

Tour #4: Telegraph Hill and Back to Fisherman's Wharf



This tour starts at Coit Tower atop Telegraph Hill. Because of the steepness of Telegraph Hill, with the exception of some minor backtracking, this tour will be downhill. Unless you are up to the challenge of climbing Telegraph Hill to the Tour's starting point at Coit Tower, start your tour by taking the #39, "Coit" MUNI bus, up to Coit Tower. You can pick up the #39 bus either in North Beach (southwest corner of Stockton and Union at Washington Square) or at Fisherman's Wharf (Stockton between North Point and Beach or at the F-Line Stop in front of Pier 39). Because of occasional street closures and/or the occasional re-routing of MUNI bus routes, check to make sure the bus stop hasn't changed by the time you take this tour.

*Armistead Maupin lived at several locations on Telegraph Hill. Three of them are included in this tour. Armistead drew upon his repeated residency on Telegraph Hill for the various story lines in his books. For example, Olin L. Cobb, a former merchant marine who lived in a hidden lean-to at Telegraph Hill's sea wall, was the initial inspiration for "Luke" in *Further Tales of the City*. As you descend Telegraph Hill, you'll read more about the personal connection of Telegraph Hill to Maupin and his tales.*

NOTE: This Tour can be combined with Tour #5 (Alcatraz). For planning purposes, it takes approximately 60 minutes from start of this tour to where you pick up the start of Tour #5. (The 60 minutes do not including going into and up Coit Tower itself. Add another minimum of 30 minutes if you intent to go up the Tower.)

The Google Map for this walking tour: [Tour #4 – Telegraph Hill and Back to Fisherman's Wharf](#)

Coit Tower, 1 Telegraph Hill Blvd (summit of Telegraph Hill)

*From time to time, Coit Tower is mentioned in Armistead Maupin's books. The first time was in *Tales of the City*:*



As a trophy of his weekend tryst with Mary Ann in Mendocino, Beauchamp stole the brown and white polka-dot scarf Mary Ann wore that weekend. He hid it in his underwear drawer. Shortly after Beauchamp's return from Mendocino, DeDe coyly remarked to him that she had recently spoken to Splinter Reilly. She said that Splinter knew nothing about a Guardsmen event on Mount Tam (Beauchamp's excuse for his absence during the weekend). Knowing he had been busted, Beauchamp decided to walk their dog, Caesar, up to Coit Tower...*after* he removed Mary Ann's scarf from his underwear drawer and planted it in the glove compartment of the Porsche for DeDe to find.

At one point in his life, Gabriel Noone (*The Night Listener*) lived just below Coit Tower on the Filbert Steps. More about this will be provided below in this tour.

Coit Tower is one of the most iconic landmarks in San Francisco. It is worth the visit.

Unless you are pressed for time, don't limit your Coit Tower visit to only a trip to the top. Take time to walk around the first floor of the Tower looking closely at the Art Deco murals. Walk outside and around the base of the Tower to the southeast for a nice view of Downtown and the Bay Bridge. Also walk across the parking lot, stand atop the low wall, and look down on the eastern end of Fisherman's Wharf and out over the Bay toward Alcatraz and the Golden Gate.

There is a widely held myth that the design of the tower was inspired by the nozzle of a fire hose. Another myth is that the design was inspired by the anatomy of a particularly fortunate male. Enough said.

To plan your visit to Coit Tower, here is the San Francisco Travel website for Coit Tower: [Coit Tower](#). Here is one of several other websites regarding Coit Tower that provides additional information: [Love to Know San Francisco: Coit Tower](#).

NOTE: *Tickets for trip to the top of the Tower are purchased with cash only.*

Start the descent of Telegraph Hill. There is an opening in the stone wall along the east side of Telegraph Hill Blvd where it becomes the parking lot for Coit Tower. On the other side of the wall is a sidewalk. Turn right on the sidewalk and walk a short distance downhill along Telegraph Hill Blvd to Filbert (keeping the stone wall between you and the traffic on Telegraph Hill Blvd).

One day during a phone call with Pete Lomax about comic books, Gabriel recalled his friendship with Wayne Stevens who also loved comic books. Wayne shared a flat with Gabriel on the Filbert Steps here on Telegraph Hill. After the chat with Pete, Gabriel got into his car and drove to Coit Tower. He parked his

car in the parking lot behind you and then walked along this walkway between the two stone walls. (*The Night Listener*)

Turn left on Filbert which quickly becomes a driveway ending at a garage. Just as the street becomes the driveway, Filbert continues as steps on the right. Descend the Filbert Steps.

Filbert Steps, between Telegraph Hill Blvd and Montgomery

(Continuing the story about Gabriel's visit to Telegraph Hill) At the top of these steps, Gabriel stopped and looked across the bay at the sunset reflecting off the windows of the buildings in the East Bay. He then looked at Treasure Island and recalled how the island was a source of wonder for his friend Wayne because a world's fair had once been held on the island. (*The Night Listener*)

In the "Tales of the City" miniseries, Mona (Chloe Webb) and Mouse (Marcus D'Amico) are filmed descending this section of the Filbert Steps. Mona blindsides Mouse with the news that she's moving out of the apartment on Barbary Lane. After a brief flare of emotions, Mouse changes the subject and informs Mona that his parents are coming to town. In the book, *Tales of the City*, Mona and Mouse are walking along the quay at Marina Green when Mona drops this bomb on Mouse (see *Tour #11: Union Street/Cow Hollow and the Marina District*). To see this scene, click here on [Hulu](#) – with ads (scene starts at about 25:05) or here on [YouTube](#) – without ads (scene starts at 3:54).



During your walk down the Filbert Steps, you may encounter a flock of green parrots – feral descendents of birds that escaped years ago. The original flock lived in the trees around Telegraph Hill; however, as the flock grew over the years, it began to divide. Now flocks of the parrots can be found in other parts of the city.

In *Tales of the City*, the flock flew past the Day's apartment (see Malloch Apartments below in this tour) toward the eucalyptus trees around Julian Castle (at the north end of Montgomery Street). DeDe compared the parrots to Beauchamp: they were beautiful and arrogant. Beauchamp, on the other hand, wasn't a fan of the birds: "*I hate those fucking parrots.*" (*More Tales of the City*/28 Barbary Lane, page 277)

Several years later, in *Babycakes*, as Mary Ann and Simon descended the Filbert Steps (not this section of the steps, but rather the section below Montgomery) their conversation was interrupted by the screeching of the parrots.

To learn more about these fascinating birds, visit [Mark Bittner's website](#). Mark was once a caretaker of a house here on Telegraph Hill. Over time, he developed a relationship with the birds that eventually led to a writing of a book, *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill: A Love Story...with Wings*, which was followed by a movie of the same name.

331 Filbert



This is one of five places on Telegraph Hill that Armistead Maupin called home. This is the first of the three included on this tour.

Incidents that occurred while Armistead lived here were later woven into *The Night Listener*:

Prior to meeting Jess Carmody, Gabriel Noone lived on the Filbert Steps. For a while, he shared his flat with his friend Wayne Stevens whom he had met at Harvey Milk's memorial service. Wayne eventually moved out of Gabriel's and into a studio apartment of his own across the Steps from Gabriel's.

Wayne referred to living amidst the vegetation below Coit Tower as living "in its pubic hair."

Now, *there's* a visual for you.

In real life, Daniel Katz, a close friend of Armistead Maupin lived across the steps from this location.

It was at Harvey Milk's memorial service that Armistead met a man who would also become a dear friend: Steve Berry. At the memorial service, Steve found himself alone. He spotted a familiar face, walked up to the individual, and asked, "You're Armistead Maupin aren't you?" (*Armistead Maupin*, by Patrick Gale, p. 81)

There is an ironic story about Steve and Harvey Milk: the morning that Milk was assassinated, Steve's housemate took a phone message for Steve from Milk proposing a date later that night.

Steve became the model for Wayne Stevens in *The Night Listener*. For a short time, Steve lived with Armistead here at 331 Filbert on the third floor. Steve had referred to living in that apartment below Coit Tower as living "in its public hair." Steve had a great love of comic strips. Shortly after Daniel Katz vacated the studio apartment across the steps, Steve moved into it. Steve took an Alaskan cruise and Armistead made an Alaskan cruise central to the *Further Tales of the City* storyline. Armistead dedicated *Further Tales of the City* to Steve.

And like Wayne Stevens, Steve Berry was lying near death on the sofa bed in his apartment across the steps when he was found by Armistead and Terry Anderson. Steve was carried down the Filbert Steps to a waiting ambulance as was Wayne. And like Wayne, a rose bush was planted over Steve's ashes in the garden of Steve's former residence.

305 Filbert, just before Montgomery

In the same scene in the movie mentioned above when Mona and Mouse are descending the steps, there are two brief clips of women working in the gardens in front of their homes. The woman in the second clip is working on her roses in front of this house. Here is that scene again: click here for [Hulu](#) (scene starts at about 25:05) or here for [YouTube](#) (scene starts at 3:54).



Since the filming of *Tales of the City* (and when this photo was taken), there have been some changes made to the home's exterior somewhat modifying its appearance – most noticeably the stone façade around the window and entrance door.

When you reach Montgomery Street, the steps split. Take the steps to the right and descend to the street. At the bottom of the steps, turn right and walk south on Montgomery to Union. (Due the steepness of Telegraph Hill's east face, the northbound lane of Montgomery was constructed down the slope from the southbound lane.)

301 Union (southwest corner of Montgomery and Union)

This was the location of Speedy's New Union Grocery. Speedy's was the model of Jiffy's where Lionel Wong worked. Lionel was the father of DeDe's twins, Edgar and Anna. (*Tales of the City*) In the "Tales of the City" mini-series, the grocery was called Wong's.



For twenty-five years, Speedy's was owned by Marshall and Art Dong. Art was the inspiration for Lionel's character. The store was a Telegraph Hill institution. The name Speedy's is derived from the family name of the original owners: Spediacci. The Dongs retired at the end of 2003.

Cross to the northeast corner of Montgomery and start walking back north on Montgomery to Alta. Turn right on Alta.

The Duck House, 60 Alta

This is another one of Armistead Maupin's former residences on Telegraph Hill. Look at the building. It's a no-brainer why it was dubbed "The Duck House". Maupin's apartment was the one at street level. With the success of "Tales of the City" in the San Francisco Chronicle, Armistead decided he needed digs that were a bit more "adult" than the Pentshack he had atop 1138 ½ Union (see *Tour #1: In the Beginning... (Aquatic Park/Russian Hill)*), so he moved here to the Duck House.

Here at the Duck House Armistead Maupin developed close friendships and formed what he considered his first alternative family. He later dedicated the omnibus collection of his first three books, *28 Barbary Lane*, to his family – the residents of the Duck House.



Maupin once stated that Eleanor Roosevelt had previously lived his apartment with a lady "friend" of hers during WWII.

There are photos of the interior of the Duck House at MisterSF's [website](#).

Back track to the northbound lane of Montgomery and turn right.

Malloch Apartments, 1360 Montgomery (southeast corner of Montgomery and the Filbert Steps).



In *Tales of the City* and *More Tales of the City*, DeDe and Beauchamp lived in the penthouse of the Malloch Apartments. In the first two miniseries, The Day's apartment was not located here at the Malloch but rather at Brocklebank Apartments on Nob Hill (see *Tour # 6: Chinatown, Nob Hill, and the Edge of the Tenderloin*).

The weekend after she released the story of Simon Bardill's defection from Her Majesty's royal yacht, the *Britannia*, Mary Ann was concerned over how all the attention was affecting Simon. She waited for Brian to leave their apartment to go to the laundromat. She then invited Simon to join her on a shopping trip in North Beach. (*Babycakes*)

All Mary Ann had to show for her shopping effort was some pickled mushrooms purchased at Molinari's (see *Tour #2: North Beach*). It was clear to Simon that Mary Ann had more than pickled mushrooms on her mind. He suggested they go for a walk.

They walked from Molinari's on Columbus Street to Union Street, turned right, and then climbed Telegraph Hill to the intersection of Union and Montgomery streets. They turned left and walked along Montgomery to its intersection with the Filbert Steps.

Mary Ann pointed out to Simon that the Malloch's penthouse was where Lauren Bacall's character in the 1947 film "Dark Passage" lived. She also informed Simon that her friend DeDe used to live in that penthouse. They then descended the Filbert Steps.

Although on two different streets, the Malloch Apartments (DeDe's and Beauchamp's apartment building) and the Duck House (Maupin's former residence) are physically quite close to each other. The SE corner of the Malloch is separated by only a few feet from the NW corner of the Duck House. The photo on the right



shows the relationship between the two buildings. The Duck House is easily identified on the right; the building on the left is the southeast corner of the Malloch Apartments.



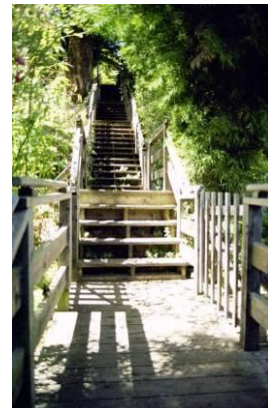
At the start of the video clips you just saw of Mona and Mouse descending the Filbert Steps, there was a brief glimpse of Coit Tower and a palm tree. The shot of Coit Tower and the palm tree was taken from near the front door of the Malloch Apartments.

Walk to the end of the Malloch Apartments, turn right and take the Filbert Steps as they continue their descent down the east slope of Telegraph Hill.

Filbert Steps, between Montgomery and Sansome

Except at the very end at the edge of Telegraph Hill, most of this section of the Filbert steps is wooden.

The lush gardens you encounter as you descend the Filbert Steps have their genesis in 1949 by the hands of a feisty 63-year old woman, Grace Marchant. When she moved into the cottage at the corner of Napier Lane and the Filbert Steps (below on this tour), trash and garbage filled the empty space where the gardens are now located. She began to plant greenery in that trash strewn space. Soon the residents of Telegraph Hill helped her convert the trash heap to the gardens you now see. This garden is now called the Grace Marchant Garden. It is privately maintained by the residents of Telegraph Hill.



Grace's ashes are buried beneath a small statue hidden in the greenery near to where Napier Lane joins the Filbert Steps.

As mentioned above, Mary Ann and Simon descended the Filbert steps. Simon commented on how magnificent the gardens were. Mary Ann pointed out that the City of San Francisco was not responsible for establishing and maintaining the gardens. Mary Ann went on to tell him about Grace Marchant. Simon remarked that Mary Ann was a "font of local color." She explained that she had done a story on Grace. Simon teased her with, "Do you do stories on everyone you know?" She soon learned that Simon had once escorted Princess Diana to a David Bowie concert. (*Babycakes/Back to Barbary Lane*, p 111.)

226 Filbert



Armistead Maupin also once lived at this address.

At this time, I have no other information about his residency at this address. Any verifiable stories about Armistead's residency at this address will be gladly accepted and added to this tour.

In the 1947 film "Dark Passage", Humphrey Bogart's character, Vincent Perry, climbs the Filbert Steps from Sansome Street at the foot of the hill. At one point during his climb, he stops in front of 226 Filbert to catch his breath before continuing his climb up Telegraph Hill.

Napier Lane, second wooden walkway on the left as you descend the steps from Montgomery Street

After learning of her pregnancy (*Tales of the City*), DeDe walked down the Filbert Steps and sat on a bench at the start of Napier Lane to contemplate having an abortion. Later in *Tales of the City*, she again visited Napier Lane and watched the neighborhood cat while she contemplated her relationships with her father and Beauchamp.

From time-to-time, a simple wooden bench *is* placed on Napier where it intersects with the Filbert Steps. People walking up and down the steps often stop to rest on the bench.



The brown house at the northeast corner of Napier and Filbert (seen the photo above) is the former residence of Grace Marchant. Her ashes are in the garden directly across the Filbert Steps from this home.

Turn left on Napier and walk a short distance to:

21 Napier

This white house midway down the lane was the inspiration for the set of 28 Barbary Lane used in all three of the “Tales” miniseries.



Prior to the on-location filming for the “Tales of the City” miniseries, Armistead Maupin took Alastair Reid (the Director), Alan Poul (the Producer), as well as several of the cast and crew members on a tour of San Francisco showing them many of the locales mentioned in the books. When Reid saw this house on Napier, he decided that he would model the set for 28 Barbary Lane after it. Unlike Mrs. Madrigal’s apartment building which had internal stair cases, this house’s external stairs could provide a stage on which the various residents could interact.

This idea of the residents of 28 Barbary Lane interacting on the steps of the apartment building was carried over to the set design for the 2011 production of the “Tales of the City” musical (see *Tour #6: Chinatown, Nob Hill, and the Edge of the Tenderloin*).

In the first two Tales miniseries, the exterior of Mrs. Madrigal’s apartment building was painted white matching this building on Napier rather than brown as Mrs. Madrigal’s apartment building was described in the Tales books. This discrepancy was corrected in the third miniseries when the set was painted brown.

An interesting coincidence about 21 Napier Lane: The house across the wooden boardwalk is #28... ..and it is *brown*.

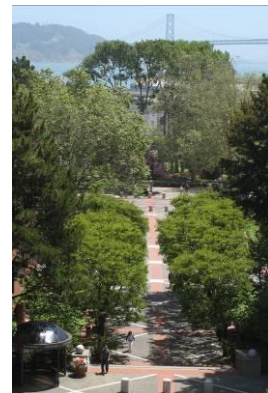
A sign has recently been put up at the entrance to Napier Lane. The wording might cause you to think access to Napier Lane is restricted to only residents. As long as you remain on the wooden walkway, you are on public property.

Return to the Filbert Steps, turn left, and continue your descent. The eastern face of Telegraph Hill is sheer because this side of the Hill was quarried for its stone. These final steps that descend to Sansome can be a little unsettling for those afraid of heights; however, they are quite safe.

Descend the hill and cross Sansome; you’re now at:

Levi Plaza Park, starting at Sansome, crossing Battery, and continuing through to the Embarcadero

Named after *the* Levi Strauss, this is a well kept, cozy park and, if needed, it is a nice place to rest before you continue the tour. There are a couple of rules you need to know: 1) As tempting as the gurgling water is, do not take off your





shoes and dip your feet into the water. 2) There is a “no-blanket” rule which means you can’t place a blanket on the grass to sun yourself.

This is a safe park and it’s well patrolled. (Try walking in the fountains and you’ll *see* how well the park is patrolled.) If you’re in the park during lunch hour, you might be entertained with music.

Cross Battery and continue through the park to the Embarcadero.

The Embarcadero

In *Babycakes*, Brian and Simon went for a run along the Embarcadero. During the run, they passed the Bay Bridge and stopped at the Villaincourt Fountain at the Embarcadero and Market across the street from the Ferry Building. (These locations are south/to the right of you.)



Turn left on the Embarcadero, walk the short distance to the cross walk and cross to the other side of the Embarcadero. Turn left.

Pier 23 Café, Pier 23 on the Embarcadero



By 1985, Mary Ann and Brian have moved up to the 23rd floor of the Summit (*Sure of You*). Brian is driving a \$20,000 Jeep. He also had mink-lined bomber jacket from Wilkes Bashford, which he only wore while driving the jeep. He also frequented Pier 23.

Shawna (*Mary Ann in Autumn*) often ate at this funky roadhouse while waiting for her boyfriend-of-sorts, Otto, to finish his clown and puppet street performance further north on the Embarcadero at Pier 39 (below in this tour). Shawna ate a plate of fried artichoke hearts while she waited for Otto.

Pier 23 Café is a fun place to eat. If weather permits, sit outside behind the restaurant overlooking the Bay.

Continue north along the Embarcadero.

Pier 29

In *More Tales of the City*, Mary Ann and Michael flew to Los Angeles on PSA Airlines



(long since defunct) to rendezvous with the *Pacific Princess*, their cruise ship to Mexico. In the “More Tales of the City” miniseries, Mona dropped them off here at Pier 29 where they boarded the cruise ship.

While construction was underway to prepare the pier for the 2013 America’s Cup Race, a fire broke out on the afternoon of June 20, 2012, severely damaging the pier. The City received a surprisingly quick settlement from the insurance company and within two months of the fire, construction began on the pier’s restoration. Pier 29 was restored to its original appearance.

Continue north along the Embarcadero to Alcatraz Cruises – between Pier 31 and Pier 33. This is where you pick up the boat for your trip to Alcatraz (see Tour #5: Alcatraz) either in conjunction with this tour or at a different time.

If you are not planning to take Tour 5 at this time, continue north along the Embarcadero to Pier 39. If you do not wish to walk all the way to Pier 39, you can pick up one of the historic F Line streetcars which stop in front of Pier 29. The streetcar drivers generally call out the Pier 39 stop.

NOTE: Because the F Line consists of the historic streetcars and it runs along the Embarcadero connecting Downtown to Fisherman’s Wharf, the streetcars can be very crowded on weekends and during the busy tourist season.

Pier 39



Jake Greenleaf (*Mary Ann in the Autumn*) found Pier 39 to be a welcome relief from the Gay Ghetto of the Castro. He “had a major thing going with the sea lions” that had made themselves a home on the docks of a marina along the western edge of the Pier.

To see the California sea lions at Pier 39, follow the “Salty, the Sea Lion” signs. If you want to see them

from the “ground”/first level of the Pier, walk down the Pier to the carousel. When you arrive at the carousel, turn left and walk between the restaurants/stores to the edge of the Pier. Upstairs, on the second level of the Pier is the Marine Mammal Interpretive Center and Store. Across the hall from the Interpretive Center is the Gold Gate National Park Store.



One afternoon, Jake rode his bicycle to Pier 39 to watch the sea lions. A young man wearing a red hoodie struck up a conversation with Jake. Jake shared the story of how the sea lions decided to move from Seal Rocks out on northwest corner of San Francisco to their current location at Pier 39.



After his short chat with the young man, Jake went to Lefty's – The Left Hand Store (Building O, Level 1) and purchased a left-handed ringed note-book. At Lefty's, Jake ran into the young man in the red hoodie again who purchased a left-handed pair of scissors. At the time of Mary Ann in Autumn, Lefty's was located

Jake and the young man decided to get a bite to eat together. They purchased crab sandwiches at the Pier Market Seafood Restaurant and Market (Building F, Level 1). They sat on benches to eat their meal and watched a tall skinny clown with a monkey puppet (Otto, Shawna's sort-of boy friend).

The young man in the red hoodie introduced himself. His name was Jonah and he was from Snowflake, Arizona. (Snowflake, Arizona is where a local resident claims to have been abducted by a UFO in 1975 which was portrayed in the 1993 movie "Fire in the Sky.")



To help plan your visit to Pier 39, click: [Pier 39](#).

Forbes Island, Sea Lion Harbor (between Piers 39 and 41)



While Jake and Jonah watched the sea lions from Pier 39, Jonah noticed just off the pier a small island with palm trees and a beach. Jake informed Jonah that he wasn't looking at an island but rather a motorized vessel that contained a restaurant – Forbes Island. Jonah suggested that they get together at a later date to eat dinner there.

Jake and Jonah returned to Pier 39 a few days later for dinner at Forbes Island. During the dinner, Jake learned that Jonah was a Mormon missionary...and that his mission was to support passage of Proposition 8 (on the 2008 California Ballot), an amendment to the California Constitution restricting marriage to individuals of the opposite sex.

He also learned that Jonah was a *closeted*, gay Mormon. In disgust at Jonah's hypocrisy, Jake left the restaurant.

For more information: [Forbes Island](#).

This is the end of Tour #4.

If you want to see more of Fisherman's Wharf, after you exit the Pier, turn right. Fisherman's Wharf spreads in front of you for eight blocks.

To return Downtown, you have several options. Among them are:

- *The F-Line streetcar: The closest stop is directly in front of Pier 39. But heads up: The line of people waiting to pick up the F-Line can be long on weekends and during the height of the tourist season. If you want to avoid the line and are already intending to walk through Fisherman's Wharf, catch the F-Line on Jones Street between Jefferson and Beach (in front of the Walgreen's). Generally, if you board the F-Line on Jones, you will get a seat.*
- *The Powell-Mason cable car: The turntable for this cable car is six blocks away at the intersection of Bay and Taylor. Generally, the waiting line for this cable car is shorter than the line at the Powell-Hyde cable car turntable.*
- *The Powell-Hyde cable car: The turntable for this cable car is seven blocks away at the western edge of Fisherman's Wharf at the intersection of Hyde and Beach.*
- *The #30-Stockton bus: Consider this option if you plan to explore Fisherman's Wharf all the way to its western edge. The #30-Stockton bus stops closest to the western end of Fisherman's Wharf are at Columbus between North Point and Bay as well as at North Pointe and Hyde (one block south/uphill) from the Powell-Hyde cable car turntable at Beach and Hyde).*

Updated: 19 March 2016