

## ASK THE Expert



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VISITOR  
GUIDE

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**Cynthia Reid**, chief concierge at the Huntington Hotel for 25 years, takes her responsibilities to heart as an ambassador for San Francisco. WHERE's Katie Prevost finds out how she showcases the city's beauty and culture to guests.

**What do you suggest first-time visitors to the city do while they're here?**

First-time visitors must jump on a cable car, walk through Chinatown and North Beach, sail across the Bay, and finally drive across the Golden Gate Bridge to Muir Woods and walk through the virgin redwood forest. I want my guests to take

away memories of the smell of fresh roasting coffee beans, the cries of the seagulls, the sound of clanging cable-car bells, and the melancholy warning of the fog horns in the bay.

**What are your recommendations for people who know the city well and want something offbeat?**

For return guests, I would suggest a day watching a Giants baseball game (AT&T Park, 24 Willie Mays Plaza), and an evening at the San Francisco Opera (301 Van Ness, 415-861-4008) or a concert at the San Francisco Symphony (201 Van Ness Ave., 415-864-6000). I might also suggest an afternoon in the Mission, taking a walking tour of the murals, stopping for lunch at Tartine Bakery (600 Guerrero St., 415-487-2600) and ending at historic Mission Dolores (1855 15th St., 415-929-5620).

**What are your favorite shops in the city, and what are their specialties?**

I enjoy sending my guests on eclectic shopping sprees in special neighborhoods. I love sending them to the consignment store Cris (2056 Polk St., 415-474-1191) in Russian Hill, where you can purchase designer shoes, purses, and clothes for a reasonable price, or shopping for delicate jewelry and French antiques at Nest (2300 Fillmore St., 415-292-6199) on Fillmore Street.

**What has been one of the most interesting "save the day" situations you've come across as a concierge?**

My most last-minute fix was after arranging a small family wedding for a couple from Scotland, finding out one hour before the ceremony that there was no bride, but two grooms. I had just enough time to alert the restaurant, change the cake, and advise the photographer and limo driver of the fact, so that when the couple departed from the elevator, both wearing Scottish kilts, the celebration and festivities would continue without any embarrassment and lots of fun!

**What do you love most about your job?**

I love the moment when guests surrender their requests to my vision and allow me to fulfill their dreams. Whether it is creating the perfect wedding, a surprise proposal, or special romantic weekend, the concierge must engender the trust that is necessary to create magic.

Cynthia Reid served as the first vice president of the founding board of the Northern California Concierge Association and was one of the first female members to be accepted to Les Clefs d'Or. In 1989, she was awarded the Dove Award for Humanitarian of the Year by the concierge association.

**The Huntington Hotel**, 1075 California St.,  
www.huntingtonhotel.com, 415-345-2888

Clockwise from top left: War Memorial Opera House; The Huntington Hotel; Nest; Cynthia Reid.

➔ The underground cables that pull San Francisco's famous cable cars are only two inches wide.