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under the radar

# san francisco's nob hill

In a rapidly changing city, a few things remain the same in San Francisco's Nob Hill neighborhood, including its unparalleled views and close location to some of the city's most vibrant areas—Union Square, Fisherman's Wharf, North Beach, Chinatown, the Financial District, are all located within walking distance (if your cardiovascular system can handle the ascent) of the iconic enclave. But Nob Hill is not immune to the changing city or the Bay Area's visitor demographics, says Joe D'Alessandro, president and CEO of San Francisco Travel, the city's convention and visitors bureau. "The scene has changed dramatically in the past 10 years and the advent of a lot of our industries has impacted every neighborhood in the city, mostly in a positive way. It's created a vibrant economy that's one of the strongest in the U.S. right

now. Nob Hill has certainly benefitted from that."

The neighborhood's history dates back to the Gold Rush when cable car lines made the area an accessible and desirable location for the Central Pacific Railroad barons to build their mansions. Still known as a swanky area of town, Nob Hill hotels, many of which have been around for more than 100 years, generate the city's highest ADR and RevPAR, D'Alessandro says.

Four key properties on Nob Hill have recently completed updates, a tricky task considering their portentous past, but necessary to attract a younger subset of guests in addition to the area's traditional visitors. "It's rare to see a modern hotel—because it's too expensive—be built in that quality and level of detail that the old hotels have," D'Alessandro says of the four: the

Scarlet Huntington, Fairmont San Francisco Hotel, InterContinental Mark Hopkins, and Stanford Court. "But it's a risky thing when you do a renovation or rehabilitation of a property that is historic and people know and love and have an affinity for."



4. Stanford Court's revamped lobby nods to the city's tech industry.

## Stanford Court

Formerly the Renaissance San Francisco Stanford Court, the property transitioned from its Marriott flag in 2013 and is now independent and managed by Highgate Hotels. That transition meant divesting the hotel of branded elements, all the while updating the public spaces. An in-house design team added tech-inspired elements intended to draw a new type of clientele and pay homage to the city's booming industry.

In December Stanford Court was purchased by Los Angeles-based Woodridge Capital Partners (which also owns the Fairmont San Francisco and Mark Hopkins), and a major renovation to the 393-room hotel is planned, though details and a design firm have yet to be announced.