest of the city a sea of matchstick buildings in eggshell and gray and white and dusty rose. All around, new landmarks appear: the graceful span of the Bay Bridge, the low-slung profile of Alcatraz, the clean-lined silhouette of the Golden Gate Bridge. You might pause to watch birds flying in formation, or lose yourself in the intricate patterns playing across the water. You might sip a beer or a cocktail (there’s a full bar on-board), close your eyes, and feel

the wind on your face. Then, perhaps before you even realized it, the boat's engines decrescendo. Sausalito emerges, a vision in green: a small town with big, beautiful houses tucked into the hillside among the trees. Palms and pines reach for the sky and, here, the only sound is that of water lapping against the side of the dock. You've arrived.

So then what, or who, do you think it's best for?

This ride offers something for everyone: the scenery lover, the wildlife enthusiast, the history buff, the nautically-inclined, and anyone who enjoys drinking on a boat. If you're easily seasick, take a Dramamine—this is a don't-miss.