

LENS & LOGISTICS

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SPRING IN SF

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WINTER COLLAPSE
INTO SPRING IN THE
CITY

DC CHERRY BLOSSOMS

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CELEBRATE WITH YOUR
GALS THE RIGHT WAY
WITH THIS PICTURE
PERFECT BRUNCH SPOT

CALLA LILY VALLEY

ON A DISCREET PULL-
OFF ALONG HIGHWAY 1
IS A VALLEY FULL OF
CALLA LILIES



WELCOME TO LENS & LOGISTICS

Dear Lens & Logistics Explorers,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of “Lens & Logistics”! It’s with immense joy and gratitude that I present this first edition, filled with the spirit of exploration, visual narratives, and travel wisdom.

As we navigate the vast landscapes of our world, “Lens & Logistics” seeks to be your companion on the journey - a source of inspiration, a guide in logistics, and a celebration of the beauty that unfolds through the lens.

In this milestone issue, expect practical guides, food recommendations, and tips to keep your footprint small when exploring natural destinations. Each piece is crafted with passion and a shared love for the stories that traveling tells. Your engagement is the heartbeat of this newsletter. Share your thoughts, send in your stories, and let’s build a community bound by a love for exploration and storytelling.

Thank you for joining me on this adventure. Without further ado, let’s dive into the first issue of “Lens & Logistics.”



Stay safe,
Sarah Marie
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STOP AND SMELL THE FLOWERS

Spring in San Francisco

My first spring in California was a sensory symphony filled with a cacophony of color and an orchestra for the olfactory. I have always loved spring, but I didn't realize how much California comes alive in the springtime, especially in San Francisco. There are endless types of flowers to see and explore in SF, but I will narrow this trip down to three: Magnolias, Tulips, and Cherry Blossoms (Sakura).

Magnolias at the SF Botanical Garden

Every year, from late January to March, Magnolias bloom throughout SF Botanical Garden. They have over 200 trees, all blooming in different shades of pink and white. But keep your eyes peeled when driving in SF, as Magnolia trees are also hidden in the most unexpected places. The event is happening this year from January 13 to March 31.

Sakura in Japanese Tea Garden

While the Japanese Tea Garden is always a spectacular place to visit in SF, it is next level in March and April when the cherry blossoms (and Azaleas and Wisteria) bloom. It can get pretty crowded quickly, so it's better to go early to enjoy the flowers with fewer people. The tea house always has a line, so if you want to skip it and still get some excellent tea, you should head to Japantown to finish your day.



Queen Wilhelmina Garden and Dutch Windmill

There are two windmills in Golden Gate Park, the Dutch windmill to the north and the Murphey windmill to the west. The Dutch windmill is home to Queen Wilhelmina's Garden which has a spectacular tulip bloom in March. The garden is free to visit and a perfect spot for a picnic. Parking can be tricky so you may need to park in a lot at Ocean Beach and walk to the windmills. Don't forget to take everything out of your car when you leave, its a popular smash and grab spot.

Pro Tip: If you go in March you can see the Magnolias, Cherry Blossoms, and Tulips easily in one day, but best done in two to not feel rushed. You can buy a "Gardens of Golden Gate" pass that will get you admission to the Botanical Garden, Tea Garden, and Conservatory of Flowers. For a fancier lunch, I recommend checking out the Beach Chalet overlooking Ocean Beach. If you look you can spot surfers and you might even see some whales around April.



About the Cherry Blossoms

There are roughly 3,800 cherry trees throughout the Tidal Basin area in Washington DC. In 1912 the trees were given as a gift from the People of Japan. There are many types of cherry trees with different blossoms but the most popular is the Yoshino Cherry which makes up 70% of the blooms. They have white flowers and an almond scent. They are the ones you see planted most along the water.

Cherry Blossom Festival

Every year, DC hosts a Cherry Blossom festival, where an estimated 1.5 million people will visit throughout the roughly three-week festival. As you can imagine, it can get pretty crowded quickly. If you are not looking to fight the crowds, you should not come on the weekend and instead play hooky from work on a random day and get there as early as possible.

If you aren't afraid of crowds, you should plan your trip around the fun events offered at the festival, like the opening ceremony, parade, kite festival, and petalpalooze.

When I visited, I watched the sunrise as I enjoyed the Yoshino blossoms around the Basin, and then I went more toward the mall to enjoy the festival events. As always, in DC, bring a sturdy pair of shoes, a refillable water bottle, and a backpack full of snacks because you will do a lot of walking and don't want to pay National Mall prices for food.

Bloom Watch

Cherry Blossoms go through many stages of bloom, but they are best seen in the "peak bloom" when 70% of the Yoshina Cherry blossoms are in bloom. Many factors play into the timing of peak bloom, such as temperature and rainfall, but there are also websites dedicated to predicting the peak bloom to help visitors plan.

TIDAL BASIN CHERRY BLOSSOMS



WASHINGTON DC CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

GALENTINE'S DAY BRUNCH



“Oh, it’s only the best day of the year. Every February 13th, my lady friends and I leave our husbands and our boyfriends at home, and we just come and kick it breakfast-style. Ladies celebrating ladies. It’s like my Lilith Fair, minus the angst. Plus frittatas.”
- Leslie Knope

Galentine’s Day Brunch at Son and Garden

I love girl friendships almost as much as I love an excuse to wear pink, go out to brunch, and celebrate those extraordinary friendships. Last year, I celebrated Galentine’s Day with my roommates and my OG Valentine, my mom. We all had been dying to go check out the most dreamy restaurant, Son and Garden; it’s like it was made for Instagram pictures.

The interior is covered in flowers from the ceiling to the wallpaper. It’s a beautiful mix of pinks and blues, golden chandeliers, and pink velvet chairs, and that’s just the main room! Next to it is the “secret bar,” which is still floral but has a more light blue/dark blue peacock vibe. The entire restaurant screams Galentine’s Day.

The best thing about Son and Garden is that their breathtaking decorations pale compared to their food and drinks. They are known for their extravagant cocktails (one comes with an edible butterfly), tea services (like full-on towers), and indulgent brunch menu. When I visited, I ordered the Korean Benedict, a bone-in short rib, kimchi fried rice, chive, mushroom, spinach, carrot, bell pepper, and house-made hollandaise. I dream about this dish.



SON AND GARDEN

Point of Realism- As you can imagine, it’s not a cheap place to eat. Some places are worth splurging on for special occasions, and this is one of those places. It’s also not in the best spot in SF, so if that makes you uncomfortable, check out the Menlo Park or Palo Alto location.

1. Dress appropriately for mud and a hike.

The trail is muddy! Like, it will suck your shoe right off your foot and be gone forever, kinda muddy. The mud may not always be that deep, but with all the rain, it certainly is treacherous. I wore hiking boots and had Crocs to change into for the beach. If you want to take cute pictures, I suggest bringing a long dress that's easy to slip on over your hiking outfit (which should include pants or leggings-see tip #2).

2. Watch for Stinging Nettles!

I learned this lesson the hard way, so you don't have to. I wore shorts because I knew I wanted to go into the water. I barely skimmed my leg against a stinging nettle, and it was enough to have the spot burning for literally 12 hours. I tried everything from calamine lotion to ice packs, and there was no relief. Just avoid it.

3. Parking Options

There's no good way to get to the beach from the valley unless you want to rock climb or go through the water. I did both, and I don't recommend. The best way to see the beach and the valley is to park on the more southern trail entrance of the Garrapata Trout Road Trailhead. Then you can walk down to see the calls lilies, then walk back up to see the beach (shh... don't tell anyone that if you go down the beach, you can sometimes catch a beach waterfall! ;))

4. Go early to beat the crowds.

Timing is a little tricky because you want to go early to beat the crowds, but you don't want to go so early that the marine fog layers are still there. I arrived around 11:00 am, and the crowd was small, but it was also expected to be cloudy, so that helped. But, like most beautiful pop-off spots along Highway 1, people only tend to stay long enough to take pictures. It's easy enough to wait out a crowd.

5. Bringing your furry friend.

Garrapata State Park is pet friendly, but pets are supposed to be on a leash. When I visited, I took a dog with me, and we navigated the trails easily on leash. Calla Lilies are toxic to dogs, so you want to ensure your pup doesn't ingest any part of them.

Pro tip: Leave some room to go up Carmel by the Sea on your way home for lunch/dinner and some shopping in the cutest little town on Highway 1.



Stinging Nettle

TIPS FOR VISITING CALLA LILY VALLEY



Leave No Trace: As with any time you're visiting a natural destination, you should take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but footprints. Pack out what you pack in and stick to the trails. This is an unpopular opinion, but Calla Lilies are invasive species, so while this valley is incredible to marvel at, don't feel too bad if you accidentally step on them. They also have underground stems, so they will grow back if the top flowers get stepped on.

THE MISSING LINK

Stop and Smell the Flowers

- [Gardens of Golden Gate Tickets](#)
- [SF Botanical Garden](#)
- [Japanese Tea Garden](#)
- [Whilemena's Garden](#)
- [Ocean Beach Chalet](#)

Washington DC Cherry Blossom Festival

- [Cherry Blossom Festival-March 20-April 14](#)
- [Cherry Blossom Map](#)
- [Cherry Blossom Bloom Watch](#)

Galentines Day

- [Son and Garden Menu](#)
- [Son and Garden Reservations- San Francisco Location](#)

Calla Lily Valley

- [Garrapata State Park](#)
- [Carmel-by-the-Sea](#)



Secret Sakura

My favorite park in San Francisco is next to Lucasfilms, across the street from the Palace of Fine Arts. It is also basically the only other place in SF where you can see cherry blossoms outside the Japanese Tea Garden. These cherry trees are free to visit!

My advice: Go to Golden Gate Deli, get a San Franpsycho on a soft roll, and walk to the park to enjoy your lunch.