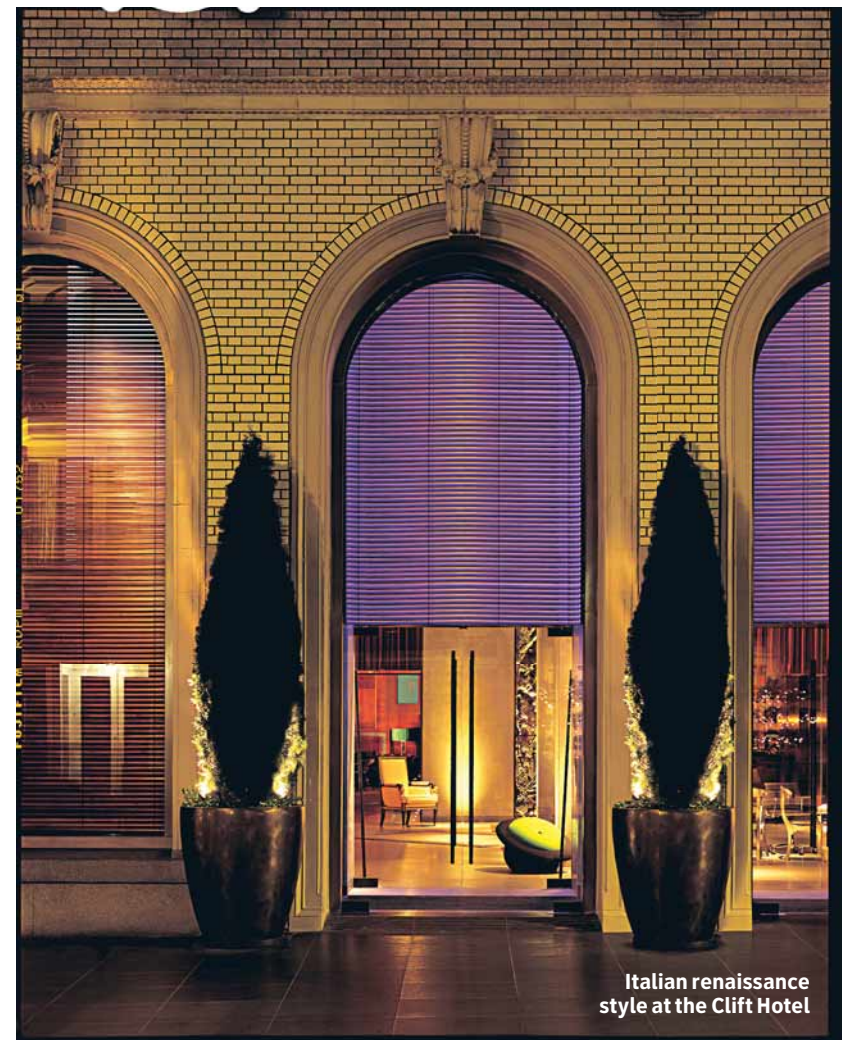


SAN FRANCISCO USA



Suspended animation:  
San Francisco's Golden  
Gate Bridge

GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE PHOTOGRAPHY:  
PHOTOLIBRARY.COM



Italian renaissance  
style at the Clift Hotel

WORDS JO ABBIE

## sleeping beauties

From luxe Egyptian cotton to organic, there are many ways to slip between the sheets in San Francisco.

**L**IKE ANY PROMINENT tourist destination, San Francisco can offer travellers an abundance of experiences. For first-time tourists, there's an array of scenic landmarks – from the Golden Gate Bridge, Muir Woods or Alcatraz to the retail splendour of Union and Ghirardelli squares. For the wine and food crowd, some of the finest restaurants in the nation (including Thomas Keller's famed French Laundry) are a short stroll or drive away. In addition to the foodies, the nearby Napa and Sonoma wine regions draw the spa crowd, after more nurture than nature at the region's acclaimed spas, including Napa's luxurious Auberge du Soleil ([www.aubergedusoleil.com](http://www.aubergedusoleil.com)), long-lauded for its pampering pleasures.

Naturally, a city nestled in a region as diverse as this also boasts accommodations that traverse the grand spectrum – from Spartan to spare-no-expense. For twenty-something hipsters of modest means, there are the anime-inspired murals of the Hotel Des Arts ([www.sfhotedesarts.com](http://www.sfhotedesarts.com)). For the contemporary, carbon footprint-conscious traveller, there's the Orchard Garden Hotel >



The Spanish Suite  
private function room  
at the Clift Hotel

## Designer Philippe Starck's minimalist cool aesthetic is almost painfully hip

([www.theorchardgardenhotel.com](http://www.theorchardgardenhotel.com)), one of the American hospitality industry's first certified green establishments. For the upscale businessman, the Four Seasons ([www.fourseasons.com/sanfrancisco](http://www.fourseasons.com/sanfrancisco)) is always a favourite. Or, for those still wanting to stroll the streets with flowers in their hair, there's the Red Vic B&B ([www.redvic.com](http://www.redvic.com)) in the legendary hippie Haight-Ashbury district – rooms dizzily decorated in paisley and psychedelics.

For travellers who like to sleep in style and want something that's more luxe than quirky theme hotel, but beyond the average elegance of a four- or five-star hotel room, San Francisco's upscale niche accommodations have something for all personalities and can be counted on to offer just the right amount of the refreshingly unexpected. A night in one of the following hotels will give you a decidedly different, and definitely not sleepy, experience of the city by the Bay.

### CLIFT HOTEL

495 Geary Street. (415) 775 4700. [www.clifthotel.com](http://www.clifthotel.com)

Most of hotelier Ian Schraeger and designer Philippe Starck's collaborative accommodations carry off the minimalist cool aesthetic so well they are almost painfully hip. Thankfully, some of San Francisco's quirky charms must have rubbed off on the duo, as they took a different approach with their \$55m redesign of the Clift Hotel, an Italian renaissance-style building constructed in 1915. Perhaps inspired by the building's grand past, the duo accented the polished grey Italian plaster walls and

limestone floors with luxurious velvet and leather and the richness of hardwood. The famed Redwood Room was once old San Francisco's place to imbibe and be seen, and it remains a popular nightspot. Schraeger and Starck retained the eponymous wooden backdrop, plus the room's gilt ceiling and art deco chandeliers, augmenting them with some of Starck's more practical furnishings and plasma screens featuring digital art. While hotels by this duo always tend to attract a scene, this one is less self-conscious than most.

**From \$US215 (\$235).**





Hotel Rex

**HOTEL REX**

562 Sutter Street. (415) 433 4434. [www.jdvhotels.com/rex](http://www.jdvhotels.com/rex)

If Dorothy Parker walked into a hard-boiled detective novel, the Hotel Rex would be where she'd hang her hat. Inspired by pulp detective novels and more literary works of the 1930s, the Rex is home to the Vicious Circle bar, the perfect place for a Scotch when chased in by the city's fog. Corridor walls are adorned with *bon mots* from the likes of John Steinbeck and *The Maltese Falcon* scribe Dashiell Hammett, and public areas appear lifted from a private eye's smoke-filled office – dark mahogany, leather and just enough lamplight to add atmosphere. Rooms are lighter on the detective decor – still masculine, with stripes, warm colours and desks. **From \$US190 (\$205).**



The Hotel Monaco's lobby features a giant fireplace

**HOTEL MONACO**

501 Geary Street. (415) 292 0100. [www.monaco-sf.com](http://www.monaco-sf.com)

Housed in a building dating back to 1911, the Monaco's recent facelift, to the tune of \$4.4 million, has restored its grandeur. While undeniably majestic, from the room-sized fireplace to the flamboyant marble staircase, interiors here come with a dose of friendly insouciance. Think a reception desk painted like an old-fashioned steamer trunk, or a tarot card reader and neck

and shoulder massages on offer in the lobby during the complimentary wine hour. There are even quirky pet-friendly touches – a bottle of Evian and liver biscotti for the hotel's four-legged guests. **From \$US185 (\$200).**

**HOTEL TRITON**

342 Grant Avenue. (415) 394 0500. [www.hoteltriton.com](http://www.hoteltriton.com)

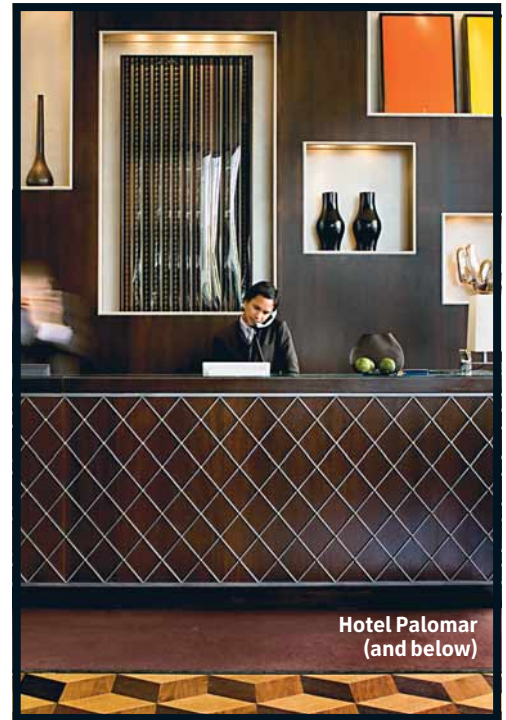
This boutique establishment, once dubbed "San Francisco's new rock and roll hotel", has an arty edge and a distinctive

ambience best described as contemporary bohemian. The vibrant colours of the lobby's murals and furnishings extend to the rooms, many of which were decorated by celebrities, including the late Jerry Garcia (lead guitarist with much-loved local band Grateful Dead) and eco-conscious actor Woody Harrelson, who would no doubt approve of the environmentally conscious touches (everything from the linens to the coffee is organic, cleaning products are biodegradable and





Boho ambience at Hotel Triton



Hotel Palomar (and below)



energy-saving bulbs are standard). Room service is available from the charming Parisian bistro adjacent to the lobby, Café de la Presse – but to feel like a local, head there in person, take one of the tiny outdoor tables and enjoy a glass of wine and tasty fare such as tartines, galettes or the generous charcuterie plate. **From \$US170 (\$185).**

**HOTEL PALOMAR**

**12 Fourth Street. (415) 348**

**1111. hotelpalomar-sf.com**

While located amid the bustling

and less upscale end of the downtown shopping district, inside, the Palomar is all class. Escher-esque parquet floors in the lobby are an example of the luxurious and somehow intellectual decor, which manages to feel both contemporary and reminiscent of 1930s Paris. What differentiates it from your standard elegant city hotel are its whimsical touches, including a Magritte-themed room, complete with cloud-painted ceiling and bowler hat adorning the pillow. Or, for solo travellers

feeling that stab of loneliness – call down to the front desk, and they'll deliver a complimentary goldfish to keep you company. **From \$US260 (\$280).**

**HOTEL VITALE**

**8 Mission Street, off The Embarcadero. (415) 278 3700. www.hotelvital.com**

You can't get much more San Francisco than a penthouse-level yoga studio. Nor the rooftop soaking tubs boasted by the hotel's spa. One of the city's youngest hotels, the Vitale made a splash when it

opened in March 2005, and has continued to win praise for its laid-back luxury – making it a kind of new-generation take on new age, with calming decor and an attitude to match. A backdrop of natural wood, stone and earthy tones make the surrounds surprisingly soothing, even for the business traveller. Add to the serenity by splurging for a suite with Bay Bridge views – which can even be enjoyed from the comfort of the bathrooms' two-person bathtubs. Also gaining great reviews with its contemporary ➤

HOTEL PALOMAR PHOTOGRAPHY: ANGUS MCRITCHIE



Americano Restaurant & Bar, Hotel Vitale

fare is the on-site Americano Restaurant and Bar. However, true foodies won't be able to resist the Ferry Building across the road, where a cornucopia of culinary treats awaits. **From \$US320 (\$350).**

**HOTEL TOMO**

**1800 Sutter Street. (415) 921 4000. [jdvhoteles.com/tomo](http://jdvhoteles.com/tomo)**

A Joie de Vivre hotel (the company behind many of the more whimsical boutique hotels in the area), this venue was opened in its current incarnation in June 2007. It is actually an old Best Western property that has been given a Japanese pop culture makeover. J-pop inspired features include a wall of televisions in the lobby, brightly coloured anime murals by artist Heisuke Kitazawa, and LCD flat-screen TVs and iPod docking stations in rooms and suites. For videogame fans there are two gaming suites complete

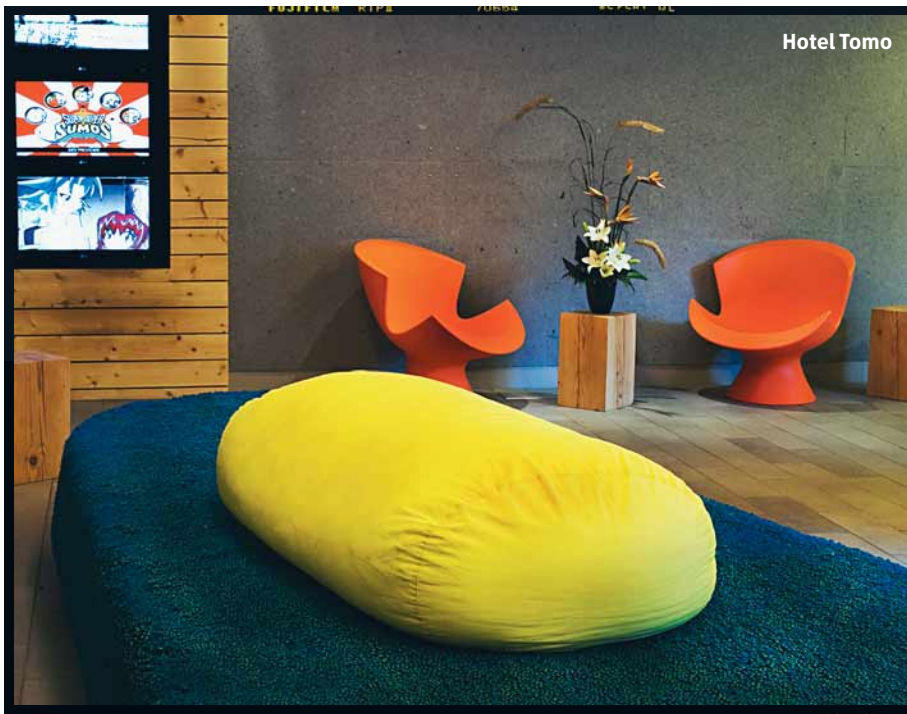
with PlayStation 3 and Wii, beanbags, and a giant LCD projection screen. Situated in the middle of San Francisco's vibrant Japantown district, Hotel Tomo is a great base for travellers, with plenty of shopping and dining options nearby, including the charming, if somewhat maze-like, Japan Center shopping district, and the swanky shops and restaurants a little further up Fillmore Street. **From \$US130 (\$140).**

**HOTEL DRISCO**


**2901 Pacific Avenue. (415) 346 2880. [jdvhoteles.com/drisco](http://jdvhoteles.com/drisco)**

While many of the city's hotels are dotted around Union Square, this charming establishment is tucked away on a leafy street in the upmarket residential neighbourhood of Pacific Heights. Think postcard scenes – narrow, century-old Victorian houses, and steep hills with scenic vistas at their crests. With its suburban locale and old-world decor, this establishment, housed in a 1903 building, feels more like a country B&B or guesthouse than an urban hotel. The daily wine aperitif reception will make guests feel almost as if they're lodging with old friends. The upscale shopping and eating of Pacific Heights' popular Upper Fillmore district is a stroll away, while San Francisco's other attractions are but a short drive.

**From \$US210 (\$230).**



Hotel Tomo

 For airtfares call **Qantas** on 13 13 13 or visit [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)  
For holiday packages to San Francisco call **Qantas Holidays** on 13 14 15.