

## Adventures by Disney San Francisco Long Weekend: An Adventures by Disney Review

by Carol Pranis, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Although Adventures by Disney (ABD) offers itineraries all around the world, for our first ABD experience, we decided to take one in our home state of California.

We love San Francisco and wine, so the San Francisco Long Weekend Adventure was perfect for us. Also, we were not sure about group travel, so a short adventure would be just a taste. The order of the itinerary has changed since our trip, but the major events remain the same, and they were amazing.

We arrived in San Francisco one day ahead of our Adventure to explore Sonoma County, just north of San Francisco. We are members of the Lasseter Family Winery Wine Club and had always wanted to visit there for a wine tasting. Advance reservations are required, but this experience is available to all. We arrived at the massive gates, hidden behind a school yard, and once we spoke with the office, the gates magically opened for us and we drove up to the main building. The winery is absolutely charming. This was a wine tasting/tour like none other...ever!! There were only 4 of us in this elegant "dining" room, with a killer view, a plate of cheeses, fruit, and chocolate to accompany our wines. Stephen was our host, and he told us some really heartwarming stories about the family, as well as the history behind the winery. Heavenly!! We will definitely go back again. I would highly recommend this as a pre or post San Francisco Long Weekend Adventure.

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□Our adventure kicked off with a welcome breakfast, although now this has changed. Our guides explained all that we would be experiencing, and then each family introduced their group and why they were excited to be on this adventure. We set out for our first day of sightseeing around the "City by the Bay" in a private vehicle that looked just like one of the famous San Francisco trolley cars. We were most pleased that our adventure guides were very accommodating to a few of us older adventurers who were not able to participate in the bike ride through the streets of San Francisco! We stayed with our trolley driver for a tour of the city and met up with the rest of our adventurers at the Palace of the Fine Arts, a beautiful park and series of buildings set around a lovely lagoon that was built for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, and is still very much in use today. Another couple, who had managed to bike to the Palace, decided to ride back with us, and so the guys lifted

their bikes onto the trolley and off we went to meet up with the rest of the group for our visit to Chinatown and lunch at M.Y. China. For you foodies, and you know who you are&hellip; this team of chefs is headed by the James Beard award winning Martin Yan. The open kitchen provided a wonderful show, and the family style dining experience was excellent. We left stuffed to the gills and were happy to have a bit of time on our own to walk off lunch, shop, or return to our hotel for a nap! Dinner that evening was at in a private dining room at the Waterbar seafood restaurant, located at the famous Embarcadero and very close to the Bay Bridge. This is not currently on the itinerary, but you do have one dinner on your own, and this would be a great choice. On every Adventure, your guides are available to help you select just the right restaurant for your family when you have a night on your own.

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□Our second day dawned sunny and beautiful, and we boarded our luxury coach for a drive across the Bay Bridge into Napa Valley for our visit to the Silverado Winery, owned by the Disney family. This winery is located in the Stag's Leap District, famous for producing fantastic wines. We began our visit with a tour of the wine making facilities, and our guide told us several stories about the Disney family and their winery. Next, the adults on our adventure had the fun opportunity to try our hands at wine blending. We sat at tables set with beakers, canisters, and pipettes, just like a flashback to Chemistry lab days! Our winery hosts were kind enough to tell us our blends were all delicious and even bottled our creations for us to take home. While we channeled our inner Mad Scientists, the younger adventurers enjoyed olive oil tasting and created lovely ornaments which, of course, included wine corks.

We had worked up quite an appetite, so our next event was a delicious multicourse lunch on the patio of the winery, with a forever view of the vineyard and rolling hills beyond. There was more wine tasting with every wonderful course for those who chose to imbibe. This was a meal to remember as we listened to Jon, the winemaker, describe how they create their fabulous wines. Well, after all that food and wine, we were quite ready to "roll" aboard our coach for the drive back to the city! After a lovely nap, we arrived at the Muir Woods National Monument, where we strolled among a forest of giant redwoods. It was amazing that this special peaceful spot exists just outside the San Francisco city limits! We were glad that we had the evening on our own that night after a long and fun filled day.

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□Our third and final day was another busy one. We boarded our coach bright and early for a trip over the famous Golden Gate Bridge. Of course we had to stop for pictures! This is another wonderful feature of an Adventure by Disney. Your guides are also your personal paparazzi,

taking hundreds of great photos of you along your adventure. These are photos you will cherish forever. After our photo stop, we were off to Tiburon and our ferry to Angel Island State Park. After an introduction to our captain, we set off on a lovely cruise along the bay. Angel Island is larger than Alcatraz Island, and has an incredible history. Originally, this was an active military base. In the early 20th century it was also a U.S. immigration station, nicknamed "Ellis Island of the West", where many immigrants from Asia were housed before being allowed to travel on to San Francisco. Our guide told us many stories of what hardships these brave souls endured as families were separated into barracks for men, women, and children. One small child drew pictures of wildlife to cope with his loneliness. Young Tyrus Wong grew up to be one of Walt Disney's animators, and he is known for his work on the movie Bambi.

□ After our tram tour, we enjoyed a delicious picnic lunch on Angel Island before our ferry ride back to Tiburon. Next stop was the Presidio, home to the Lucasfilm campus and the Disney Family Museum, two stops highly anticipated by everyone. We were actually the very first ABD to visit Lucasfilm, and our guides had a few special surprises in store for us. We all loved our private tour of the Disney Family Museum, where even the most knowledgeable among us learned a few new facts about the Disney family. We could have spent an entire day here enjoying the interactive exhibits and admiring so many lovely family pictures. The gift shop was a fun stop as well! But alas, our trip was coming to a close, and it was time to move on to our farewell dinner at One Market, an award winning restaurant in the Embarcadero area of San Francisco. We shared our favorite moments about our journey and enjoyed one last delicious meal.

□ Granted, Adventures by Disney are a bit expensive, but once you have experienced one of these very special trips, you will come to understand how great a first class value they are. Our two Adventure guides were always there for us, even providing bubble wrap to help send our wine safely home, to weigh those wine laden suitcases, and to bid farewell, even if that was at 4AM. They always had snacks and water, great stories, and spot-on touring advice for us. There was also a special surprise every day, but you will have to find out about that on your own -- no spoilers here! A short Adventure such as this one would allow you to sample the uniqueness of an Adventure by Disney, but be forewarned -- you will be craving more!

*About The Author: Carol is a lifelong Disney fan and a 20 year DVC member who has enjoyed countless trips to Walt Disney World and Disneyland, many cruises, and now three Adventures by Disney. When not working as a Quality Director, she is always planning that next adventure by land or by sea.*

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