

Two Days in San Francisco: Alcatraz, Fog, and Sourdough (No Five-Hour Lines)

o) Your Trip at a Glance

Detail	Your Spec
Dates	Friday, August 21 to Sunday, August 23, 2026 (2 nights)
Group	2 adults
Budget	Up to \$1,400 total (excludes flights)
Must-haves	Alcatraz, Golden Gate Bridge, one cable car ride, Ferry Building, relaxed pace
Food wishes	Sourdough, dim sum, one great seafood dinner
Getting there	Flying into SFO, no rental car (public transit only)
Special request	Exactly where and when to book Alcatraz, smartest departure time, plan B if sold out, plus all other advance bookings

The honest headline: your Alcatraz ticket is the one thing on this trip that behaves like a concert presale. Everything else you can wander into. So we book The Rock first, then build the weekend around it.

1) At a Glance

Item	Detail	Price (USD, as of June 2026)	Book ahead?
Alcatraz Day Tour (2 adults)	Official ferry + cellhouse audio tour from Pier 33	\$47.95/adult, taxes included = \$95.90	YES, weeks ahead
Airport transfer	BART, SFO to downtown	\$11.15 one-way/person (\$22.30 RT) = ~\$44.60 for two, round trip	No
Cable car (once)	Powell–Hyde or Powell–Mason single ride	\$9.00/person, one-way, no transfers	No (buy before boarding)
Golden Gate Bridge	Welcome Center + walk on the bridge	Free (pedestrians)	No
Ferry Building + Saturday Farmers Market	Marketplace shops + market around the building	Free to browse	No

Item	Detail	Price (USD, as of June 2026)	Book ahead?
Seafood dinner	Scoma's, Fisherman's Wharf	~\$120–\$180 for two before tip	Yes, reserve
Lodging (2 nights)	North Beach boutique (see 1b)	~\$250–\$320/night guide value	YES

The National Park Service does not charge an entrance fee to visit Alcatraz Island, but a ticket for ferry transportation by Alcatraz City Cruises is required to visit. The ticket price you pay is essentially for the boat and the (excellent) audio tour.

1b) Recommendation and the Best Alternative

Where to stay, our pick: Hotel Bohème, North Beach. It sits right in the neighborhood you asked for, a genuine small boutique with fifteen rooms, and it puts you a flat walk from Pier 33 (Alcatraz) and a short stroll to the Powell–Mason cable car and Chinatown dim sum. Rates behind the live booking widget typically land around **\$250–\$320/night (guide value, as of June 2026)** for a summer weekend, so budget roughly **\$500–\$640 for two nights**. Why it fits you two: quiet, characterful, walkable, and you skip car costs entirely since you have no rental.

Best alternative: a Union Square hotel (your second named neighborhood). Union Square puts you on top of the Powell Street cable car turntable and one block from the Powell BART station, so your SFO arrival and your cable car ride both start at your doorstep. Expect similar or slightly higher summer weekend guide rates. Trade-off: more retail bustle, less neighborhood charm than North Beach.

A dose of budget reality: San Francisco lodging in August is the biggest line item by far, and 2026 is a FIFA World Cup summer in the Bay Area, which pushes rates up. If two nights of lodging runs to the \$600 end, your \$1,400 total still works comfortably because everything else on this itinerary is cheap or free. If you want breathing room, the Union Square chain hotels sometimes undercut boutiques on a given weekend.

1c) Book Now

What	By when	Where (official)
Alcatraz Day Tour x2	As soon as your dates are firm. Sailings frequently sell out a week or more ahead in August; do not wait	alcatrazcitycruises.com (the only authorized seller) or call +1-415-981-7625
Lodging (2 nights)	1–2 months out for August; sooner is better in a World Cup summer	hotelboheme.com (North Beach) or your Union Square hotel's own site
Scoma's seafood dinner	1–2 weeks ahead for a Saturday night	scomas.com (reservations)

What	By when	Where (official)
Cable car	No booking. Buy the \$9 fare before boarding via the MuniMobile app or Clipper	sfmta.com

For lodging: you will see the binding price for your exact dates and occupancy at the provider's booking step, it changes daily.

Alcatraz booking specifics you asked for:

- **Where:** Only Alcatraz City Cruises is the only authorized official provider with exclusive ferry services to Alcatraz Island. Buy at alcatrazcitycruises.com. Prices start at \$47.95, with fees and taxes included in the price. Booking direct means no extra booking or processing fees.
- **How far ahead it sells out:** Tickets can be reserved online up to 90 days in advance. The park service warns that it strongly recommends making advanced ticket reservations, which eliminates the need to wait in line. In peak August, popular time slots sell out well over a week ahead, so treat this like the first thing you book.
- **Smartest departure time:** Take one of the **first morning departures** (roughly 9:00–10:00 AM). The light is better, the island is quieter before the mid-day boats, the fog often hasn't fully set, and you free up your whole afternoon. Plan on a 4–5 hour total experience door to door, so an early boat gets you back to the Wharf by lunch.
- **If Alcatraz is sold out (plan B):** First, check the site again a few days out, as cancellations release inventory (refunds require 72 hours' notice, so seats reappear). Second, look at the **Night Tour**, a different, atmospheric experience that sometimes has availability when day tours are gone (Night Tour adult fare is \$59.65). Third, if the island itself is fully booked, take a **narrated bay cruise that circles Alcatraz** without docking (Blue & Gold Fleet from Pier 39), giving you the views and history from the water. It's not the cellhouse, but it's a genuine Alcatraz experience with no advance-sellout risk.

2) Day-by-Day Plan

Day 1, Friday, August 21: Arrival, North Beach, Cable Car

- **Afternoon: Land at SFO, take BART into the city.** From the International Terminal (a short walk or the free AirTrain red line from Terminals 1 and 3), board an Antioch-bound train to a downtown San Francisco station such as Powell Street, Montgomery Street, or Embarcadero. The fare to downtown is \$11.15 (\$22.30 round trip), and it's about a half-hour ride. Pay by tapping a credit card or your phone at the gate, or use a Clipper card. From Embarcadero it's a short taxi or rideshare hop up to North Beach; from Powell you're right at Union Square.
- **Check in and settle** at Hotel Bohème (or your Union Square base).

- **Late afternoon: ride a cable car, once, the smart way.** Walk to the Powell–Mason or Powell–Hyde line. A single ticket to ride the historic cable car is \$9.00, one-way with no transfers. Because the terminal kiosks can have lines, buy your fare in advance: to board at Powell & Market, Bay & Taylor and Hyde & Beach you must purchase your fare in advance between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily. The MuniMobile app or a Clipper card on your phone does this in seconds. 💡 **Tip:** Board at a mid-route stop rather than the Powell turntable to skip the worst of the queue, and grab a spot on the running board for the Hyde Street hill drama.
- **Evening: dinner in North Beach,** the old Italian quarter right outside your door (see restaurant menu in section 3).
- 📺 **Plan B (fog/wind):** August afternoons can turn gray and blustery. If the cable car line is a zoo or the fog is thick, do it tomorrow instead and spend tonight strolling Columbus Avenue's cafés.

Day 2, Saturday, August 22: Alcatraz, Ferry Building, Golden Gate

- **Morning: Alcatraz.** Take your pre-booked early boat from **Pier 33 Alcatraz Landing.** 💡 **Tip:** Arrive 20–30 minutes before your printed departure; Pier 33 gets busy and the boat leaves on time whether you're on it or not. Bring a layer, the crossing is windy and the island is cold and exposed even in August. Your ticket includes the ferry transportation and the cellhouse audio tour, which is all inclusive.
- **Midday: sourdough at the source.** Back at Fisherman's Wharf, do lunch at **Bistro Boudin**, the upstairs waterfront restaurant above the flagship bakery, home of San Francisco sourdough. 💡 **Tip:** Ask for a window table for the Alcatraz view you just came from.
- **Early afternoon: Ferry Building + Saturday Farmers Market.** This is the day for it. The Ferry Plaza Farmers Market runs Saturday 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM, and the Saturday market wraps around the front of the Ferry Building and the rear plaza overlooking the Bay, with over 100 vendors and plenty of brunch and lunch options. Browse the indoor marketplace shops afterward. Getting there from the Wharf is an easy walk along the Embarcadero or the historic F-line streetcar.
- **Late afternoon: Golden Gate Bridge.** Ride out to the **Golden Gate Bridge Welcome Center** (free) and walk out onto the pedestrian path for the classic photos. There's no admission for walking the bridge. 💡 **Tip:** Late afternoon light is gorgeous, but the bridge makes its own fog, so if the towers are socked in when you arrive, wait 20 minutes, it often clears in waves.
- **Evening: your one great seafood dinner at Scoma's** (see section 3).
- 📺 **Plan B (fog on the bridge):** If the Golden Gate is completely fogged, swap in the view from Fort Mason or the Palace of Fine Arts, both photogenic even in gray, and try the bridge again Sunday morning when fog is often thinner.

Day 3, Sunday, August 23: Dim Sum and Departure

- **Morning: dim sum.** Round out your food trio with dim sum at **Yank Sing** (see section 3), an easy pick before you head out.
- **Late morning: a relaxed last wander** through Chinatown (the largest outside Asia and right between North Beach and Union Square) or a final coffee on Columbus Avenue.

- **Afternoon: BART back to SFO.** Reverse your arrival: any airport-bound train from Powell, Montgomery, or Embarcadero, about 30 minutes, \$11.15 per person. 💡 **Tip:** Build in a cushion; three to four trains depart each hour, but you don't want to sprint the AirTrain with luggage.
- 🗺️ **Plan B (early flight):** If you fly out early, do dim sum Saturday as your lunch instead and keep Sunday morning as pure buffer.

3) Practical Notes, Restaurants and Costs

Your three food wishes, all named and verified

Sourdough, Bistro Boudin (Fisherman's Wharf). Bistro Boudin serves classic San Francisco cuisine and its legendary sourdough bread, with bay views of Alcatraz, Angel Island and Marin.

Hours: Sunday–Thursday 11:30 AM–9:00 PM, Friday and Saturday 11:30 AM–10:00 PM. Address: 160 Jefferson Street, San Francisco, CA 94133, Second Floor. Phone: (415) 351-5561. Map: [Open in maps](#)

- *Alternative:* the ground-floor Boudin Bakery Café at the same address for a quicker, cheaper clam-chowder-in-a-bread-bowl.

Dim sum, Yank Sing (Rincon Center, 101 Spear Street). A San Francisco dim sum institution, Michelin-listed, cart-and-order style, an easy walk from the Ferry Building. Please **check the current opening hours before you go** (Yank Sing typically serves dim sum from late morning into mid-afternoon and can be busy on weekends, so a reservation helps). Address: 101 Spear Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Map: [Open in maps](#)

- *Alternative:* Great Eastern Restaurant in Chinatown, a short walk from North Beach, for classic Cantonese dim sum.

Seafood dinner, Scoma's (Fisherman's Wharf). A three-generation family-owned waterfront seafood institution founded in 1965, famous for pier-to-plate freshness. Hours: Friday and Saturday about 11:30 AM/12:00 PM to 10:00 PM, Sunday to about 9:00–9:30 PM (confirm at booking). Address: 1965 Al Scoma Way, San Francisco, CA 94133. Phone: (415) 771-4383. Reserve at [scomas.com](#). Map: [Open in maps](#)

- *Alternative:* Bistro Boudin's raw bar and seafood menu (already on your Day 2), or Waterbar on the Embarcadero for a bridge-view splurge.

💡 **Tipping note (US convention):** Sit-down restaurants here expect 15–20% on the pre-tax total; posted menu prices exclude sales tax, so budget "plus tax." A restaurant total for two of "\$120 food" realistically becomes roughly \$150 once tax and tip are added.

Transit cheat-sheet

- Get a **Clipper card in your phone's wallet** (Apple/Google Pay) or just tap a contactless credit card. It works on BART and Muni (buses, streetcars, cable cars via MuniMobile). Loading Clipper on your phone saves the \$3 fee for a new plastic card.
- Cable car fare must be bought **before** boarding at the main terminals; the MuniMobile app is the fastest way.

Estimated Cost Overview vs. your \$1,400 budget

Item	Estimate (USD)
Lodging, 2 nights (North Beach boutique, guide value, check exact-date price with the provider)	\$500–\$640
Alcatraz Day Tour, 2 adults	\$95.90
BART round trip, 2 people	~\$44.60
Cable car, 2 people x 1 ride	\$18.00
Golden Gate Bridge (walk)	\$0
Ferry Building / Farmers Market (browsing)	\$0
Seafood dinner at Scoma's, 2 (incl. tax + ~18% tip)	~\$140–\$210
Sourdough lunch at Bistro Boudin, 2 (incl. tax + tip)	~\$45–\$70
Dim sum at Yank Sing, 2 (incl. tax + tip)	~\$60–\$90
North Beach dinner, Day 1, 2 (incl. tax + tip)	~\$70–\$110
Coffee, snacks, incidentals	~\$40–\$60
Estimated total	~\$1,015–\$1,340

Verdict: you land inside \$1,400 even at the higher end, **as long as lodging stays near the middle of its range**. The one variable that could bust the budget is a World-Cup-summer room rate spike, which is exactly why lodging is your second "book now" item after Alcatraz. Flights are not included above.

Packing and prep checklist

- ☐ Alcatraz tickets booked (screenshot + email confirmation saved offline)
- ☐ Lodging confirmed for both nights
- ☐ Scoma's reservation for Saturday night
- ☐ Clipper set up in phone wallet (or contactless card ready)
- ☐ **Layers.** August in San Francisco is famously cool and foggy; the Alcatraz crossing and the bridge are windy and cold
- ☐ Comfortable shoes (hills, and Alcatraz has steep gravel paths)
- ☐ Light rain shell is optional but a windbreaker is not
- ☐ Note Alcatraz reservations line: +1-415-981-7625 (9 AM–5 PM PT, 7 days)

4) Sources (checked June 2026)

Alcatraz (official)

- [alcatrazcitycruises.com/...](#)
- [nps.gov/...](#)

Transit (official)

- [sftravel.com/...](#)
- [sfmta.com/...](#)
- [bart.gov/...](#) (fare calculator)

Food (official)

- [bistroboudin.com](#) (Bistro Boudin hours, address, phone)
- [scomas.com](#) (Scoma's reservations)
- [yanksing.com/...](#) (Yank Sing location; confirm current hours here)

Ferry Building / Farmers Market (official)

- [ferrybuildingmarketplace.com/...](#)

Lodging (guide-value pricing behind live booking widgets)

- [hotelboheme.com](#) (Hotel Bohème, North Beach)

Have a wonderful, fog-kissed weekend. Book The Rock today, and the rest of the city is yours to wander.

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