

# Travel

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2008

## CHECK IN/CHECK OUT

SAN FRANCISCO  
INTERCONTINENTAL

### THE BASICS

As San Francisco's largest new hotel in two decades, the 32-story InterContinental San Francisco has prompted its share of architectural controversy. Preservationists, design bloggers and other critics have compared the glassy, turquoise hotel to a deodorant stick, a gigantic Popsicle and even a futuristic toaster. Some just call it plain ugly. But the view from the inside is quite different. The muted beige interiors are well proportioned and calming. The service is polished. And many of the hotel's 550 rooms offer spectacular views of the low-slung city.

### LOCATION

In the half-seedy, half-sparkly neighborhood of South of Market, or SoMa. The hotel is a short stroll from the financial district, several museums, gobs of shopping and the Powell Street BART station.

### ROOMS

Given the Bay Area's exorbitant real estate prices, you might expect cramped quarters, but the rooms are surprisingly large and inviting. The décor is clean and contemporary, with inoffensive browns and beige. There are also plenty of gadgets, including a 42-inch HDTV, iPod-ready alarm clock and futuristic touchpad phones. But it's the floor-to-ceiling windows that really shine. My 12th-floor view stretched from Potrero Hill to Oakland, with colorful swatches of water and ballpark. Pay a little more for the king bed superior and you'll be guaranteed a room above the 12th floor. From this height, the neighborhood's dingy residence hotels blend into the sleek cocktail bars.

### THE BATHROOM

Bright and spacious, separated from the rest of the room by a sliding glass door. It was decorated with the kind of soothing wood and granite you'd find in a spa. There was an oversize soaking tub, warm mood lighting and a large countertop and sink. A phone hung by the toilet.

### AMENITIES

The lobby level has a cozy lounge, Bar 888, which specializes in grappa, and a California Tuscan-style restaurant, Luce, which serves hearty dishes like pan-roasted venison (\$31), cider-braised pork belly (\$29) and a Niman Ranch rib-eye (\$29). The sixth floor features a full-service spa, an expansive (if chilly) outdoor terrace furnished with a smattering of lounge chairs and tables, and a health club with indoor lap pool, hot tub and a well-equipped and airy fitness center. Also on the sixth: Club InterContinental, a private lounge and business center where guests can find a continental breakfast, afternoon tea and happy hour (the club fee is \$80 a couple).

### ROOM SERVICE

Room service is available around the clock, and orders arrive atop a white tablecloth trolley, wheeled in by courteous waiters. My grilled tuna with beans and olives (\$26) took a little over 30 minutes on a Friday night, as did my eggs and bacon (\$15) the next morning. Both meals showed up delicious and hot.



PETER DASILVA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The floor-to-ceiling view is the star feature of the rooms at the InterContinental San Francisco.

### BOTTOM LINE

The InterContinental may not be the prettiest hotel on the outside, but inside, it offers stunning views, comfy rooms and an attractive location for business travelers and shoppers alike. Standard rooms start at \$229 through the reservations desk, though discounts can be found online. The InterContinental San Francisco, 888 Howard Street; (888) 811-4273; [www.intercontinentalsanfrancisco.com](http://www.intercontinentalsanfrancisco.com).

CHRIS COLIN