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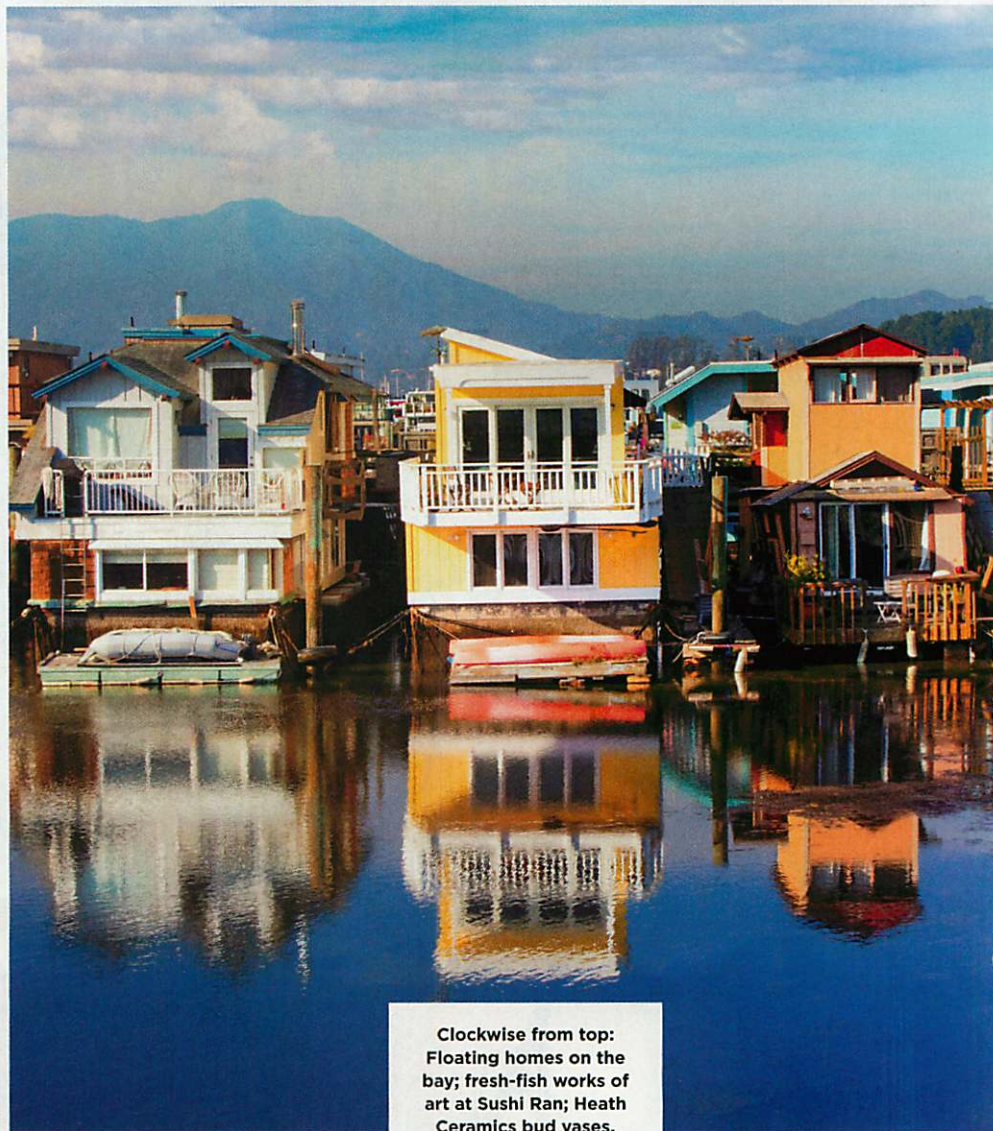


SAUSALITO

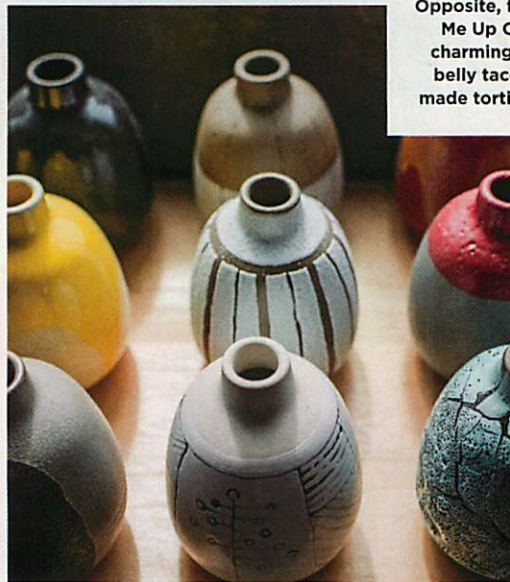
Superb cuisine, killer views, and colorful houseboats: What's *not* to love about California's tastiest town?

LIFE IN SAUSALITO runs on two alluring tracks: vertically up steep hillsides to million-dollar homes with expansive views of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge, and horizontally along the water—literally. It's the rare small town that boasts a nautical neighborhood of more than 400 houseboats, including shingled cottages with overflowing window planters, sailors' sanctuaries built from weathered ship parts, and white, boxy, modern abodes with floor-to-ceiling windows. When locals do leave their perches and pilothouses, they walk to Sausalito's energetic downtown, where serious bikers zoom by faster than cars and the ferry unloads besotted day-trippers from San Francisco.

Still, the pace of life in this storied enclave that began as a fishing village is considerably slower than on the other side of the bridge. "It's a charming little town that seems so far away from all the chaos of a major city, even though it's right across the bay," says author and longtime resident Mitch Powers. For visitors, it's a true getaway. For locals—around 7,000 artists, writers, and outdoors lovers, plus business and tech tycoons—any hour of the day seems right for sipping espresso at alfresco café tables and watching the world go by.



Clockwise from top:
Floating homes on the bay; fresh-fish works of art at Sushi Ran; Heath Ceramics bud vases. Opposite, from top: Pick Me Up Chocolate's charming entry; pork belly tacos on hand-made tortillas at Copita



EAT AND DRINK

Locals congregate around the fire pit and bocce court at the harborfront **Bar Bocce** for sourdough-crust pizzas and pitchers of sweet and tangy house sangria, but the best spot at this popular hangout may be on the restaurant's little strip of beach, where you can spread a blanket and have your meal by the water. Nearby, tiny **Sushi Ran's** sashimi has won international awards; vegetarians will be equally wowed by sides like kimchi Brussels sprouts. For elevated Mexican cuisine, **Copita's** ceviche featuring lobster, flounder, and scallops is exquisite (as are the chile-spiced pom-egranate margaritas).

SHOP

If you find yourself ogling the elegantly rustic dishware at Copita, stop by where it's actually made. **Heath Ceramics**, the artisan pottery company founded in Sausalito in 1948, produces thousands of glazed pieces per week, and is open for touring and shopping. Skirting San Francisco Bay, Bridgeway Promenade is dotted with small eateries and upscale boutiques, putting a gilded frame around the notion of Main Street. Must-stop No. 1: **Shoe Stories of Sausalito** offers

runway-direct heels from Valentino alongside cutting-edge local brands like Freda Salvador. (Warning: Browsing the deeply discounted sale section upstairs may make you late for dinner.) Must-stop No. 2: **Pick Me Up Chocolate** is the brainchild of a former Hollywood art director and her daughter-in-law, who took a chocolate-tasting trip around the world before setting up shop here to sell handcrafted truffles, pralines, and ganaches from local chocolate artisans.

EXPLORE

You know it's the good life when the **Golden Gate National Recreation area** is the local, verdant playground. Hiking and biking trails through **Muir Woods** to the northwest and the **Marin Headlands** to the south offer striking views of dark-sand beaches and dramatic cliffs. Back on the Bay, **Sea Trek's** stand-up paddleboard and kayak rentals and lessons put your workout on the water (all while wide-eyed harbor seals bob nearby and eye your exertions). Right in town, a compact, sandy expanse at **Schoonmaker Point Marina** is best for lying out in the sun and watching the yachts go by. On the Pacific side of the peninsula and a 15-minute drive away,

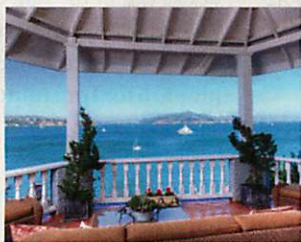
breezy **Rodeo Beach** is a favorite among seasoned surfers and dog owners alike, with its large waves and off-leash allowances.

STAY

The family-owned **Inn Above Tide** takes full advantage of being the only Sausalito hotel right on the bay: Almost every guest room has its own glass-walled balcony furnished with a wood dining set and cushioned lounge chairs. Inside, many of the elegantly minimalist rooms have wood-burning fireplaces and deep soaking tubs. Breakfast features fresh local fruits and French pastries ferried over every morning from San Francisco. Complimentary bike rentals allow guests to explore the area like locals. Rates start at \$360; 800/893-8433 or innabovetide.com. Two miles south of downtown and nestled amid grassy hills, the bucolic **Cavallo Point Lodge** occupies a former military base; former officers' residences now house sumptuous leather and wood furnishings. A resort known for its outstanding culinary options (and its gourmet cooking classes), Cavallo Point also has a spacious spa. Rates start at \$400; 415/339-4700 or cavallopoint.com.



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