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Day Trippin'

By Fran Miller



Holiday decorations adorn the outside and inside of the InterContinental Mark Hopkins hotel in San Francisco Photos courtesy InterContinental Mark Hopkins

towels, taking public transportation, and opting for in-room Green Eco temperature control. (Tip: Treat yourself by paying a little extra per person for access to the 6th floor Club Lounge where an array of food and beverages are available for the taking, day and night.)

The InterContinental is just around the corner from some of the city's best shopping and greatest public spaces. Check off everyone on your gift list with a trip to Westfield San Francisco Centre and then catch a movie at Metreon, or slip on your ice skates and glide around Yerba Buena Gardens' ice rink. Let the kids run free in the Yerba Buena Children's Garden play circle and maze while you sip an eggnog latte and take in the spectacular skyline view.

Just a 15-minute walk through Union Square and up Nob Hill is the InterContinental's sister hotel, the venerable Mark Hopkins and its celebrated Top of the Mark restaurant. This is where you will find old school holiday pleasures, such as a traditional Thanksgiving feast, served 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thanksgiving day and featuring piano entertainment and a Little Explorer petting zoo in the hotel's lobby. Starting Dec. 5, the Mark offers its Magical Holiday Tea, an amusing family-friendly event featuring a magician, a face painter, a cookie decorating station, a fire engine display in the courtyard, and visits from Santa. Those who bring a toy donation receive a \$4 discount. (The Mark also offers a special Christmas Eve dinner, Christmas day brunch, and a New Year's Eve party. See their website for details.)

If a consumer-free experience is more your style, head over to Pacific Heights and walk the Lyon Street Steps. Start at the top at Broadway and Lyon and take in the sprawling bay view before making your way down toward the water. You will pass some of San Francisco's most spectacular homes, Letterman Digital Arts Center, and the Palace of Fine Arts - and you will wonder why you do not do this more often. On your way back up, stop at Sessions at the Presidio just inside the Presidio's Chestnut Gate for a thirst quencher. Sessions offers more than 100 beers; enjoy one on their heated patio overlooking Letterman's bucolic gardens.

If you plan to take public transportation and/or visit some of the city's museums, consider purchasing a CityPASS, which provides unlimited rides on all cable cars, Muni buses and Muni rail for seven consecutive days. CityPASS saves you 45 percent off of admission prices for The

If the suggestion of a day or night in San Francisco causes a "been there, done that" shrug of the shoulders, 'tis the season to head back over the bridge. This is a magical time in the city, and there is no better way to summon some holiday spirit than by wandering the streets among fellow revelers and partaking of the eclectic festivities. From breathtaking city views via a luxe vantage point, to holiday tea at a grand hotel, to time honored tourist attractions, give yourself 24 hours to explore, and you'll come home with a renewed sense of pride in being San Francisco's across-the-bridge neighbor.

A great home base is the InterContinental. Located at 5th and Howard streets, it is the newest, built from the ground up hotel in the city. It is modern and spacious with fantastic floor-to-ceiling window views, and, it is eco-conscious. Guests are invited to actively participate in sustainable practices via the 'LEED By Example' vacation package that can earn you discounts for reusing

California Academy of Sciences, Aquarium of the Bay, The Exploratorium or the de Young Legion of Honor. And CityPASS holders get to skip entrance lines (except for cable cars). You can purchase the CityPASS at any of the featured venues, online at CityPASS.com, or at SanFrancisco.travel - a wonderful resource for anyone visiting the city.

For further details and reservation information, visit www.intercontinentalsanfrancisco.com, www.intercontinentalmarkhopkins.com, CityPass.com, SanFrancisco.travel.



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