



GOLDEN GATE PARK

Celebrating 150 Years of
Everybody's Park



The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department and the San Francisco Parks Alliance are working together with more than 150 community groups and institutional partners to plan a year of celebrations that will pay tribute to one of the world's most iconic treasures – Golden Gate Park – and its amazing stories of past, present and future.

On April 4, 1870, an act of the state legislature created Golden Gate Park, which skeptics said could never be built atop San Francisco's sand dunes. However, a determined engineer, displaying the creativity and can-do spirit that has always been a part of San Francisco, figured out a way and the park then began rising from the city's western sand dunes. Since that time, it has stood with a growing city as a haven from urban life to an important partner in key moments in the city's history.

To this day, the park boasts 24 million visits each year by those who come from across the city, the nation and the world to visit its historic institutions, take in concerts, participate in races, have a family picnic and enjoy activities from soccer and lawn bowling to hiking and fly casting.

Golden Gate Park is home to the California Academy of Sciences, de Young Museum, Conservatory of Flowers, Japanese Tea Garden, Botanical Gardens, National AIDS Memorial, Stow Lake, a nine-hole golf course, Shakespeare Garden, Rose Garden, two windmills, a bison paddock, 6 children's playgrounds, the Anglers Lodge and its casting pools, and so much more.

There is certainly something for all ages and interests to do within Golden Gate Park's 1,017 acres, whether you are young or old, that includes bicycling, roller skating, Segway tours, golf, disc golf, soccer, archery, swing dancing, drumming circles... and lots of picnics.

All year long, the park hosts events that celebrate the diversity, creativity and quirkiness embraced by San Franciscans. These include the Bay to Breakers Race, Comedy Day in the Park, Opera in the Park, Outside Lands and Hardly Strictly Bluegrass music festivals.

GoldenGatePark150.com features exciting news about the yearlong celebration!

Golden Gate Park's celebration year recognizes four important aspects of engagement.

Throughout the year, our goal is to, engage with park supporters, highlighting known and secret treasures of the park for residents, national and international visitors, cultivating support for the park and its institutions. Golden Gate Park is Everyone's Park.



Recreation & Wellness

Golden Gate Park offers a multitude of recreation and wellness opportunities, from activities like tennis, lawn bowling and soccer to more introspective adventures like hiking the Phil Arnold Trail, paddling on Stow Lake, and meditating atop Strawberry Hill. In fact, the first playground in America, is located adjacent to Robin Williams Meadow, an innovative inspiring playground to this day. The opportunities are endless and available to all.



Creativity & the Arts

In addition to playing host to the legendary de Young Museum, Golden Gate Park is dappled with sculpture, embraced by music, and a favorite place to paint, photograph and compose. Home to the Sharron Art Studio where local artists and creators study their craft, and the San Francisco Botanical Gardens, where visitors celebrate plants and flowers from across the globe. It is a canvas that inspires the gardening team, an ever-shifting park which reflects the enjoyment of all who visit.



Science, Technology & Nature

Innovation is a word often associated with contemporary San Francisco however the city has always been viewed as an epicenter for science, technology, and environmental issues. From the origins of wireless communications in 1902 to the first tweet and groundbreaking water reclamation efforts underway now, Golden Gate Park has always been a muse for inventors of all ages.



History & People

The past, present and future are embodied in what Golden Gate Park provides for visitors. Ever changing, the park has been transformed and celebrated in a multitude of ways over the decades. A refuge during the aftermath of the 1906 Earthquake, a place to gather during the Summer of Love, and an open space for all, the future of the park is as bright as the past. With the 150th birthday upon us, discover the Conservatory of Flowers, the first building in Golden Gate Park; the first public playground in the nation, at Robin Williams Meadow; and the individuals who work tirelessly to be sure your memories of picnics and events remain beautiful. Reflect at the National Aids Memorial Grove, and the monuments to fallen heroes.

FUN AND INTERESTING FACTS

About Golden Gate Park

There are a wide range of dedicated athletic courses, fields, and courts including soccer, baseball, tennis, football, running, horseshoe pitching, golf, lawn bowling, petanque, archery, and disc golf.

With its rectangular shape, the park can be traversed in the north-south direction fairly quickly. In the east-west mode, it's tempting to lose oneself among the groves, glades and glens of the park's lush landscape.

The park's landscape is home to 680 forested acres, 130 acres of meadows, 15 miles of drives, and 33 acres of lakes. Additionally there are numerous fields and many open spaces.

The park was originally created on 1013 acres of windswept sand dunes in an unincorporated area of the Peninsula, known as the Outside Lands, starting in 1870 by surveyor, designer, and first Superintendent William Hammond Hall. Today, with an addition, the acreage stands at 1017 acres.

The very first Tweet was actually done in Golden Gate Park in front a herd of bison. [Learn more about this](#)

Commemorative trees groves include the National AIDS Memorial Grove, Heroes Grove, Redwood Memorial Grove, and Phil Arnold Oak Woodlands Trail.

The park played the role of sanctuary after the cataclysmic 1906 Earthquake and Fire, when 200,000 homeless residents were forced to camp in the park, first in crude shelters, and later in temporary wood barracks.

The Conservatory of Flowers, opened in 1879 was the park's first formal structure. Its 12,000 square feet, all covered in glass, contains mostly tropical plants. A gigantic specimen of philodendron, known as Phil, thought to be more than 100 years old, continues to climb into the center dome.

The park is host to several free annual events including Hardly Strictly Bluegrass, Opera in the Park, and Comedy Day.

The California Midwinter International Exposition of 1894, the first world's fair held in the U.S. west of the Mississippi, offered 2 million visitors a glimpse of things to come in its 180 structures set on 160 acres. The footprint of the fair was the genesis of today's Music Concourse.

The San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum consists of 55 acres with 9000 different kinds of plants from around the world. All this is laid out in geographic, groupings of similar plants, or thematic settings.

The park is home to several unique gardens including the Shakespeare Garden, Rose Garden, Japanese Tea Garden, Queen Wilhelmina Garden, and Conservatory Valley with its graphic floral plaques.

Originally called the Sharon Quarters for Children, today's Koret Playground, was the first public playground in the United States. The park contains five playgrounds spread across the length of the park.

In 1870, the value of the 1,017 acres of land that established Golden Gate Park was appraised at \$801,593, the medium value of the average home in San Francisco in 2019 is \$988,000.

Cultural institutions ring the Music Concourse including the de Young Museum, established in 1895 and the California Academy of Sciences, first opened in 1923. Numerous statues and monuments also reside here.

With the threat of extinction, bison have resided in the park since 1891. Today the animal's names reflect those of Native American origin.

Golden Gate Park is 20% larger than New York's Central Park (1,017 acres vs. 840) and one of the most visited parks in America with 25 million visits each year. In fact, Central Park designer Frederick Law Olmsted was briefly considered as a Golden Gate Park architect, but he disliked the desolate location and felt the massive sand dunes made it impossible to build. San Francisco proved him wrong!

15 Amazing Stories... and there's so much more!

1 Flagging in the Park: Through its humble beginnings under the shadow of the AIDS epidemic, Flagging in the Park served as an expression of joy and remembrance in a time when the virus claimed the lives of nearly half of the city's gay community. Now entering its 22nd year, the DJs, organizers, and participants keep tradition and memory alive in an explosion of kaleidoscopic color and dance in the National AIDS Memorial Grove. Flagging in the Park is indicative of what the Grove stands for, and even more importantly, what the city of San Francisco historically stands for. What we're looking at is a diverse community coming together, celebrating life, supporting each other, and improving the fabric of the community they live in literally by spinning fabric.

2 Vintage Baseball: Baseball has always been considered America's pastime, and one group in Golden Gate Park takes the game to historic levels. The Bay Area Vintage Base Ball League plays by the rules of 1886, where each team is outfitted in uniforms and equipment replicated from the era. The majority of games are played on weekends at Big Rec, where you'll find a dedicated cluster of 'cranks' (fans) cheering from the bleachers and picnicking in the outfield, just as they did in the days of yore.

3 The Secret Treasure Hunt: In 1982, Byron Preiss secretly buried a dozen ceramic vases ("casques") encased in Plexiglas in parks across North America. Each casque contains a key that could be redeemed for one of twelve jewels Preiss kept in a safe deposit box in New York. The key to finding the casques was to match one of twelve paintings to one of twelve poetic verses, solve the resulting riddle, and start digging. It is widely believed that Golden Gate Park holds one of these casques. Over 100 hopeful treasure hunters have tried their luck at this 37-year-old riddle, yet the answer may lie buried forever in Golden Gate Park.

4 Disc Golf Course: Nestled between Marx Meadow and Lindley Meadow, the Disc Golf Course is truly a hidden gem for both avid disc golfers and curious beginners in San Francisco. Founded in 1997, the SF Disc Golf Club, with over 350 active members and 2k+ followers on Facebook, precedes the installation of the Golden Gate Park course by eight years. The PDGA (Professional Disc Golf Association)-sanctioned San Francisco Safari draws players from all over the country (even a few from Finland) to play at the course. It sold out in less than one minute this year. Club member Sean Jackson says, "The Golden Gate Park Disc Golf Course is one the "most favored" in the world. It provides fun for new players and challenges the best. I've heard many people say they would have moved outside of the city if it weren't for our course. It might be my favorite place in the world."

5 Model Yacht Club: The San Francisco Model Yacht Club (SFMYC) was founded in 1898 and is the oldest model yacht club in the U.S. with continuous membership of sailors and power boaters since its origins. Since 1903, the members have served as the primary custodians of Spreckels Lake, which was built specifically to promote model yachting. Some boats are modeled after hull designs of real yachts, sharing their speedy, award-winning attributes. The club is open to all who wish to join in the camaraderie and are interested in many kinds of watercraft, especially on opening day in the spring when most members congregate to throngs of onlookers who gather to see all the excitement. One current model boater is actually a third-generation club member.

6 SF Lawn Bowling Club: For nearly 120 years, players in traditional white uniforms have aimed their small bowling balls carefully while standing on these perfectly manicured, velvety greens. The sport of lawn bowling began in the parks on October 18, 1901 with "bowls" brought from Scotland, the result of a park commission appropriation for construction of a bowling-green. These were the first public lawn bowling-greens in the United States. Members of the club participate in bowls events worldwide and in past years have won national honors, with one member winning a gold medal as a world champion. Locally, the SFLBC offers free lessons every Wednesday at Noon, as well as Saturday and Sunday lessons at noon, though this varies through the year.

7 Ghost Stories: From the "Lady in White of Stow Lake" who has haunted the spot for more than a century in search of her lost baby to the ghostly police officer who reportedly pulls people over for speeding late at night, Golden Gate Park is legendary among paranormal investigators like the San Francisco Ghost Society, which recently brought their equipment to the park at night. Why is the park the site of so many urban legends?

8 Windmills / King's Day: San Francisco isn't known for its Dutch community, but they make their presence known in a big way each April among the windmills on the west end of Golden Gate Park. That's when 3,000 orange-clad Dutch expatriates, descendants and lovers of Dutch culture descend on the park to eat stroomwafels and bitterballen, drink Dutch beer, and celebrate all things Netherlands. Golden Gate Park's iconic windmills are known as the "San Francisco Giants" in Holland, and they have a fascinating history all their own.

9 Animals of the Park: Coyotes and owls, horses and bison—even the occasional mountain lion, can be found in Golden Gate Park. In the past, it was a veritable menagerie of deer, elk, moose, caribou and antelope. At one time, donkeys and goats gave rides to kids, while chickens clucked around an imitation barnyard in the Children’s Playground. Before 1929, when the zoo was born, visitors to Golden Gate Park could find elephant, zebra, bear, kangaroo, emu and ostrich on display. Angles: a day with bison and their caretakers; profile of fans and photographers of the baby owls; police horses/officers; longtime birdwatchers.

10 Golden Gate Park—Tying the Knot: According to permit data, 69 couples wed in Golden Gate Park last year. In order of popularity, lovers tied the knot at Shakespeare Garden, Queen Wilhelmina Tulip Garden, Fuchsia Dell, San Francisco Botanical Garden, Chain of Lakes and Portals of the Past at Lloyd Lake. Possible angles: What makes Golden Gate Park a top pick to walk down the garden path of love? Profile diverse San Franciscans getting married in a single weekend in the park.

11 Golden Gate Park Tennis: First played in Golden Gate Park in 1894. The past, present and future of the game are represented in the park. Some of the tennis world’s brightest stars started out or honed their games on the Golden Gate Park tennis courts, including Hall of Famers Billie Jean King, Rosie Casals, Brad Gilbert, Dick Gould and Peanut Louie Harper. An immigrant from El Salvador, Casals’ life changed as soon as she stepped onto these public courts at 8 years old. Years later, she went on to pioneer the WTA’s “Original 9” with Billie Jean King, with whom she played doubles. The GGPTC is currently undergoing a \$27 million renovation which will feature 17 new lighted USTA regulation courts, a dedicated pickleball court, and a new clubhouse.

12 Archery: Bushes of clipped California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*) form a hedge to divide the archery field from the short extension of 47th Avenue. Here avid archers can shoot their quarry of nine hay bale targets, a sport known all the way back to Mongolian conqueror Genghis Khan. The pastime was first organized within the park in 1881; in 1933 the first range devoted to the sport was constructed east of Golden Gate Park Stadium. The existing meadow was improved in 1936 by Works Progress Administration funded workers. Then, in 1938, the Ahwahnee Archers group requested that the meadow be turned over to archery. The site is well suited, as a shallow rise of dunes behind the targets catches errant arrows. Today, archery classes are provided by City College of San Francisco.

13 Skatin’ Place: This gateway once marked a park road entrance, an extension of Sixth Avenue, which was closed in 1989. It was part of a move first discussed in 1983 to diminish vehicular environmental impacts to the park. Today it serves as the entrance to a paved area dedicated for the use of athletic skaters and is dubbed the “Skatin Place.” Every Sunday, all rollerbladers or roller-skaters interested may revisit their childhood memories and come together for a roller disco party. At the party, the “Godfather of Skate,” D. Miles Jr., brings a mobile DJ unit to liven up the party. The area is always open for the sport, though.

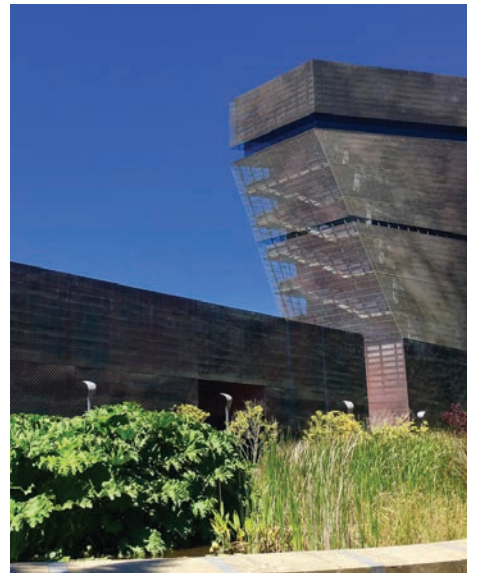
14 Lindy in the Park: Lindy in the Park, or LitP, was founded by Lindy Hoppers Chad Kubo and Ken Watanabe in August of 1996 and is the original free swing dance party. Held every Sunday in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, Lindy in the Park is the longest-running swing dance venue in the San Francisco Bay Area (and quite possibly, the world), and is open to dancers of all ages and levels. There is space to sit, take a breather, chat with friends and make new ones, and otherwise enjoy the fresh outdoor air. It is a perfect venue to practice your social dancing to the sounds of jazz, blues and swing music, and sometimes even a few musical surprises.

15 SF Botanical Garden: The San Francisco Botanical Garden offers visitors a chance to travel the world in 55 acres through nearly 9,000 different kinds of plants from across the globe. Its staff is also creating the next generation of San Francisco gardeners through garden crafts, bug hunts to story time. Its youth programs serve more than 12,000 kids and their families. In addition, Flower Piano transforms the Garden into the city’s own alfresco concert hall for 12 days each year. Possible angle: Ordinary citizens of all ages and backgrounds who wow each year at the Flower Piano.



GOLDEN GATE PARK IS TURNING 150!

San Francisco's Golden Gate Park is turning 150 – and this internationally-renowned treasure has never been more beautiful or beloved.





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Celebrating 150 Years of Everybody's Park

GoldenGatePark150.com