



Photo credit: Michal Venera

## Hidden Gem at the Golden Gate

Fort Baker comprises approximately 335 acres set in a cove at the north side of the Golden Gate Bridge. This beautiful historic area includes a core zone of 91 acres surrounding a parade ground, protecting a collection of over two dozen historic military buildings dating from the turn-of-the-century. Partners have also added new eco-friendly and architecturally sensitive buildings on the footprint of historic buildings to create program space and lodging. The main post is fronted by Horseshoe Cove, and over one-mile of relatively pristine rocky bay shoreline. The surrounding open space and hillsides, which contain habitat for the endangered mission blue butterfly, contribute to the site's significance. An extensive trail system invites exploration. With less fog and warmer temperatures than other coastal sites, Fort Baker offers quiet solitude in a spectacular setting.

## Fort Baker's Early History

The Coast Miwok tribe inhabited the Fort Baker area prior to its exploration and settlement by Europeans. Wetlands, marshes and streams provided many resources of daily living for the indigenous peoples. The adjacent land often served as seasonal encampments or villages. The area's recorded history began in 1775, when the

Spanish vessel *San Carlos*, under the command of Juan Manuel de Ayala, entered San Francisco Bay. At the end of the Mexican War in 1848, this area—part of William Antonio Richardson's vast Rancho Sausalito—began to be sold to real estate speculators.

## The Military Years

In 1866, the United States government acquired the site and created a military reservation along the Marin Headlands to safeguard San Francisco Bay. Relatively simple earthwork batteries were constructed in the 1870s. One of these, Battery Cavallo, is a particularly fine example of seacoast fortifications of that period.

In the 1890's, Fort Baker was formally established. As part of an effort to reconstruct coastal fortifications for major U.S. harbors, massive concrete batteries with the latest in long range guns were built along the bluffs. By 1910, the construction of the post was essentially complete. The fort included eleven Colonial Revival-style officer's homes, barracks, and community buildings for the troops, laid out in a curve around a grassy parade ground with plantings of pepper, elm and eucalyptus trees to reduce wind and dust.

After World War I, most of the long range guns were removed, and the post became inactive. But as world tensions increased in the 1930s, Fort Baker was reactivated as a mine depot. Over three hundred underwater mines guarded the Golden Gate during World War II, tended by the Army's "navy" of mine vessels berthed at Fort Baker. The guns of Battery Yates were manned against surprise surface raids.

In the Cold War years, the buildings at Fort Baker were used for training Army Reserve troops, and as headquarters for the anti-aircraft missile units defending the Bay Area. With the end of the Cold War in the 1970's, the Army's presence at the historic post was significantly reduced.



Fort Baker is named for Edward Dickenson Baker, a former U.S. Senator from Oregon. Active in California politics in the 1850s, Baker lost his life while leading a regiment of Union troops in the Civil War. He and his wife are buried in the San Francisco National Cemetery at the Presidio.



## Fort Baker Today

This former Army site has been reborn as part of a national park—the last of the dramatic “post to park” conversions that have created the Golden Gate National Parks. Hiking, fishing, viewing wildlife, and spectacular views of the Golden Gate and the Marin Headlands await visitors to Fort Baker.

Several partners also provide recreation and educational opportunities and visitor amenities at Fort Baker.

Self-guided walking tours of the historic parade ground and Horseshoe Cove are available at the Marin Headlands Visitor Center, the Bay Area Discovery Museum, or at Cavallo Point—the Lodge at the Golden Gate. They are also available online at:

[www.nps.gov/goga/planyourvisit/fort-baker.htm](http://www.nps.gov/goga/planyourvisit/fort-baker.htm)

■ Since 1991, the **Bay Area Discovery Museum** has provided outstanding children’s educational programs activities for the 6 months to 8 year-old set.

Information 415-339-3900  
[www.badm.org](http://www.badm.org)

■ **Travis Sailing Center** located on the east side of Horseshoe Cove, offers sailing instruction and boat rentals.

Information 415-332-2319

■ The most dramatic recent changes are evident in the historic and contemporary buildings surrounding and overlooking Murray Circle and the historic parade ground. **Cavallo Point—The Lodge at the Golden Gate**, the newest lodge in the National Park System, welcomes visitors for a unique overnight stay in one of 68 historic and 74 contemporary guest rooms. The Lodge also has a restaurant, bar, meeting rooms and Healing Arts Center. The Lodge was constructed to the highest standards of environmental sustainability.

Information 415-339-4700  
[www.cavallopoint.com](http://www.cavallopoint.com)

■ The **Institute at the Golden Gate** is a new program of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy in partnership with the National Park Service. The Institute, which will use facilities at the lodge, advances environmental preservation and global sustainability by facilitating cross-sector dialogue and collaboration, encouraging new partnerships and promoting action.

Information 415-339-4786  
[www.instituteatgoldengate.org](http://www.instituteatgoldengate.org)