



The sky is always blue above The Ferry Building. Below: A few of the savory selections at Mistral Rotisserie Provencale.

A savvy operator is defined as one who can always tell which way the wind is blowing, but if you want to avoid stiff breezes altogether, the place to go in S.F. is the Ferry Building.

For one thing, the location's not what you'd call a tourist trap. Bay Area residents in town for the day bask in the sunshine alongside pin-striped corporate lawyers, bicyclists, and of course, travelers from all points on the globe.

A Tourist in Your Own Town

Originally built in 1896, the bustling passenger terminal underwent a complete renovation after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. That famous disaster made mincemeat out of the decrepit, shadowy Embarcadero Freeway. After dutifully hauling away tons of double-decker concrete, the city replaced it with a streetcar line on the ground and plenty of open space.

The F-trolley traverses the Embarcadero between Mission Street and Fisherman's Wharf, with the Ferry Building serving as the midpoint point for a pit stop along the route that turns up Market Street and ends in the Castro. The

California Street cable car stops just a block up the street, in front of the Hyatt Regency, where you'll also find a BART/Muni station. If you're driving, you can take advantage of metered parking or a curbside valet service in front of the Ferry Building itself.

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As for what's inside this popular landmark, think organic produce, cheese, Napa Valley wine, bread baked on site, high-end kitchen utensils, an inspired florist and an excellent array of lunch and dinner fare, all snugly fastened together under the same sunlit roof.

Between patronizing the small-scale artisan merchants and satisfying your palate, you won't break the pocketbook, either. On Tuesday, Thursday and weekends, the city's Farmer's Market stretches the length of the building out in front.

Yet even without the farmers, there's plenty of fresh produce available inside the building, an information center specializing in ferry trips, one-of-a-kind gifts, a Sur la Table outlet and Peet's Coffee.



(Clockwise from top left) You can buy your produce at Farm Fresh to You.-- Planning the next mob hit along the bay side promenade. -- Outside the Marketbar restaurant on the southern end of the Ferry Building. -- They bake their bread fresh everyday at the ACME Bread Company.

The Amtrak station, incidentally, is located in the next building over, going south, while the Larkspur, Sausalito, Vallejo and Oakland-Alameda Ferries dock out back. You can sit outside along a windless promenade and stare out across the bay for hours.

In terms of esthetics, ease of access, dining and retail diversity, San Francisco's oldest transport hub leaves concourses around the planet in the dust. If you've ever been to the Gare du Nord in Paris, or Union Station in Washington D.C., you'll know what we mean after spending five minutes inside this exquisite piece of architecture lovingly maintained by folks who know their feng shui. No earthquake has ever torn this place asunder.

At least, not so far...

For more information about the Ferry Building, visit the official website ferrybuildingmarketplace.com. You can find a schedule for the outdoor farmer's market at cuesa.org.

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The City Edition of San Francisco
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