

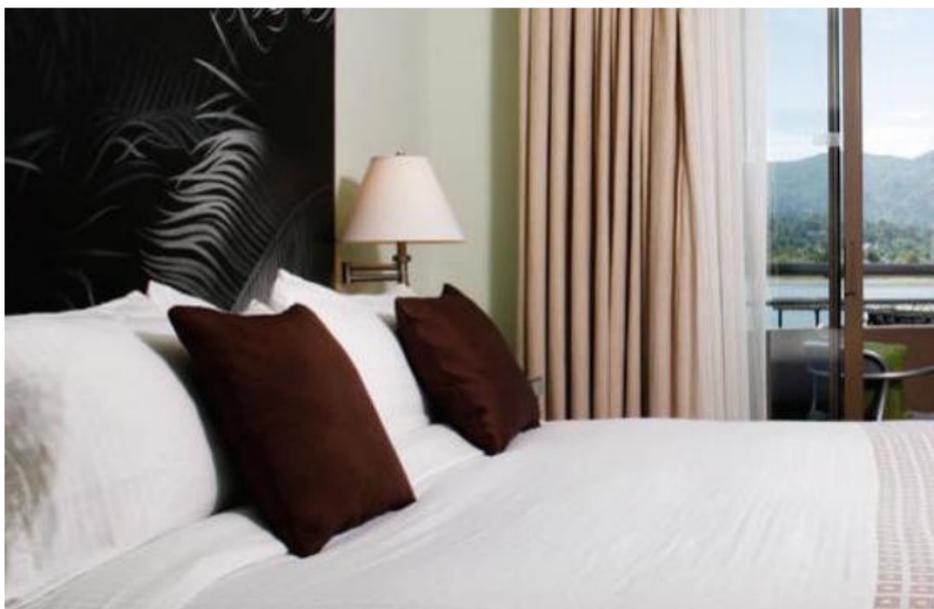
How to Spend 50 Perfect Hours in San Rafael

By **Katie Morell** on November 06, 2015 9:00 AM

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San Rafael is the perfect Bay Area getaway with plenty of outdoor activity options, a cute downtown scene, and fascinating cultural attractions.



9:00 a.m. – Wake up among crisp, soft, white sheets at **Acqua Hotel**, a boutique property located right on Richardson Bay in Mill Valley. Grab a cup of coffee and, while still sporting your pajamas, walk out onto your terrace and enjoy the water view. Dress in comfortable, breathable clothing and pack your bathing suit in a backpack along with a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.

Walk downstairs and get in line for your complimentary breakfast. The waffles at Acqua are especially delicious, so be sure to go up to the waffle bar a few times before you leave. Eat until you are full because you won't be eating again for several hours.

10:10 a.m. – Drive into San Rafael and park at the **Marin County Civic Center**, an impressive structure designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The Center opened in 1962, three years after Wright died (his team completed the construction). It is known as Wright’s last work of art.

If you happen to stop by in the middle of the week, you are in for a treat. Hour-long, guided tours are offered at 10:30 a.m. every Wednesday for \$5 per person. Reservations are not required unless you have 10 people or more (in that case, call ahead).



11:45 a.m. – Park your car near 115 3rd Street. Walk along San Rafael Creek until you see **101 Surf Sports**. If you’ve always wanted to try stand-up paddle boarding, now is your chance! For \$20 per hour, you can rent a board and enjoy paddling out onto the San Rafael Bay. (Pro tip: While it may be tempting to snap Instagram shots during this experience, it is not advisable. Many a phone have been lost that way.)

1:30 p.m. – Starving by now, stop in front of **Mr. Pickle’s Sandwich Shop**, a wildly popular California franchise. Walk up to the counter and place a to-go order for sandwiches with the names Summer Love (turkey, hummus, avocado), the Manhattan (hot pastrami and melted Swiss) and the Big Easy (chicken salad, Swiss and avocado).

Grab a few waters on your way out and drive up to **China Camp State Park**, a picturesque green space and beach with plenty of grass for a picnic. Spend time playing catch.

3:00 p.m. – Wrap up your day of outdoor activities with a visit to **Marin Bocce Federation**. This place has 10 bocce courts to choose from and is open for drop-in play on Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays (advance reservations on the weekend are recommended).

4:30 p.m. – Hop back on US-101 to Acqua Hotel and relax for a little while. Take a nap, shower, then change into some nice dinner clothes.

6:00 p.m. – Just up the road, settle in for a night at **Fenix**, a live music supper club right in San Rafael. Check the restaurant’s **online schedule** for a listing of who will be playing the night you arrive (you never know—the band may be a household name!) and enjoy a refreshing take on Southern food—all the taste without the eye-popping calories. Don’t leave without trying the New Orleans style BBQ shrimp, crawfish etouffée and the wings and waffles. For desert, you can’t go wrong with a helping of key lime pie. Scrumptious.

DAY 2

9:00 a.m. – Wake up and get ready for a day in downtown San Rafael. Dress in clothing that will be comfortable and not too fancy (read: sneakers are always a solid option). Then, drive up the road and walk into **Depot Garden Café** at 718 B Street, an area favorite that has served breakfast all day to locals since the late 80s.

Order the shrimp, avocado, tomato and cheddar omelet to start and then dive into a vegetarian breakfast burrito and a pecan waffle. Wash it down with a glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice.



10:00 a.m. – From here you can walk to the Fourth Street arts district. Walk into **Art Works Downtown**, a gallery space where you can check out tons of artists. This place is open between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturdays, and until 8 p.m. on some Fridays. **Check online** for events and art classes open to the public.

12:00 p.m. – Drive to **Sol Food**, a crazy popular Puerto Rican restaurant. Try the chicken, rice, beans, and salad with plantains and the limeade (the mango tea is also tasty). The lively atmosphere of this place and the island cooking will make you feel like you've just flown to the Caribbean for lunch.



1:30 p.m. – Get ready for a fun history lesson. Stroll until you see **Mission of Saint Raphael Arcángel**. This gorgeous building is one of the most important in San Rafael. It was founded in 1817 as the 20th of California's 21 Missions and was integral in the creation of the city and of Marin County as a whole. Bring your camera to shoot snaps outside and then walk into the Mission's gift shop to learn more about California's Missions. Tours are available for groups of 10 people or more with advance reservations.

3:00 p.m. – Spend the next few hours visiting shops in downtown San Rafael. A few favorites include **Bella, Viva Diva Boutique, Shunzi** and **Gala Boutique**.

Back up on 5th Avenue, make sure to visit **Mountain View Winery & Tasting Room**, a local gem with a cute tasting room. Belly up to the bar (artfully supported by wine barrels) and try a few varietals. You can't go wrong with any selection—both the whites and reds are fantastic.

6:30 p.m. – You won't need to venture far for dinner. Just walk to **Il Davide**, a delicious Italian restaurant (advance reservations are highly recommended). The polenta is a great dish to start with, as are the burrata and calamari fritti. From there, move on to the ravioli filled with mushrooms and black truffle cream, the scallops and the fillet. A night at Il

Davide wouldn't be complete without an order of the butterscotch Pots de Crème and vanilla Panna Cotta. Enjoy—calories don't count when you are on vacation!

DAY 3

9:30 a.m. – Wake up at a leisurely pace this morning, throw on clothes suitable for exercise and walk downstairs for breakfast. Then, check out and drive to 1820 4th Street in San Rafael and walk into **Acme Bikes**, a bike rental spot. Ask for a map and spend the next hour enjoying the California sun and fresh outdoor air.

This article comes to us courtesy of the San Francisco Bay Area Super Bowl 50 Host Committee. Each week the San Francisco Bay Area Super Bowl 50 Host Committee features a #Perfect50 Hours series detailing how to spend 50 hours in a different San Francisco Bay Area city.