



AMSTERDAM



SAN FRANCISCO



COPENHAGEN

# 5 CITIES ON THE CHEAP

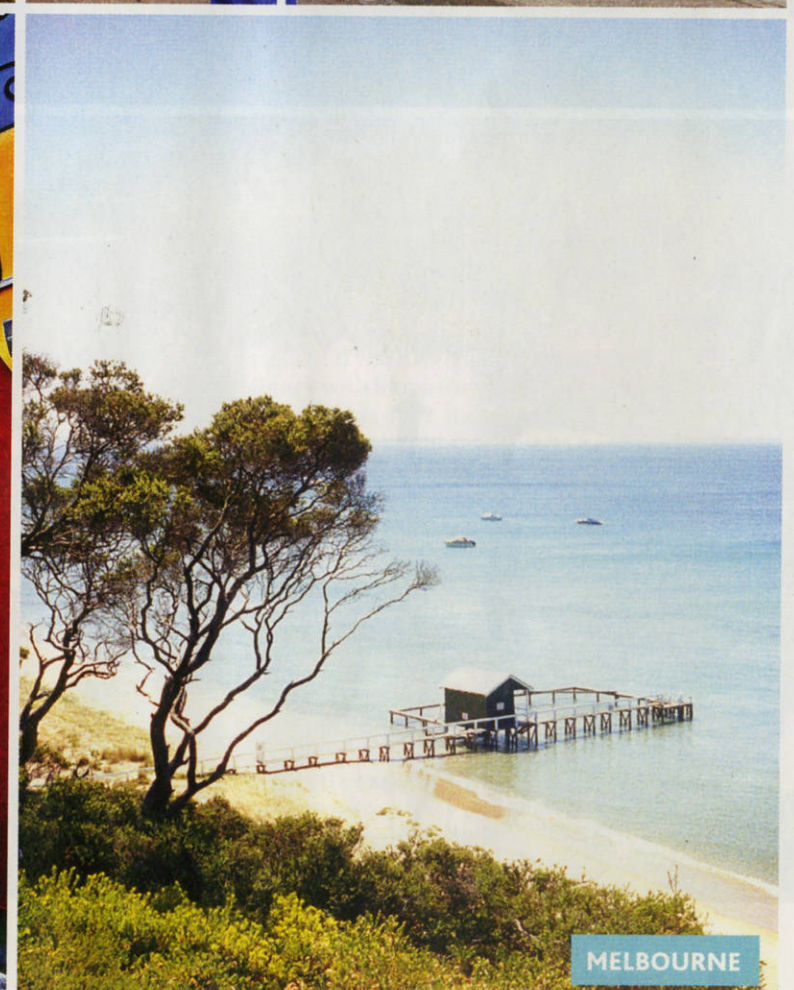
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Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Melbourne, San Francisco and Singapore are all expensive and alluring in their own way. Yet, there are ways to work around the costs and still have a fabulous time cruising down the canals in Amsterdam, gawking at the modish street art in Melbourne, or gorging on *kaya* toast in Singapore. We tell you how

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SINGAPORE



MELBOURNE



## TRAVEL FOR VALUE CITIES ON A BUDGET

1. Amsterdam, despite its reputation as a party town, is a gorgeous, cultured city.
2. The beautiful garden at the Rijksmuseum is perfect for a breather.
3. Spend an unusual morning at the Amsterdamse Bos.
4. Soak in the quiet in the Begijnhof garden.



# 01 Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**DAY 1** Begin your first day in a city that brings together 17th-century buildings and peculiar modern sculptures with a free self-guided walking or cycling tour. Try **Sandeman's** free walking tour, which takes you on a visual journey through Amsterdam's history from the banks of the River Amstel to important trading neighbourhoods ([www.newamsterdamtours.com](http://www.newamsterdamtours.com)). Alternatively, cycle around the harbour; through the romantic Jordaan quarter; to the Anne Frank House and through secret courtyards and tranquil canals with Yellow Bike's **City Bike Tour** ([www.yellowbike.nl/en](http://www.yellowbike.nl/en); ₹ 2,060). Spend the afternoon at **Begijnhof**, an idyllic hidden courtyard that was inhabited by religious women in the 14th century and is now home to a chapel and church. In the evening, take a free ferry ride to **Amsterdam Noord** and enjoy picture-postcard views of the Dutch countryside ([www.ilovenoord.com](http://www.ilovenoord.com)). End your day with an exploration of Amsterdam's famed **Red Light District**.

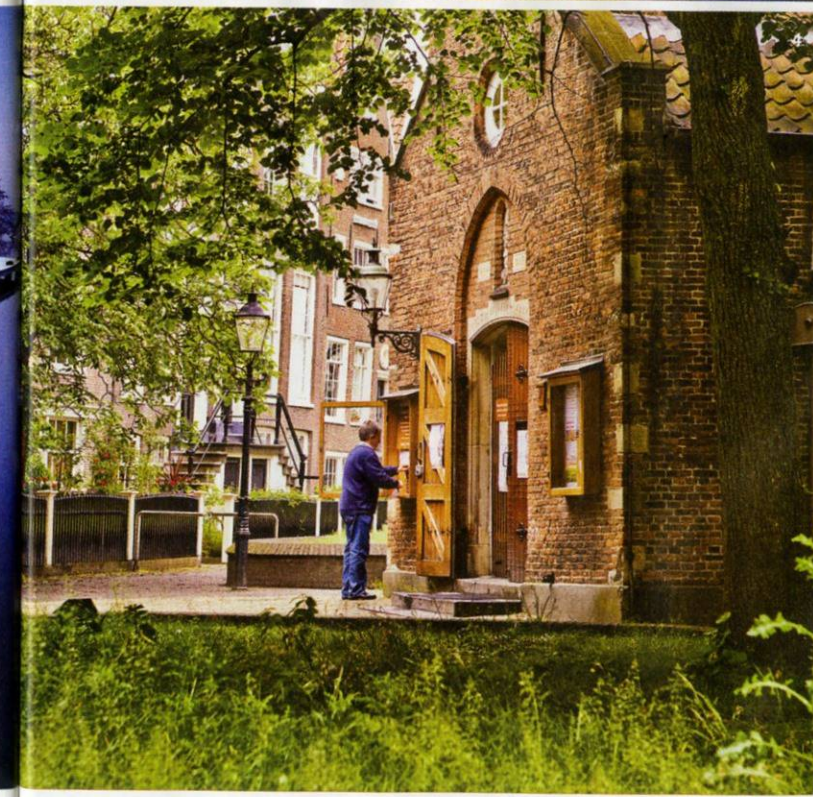
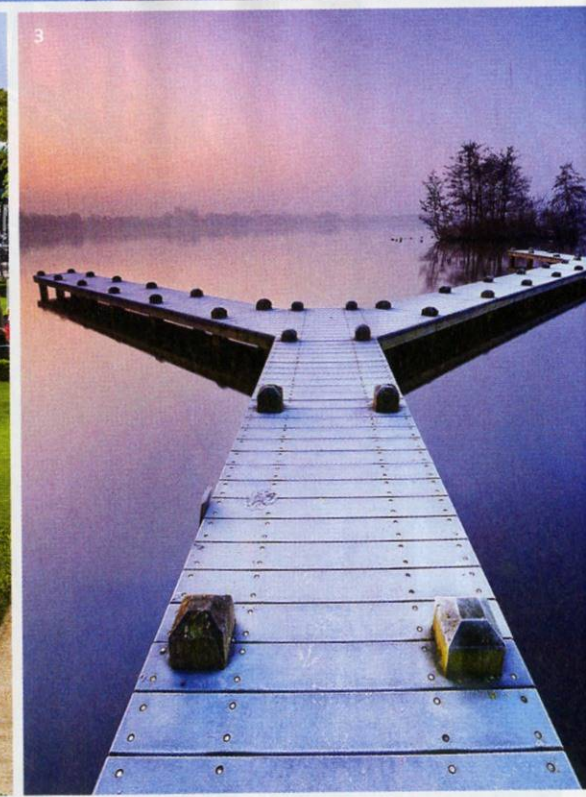
**DAY 2** Ambling around **The Nine Streets** in the centre of the city's historic district, with its small boutiques, excellent second-hand shops and well-loved restaurants between the main canals – Heerengracht, Keizersgracht, Prinsengracht and Singel – can keep you busy all day. All those wonderful shops might set you back a few euros – so spend the afternoon at the free **floating flower market** on the Singel Canal and allow the colours and fragrances to overwhelm you. For a slice of Amsterdam's history, head to the **Schuttersgalerij** at **The Amsterdam Museum**, a covered street lined with old portraits of civic guards that is free to visit ([www.amsterdammuseum.nl](http://www.amsterdammuseum.nl)). The rest of the museum tells the story of Amsterdam's metamorphosis from a sleepy fishing village to a major trading centre. Take a breather at the **Rijksmuseum Garden**, a free outdoor gallery with exquisite flowerbeds, fountains and monumental works by Henry Moore.

**DAY 3** Give your day an unconventional start at the **Amsterdamse Bos**, an artificial 'forest' with tiny pools, jogging and biking trails and a river ([www.amsterdamsebos.nl/english](http://www.amsterdamsebos.nl/english)). Located 20 minutes away from the Museumplein, there is also a small petting zoo with pigs, cows, horses, goats, sheep and chickens. Next, visit **The Westerkerk**, a beautiful church along the Prinsengracht that Anne Frank used to love. Its 85m tower is unarguably Amsterdam's finest, and Hendrick de Keyser is to be credited for its elegant exterior ([www.westerkerk.nl/english](http://www.westerkerk.nl/english)). If you like books, you'll love the **Amsterdam Public Library** with its massive collection of English tomes and magazines. Even if you don't, there are rotating art exhibitions, occasional concerts and stunning views from the top floor to catch your fancy ([www.oba.nl](http://www.oba.nl)). End the day at **Cannabis College** ([www.cannabiscollge.com](http://www.cannabiscollge.com)), located in a 17th-century monument in the Red Light District, which has scads of information on the drug. →

**STAY:** **Volkshotel** is only a 10 minute walk from the De Pijp quarter ([www.volkshotel.nl/en](http://www.volkshotel.nl/en); from ₹ 7,425). For the feel of a typical Amsterdam house, complete with dangerously steep stairs and narrow corridors, stay at **Hotel Dwarfs** ([www.hoteldwarfs.com](http://www.hoteldwarfs.com); from ₹ 8,480).

### GOOD TO KNOW

- If you plan to visit a lot of museums, get the **Amsterdam City Card** ([www.iamsterdam.com](http://www.iamsterdam.com); ₹ 4,125/ 24-hour card). The card also gives you access to free, unlimited public transport.
- Every Tuesday, the **Dutch National Opera and Ballet** holds a complimentary classical concert at lunchtime. The **Muziekgebouw** ([www.muziekgebouw.nl](http://www.muziekgebouw.nl)) sells early-bird tickets to everyone between 13 and 30 years for only € 10 (₹ 750) a ticket for a lot of shows.
- You can get cheap drinks at hostels even if you aren't staying there, including beer for € 2 (₹ 150).





# 02 Melbourne, Australia

**DAY 1** Melbourne abounds with art, history and culture, much of which is free to take in. Begin your day at **Hosier Lane** opposite Federation Square and keep walking north to feast your eyes on colourful murals by local artists and a few works by visiting ones. Continue the art tour at **The National Gallery of Victoria**, which houses works by renowned names like Drysdale, Rodin and Constable ([www.ngv.vic.gov.au](http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au)). It is split into the NGV International St Kilda Road and the Ian Potter Centre on Federation Square. If you're interested in cinema, the **ACMI** (Australian Centre for the Moving Image) is worth a visit for its interactive history of film and television ([www.acmi.net.au](http://www.acmi.net.au)). You can also check out the private galleries in the **Flinders Lane** precinct for exhibitions of smaller local and international artists. Take a break from all the art and history with a stroll down **St Kilda Beach** and **Brighton Beach**, both located along Phillip Bay.

**DAY 2** Use the free **City Circle Tram** to tour the city with informative commentary. The circular route covers major attractions and ends at the Docklands precinct ([www.yarratrams.com.au](http://www.yarratrams.com.au); route 35). You can also ride the heritage W-class trams, which have chairs and leather hand-straps. Your second evening in Melbourne can be spent discovering the city's penchant for live music. Begin at **Cherry Bar**, well known for its free as well as charged gigs ([www.cherrybar.com.au](http://www.cherrybar.com.au)). **Beat**, a local magazine that is available at bars, pubs and cafés, has listings for folk, blues, jazz, pop and Australian hip-hop. Suburbs like **The Northcote Social Club** ([www.northcotesocialclub.com/gigs](http://www.northcotesocialclub.com/gigs)) and **The Retreat** in the suburb of Brunswick ([www.retreathotelbrunswick.com.au/gigs](http://www.retreathotelbrunswick.com.au/gigs); live gigs are free) are also good spots for live music.

Or, you can pack in some shopping at the **Queen Victoria Market**, a huge, historical open-air market known for farm-fresh produce and other merchandise ([www.qvm.com.au](http://www.qvm.com.au)). Pro tip: If you're taking the City Circle Tram, get off at the corner of La Trobe and Elizabeth Streets and walk north to the Market.

**DAY 3** Get a taste of Melbourne's early urban history in the northern neighbourhoods of **Collingwood**, **Abbotsford** and **Clifton Hill** and see iconic industrial landmarks. You will find walking tour maps on the local council's website ([www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Planning--Building/Heritage/Heritage-Walk](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Planning--Building/Heritage/Heritage-Walk)). Next, give in to your political side and watch Australian politicians engage in entertaining debate at the **Parliament House**. Check the calendar ([www.parliament.vic.gov.au/visit](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/visit)) to see when The Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly are sitting, and find a seat at the public gallery. You can also take a free public tour to admire the stately leather and wood interiors. By evening, take a stroll through the vast **Royal Botanic Gardens**, featuring thousands of plants from Australia and the rest of the world across its 86 acres ([www.rbg.vic.gov.au](http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au)). →

**STAY:** Try **The Nunnery**, a dormitory and guesthouse dating back to 1888 ([www.nunnery.com.au](http://www.nunnery.com.au); bed in dorm from ₹ 2,000, guesthouse: doubles from ₹ 7,200).

## GOOD TO KNOW

- There's free wi-fi at several places across the CBD ([www.thatsmelbourne.com.au](http://www.thatsmelbourne.com.au)). Pick up the full list of hotspots at the Melbourne Visitor Centre on Federation Square.
- Use **SkyBus** for low-cost airport shuttles and free hotel transfers ([www.skybus.com.au](http://www.skybus.com.au); from ₹ 980 one-way).



1. These colourful beach huts have become true-blue Australian symbols
2. The ACMI always has something interesting going on
3. The Queen Victoria Market is delightful to wander through, even if you aren't in the market for anything
4. Take some time to explore the graffiti-ed streets and bylanes





1. You will want to spend hours with the deer in Dyrehaven Park
2. It's not just Buckingham Palace that has a Changing of the Guard ceremony
3. If it's summer, the Danes will be relaxing in Copenhagen's many gardens en masse
4. Danish cuisine is seafood-heavy and delicious
5. The Nyhavn, or new harbour, district is a pleasure to explore
6. The Little Mermaid has become emblematic of Copenhagen



# 03 Copenhagen, Denmark

**DAY 1** If you're there in the summer, you'd do well to begin your day with a swim in the fresh waters of **Islands Brugge**, a stylish pool overlooking the harbour in Indre By. After a hearty breakfast, take a stroll around the former barracks of **Christiana**, the erstwhile 'free city' patronised by hippies. The area is dotted with colourful buildings and charming cafés and theatres, which you can also explore with a paid, guided tour. At noon, catch the Changing of the Guard at **Amalienborg Castle**. Called "Vagtparade" in Danish, the occasion sees soldiers in blue trousers marching to vigorous music. Carry your own picnic basket to **Kongens Have**, the city's oldest and best-known public garden. Enjoy the view of the leafy pathways while you settle on the grass beneath the canopy of a tree to dig into your meal. If you're visiting in summer, you're in for a treat, as there will be puppet shows and free music.

**DAY 2** The Scandinavian countries are known to be pioneers of freedom, and Copenhagen doesn't disappoint. **Cycling's** a great way to explore the city, and bicycles are easily available for hire (about ₹ 230/ day). Next, make your way to the iconic **Little Mermaid**, a little statue at the end of the Langelinie promenade that has a tragic history of vandalism. If you enjoy history and culture, Copenhagen has plenty of free museums to keep you occupied. Entry to **The National Museum** and **National Gallery** is always free, while the **Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek** and the **Hirschsprung Collection** are free one day during the week. End your day with free samples of gooey warm liver paté, tasty cheese and licorice at **Torvehallerne**, a gourmet food market.

**DAY 3** Start your day with a free tour of **Ebeltoft, Odense or Ribe**, during which the town crier narrates the history of the town ([www.visitdenmark.com](http://www.visitdenmark.com)). In the summer, you can also go on the free **New Copenhagen Tour**, which begins on the steps of the City Hall ([www.newcopenhagentours.com](http://www.newcopenhagentours.com)). Continue on to **Klampenborg** and walk to **Dyrehaven Park**, a historical deer refuge and nature reserve. For a taste of modern Scandinavian architecture, head to **The Royal Library**, an impressive black granite building with beautiful wave-form balconies within. The library offers picturesque views of the harbour, a permanent exhibition of classic literary works like Gutenberg's Bible and the diaries of Hans Christian Andersen and free wi-fi. In the evening, catch a complimentary screening of a classic or contemporary film in one of Copenhagen's parks (in summer only). →

**STAY:** **Bedwood Hostel**, off Nyhavn, is the best option for backpackers, with rooms and dorms that accommodate two to 12 guests ([www.bedwood.dk/en](http://www.bedwood.dk/en); shared dorms from ₹ 2,700/ person, private doubles: ₹ 10,000). **Hotel Sct Thomas** is located close to Værnedamsvej, and several parks and bars ([www.hotelsctthomas.dk](http://www.hotelsctthomas.dk); from ₹ 8,000).

## GOOD TO KNOW

- Save some money on the official canal tours by using the cheaper blue and yellow harbour buses ([www.visitcopenhagen.com](http://www.visitcopenhagen.com)).
- There are several free concerts and festivals at churches and unconventional venues during the summers.
- If you have an International Student Identity Card, you can avail of discounts on sights, accommodation, food and transportation.





# 04 Singapore

**DAY 1** Kick off your time in Singapore by browsing through the collection of contemporary art galleries at **Gillman Barracks** on Lock Road ([www.gillmanbarracks.com](http://www.gillmanbarracks.com)). Built at the site of a former military camp, there are both smaller galleries and larger names like the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore, set amid abundant greenery. If you're lucky, you might get to speak with the curator or artist behind the exhibitions. Spend the afternoon immersing yourself in the beauty and serenity of Singapore's Hindu and Chinese temples. The **Mariamman Temple** in Chinatown is worth a visit, as is the **Thian Hock Keng Temple**, Singapore's oldest Chinese temple. Free vegetarian meals are served in the dining hall of **Kong Meng San Phor Kark See**, a working monastery. End the day at the **National Museum of Singapore**, where the Living Galleries will take you on a vibrant journey through Singapore's history ([www.nationalmuseum.sg](http://www.nationalmuseum.sg)).

**DAY 2** The Singaporeans have their own delicious version of the bread-butter-eggs breakfast, and you must start your day with a helping (or three). At the popular **Ya Kun Kaya Toast** chain of coffee stalls, you can dig into a crisp toast sandwich of butter and kaya, a creamy preparation of eggs, coconut milk, sugar and pandan leaf, served with a half-boiled egg and a cup of dark coffee for just ₹ 335 ([www.yakun.com](http://www.yakun.com)). Thus fortified, head to Changi Point Ferry Terminal to catch a ferry to the remote and indescribably beautiful island of **Pulau Ubin**. Explore forests, wetlands and butterfly groves on foot or bike (bike rental: ₹ 100). From a tall observatory, you have a sweeping view of the island's mangroves and distant shores. Spent from all the walking, you'll want to relax in the evening watching a usually free (though sometimes paid) movie screening or performance at **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** ([www.esplanade.com](http://www.esplanade.com)).

**DAY 3** Unleash your inner shopaholic with a visit to **Haji Lane**. Located in the Kampong Glam neighbourhood, this boutique-lined lane is the narrowest in Singapore. It's also famous for its Middle-Eastern cafés, so you might want to stop for brunch at **Café le Caire**. Apart from clothes, you can also shop for quirky home accessories and gawk at the graffiti on the walls. Next, enjoy a free hour-long tour of **Baba House**, the restored house of an affluent 1920s family. Full of Peranakan history, this house can be visited only by prior appointment on Monday at 2pm, Tuesday at 6.30pm, Thursday at 10am and Saturday at 11am ([www.yoursingapore.com](http://www.yoursingapore.com)). In the evening, go bird-watching at **Bukit Brown Cemetery**, an abandoned cemetery that is now a heritage site strewn with traditional Chinese graves in a serene jungle. Historians and volunteers routinely conduct walking tours here ([www.bukitbrown.com](http://www.bukitbrown.com)). →

## STAY

**Wanderlust Hotel**, on Dickson Road, will charm you with its groovy rooms ([www.wanderlusthotel.com](http://www.wanderlusthotel.com); from ₹ 7,350). The nearby **Hotel 81 – Dickson** is also a good option, with cosy and clean rooms ([www.hotel81.com.sg/hotel\\_dickson.html](http://www.hotel81.com.sg/hotel_dickson.html); from ₹ 3,300).

## GOOD TO KNOW

- Get the **Singapore Tourist Pass** for unlimited use of basic bus services, and the MRT and LRT trains ([www.thesingaporetouristpass.com.sg](http://www.thesingaporetouristpass.com.sg); ₹ 500/one-day pass).
- If you're flying by Singapore Airlines, you have the option of purchasing the **Singapore Explorer Pass**, which offers entry to a variety of places at discounted rates ([www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com); SGD 60 [₹ 3,000]/one-day pass). Additionally, displaying your Singapore Airlines ticket can get you discounts at many attractions.
- Singapore's gardens and green spaces, including **Fort Canning**, the **Southern Ridges Trail** and the **Singapore Botanic Gardens** are well worth spending time in.
- Restaurants at Little India offer the cheapest meal options.



1 & 4. Lovely Pulau Ubin showcases a side of Singapore most visitors don't experience  
2. Haji Lane is a wonderful mix of value shopping and great food  
3. Learn more about the city-state at the National Museum of Singapore





1. San Francisco is a haven for unusual art
2. Trams are an SF icon
3. ... as is the Golden Gate Bridge
4. The city's Chinatown is the oldest in the United States
5. You could spend hours laughing at the antics of the sea lions at Pier 39



# 05 San Francisco, The USA

**DAY 1** Usher in your first day in the city of rolling fog with a walk across the famous **Golden Gate Bridge**. You can also take a bicycle across the 2.7km span, but make sure you go while it's open (check first on [www.goldengatebridge.org](http://www.goldengatebridge.org)). The way across the world's most beautiful bridge overlooks the bay, Alcatraz and the city. Get lunch and free access to karaoke, jazz, open-mic poetry slams and film screenings at **Café Royale**, a Parisian-style establishment ([www.caferoyale-sf.com](http://www.caferoyale-sf.com)). And don't miss the waterfront at **Pier 39**, where hundreds of sea lions come out to play ([www.pier39.com](http://www.pier39.com)). It's quite a unique experience watching these creatures belching, playing around and scratching themselves on the pier between January and July.

**DAY 2** Allow local volunteer-historians to show you around Chinatown's alleys, the Coit Tower murals and the Alfred Hitchcock film sites on a **walking tour** ([www.sfcityguides.org](http://www.sfcityguides.org)). The tours are free, but donations are expected and appreciated. Continue the walking trail at **Clarion Alley** in the Mission District, home to over 400 murals. In Clarion Alley, murals don't always live a long life; being painted over is the norm, unless they attract a lot of attention, like Megan Wilson's daisy-covered *Capitalism is Over*. From 12am to 6pm, between Wednesday and Sunday, you can enjoy free tastings of sulphite-free red wines at the **Fat Grape Winery** on Treasure Island ([www.fatgrapewinery.com](http://www.fatgrapewinery.com)). Come evening, head to **Amoeba Music**, the world's largest independent record store, with an enviable collection of new and used music and videos ([www.amoeba.com](http://www.amoeba.com)). There are several listening stations, a free music magazine and even a free concert series to keep you entertained.

**DAY 3** Dedicate this day to the many spectacular museums in San Francisco, starting with the **Cable Car Museum**, located in a historical cable-car barn and powerhouse ([www.cablecarmuseum.org](http://www.cablecarmuseum.org)). Here, you can learn about the inner workings of a cable car and gawk at three original 1870s cable cars. On the first Tuesday of the month, you get free entry to several museums, including the **San Francisco Railway Museum**, the **Wells Fargo History Museum**, the **Conservatory of Flowers**, and the **Contemporary Jewish Museum**, while the **Asian Art Museum** is free on the first Sunday. The **Randall Museum**, near Corona Heights Park, has hands-on workshops. If it's a summer Sunday, make a beeline for the free outdoor concerts at the **Stern Grove Festival** ([www.sterngrove.org](http://www.sterngrove.org); 2pm Jun 19 – Aug 21, 2016). And if it happens to be the first Sunday of the month, which is usually **Hot Dog Day**, you can dig into a free kosher beef or vegetarian dog at **Frankenart Mart**, an art exchange in the Inner Richmond district. ☺

**STAY:** The **Pacific Tradewinds Hostel** is a great choice for backpackers, with dorm-style sleeping arrangements and shared bathrooms. The hostel organises pub crawls and guided excursions, and there are ample opportunities to interact with other travellers ([www.san-francisco-hostel.com](http://www.san-francisco-hostel.com); dorm beds from ₹ 2,700). The **Nob Hill Hotel** is a boutique hotel with period furnishings. Rooms at the rear tend to be quieter ([www.nobhillhotel.com](http://www.nobhillhotel.com); from ₹ 8,000).

## GOOD TO KNOW

- To save money, visit during the shoulder season months of May and October.
- One area where you're sure to find some sort of free entertainment, be it art exhibits or music, is **Union Square**.
- Most tour companies offer visits to **Alcatraz Island** but at differing prices; do your research and find the one with the best deal.
- Ditch the harbour tours and take the public ferries instead (\$6.40/₹ 430).