

8 MUST-SEE SAN FRANCISCO VISTAS

Visiting the city’s high points

Story and Photographs by Joan Walsh

San Francisco is a city of many hills, and there is no shortage of vistas — from parks to open space areas. The city skyline is always a beauty to behold, but there are many places besides the well-known Twin Peaks to get out and explore with a view.

KITE HILL

Eureka Valley: 19th Street and Yukon Street

This small park, nestled between the Castro and Eureka Valley, offers views of the downtown skyline, Twin Peaks and Sutro Tower. Eureka Valley itself almost feels like a European village tucked into a hillside. There are a few different entrances, but all parking is difficult in this heavily residential neighborhood. You can walk up to Twin Peaks from here (1 mile) or to the Castro (half a mile). Kite Hill is also half a block from the Seward Street Slides.



Sunrise from the top of Kite Hill.

CORONA HEIGHTS PARK

Eureka Valley: Roosevelt Way and Museum Way

Corona Heights Park is known for its rock formations. The northern end has a chert rock wall popular for rock climbing, and the summit offers views of the downtown skyline, Sutro Tower and Twin Peaks. You can even see other parks on the list from here, like Tank Hill and Kite Hill. Parking is on Roosevelt Way, a short walk to the top. The park also has a playground, dog park, two tennis courts and is next to the Randall Museum.



View of Twin Peaks and Eureka Valley taken from the top of Corona Heights Park.

INA COOLBRITH PARK

Russian Hill: Vallejo Street and Taylor Street

Ina Coolbrith Park, named after a 19th-century San Francisco poet, offers views of the financial district, the Transamerica Pyramid, the Bay Bridge and the East Bay in the distance. Finding parking in this neighborhood is very difficult because it’s on a steep hill and near touristy areas. The park is multilevel and has staircases going down to different sections. The wild parrots of San Francisco frequently visit the park and the trees across the street, which is a sight to see. Down the street at 1001 Vallejo St. lies the house featured in the Netflix show “The OA” (second season). The park’s proximity to Fisherman’s Wharf and North Beach makes it a good destination.



View of the financial district and Bay Bridge from Ina Coolbrith Park.

BERNAL HEIGHTS PARK

Bernal Heights: 1058 Bernal Heights Blvd.

There are various entrances, but the easiest way to reach the top is to hike about five minutes up a short, paved fire road at the entrance on Bernal Heights Boulevard. A communication tower marks the summit. Bernal Heights Hill is close to the bay, where you can feel the fresh breeze. It has a 360-degree view of the city, including the downtown skyline, Twin Peaks and San Bruno Mountain. This is a good one for hiking because, besides the view, Bernal Heights Hill has a couple of trails to explore and many staircases in the neighborhood. Beware of coyotes, as many live around here.



City skyline in the distance from the top of Bernal Heights Hill.

GRANDVIEW PARK

Inner Sunset: 1705 14th Ave.

The park, located in the western part of the city, has views of the Outer Sunset, the Golden Gate Bridge and Marin in the distance. It’s best for a view of the sun setting over the ocean. To get to the park, one must walk a long staircase up to the top, but otherwise it is not too far from the street. It can get extremely windy here. You can’t come here without checking out the popular 16th Avenue Tiled staircase, just one block away.



Join one of the many sunset watchers at the top for a grand view of the city’s western edge.

BILLY GOAT HILL

Diamond Heights: 300 Beacon St.

Billy Goat Hill is more of a neighborhood secret, so it's not too crowded. The view can be taken in without even getting out of the car on Beacon Street, or you can walk up for a closer look. A rope swing appears from time to time for that Instagrammable moment, but it gets cut down by the city as fast as it's put up. For a short walk, check out the nearby Harry Street staircase — 239 wooden steps that make a path from Beacon to Laidley streets, adorned with some hidden houses. Use this to loop around back to Billy Goat Hill.

LAKEVIEW AND ASHTON MINI PARK

Ingleside Heights: 488 Orizaba Ave.

The park is about 1.5 miles away from City College, making it the closest on the list. Less of a park and more of a little-known open space area, this spot offers a 360-degree view of the city, including the bay, San Bruno Mountain, Sutro Tower and the El Rey Theater. A rocky outcrop of exposed bedrock sits at the top, and the area is home to many wildflowers in spring, such as California poppies and bright yellow oxalis. It's a short walk from the street, though the ground is a bit uneven and a little steep. Entrances are on Orizaba, Lakeview and Shields streets. This is a good place to come for a sunset, as you can see the ocean in the distance.

TANK HILL

Ashbury Heights: 2 Belgrave Ave.

Tank Hill has a 270-degree panoramic view where you can take in both bridges, the downtown skyline, Eureka Valley, the bay and Marin. It is not that crowded and often overlooked because it's so close to Twin Peaks. Parking is available on Belgrave Avenue or Twin Peaks Boulevard, both with a short staircase to the view. The space used to have a water tower, hence its name — the concrete platform where it stood is still visible.



Looking toward downtown from the top of Billy Goat Hill.



View of the Ingleside Terraces neighborhood from the top of Lakeview and Ashton Mini Park.



Take in the sight of the Haight Ashbury, Inner Richmond and the Marin Headlands from the top of Tank Hill.