

# HER FAMILY / HIS

## Reviewing Family Entertainment



by Suzanne & Chris Shoemaker

# Golden San Franciscan Days

## HERS

Leaves are turning color and sailing on the gusts of the Santa Anna winds, and flavored coffees smell of cinnamon, pumpkin and chestnut. It's a great time to travel home to celebrate holidays.

Home to me is a journey north on the PCH out of L.A. Just past San Simeon, the Pacific Coast Highway starts a climb into the coastal mountains leading to Big Sur. Highway 1 offers a teenager more thrills than a wooden roller coaster. Hearing our fifteen-year-old back-seat-driver tell his father to slow down stimulates memories of terror-filled car rides from my youth. I am going home again in more ways than one.

An evening in Monterey is a mandatory stop between southern and northern California. It allows time to introduce a teenager to John Steinbeck country and wander through Cannery Row to Bubba Gump's Restaurant; the original and busiest still, to watch a majestic sun set in the western sky.

Then back on the PCH and straight into San Francisco. Our son has never been to San Francisco, so there is great delight in introducing him to Fisherman's Wharf, the Ferry, the Cable Car, and Russian Hill. Remarkably, a lot has changed in San Francisco but all for the better. I am surprised to find the Mission District catering to the convention traffic; the colorful North Beach is a festive restaurant row; and the Tenderloin is placid enough for a walk with a minor.

San Francisco has always been a culinary delight. Pier 39 used to be an all night jazz club, now it's "cleaned up" and home to stores, candy shops, and great restaurants like The Crab House, no longer a shack at the edge of the bay, but a tasteful restaurant featuring the signature sour dough bread and everything imaginable made of crab with a 4-star rating.

The most surprising discovery is an old restaurant that I knew as a child, The Spinnaker, in Sausalito. The food is wonderful, as is most food in San Francisco, but the beauty is unmatched. Eating dinner at The Spinnaker restaurant, sitting at the end of a pier in the Sausalito inlet, is nothing short of magic.

Muir Woods is perfect for a walk among the giant trees of the Pacific coast. Talk about "finding your place in the universe," the serenity of walking among these giants is enough to remind all of us of our insignificance in the greater scheme of things.

There is nothing like a road trip home to clear the cobwebs from a busy mind. Enjoy this holiday season with family wherever you call home.

## HIS

We parents thought it high time to share San Francisco with our history-minded son. Since this city ranks among America's most historical and the world's finest cities, we jumped at the chance to motor north and rediscover its abundant charm and innumerable personalities.

While in San Francisco, our home base was The Pickwick Hotel, an affordable turn of the century hotel strategically located at the city's center. Built in 1926, this art deco and stylish without being pretentious hotel was perfectly placed in proximity to most of our daily walking excursions. One block off Market Street, it's a stone's throw from the famous Cable Car turnaround, a hundred yards from the San Francisco Shopping Center, and a quick 3 blocks to the festive Union Square. Nowhere could be more central.

To know San Francisco, one must certainly taste San Francisco... and taste again. Our palettes met the likes of several remarkable restaurants. Our first night there, we treated ourselves to an utterly exquisite, dry-aged (four to six weeks) steak dinner at Boboquivari's, named for the Venetian Court Jester of comedy and entertainment. The atmosphere is indeed fun and tasteful, but this steak is no laughing matter. Its one of the best pieces of beef you'll ever taste. I'm plotting my way back to Bobo's.

Another family friendly dining spot close to downtown was the Acme Chop House. Located inside Willie Mays Plaza at the SBC Park, this restaurant offers yummy burgers, steaks and mouthwatering seafood. Reasonably priced with pleasant service, the décor understandably resonates Giants' baseball paraphernalia. Come hungry – you won't strike out here!

Finally, who can resist a restaurant with a name like Moose's? Nestled along the quaint perimeter of North Beach's Washington Square, this place is a true surprise and local gem. Serving contemporary American cuisine, the menu features locally grown food, tremendously fresh salads and out-of-the-water, onto-the-plate seafood. The ambiance is smart and hip if not European feeling – take a bite out of this one.

San Francisco is a can't-go-wrong type of cure for the travel itch. There's simply too much to see, do and experience in the span of five short days to contemplate boredom. It's one place sure to delight the mind and stir the soul.