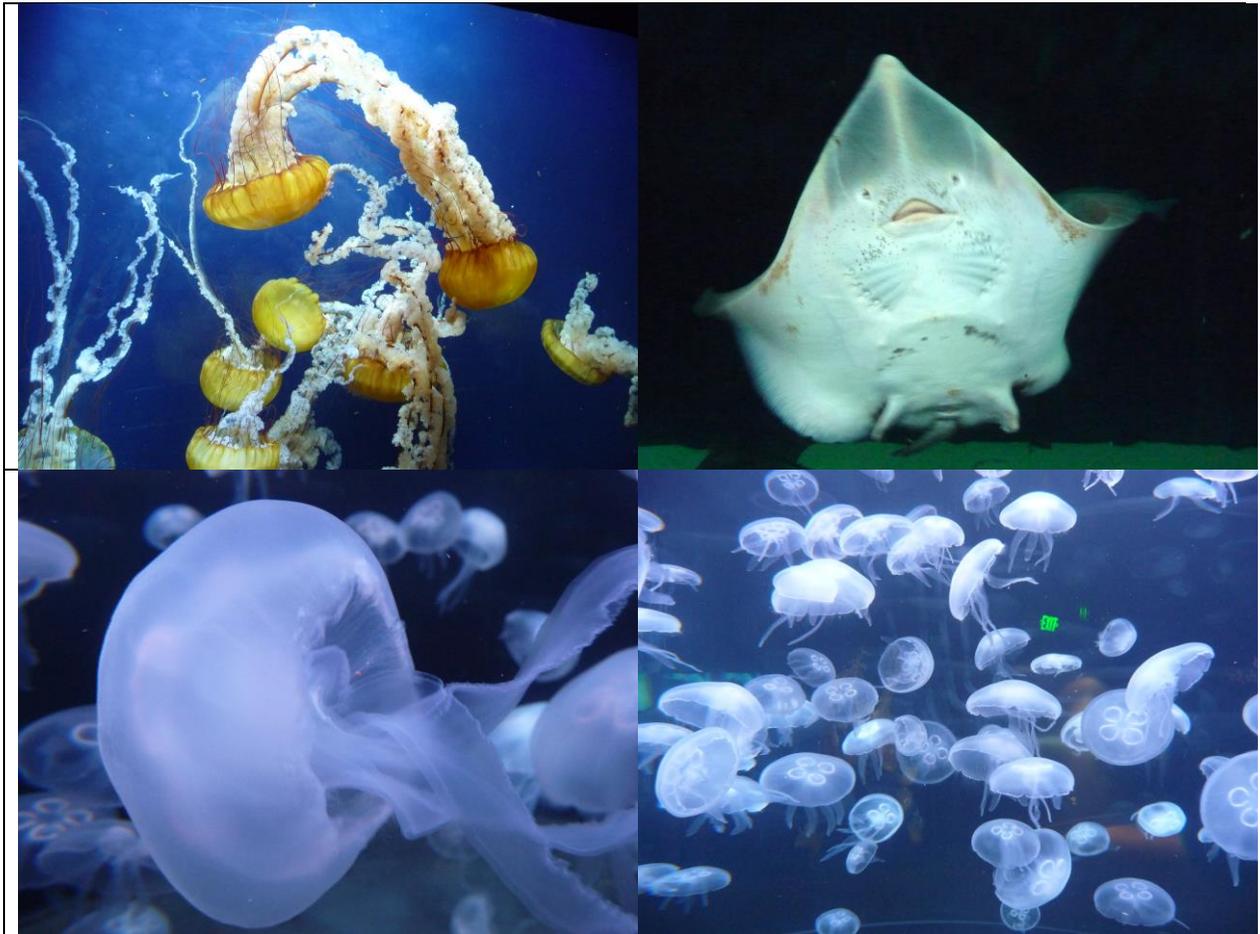


Golden Gate Chronicle

I thought I knew San Francisco. When I taught in San Bernardino, any long weekend provided sufficient excuse for the day-long drive from the stinking desert to the city by the sea. Some things have changed since the 70s: the evergreens around Coit Tower now prevent one from sitting on the stone wall and gazing out across the Bay. And the trendy stores that I so enjoyed near Ghirardelli Square have disappeared like faded flower children: the store that sold only mobiles; the shop vending clocks so esoteric that they required a crib sheet to read the time; the boutique called “Candles to Burn” whose artistic creations you would never think of igniting. But the passing years have also brought the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) system, the Castro, and a first-rate aquarium near Fisherman’s Wharf.



Nearby, a colony of sea lions and harbor seals enjoys more physical intimacy than I would find comfortable, with newcomers flinging themselves across the bodies of earlier arrivals.



A walking tour of Chinatown takes us to a square where an ensemble of traditional instruments bring delight with unconventional (to me) scales, timbres and approach to musical time. I marvel again that Europe, alone among the world's musics, developed harmony. Chinese music employs sophisticated treatments of melody and rhythm without any need for chords.



The Ferry Terminal at the Embarcadero offers foods I have seldom seen elsewhere (including heirloom tomatoes) as well as an opportunity just to sit in the sun and enjoy the expanse of San Francisco Bay and the graceful bridges that span it.



A walking tour up Market Street takes us past a sculpture that evoked outrage at its erection, the glories of the old Palace Hotel, and an art gallery designed by Frank Lloyd Wright that anticipated the layout of New York's Guggenheim Museum.

A walking tour of the Castro and Mission Districts also brings unfamiliar sights including Dolores Park, with its fine view of the city, and a remarkable, ever-changing display of street art along Clarion Alley.



The harbor cruise from Fisherman's Wharf offers commentaries in eight languages describing the Bay, Angels Island and Alcatraz. I'm so pleased at the prospect of an hour on the water without obligatory narration or canned music that I leave off the headset and just revel in the city, the Golden Gate and the deep-blue sky.



Residents of Sausalito doubtless consider it home. I've always thought of it as a good place to bask in the sun and get great views of the city, and as a way station to Muir Woods, whose majestic redwoods recall the lines from Longfellow we memorized in school:

THIS is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight, Stand
like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,

Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms. Loud from
its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean Speaks, and in accents
disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.



I left my heart