

# How to save a lot of money on cable car tickets in San Francisco

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Say you're a tourist in San Francisco and want to take a ride on the famous cable cars. You are almost certainly going to get on at the turnaround at the corner of Market Street and Powell Street and take it all the way to the other end of the line, which drops you off at Fisherman's Wharf.<sup>1</sup>

Now, a single cable car ride is \$8 (all prices are current as of publication time), so a round trip would be \$16. If you make a stop at the Cable Car Museum, then it'll be \$24 since you'll have to buy a new ticket for the resumption of the journey.

Near the Powell Street turnaround is a ticket booth where you can buy cable car tickets. Also available is a 1-day Visitor Passport, which grants unlimited use of the cable cars and the Muni bus and tram system. At the booth, the 1-day Visitor Passport costs \$24.

But you can do better.

Go down the stairs into the BART station. Turn right and you'll see a bank of red Muni vending machines. You can buy a 1-day Visitor Passport from the machines for only \$13, assuming you already have a Clipper card. And you may very well already have a Clipper card, because you may have taken BART or Caltrain into the city, and they also use Clipper. If not, you can buy one for \$3, bringing your total to \$16, the same as two cable car tickets, and still cheaper than the price upstairs at the kiosk.

Do note that the machine is limited to two transactions per credit card per day, so if you're buying more than two Visitor Passports, you'll need to split the purchases across multiple cards or pay in cash. If you have any problems, there's a Muni ticket booth right next to the machines, and in my experience, the people are very helpful.

You can also buy a \$13 1-day Visitor Pass from the MuniMobile app, if you're the sort of person who likes to pay for things with your phone. Personally, I prefer the card, because I don't want to be pulling out my phone to show the conductor while hanging onto the outside of a moving cable car.<sup>3</sup>

If you are traveling by yourself or in a small group, you can try to bypass the long lines at the turnarounds by walking to the *second* stop on the line. This doesn't always work, however, because during busy times, the cable car will have room for only a few people, and if a lot of people are trying the same trick, you'll have to wait a few cycles until you get your turn.

<sup>1</sup> The Powell Street turnaround serves two lines: The Powell-Mason line takes you to the east end of the Fisherman's Wharf tourist area; the Powell-Hyde line takes you past Lombard Street (the famous crooked street) to the west end near Ghirardelli Square. Both go past the Cable Car Museum (free admission), which I highly recommend.

<sup>2</sup> If you get off at Lombard Street, you can just walk the rest of the way down Leavenworth Street to Fisherman's Wharf.

<sup>3</sup> Hanging onto the outside of a cable car is the cool way to ride.

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