

# San Francisco: the City by the Bay

■ By Suzy Guttler

"San Francisco is a city where people are never more abroad than when they are at home."

Benjamin F. Taylor

Pier 39 at Fisherman's Wharf.



**H**aving lived half my life across Asia in radically diverse cultural settings, I was excited to experience the energy of a single city that would bring back a *mélange* of all my best childhood memories. I was ready to take flight into the city that is San Francisco.

## City by the Bay

San Francisco, California is renowned for its steep rolling hills, an eclectic mix of Victorian and modern architecture, and its peninsular location surrounded on three sides by the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay. Famous hallmarks and landmarks include the Golden Gate Bridge, Fisherman's Wharf, Alcatraz Island, the cable cars, Lombard Street (crookedest street in the world) Chinatown and Japantown. With nearly 16,000 people per square mile, San Francisco is the second most densely populated major American city.

San Francisco is a minority-majority city as non-Hispanic Whites make up less than 44 percent of the population. Asian Americans, principally Chinese and Filipino, comprise nearly 31 percent of the population.

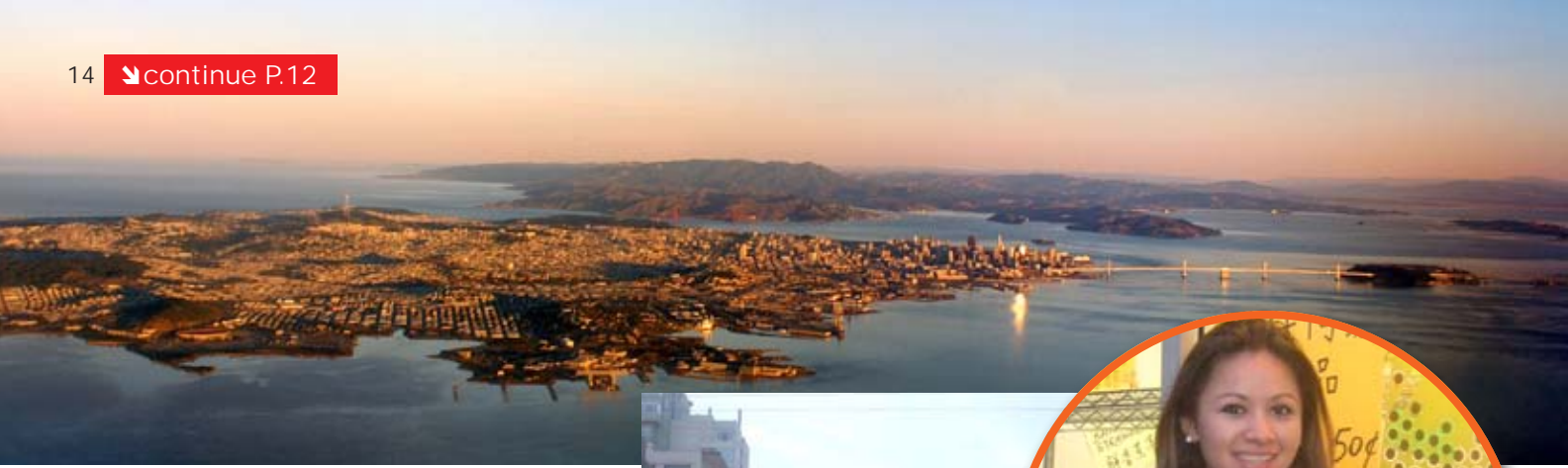
**San Francisco's Chinatown is the Second Largest in the United States**

San Francisco Chinatown is the largest Chinese community on the West Coast, and the second largest in the United States next

to New York City's settlement. It is also the oldest Chinatown. Established in the 1850s, it has been featured in popular culture, such as in film, music, photography, and literature. The area has developed into a major tourist attraction — drawing more visitors than the Golden Gate Bridge, and being one of the largest and most prominent centers of Chinese activity outside of China.

## Festivals and Events

Three annual festivals honor the city's Chinese heritage. The Chinese New Year takes place between late January and early February with festivities to include a street parade, dragon dances, street fair, fire works and thanksgiving. The Autumn Moon Festival in September celebrates the myth of the moon Goddess, Chang O. The Dragon Boat Festival, which is held on Treasure Island has been an organized sport for a few decades now. Teams of paddlers compete in colorfully-decorated, dragon-themed boats in races held to honor Qu Yuan, a scholar and advisor to the emperor of the Chu Kingdom.



### A True Melange of Asian Communities

Outside the San Francisco area, suburban Cupertino in the San Jose area has emerged the major Taiwanese cultural and retail center in the Bay Area. A large shopping center by the name of *Milpitas Square*, boasts a variety of regional Chinese cuisine, book stores, boba tea shops, bakeries, and upscale boutiques.

Other suburban communities in the San Francisco Bay Area with a large Asian American presence include Foster City and Daly City (also home to a large Filipino population) in San Mateo County and Fremont in Alameda County. All of these cities have Chinese-themed shopping centers. In Fremont, a shopping center known as “Little Taipei” offers the largest variety of food item and specialty good from Taiwan.



Enjoying a cup of bubble tea in Chinatown.

▼ The busy streets of Chinatown



◀ Lombard Street – the crookedest street in the world.

### Japantown in San Francisco

The Japanese have definitely established their presence in the city as well. In Japantown, locals and visitors are treated to wonderful restaurants, sushi bars, and karaoke lounges, shops -- offering a fascinating array of merchandise from Japan—including art, antiques, kimonos, jewelry, books, gifts, toys, apparel, auto accessories. Spas are also plenty --offering shiatsu, anma (Japanese full-body massage), and reflexology (a Japanese adaptation of foot massage

developed by the British), Japanese supermarkets packed with food products from Japan, and displays of ikebana (traditional Japanese flower arrangements).

On many weekends—particularly during the spring Cherry Blossom Festival and the summer months—you'll see traditional Japanese music and dance performances, flower arranging demonstrations, martial arts presentations, and a variety of other cultural events in celebration of Japanese heritage.



*After all was seen and done, it was time for me to pack my bags and a week's worth viewing of pictures, and jetset back to Orlando. It was a strange feeling I had, female intuition maybe--I knew I'd find myself back in the city, and this time, it'll be to stay. =)*