

Tour #3: Jackson Square

This tour starts at the foot of Columbus Avenue (Montgomery and Washington Streets)...the base of the Transamerica Pyramid.

Minimum time: 30 – 45 minutes

Google Map for this tour: [Tour #3: Jackson Square](#)

Probably the easiest way to reach the starting point by public transit is to take the #41-Union MUNI bus: You can pick up the #41-Union on Drumm Street in front of the Hyatt Regency – a few feet from the eastern end of the California Cable car line and ½ block north of the Embarcadero MUNI Metro/BART Station. Get off the bus just after it turns right off of Washington Street onto Columbus. After exiting the bus, turn right. Walk the short distance to Washington and Montgomery streets crossing both until you are at the base of the Transamerica Pyramid.

Transamerica Pyramid (Pyramid Center), 600 Montgomery



The Transamerica Pyramid was mentioned in *Tales of the City*. During a tryst between Anne and Edgar, Anna shared her theory that she, he, and everyone they knew in San Francisco were at one time Atlanteans. They had all come together at the edge of the continent to return to the sea together. Edgar didn't see the connection with Atlantis. She informed him that the thing that dominated the skyline of Atlantis prior to the earthquake that sunk the island into the sea was a large pyramid topped by a beacon.

Although highly controversial when it was first built, the Transamerica Pyramid has become as much of an icon of San Francisco as the Golden Gate Bridge, Coit Tower, and the cable cars. The Transamerica Corporation built the tower and moved into it when it was completed in 1972. The tower no longer serves as the Corporation's headquarters. Although its official name is now the Pyramid Center, San Franciscans still generally call it the Transamerica Pyramid.

There is no public observation deck at the top of the Pyramid nor are there public tours of the building at this time. Only tenants and their guests may go above the lobby level. KPIX Channel 5, the CBS affiliate in the Bay Area, broadcasted an interesting tour of the upper most reaches of the tower in its "Eye on the Bay" series ([click here](#)).



Until recently, you could get a great “eye-to-eye” view of the Transamerica Pyramid by going to the lounge of the Carnelian Room on the 52nd floor of 555 California (two blocks south of the Pyramid on the corner of California and Montgomery). The Carnelian Room closed its doors after the last customer left on New Year’s Eve 2009. At the time of the writing of this tour, no new restaurant was planned for that space. There are a number of videos found on YouTube that share views of the San Francisco skyline from the former Carnelian Room.

Turn left and walk east on Washington.

On the east side of the Transamerica Pyramid is a small grove of redwood trees. One evening in the *Tales of the City*, DeDe confronted Beauchamp with seeing him and Mary Ann being chummy with each other crossing the street on their way to lunch earlier that day. She and Binky happened to be shopping at La Remise du Soleil when she saw Beauchamp and Mary Ann (see below in this tour). Beauchamp snidely responded that DeDe should have seen him ravaging Mary Ann in the redwood grove behind the Transamerica Pyramid.



Back track on Washington a few steps toward Montgomery Street. Across Washington, you’ll see Hotaling Place. Cross Washington to the entrance to Hotaling Place. You are now on the edge of the Jackson Square Historic District.

Jackson Square Historic District, the neighborhood defined by Columbus on the west, Broadway on the north, Sansome on the east, and Washington on the south.

Jackson Square is not a square but rather a neighborhood. It encompasses part of the former (and notorious) neighborhood formerly known as the Barbary Coast. Sections of it escaped the fire following the 1906 earthquake making it the oldest commercial district in the City.

Armistead Maupin is familiar with Jackson Square. After leaving the Associated Press (and afterwards a few other odd, poorly paying jobs), Maupin landed a job working at two ad agencies in this neighborhood – one of which will be seen later in this tour. Maupin doesn’t provide an exact location in Jackson Square for Halcyon Communications in *Tales of the City*. The only description of Halcyon is that it had been a food processing warehouse in an earlier incarnation and that it had “mellow brick walls”.



The interior and exterior shots for Halcyon Communication in the “Tales of the City” miniseries were taken in Los Angeles in the upper floor of a commercial building at 3287 Wilshire Blvd (at Berendo Street). The view out the window of Edgar Halcyon’s

office is of the Talmadge Apartments (3278 Wilshire) and Emmanuel Presbyterian Church (3300 Wilshire).

An interesting note: In the “Tales of the City” miniseries, one scene shows Mary Ann hanging out the American flag (she also does this on a daily basis in *Tales of the City*). Among the various background sounds of the city heard is a cable car’s clanging bell. The closest cable car line to the Jackson Square district is at least three blocks away on California Street.

No longer filled with bawdy dance halls, cat houses, and other like businesses, Jackson Square is now filled with restaurants, watering holes, antique dealers, furniture galleries, and other more reputable businesses – even advertising agencies. You will notice this as you walk through Jackson Square.

Walk down Hotaling Place to Jackson Street. Just a few steps from the corner of Jackson and Hotaling Place and on the side of the building to your right you will find a plaque that reads:

“If, as they say, God spanked the town for being over-frisky,
Why did he burn the churches down and spare Hotaling’s Whiskey?”

Hotaling Building, 451 Jackson, southeast corner of Jackson and Hotaling Place



This was the office and headquarters of Anson Hotaling’s business enterprises which spanned both sides of the alley you just passed through that bears his name. His enterprises included real estate and a distillery.

Whiskey, along with the whim of the wind, is the reason why this block of buildings was not dynamited or burned during the fire caused by the 1906 earthquake. The story goes that the US Army intended to dynamite this block of buildings along Jackson Street to create a firebreak to protect a nearby Federal building. The manager of Hotaling distillery pointed out to the army that the dynamiting of the warehouse full of whiskey would create a firestorm itself so the building was spared.

San Francisco’s Anchor Brewing has created a new Hotaling’s Whiskey.

Cross Jackson Street, turn right and walk the ½ block to Balance. Cross Balance to the northeast corner of the intersection of Balance and Jackson.

414 Jackson Street

After leaving the Associated Press followed by a series of odd jobs around the city, Armistead Maupin landed a job as a mail boy for the PR firm of Hoyer,

Dietrich, and Brown which was located on the 4th floor of 414 Jackson. Hoefler, Dietrich, and Brown became the model for Halcyon Communications. Like Mary Ann, Maupin hung the US Flag outside the building every morning. In his short biography of Armistead Maupin, Patrick Gale shared how Maupin drew upon his employment at Hoefler, Dietrich, and Brown when writing *Tales of the City*:

It was there he [Armistead Maupin] encountered the copywriter who was an inspiration for Mona Ramsey. (She wore granny glasses and peasant dresses, had *Playgirl* centerfolds on her office wall and hooka pipes and was known as the Resident Freak. She was deeply flattered when *Tales* first came out and, spotting the resemblance between her and the feisty character, bragged to all and sundry ... then wished she hadn't when Mona turned out to be a lesbian.)



Armistead Maupin, p 46, Patrick Gale

Although Armistead Maupin worked as a mail boy at HD&B, no mention is made by Patrick Gale if Maupin ever used the copier.

After leaving HD&B, Maupin took a job as an account executive at another ad agency – Lowry, Russom, and Leeper, which was located a few blocks away at 350 Polk (the building has been razed and replaced by a parking lot). It was at Lowry, Russom, and Leeper that he wrote copy for aluminum honeycomb.

Continue walking on Jackson ½ block to Sansome. Cross Sansome until you are at the northeast corner. Turn left and walk north on Sansome.

710 Sansome



This white building was the former location of the Hoover Gallery where DeDe told Binky about her “growing dilemma”: just how little the child she was carrying would resemble Beauchamp. When Binky asked if people would be able to tell the child was not Beauchamp’s by looking at the child. DeDe nodded. And then pointed to her daffodil Diane von Furstenberg dress. Watch this scene from the mini-series: [Hulu](#) (scene starts at about 36:20) and [YouTube](#) (scene starts at about 07:17)

Note: Although the quality of the video on Hulu is better than that on YouTube, the YouTube videos are not accompanied by ads as are the videos on Hulu.

Backtrack two doors south on Sansome to 704 Sansome.

Primitive Logic, 704 Sansome

This is the former location of La Remise du Soleil. DeDe and Binky were shopping at this chic store when DeDe happened to look up and see Beauchamp and Mary Ann crossing the street on their way to lunch. Later that night, DeDe confronted Beauchamp:

“It was lunchtime, and you were looking very chummy.”

“You missed the good part. You should have been there earlier when I ravaged her in the redwood grove behind the Transamerica Pyramid.”

(Tales of the City/28 Barbary Lane, p. 39)



In the “Tales of the City” miniseries, DeDe and Binky are eating at a restaurant. There is the reflection of a passing cable car in the restaurant’s window. DeDe is sitting with her back to the window. Binky happens to look up and sees Beauchamp and Mary Ann across the street walking up to the Washington Square Bar and Grill. See *Tour #1: North Beach*, for the rest of the story about this scene in the miniseries.

Finish backtracking south on Sansome to Jackson. Cross Jackson to the southeast corner of the intersection. Turn left (east) and walk 1 ½ blocks to 215 Jackson.

Eureka Theater, 215 Jackson Street



This is the former home of the Gateway Cinema (1967-1998). In *Tales of the City*, Mary Ann and Normal saw *Detective Story* with Kirk Douglas and Eleanor Parker. After the movie, they walked up Jackson Street to Chinatown. They stopped to eat at Sam Wo where Mary Ann had her encounter with Edsel Ford Fong (see *Tour #6: Chinatown, Nob Hill, and the Edge of the Tenderloin*).

At the same time south of Market, Michael was competing in (and winning) the jockey shorts dance contest at the End Up (see *Tour #9, South of Market*). Meanwhile, at the other end of town at Perry’s on Union Street in Cow Hollow, Brian was trying to pick up D’orothea (see *Tour #11, Union Street/Cow Hollow, the Marina District, and Back to the Beginning*).

Busy night for some of the residents of 28 Barbary Lane.

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In the “Tales of the City” miniseries, Mary Ann and Norman see this movie at the Castro Theater (see *Tour #8, The Castro, Noe Valley, and Dubose Triangle*) before going to eat at Sam Wo. If you look closely at the scene in the movie, you will see *Detective Story* on the marquee of the Castro Theater.

Continue walking east to the end of the block. At Front Street, turn left and cross Jackson to the northwest corner of the intersection. Continue walking north on Front just a few steps.

Institutional Venture Partners (IVP), 607 Front Street (just north of Jackson/across from Walton Park)

IVP’s space in this red brick building is the former location of MacArthur Park, the restaurant where Beauchamp took Mary Ann one day for lunch. It was during this lunch that Beauchamp pitched to Mary Ann the idea that the two of them should go away the following weekend to a place he knew in Mendocino. (*Tales of the City*)



This is the end of Tour #3.

To return to Market Street and/or the MUNI Metro/BART system, retrace your steps to the northwest corner of Jackson and Battery. This is the stop for both the #10-Townsend and #12-Folsom/Pacific MUNI busses. Exit the busses at Sansome and Sutter. The entrance to the Montgomery MUNI/BART Station is right here. To reach Market, turn left after exiting the bus. Cross Sutter. Market is just a few steps ahead of you.

If you want to go directly to the start of Tour #4: Telegraph Hill and Back to Fisherman’s Wharf, walk two blocks north on Front (away from Jackson Street) to Broadway. Cross Broadway (to the northeast corner), turn right and talk the two short blocks to the Embarcadero. Halfway across the Embarcadero and on the left is the stop for MUNI’s historic F-Line (Market and Wharves). Exit the MUNI Streetcar at Pier 39/The Embarcadero and Stockton. From this stop, pick up the #39-Coit bus to Coit Tower and the start of Tour #4: Telegraph Hill and Back to Fisherman’s Wharf.

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