

A LITERARY Tour of San Francisco

By ROXANNE WILLIAMS

San Francisco is well renowned for its lively arts and cultural scene. It's also been home to some of the greatest writers to ever grace this earth. The city obviously serves to inspire the literary muse within and in turn birth stories to life.

The lauded poetic works of Sir Robert Frost have been penned here, John Steinbeck channelled characters from the locals and the 1960's 'beat generation' of wordsmith guru's that included Jack Kerouac, Frank O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg, effectively aided in the creation of a whole generational arts movement that reverbed throughout the world. Prolific female scholars of verse such as author Joan Didion and poetess Maya Angelou also drew inspirational from San Fran's sloping city streets, bohemian eateries and its pervading sense of wonder.

Take a tour of the bay city's many notable literary landmarks and one will inherently understand how San Francisco serves as a catalyst to transform unique imaginations into the omnipotent written word.

TO DISCOVER: JACK KEROUAC ALLEY

To be reading a travel magazine (as you are) and be unfamiliar with the varied written works of Jack Kerouac could be almost be construed as criminal. May we, as friends, kindly suggest you rectify that immediately and purchase a copy of his uber famous novel 'On the Road Again'. We're confident the iconic City Lights Bookstore and publishing house across the road, will have them in stock! Jack's literary impact is so grand that he has his own San Fran street named after him, well, a funky pedestrian access alley anyway. Go check it out and be sure to stop by Vesuvio Café! This saloon style bar was Kerouac's fav and also the place in which him and the swinging sixties beat generation of poets and novelists created much of their instant narrative writing prose style. Undoubtedly the soul of California's literary counterculture movement once thrived here.



City Lights Book Store



City Lights Book Store Interior



The Sunset District



Chinatown gates

TO DRINK: CHINATOWN

San Francisco's Chinatown district was the setting of illustrious author Amy Tan's award-winning novel 'The Joy Luck Club'. Why not investigate the night life here and spend some time amid the exotic bars and clubs that inspired Tan to write such an enthralling fictional tale modelled on the Chinese American immigrant families that lived here. The Li Po Cocktail Lounge is a top spot to drink with friends in a now classy lounge setting that was once a former opium den! Take note, the cocktails here a very strong, best sip on one lest you start spinning quick under the red lantern lit lounge canopy above.

TO UNWIND: THE CLIFF HOUSE

A favourite haunt of the Bay City's most eminent intellectual and emotionally astute scribe, Robert Frost whom frequented here in his mature age. Incidentally, Frost was a born and bred San Francisco native. However, it is said he was traumatized as a child by wild visions of the stormy sea (below the Cliff House) when his father would take long ocean swims out into the waves as he waited on the beach. Whether this recollection is fact or not, many of the stanzas in his moody poem 'Once by the Pacific' are congruently inciteful as to detail a foreboding sense of abandonment.

Another celebrated writer, Mr Mark Twain is quoted as saying this about his favoured time spent at the historic seaside dining venue "If one tires of the drudgeries and scenes of the city, and would breathe the fresh air of the sea, let him take the cars and omnibuses, or, better still, a buggy and pleasant steed, and, ere, the sea breeze sets in, glide out to the Cliff



The Bay Bridge

House..." the San Francisco Daily Morning Call – June 25, 1864.

A visit to the Cliff House to eat and drink will earn a big bucket list from aspiring writers and curious travellers. In general, it is a terrific setting for those who would like to clink drinks and celebrate by the sea at a place that is exemplary of San Francisco's wonderful heritage.

TO EAT: JOHN'S GRILL

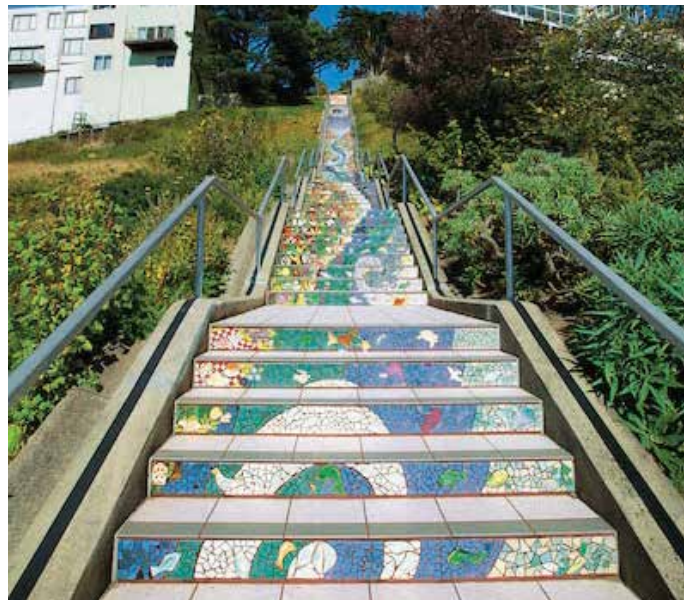
International bestselling novel, The Maltese Falcon is author Dashiell Hammett's most notable novel and the infamous John's Grill restaurant is referenced within. When on the climactic final night of the novels plot, detective Sam Spade dines there, after gaining possession of the elusive falcon. Intriguingly Dashiell Hammett wrote many other popular mystery stories set in San Francisco too. Nowadays John's Grill operates as one of San Francisco's oldest steak and seafood restaurants and offers up moody jazz tunes 7 nights a week. An evening spent at John's Grill is as iconic as riding the cities cable carts or driving over the instantly recognizable Golden Gate Bridge.

OTHER NOTABLE LITERARY GREATER BAY AREA LANDMARKS

- Mark Twain Plaza, SF.
- Robert Frost Plaza, SF.
- Robert Louis Stevenson Monument, SF.
- The Henry Miller Memorial Library, Big Sur.
- Steinbeck House, Salinas.



Cliff House



Moraga Stairs