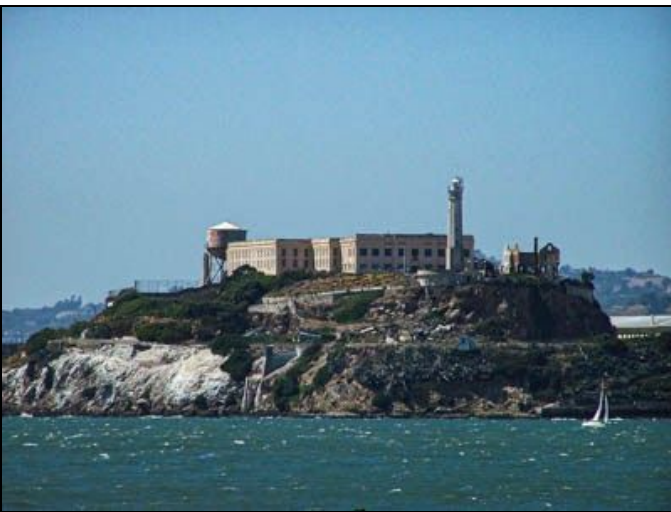




The Wayfarer

By Dawn M. Wayand

Behind Bars on Alcatraz



On a recent trip to San Francisco, I found myself on the Island of Alcatraz, but luckily, not for the reasons that it was used between the years of 1934 and 1963! Today Alcatraz is one of the major tourist attractions in the San Francisco area. It is accessible by the Blue & Gold Fleet ferry lines from Pier 41.

Because of its overshadowing notoriety as a Federal penitentiary, many people are unaware of the fact that Alcatraz initially served as a military fort, most notably used during the years of the Civil War to protect San Francisco from Confederate invaders. Subsequently, it was turned into a military prison and then later became what is now known as "The Rock".

Once arriving on the island, the tour guide will give you some brief information about the prison and lead you to the starting point of your self-guided tour. I recommend the Cell House Recorded Tour, which is a 35-minute

recorded tour that is narrated by former inmates and correctional officers remembering life on Alcatraz. The headset tours are available in English, Spanish, Italian, German, Japanese, and French.

The tour walks you past the guardhouses and guides you through the administration building and between the cell blocks of the prison that housed known criminals such as Al Capone, George "Machine Gun" Kelly, Rufus McCain and Alvin Karpis. It leads you through the library, cafeteria, visitation area, recreation area and a few of the prison's regular cells and "hole" or isolation cells.



Former inmates and staff tell stories about their experiences living on Alcatraz and of the escape attempts made during its occupancy. On Alcatraz, there was one guard assigned for every three inmates, unlike the usual one for twelve in regular prisons. It is of record that 36 prisoners made an attempt to escape from Alcatraz, and although most escapees were captured, some were killed and five were unaccounted for.



One of the most notable facts about the island is that its location teased inmates of the beautiful world around them that they were missing out on as

it is surrounded by astounding views of the city, the Golden Gate Bridge, Sausalito and the beautiful light aqua-colored bay waters. Alcatraz is a recommended must-see when visiting the San Francisco Bay area.

Travel Planning Tips: Europe Vacation Tips Series Part IV - Booking Your Accommodations

Finding inexpensive lodging options in Europe is pretty simple - hostels are widely popular. However, if you are strapped for cash and need to save money on accommodations, finding a good hotel deal can be challenging. It can be done though, with the right research. Keep in mind, most hostels DO NOT have age restrictions. They are just old hotels that have been converted to dorms and/or private rooms and are less expensive than hotels.

I use hostelworld.com when booking my hostels. They only require a 10% deposit up front. You can search by country/city for hostels on their website and view information and pictures like any hotel booking website.

Once you search your destination, you will get a list of hostels in the area. They will price on the list for dorms and/or private rooms. I like having my own room. Depending on where you're at, it can be more secure for your belongings. However, I've slept in dorms for the sole purpose of meeting people to hang out with on special occasions such as New Year's Eve.

On the listings, check out room photos - sometimes they can say a lot. Search the web for attraction maps of your

destination city so you know where your attractions of interest are clustered together. On each listing you should see a column titled 'Located Near...' Take that information into consideration when choosing where to stay. (I once made a reservation in Paris without doing this and found out upon arrival that the hostel was actually located in Versailles (outside the city center). Look at ratings and the list of amenities and inclusions. Some do not include linens but those can usually be rented at the front desk. Most hostels include breakfast - some as little as bread and coffee, others as elaborate as an all-you-can eat American breakfast bar.

Next month, we'll continue with Part V of this series: **Tips for Packing.**

Lodging Pick

Looking for cheap quality lodging near the major attractions in San Francisco? I was pleasantly surprised to find that I could get my own private room complete with a king-size bed and Jacuzzi bath tub for \$69/night (compared to \$120-300 per night for decent accommodations anywhere else in San Francisco!) USA Hostels San Francisco is located two blocks from Union Square. Public transportation or a nice stroll will get you to Ghiradelli Square and/or Chinatown.



Parking permits for a garage four blocks over costs \$14/day. Keep in mind, in San Francisco, parking is very

limited. If you like to walk to explore and plan to skip Wine Country or other out-of-city attractions, I'd recommend nixing a rental and using public transportation.

USA Hostels San Francisco

749 Taylor Street (between Sutter & Bush)
San Francisco, CA
<http://www.usahostels.com>

Eats Pick

San Francisco is known for its Dungeness Crab and Neptune's Palace is a great place to try it. Finding this restaurant is an easy task as it is notorious for the Seal Docks located in the bay next to it and the seals are never quiet! The restaurant is one of two on Pier 39 that has breathtaking views of the city and water (the other being Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.).



Their clam chowder is pretty immaculate and in my opinion, comparable to chowders I've tasted in New England.

For dinner, I had the Cioppino which was a pasta based dish with crab, scallops, clams, mussels and fresh fish sauteed in a garlic cream sauce.

Neptune's Palace

Pier 39, Fisherman's Wharf District
San Francisco, California