

# Federal Documents Focus

## San Francisco

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San Francisco conjures images of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars, Chinatown, and a free spirited atmosphere reminiscent of the Summer of Love. While San Francisco is certainly all that, it is also home to places and historical events connected to federal government policies and programs. We hope these tidbits of information will help you appreciate San Francisco in a new way, whether you are attending for ALA Annual or stopping by on a future visit to the Golden State. ALA Annual will be held primarily at the Moscone Center ([www.moscone.com](http://www.moscone.com)) in the downtown district, which is near a plethora of hotels and accessible using Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). Many of the places mentioned in this article are within walking distance of Moscone Center, but some attractions are further away and require using mass transit or a personal vehicle.

### Golden Gate National Recreation Area

San Francisco's current reputation as a thriving metropolitan city obscures the city's military foundation and importance to the overall security of our nation's West Coast. If you have an interest in military history or are simply looking for spectacular views of the San Francisco Bay and Golden Gate Bridge, consider visiting the **Presidio**. Located north of downtown it can be reached in approximately 1 hour by Muni bus, 30 minutes by car, or 45 minutes using the PresidioGo bus from the Embarcadero BART station (free on weekends). This former army base's 1,491 acres are now part of the **Golden Gate National Recreation Area**. At one time the base was an integral part of the Pacific coast defense system, which also included Angel Island and Alcatraz. The base was decommissioned in 1994 as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, at which time it was transferred to the National Parks Service. A few years later in 1996, Congress created the Presidio Trust a federal agency in charge of managing and preserving "natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources" of the Presidio lands and 700 historic buildings. Today visitors are able to appreciate (in the words of the Presidio trust) the "nation's finest collections of fortifications, landscapes, buildings, structures and artifacts related to military history. It also embraces the oldest national cemetery on the West Coast, the final resting place of many Medal of Honor awardees" (<http://1.usa.gov/1F7U4q0>). Start your visit

at the Visitor's Center to learn about the different museums, tours, trails, restaurants, and other amenities.

### Palace of Fine Arts

The Presidio lands provided another cultural intersection when part of the lands along the waterfront were donated by the federal government for the **Panama-Pacific Exposition** of 1915. Also referred to as the World's Fair of 1915, the exposition was conceived as a way to prove to the world that San Francisco had overcome the devastation wrought by the 1906 earthquake. The buildings constructed for the fair were intended to be temporary as they were typically constructed of timber, plaster, and chicken wire. The only remaining structure commemorating the fair is the **Palace of Fine Arts**, which is located on the border of the Presidio grounds. The building couldn't withstand the effects of age and deterioration so in 1960 it was demolished with a high quality replica reconstructed in its place (<http://1.usa.gov/1yIIHCC>).

Corridor of the Palace of Fine Arts. Image from the Bulletin of the Pan American Union. March 1915. U.S. Congressional Serial Set Vol. No. 6877, pg. 300.

### Alcatraz and Angel Island

Another popular National Parks Service destination is **Alcatraz** prison on Alcatraz island ([www.nps.gov/alca/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/alca/index.htm)). There are no entrance fees beyond the price of the ferry ticket required to reach the island and all island tours are free. Ferry tickets sell out rapidly in summer so plan on reserving your ticket in advance. The island is also a sanctuary for thousands of seabirds so be aware no food is allowed beyond the dock area.

Anyone with an interest in America's immigrant past, military history, or simply wishing to hike and enjoy amazing views of the city skyline should find time to visit **Angel Island State Park**. Angel Island was employed as a military base for over 100 years before it was closed in 1960 and transferred to the California State Parks system. From 1910 to 1940 the island served as the primary processing station for immigrants from Asia. Most immigrants were from China, but there were more than 80 nationalities represented (<http://bit.ly/1Dtc4jT>). In World War II it was used as a way station for POWs from Japan and Germany. The island can be reached using one of several commercial ferries that traverse the bay (<http://bit.ly/1NFEir2>).

### Maritime Influence

After your tour of Alcatraz or Angel Island, you might wander north along the waterfront and find yourself in the Fisherman's Wharf and Ghiradelli Square area, home to the **San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park**. The Historical Park is



Corridor of the Palace of Fine Arts. Image from the *Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, March 1915. U.S. Congressional Serial Set Vol. No. 6877, pg. 300.

actually three distinct sites that showcase the impact of seafaring on San Francisco's history: the **Maritime History Museum** near the beach, the **Visitor Center** one block from Fisherman's Wharf, and the **Historic Vessels** anchored along the nearby Hyde Street Pier. The Visitor Center includes impressive exhibits that transport visitors to the sights and sounds of life along the docks. Go back to the waterfront as it existed during Native American settlement, followed by the dramatic impact of the Gold Rush on the coastline (be sure to note the map of ships buried under various buildings), and extending to the influence of Italian and Chinese immigrants on the city and the bay. If you are interested in walking a little further, the Maritime History Museum is housed in the Bathhouse Building, an Art Deco building reminiscent of an ocean liner. In addition to rotating displays of nautical history and artifacts, this unique building also showcases a number of vibrant WPA murals. No matter what your interest, it's a beautiful area to walk around and enjoy the charm and bustle of the waterfront (<http://1.usa.gov/1NLJfAA>).

## United Nations Plaza

Although San Francisco doesn't yet have ties to any interplanetary organizations, it is the birthplace of Earth's biggest

intergovernmental organization. In fact, ALA Annual will take place exactly 70 years after the signing of the UN charter on June 26, 1945, in San Francisco. If you are using BART to navigate the city, consider getting off at the Civic Center/UN Plaza stop to visit some UN landmarks, or take a one mile (approximately twenty minute) walk from Moscone Center. The UN Charter was signed by President Truman and other heads of state in the grand auditorium now known as the Herbst Theatre inside the **Veterans Building**. Plenary meetings for the conference were held next door at the **War Memorial Opera House** (<http://bit.ly/1CBpEhA>). Nearby, the **United Nations Plaza** (<http://bit.ly/1GmiLDo>) was created to honor the formation of the United Nations. The Plaza proudly displays a series of stone pillars inscribed with the names of each UN member country and a spacious fountain composed of massive granite slabs. The plaza also hosts numerous festivals and a popular farmers market ([www.unplazasf.org/about](http://www.unplazasf.org/about)). Other nearby areas of interest are the **San Francisco Public Library** ([sfpl.org](http://sfpl.org)), the **Civic Center Plaza**, and **City Hall**.

## Vicinity of Moscone Center

Even if you don't have much time for sightseeing during the conference, there are a couple options even closer if you have a short opening in your schedule. While not technically related to a federal agency or program, **Yerba Buena Gardens** ([yerba.buenagardens.com](http://yerba.buenagardens.com)) is located behind the Moscone Convention Center at Third and Howard Streets. The gardens provide a serene oasis from the bustle of the city, offering visitors a chance to enjoy several larger-than-life public art installations and take in fresh air in beautiful surroundings.

If a visit to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) library is on your bucket list, you are in luck. The **EPA Library for the Southwest Region**, which includes California, Nevada, Arizona, and Hawaii is located about three blocks from the Moscone Center at 75 Hawthorne Street. The library is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m., closed on Fridays. Visiting the EPA office requires registering at the guard desk before continuing to the library.

San Francisco has something for every government information lover, and these are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to interesting locations. If you are pressed for time, then the sites near the convention center might be more realistic for you. However, if you have more time and are able to journey further away from Moscone Center, then consider places like the Presidio or Maritime History Museum, or a ferry ride to Alcatraz or Angel Island to steep yourself in the history of San Francisco.