

THE PRESIDIO: BATTERIES TO BLUFFS TRAIL

60

IN BRIEF

Think of a dream San Francisco hike: a path overlooking the ocean, with gorgeous views of the Golden Gate Bridge; a peaceful place where you could sit and watch the waves crash, or get your morning exercise running through a scenic landscape while birds sing and flowers bloom. You don't have to imagine this trail, because it already exists—it's the Batteries to Bluffs Trail in The Presidio.

DESCRIPTION

Batteries to Bluffs Trail runs parallel to and downslope from Lincoln Boulevard and consists mostly of sets of steps and some flat sections of trail. You can hike in either direction, starting from the parking lot at the Golden Gate Overlook, as described here, or from the side-of-the-street parking on Lincoln Boulevard (this is my preferred trailhead, but there isn't much parking).

Begin at the parking area near Golden Gate Overlook. If you want to take in the view

Directions →

From southbound US 101 in San Francisco, just past the Golden Gate Bridge toll plaza, turn right onto Merchant Road. After about 500 feet, turn right onto Lincoln Boulevard, then almost immediately right again into the parking lot at Golden Gate Overlook, or continue to side-of-the-road parking on Lincoln near Kobbe Avenue.

From northbound 19th Avenue in San Francisco, bear left onto Crossover Drive in Golden Gate Park. Continue, now on 25th Avenue, to the junction with El Camino del Mar. Turn right. Continue, now on Lincoln, into The Presidio, to side-of-the-road parking near the junction with Kobbe Avenue, or to the parking lot at Golden Gate Overlook.



KEY AT-A-GLANCE INFORMATION

LENGTH: 1.9 miles

CONFIGURATION: Out-and-back

DIFFICULTY: Easy

SCENERY: Coastline, beach,
Golden Gate Bridge views

EXPOSURE: Almost completely
exposed

TRAFFIC: Moderate

TRAIL SURFACE: Dirt fire roads and
trail with many steps

HIKING TIME: 1 hour

SEASON: Good anytime

ACCESS: Free

MAPS: At the trailhead's information signboard and nps.gov/goga/planyourvisit/maps.htm. *The Walker's Map of San Francisco*, published by Pease Press, is another good option (\$7.95; peasepress.com).

FACILITIES: None

SPECIAL COMMENTS: No dogs
allowed

CONTACTS: 415-561-4323,
presidio.gov

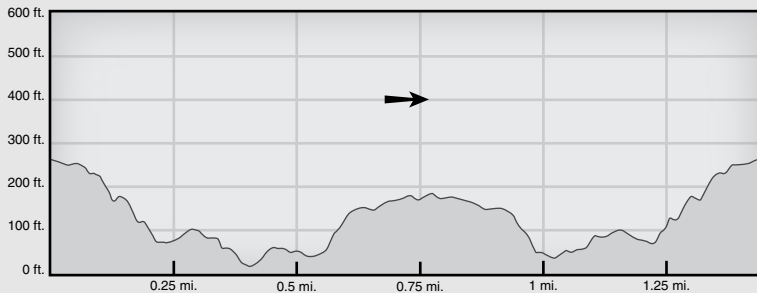
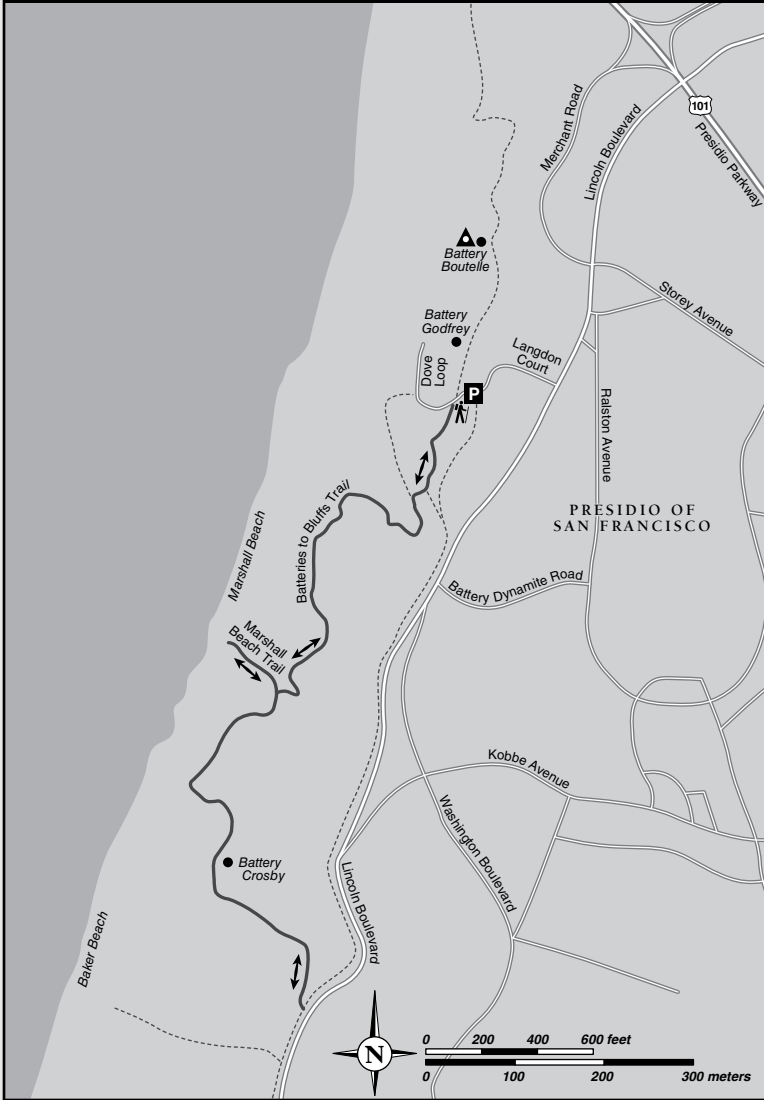
DRIVING DISTANCE: 5 miles from
the San Francisco Civic Center



GPS INFORMATION

N37° 48.207' W122° 28.609'

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A bee and a butterfly stop to peruse the blooms along the trail.

of the Golden Gate, follow the paved path to the north, then return to the parking lot when ready. Three different paths depart to the south: one edging along Lincoln, the second where a driveway connects two segments of parking lots, and a third on the western edge of the second parking lot. All three join, but for this hike, take the middle path.

The wide dirt trail weaves through a thin forest of Monterey cypress and pine. The understory is mostly invasive ivy. At .07 mile, bear right (the path left leads to the Pacific Overlook on Lincoln). A sign at the top of wooden steps marks the start of Batteries to Bluffs Trail.

And here you'll begin the descent, with the trail already showing off fantastic views south to Lands End. In autumn you may see white-crowned sparrows flitting from ceanothus to coyote brush shrubs. Poison oak is a near-constant companion along the path. In spring look for purple iris in bloom. The steps keep dropping, and the trail passes a bare rocky hillside. At 0.22 mile, note an overlook with a bench on the right—this is an excellent rest stop on the way back uphill. The trail descends again, passing through a clump of willows. At 0.43 mile, turn right at the signed junction with Marshall Beach Trail.

The narrow path descends, then ends at one last set of stairs leading to the beach, at 0.5 mile. Here, you can gaze north to the Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin Headlands. I often see brown pelicans flying in formation overhead, and on



Batteries to Bluffs Trail ascends through lush coastal scrub.

one September visit, I was delighted to watch a pod of porpoises cavorting offshore. Explore the beach if you like; when ready, retrace your steps back to the junction with Batteries to Bluffs Trail, then turn right.

The trail crosses a year-round trickling stream. Toyon, coyote brush, and coffeeberry thrive here. Soon, Batteries to Bluffs Trail begins to climb—yes, more steps! At the top, the trail heads over the top of Battery Crosby; use caution here so you don't fall down to the left. As you enjoy views south to Baker Beach, watch for lizards scampering about. A few more steps head down to join a wide dirt track that leads up to Lincoln Boulevard. You could start back toward the Golden Gate Overlook now, at 0.83 mile, but consider walking up to Lincoln and the official end of the trail. If you do, you'll likely see purple bush lupine as well as San Francisco wallflower, buckwheat, and other lovely wildflowers blooming here in spring. This is also the section of trail where I commonly spot coyote scat.

When you're ready, retrace your steps back to the trailhead.