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Day Trippin'

By Fran Miller



A gorgeous view from Sausalito's Marina Plaza Harbor. Photos Fran Miller

While a day trip allows for great enjoyment of the area's activities, an overnight stay is guaranteed to relax and rejuvenate. Most Sausalito hotels take full advantage of their charmed vantage points, but one, in particular, cannot be beat for its prime location - The Inn Above Tide, which sits literally above the tide. While on a recent visit, kayakers waved as they glided by our spacious deck where we enjoyed a glass of wine. "I could be very happy living here," said my San Francisco-born and bred husband who becomes instantly revitalized whenever he is near his hometown. Later, as the skyline illuminated on the horizon, we realized that gazing upon the city is even more magical than staying within it.

The Inn Above Tide guests enjoy complimentary evening wine and cheese, a beautiful breakfast buffet that can be enjoyed in their library or in-room, the use of bicycles, and the assistance of a knowledgeable and friendly staff that can assist with reservations, transportation and excursion ideas. But a simple walk up and down Bridgeway provided enough entertainment to fill our afternoon.

We first headed toward Heath Ceramics (400 Gate Five Rd.) to examine the 'seconds' section - dishes, pitchers, mugs and serving bowls with slight, mostly undetectable imperfections, marked at 20 percent off retail. Heath has been handcrafting its classic pottery in this industrial location since the late 1950s. Take a behind-the-scenes tour Friday through Sunday and find out why a simple coffee mug costs \$30, and why it's worth every penny. Also be sure to check out the tile overstock room.

We strolled back along Marina paths offering beautiful views of the harbor, and headed toward the heart of town where decidedly tourist-oriented shops reside amongst businesses that found a home here long before the ferries began their hourly deposit of visitors. The Mark Reuben Sports and History Gallery, for instance, has been at 34 Princess Street for 25 years. The tiny shop features more than 5,000 historic and vintage photos of sports stars, rock icons, and historical figures and provides a wonderful trip down memory lane. A few doors over, we could not resist the lure of Pegasus Leather and its abundant display of jackets. Some day we will be more than looky-loos.

Head a bit farther to the Bridgeway Promenade and you are likely to see Bill Dan, Sausalito's "Rock Man," quietly and carefully balancing stones into mini, freestyle sculptures that defy gravity.

Dan has been a local fixture for years; his impromptu works of art exist for that particular moment, yet are captured forever on camera by the thousands of passersby. A stop at Munchies Candies, where they welcome a bit of tasting from their overflowing apple basket displays of taffy, tided us over until dinner.

Sausalito is home to one of my all-time favorite Bay Area restaurants, Poggio. Located on Bridgeway on the ground level of the Casa Madrona Hotel and Spa, Poggio is a classic Italian trattoria overseen by Chef Ben Balisteri who uses the best local ingredients in his Northern Italy-inspired cuisine. A homey, welcoming vibe, a great bar scene, and an expansive menu keep me coming back time and again. Proprietor Larry Mindel, a 30-year veteran of the Bay Area food scene, has taken everything he's learned from stints at Il Fornaio, Prego, Ciao and MacArthur Park to create a truly great restaurant experience. Poggio welcome the tourists, but at its heart, it's a locals' spot.

Satiated and tired, we headed back to our Bay facing room at the lovely Inn Above Tide and took in the incredible view that, just like a trip to Sausalito, never gets old.



Heath Ceramics has been handcrafting pottery in its Sausalito studio since the 1950s.

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