



Guest senior traveler: My best in San Francisco are the Fairmont, the Mark Hopkins, the Palace and the Westin St. Francis. They're among the oldest hotels in the famed city, but are still wonderfully five-star, luxurious places to meet, sleep, drink, dance, romance and dine.

The Mark Hopkins is perched atop Nob Hill across the street from the equally classic St. Francis. If you get a room with a big window or balcony overlooking the city and the Bay, it's worth sitting there sipping a drink just to enjoy the view, whether dawn, day, twilight or night.

The Top of the Mark is a restaurant/nightclub/meeting room suite on the hotel's highest floor, and serves as a last hurrah for Navy guys before they ship out. When they return, it's also traditional to celebrate their survival again at the Top. The site was featured in several movies about the Navy. There was "Kiss Them For Me", starring Cary Grant. If you read the book or saw "The Caine Mutiny", you know the officers of the Navy minesweeper gathered there to celebrate winning their court martial instigated by their insane captain, Lieutenant Commander Queeg (Humphrey Bogart).

The stately Mark Hopkins has luxurious facilities and costs about \$400 plus a night for a basic room. It offers great restaurants, meeting rooms, and if you're feeling sentimental, the Top of the Mark.

The St. Francis, now over 100 years old, is in two segments. The old hotel is still grand, with the enormous atrium lobby, full of magnificent marble and crystal. The new building is just as luxurious and boasts an all-glass outdoor elevator for looking out on the city.

The hotel sits on Union Square, across from a park, surrounded by posh stores, restaurants and hordes of tourists. It's a short walk to Market Street, the theater district, as well as the largest Chinatown in the world, except for China itself.

The stately Palace Hotel just celebrated its 106th birthday, and the landmark building sits right on the city's main thoroughfare, Market Street. It's within easy walking distance of many of the city's top stores, restaurants, theaters and other tourist attractions, including the downtown turnaround terminal of the famed cable cars.

The Fairmont San Francisco, rated at five stars, has definitely earned its title of Queen of Nob Hill. Also more than a century old, the Queen doesn't show her age. It's marble, polished brass and luxury all the way.

Near the Moscone Convention Center is the InterContinental's super modern luxury. The exterior is a soaring, 32-story monument of blue-grey glass. The location is near business and major conventions, south of Market Street in the financial district. Other than clubs and restaurants in the hotel, there isn't much for tourists to see and do in the immediate neighborhood. However, a brisk walk will take you to the newly-built Westfield Centre, which now features good restaurants and high-class shopping.

There are tour services available to pick up and deliver you from most hotel front doors, for those who want to visit Fisherman's Wharf, Alcatraz Island, the Embarcadero, Chinatown and other city sights. Prices for basic rooms at the InterContinental start at about \$500 a night.