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Top Attractions in San Francisco: Coit Tower

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When you look at the San Francisco cityscape, you can't miss narrow Coit Tower soaring into the sky atop Telegraph Hill. With its fascinating history and great view, Coit Tower is definitely a place you want to add to your "must see" list when you visit the City by the Bay.



Constructed in 1933 with a bequest from Lillie Hitchcock Coit, for whom the tower is named, the edifice was designed in honor of the San Francisco firefighters, whom Lillie admired. Rescued from a fire when she was just a child, Lillie grew up to be a volunteer firefighter and fought many fires as the mascot to Knickerbocker Engine Co. No. 5. She wanted the tower to be not only a memorial but also a way to view her beloved city and it is indeed both.

Because the traffic is very heavy in the area and parking is a real hassle, the best way to see Coit Tower is just to walk up Filbert Street. It's very steep but has steps to make the trek a little easier and an incredible view of the city every time you

take a rest and turn around. There's also plenty of tours available which include Coit Tower and the San Francisco bus system offers a convenient trip up to the tower via the #39 Coit bus from Pier 39 at Fisherman's Wharf.

Once you reach the base of the tower, you will have a 360 degree view of the city which is unobstructed by taller buildings due to a city ordinance. The inside of the tower just seems like a small circular building where there is a tiny gift shop. Buy your tickets here to take the elevator to the top as you surely want to get the complete view after that walk!

The architecture of the tower is said to resemble the nozzle of a fire hose, although this is probably just a coincidence, but it's when you enter the building that you will fully appreciate the history as beautiful murals explain the whole story. The murals were part of a Public Works of Art project which provided jobs to artists after the Great Depression. You can walk around and see the murals at no charge. There is also a set of murals of murals in the stairway which are not generally seen by visitors but are allowed access with certain tours.

Coit Tower is the main reason you are visiting Telegraph Hill but while you are there you can't help but see the wild parrots. No one is sure how this flock of parrots ended up in the middle of San Francisco but they have been there for years and generally hang out in the trees near Coit Tower. There is a ban on feeding them so don't consider it but these famous birds who have been the subject of a book and a documentary are very entertaining with their loud, raucous voices and determination to survive in what was never intended to be their native habitat.

When you leave, be sure to walk down the eastern steps where the neighbors of Coit Tower have created lush, beautiful gardens in their backyards for visitors to enjoy.