

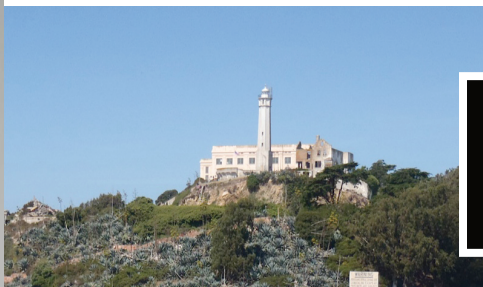


SIXTEEN CANDLES, San FranStyle

“Once you have traveled, the voyage never ends, but is
played out over and over again in the quietest chambers.”

~Pat Conroy, author

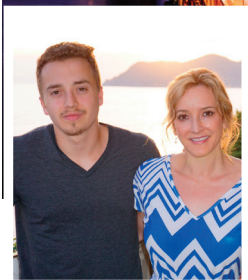
BY: SHANNON LINDEN



TOP LEFT: ALCATRAZ

LEFT: NICOLAS RIDING THE CABLE CAR IN SAN FRANCISCO

RIGHT: SAN FRANCISCO'S SEGWAY



Maybe it's every teenager's dream to wake up on his sixteenth birthday and find a car—any kind of car—in the driveway. But my husband and I have tried to encourage our kids to appreciate the worldly experience. It started when they were just five and three-years old and we moved them to the Middle East. Trading the comforts of Kelowna, for five years of cultural challenge and life-changing experiences in Abu Dhabi, was one of the hardest—and best—things we've ever done.

Repatriated in Canada, we appreciate home more than ever, but we've been bitten by the travel bug big time, so a few years ago, rather than a set of wheels for our son Nic's sixteenth birthday, we opted for wings and a weekend away.

We presented him with a homemade card, pictures of sights and tickets to events in a city he yearned to see, glued within. "Are you serious?" he said. "We're going to San Francisco for my birthday?"

Our daughter was less impressed. "You can't come," we told her.

That might sound cruel, but there were two caveats to this creative birthday gig: the destination had to be in North America and the other kid wasn't invited. Her turn would come.

The thirteenth most visited city in the world, San Francisco lures visitors with its iconic sights, cultural diversity, fabulous food, and fun, fun, fun.

Here, is our itinerary (plus suggestions) of what can reasonably be crammed into a

few days, keeping it as teen-tastic as being stuck with your parents can be.

The Streets of San Francisco

For a kid who insisted upon getting his "L" on the way to school on his 16th birthday, contemplating the city's rollercoaster hills is exciting. Take a streetcar or simply sail over the reportedly steepest hill, Filbert, in a crazy cab. Warning: every cab ride we took qualified as crazy: a living episode of Starsky and Hutch, we flew, airborne over crests, somehow landing safely on the other side.

Taking and Turning of the Cable Car

Synonymous with the city, you simply must experience the historic, open-air cable car. Used by both locals and tourists, it's an enjoyable way to get around the inner core. Listen to the bell ring and cables sing as you take in the sights. Go to Union Square and watch the hand turning of a cable car.

Sensational Segway

Sure, you could walk, but what teen wouldn't want to speed things up with this super cool course of transportation? Sign up online with a company like City Segway Tours, show up at their office, get "driving lessons" and head out with a small group. See the sights like Fishermen's Wharf, the Golden Gate Bridge, Telegraph Hill and various neighbourhoods.

Get Your Game On at IGN Entertainment

Show me a teenage boy who doesn't like to game and I'll show you—forget it. There's no such thing. Ours was also fascinated with the production and podcasting that took place at IGN and after emailing

LEFT: SAN FRANCISCO SKYLINE AND BAY BRIDGE AT SUNSET, CALIFORNIA

NICOLAS LINDEN AT ALMOST 19 STILL TRAVELING WITH MOM

BOTTOM LEFT: SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINATOWN IS ONE OF NORTH AMERICA'S LARGEST CHINATOWNS. IT IS ALSO THE OLDEST CHINATOWN IN THE USA





TOP: FISHERMAN'S WHARF CLAM CHOWDER IN A SOUR DOUGH BREAD BOWL

LEFT: FROM LEFT BIRTHDAY BOY NICOLAS LINDEN DAD PAUL AND MOM SHANNON

BOTTOM: FAMOUS LOMBARD STREET IN SAN FRANCISCO AT SUNRISE

one of his favourite reviewers, Greg Miller, he was astounded with an invite to tour the office and watch a podcast live. A spectacular lobby with video game statues awaits visitors while modern glass offices invite voyeurs to peek and see where creative minds meet. Journalists busily typing and fun folk running the place all love their dream jobs. It's worth booking a tour online.

Watch a Game

The list of possibilities is long, with timing and pricing being the determining factors, but there's professional hockey (San Jose Sharks), football (Oakland Raiders) and baseball (Giants and Oakland A's). We took the Bart out to Oakland and took in a game. Singing the traditional half time "Take me out to the ballgame" while vendors sang, "Beef dogs! Cotton Candy! Get your ice-cold lemonade!" was super cool.

A Little Laughter

Since he was a wee babe, our son has had the best giggle and he grew up to be a funny guy, with a passion for comedy. We took him to see comedian, Dimitri Martin at the fabulous Palace of Fine Arts.

Alcatraz

What teenager (or adult) wouldn't be intrigued by the creepy history of the infamous former federal prison where big time criminals like Al Capone, George "Machine Gun" Kelly and Robert "The Birdman" Stroud were housed? Take the short ferry ride over cold, current-crazy waters to the rocky shores of the isolated island and tour the eerily vacant cells. Headsets available in multiple languages and narrated by former guards and even inmates, tell a captivating 45-minute tale while your tour. An outstanding tourist must, book online online (just Google Alcatraz tours).

Boudin's Bakery at Fisherman's Wharf

Just walking around the wharf is fun but a highlight was our visit to the well-known Boudin's Sourdough bakery where we watched the delivery of bread via robots, marveled at the dough shaped into animals, like turtles and alligators, and of course, chowed down on traditional clam chowder in chewy bread bowls.

Stay tuned for next issue, when we hit the Big Apple with our little girl. 🍷

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