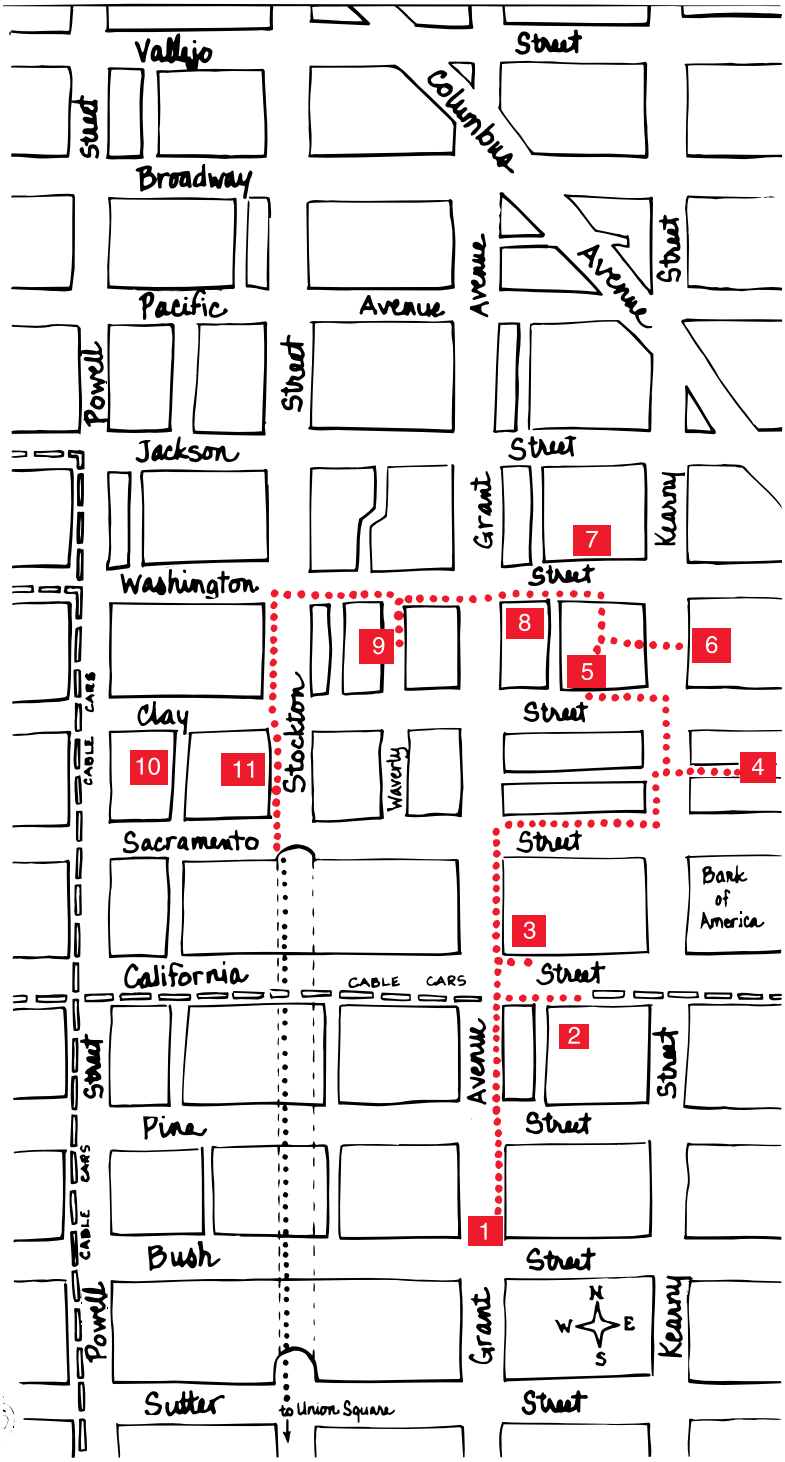
CHINATOWN

Besides being the largest settlement of its kind outside of Asia, San Francisco's 24-block Chinatown is the U.S. distribution hub for Chinese trade goods and the ethnic capital of 1.6 million Americans of Chinese descent. Enter Cathay-by-the-Bay via the **dragon-crested gate [1]** at Grant Avenue and Bush, a 1969 gift from the Republic of China. As you peruse the eight-block length of Chinatown's main stem, Grant, lift your eyes to the calligraphy street signs, dragon-entwined lamp posts and the roofscape of arched eaves, carved cornices and filigreed balconies. Two blocks beyond the Chinese gateway turn right (east) at California into **St. Mary's Square [2]**, a tree-shaded plot presided over by Beniamino Bufano's 12-foot statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese Republic (1911-1913). The stolidly un-Chinese-looking church across the street, **Old St. Mary's [3]**, was built in 1854 of brick brought 'round the Horn and granite cut in China, and served for 37 years as the City's first cathedral. Continue north on Grant. Turn right (east) on Sacramento, then left (north) on Kearny. A half-block up on your right is Commercial Street, a small alleyway concealing an historical treasure. Pacific Rim art is showcased at the **Pacific Heritage Museum of San Francisco [4]**, 608 Commercial Street. The museum is housed in the 1875 U.S. Subtreasury, a California Historical Landmark. Return to Kearny and turn right (north). **Portsmouth Square [5]**, San Francisco's birthplace, is on your left, just across Clay Street (the American flag was first raised here on July 9, 1846). The Square, known as "Chinatown's living room," is the scene of solemn tai chi rituals in the early morning. The pedestrian bridge over Kearny Street leads to the **Chinese Culture Center [6]**, on the third floor of the Holiday Inn Financial District. The center offers performances and rotating exhibitions of Chinese art and culture. On the Square's north side at 720 Washington is **Buddha's Universal Church [7]**. Turn left (west) and walk up Washington, noting the quarter's oldest **pagoda-style edifice [8]** at 743, to **Waverly Place [9]**, "street of the painted balconies." This busy alley harbors three temples: Jeng Sen at 146, Tin How at 125 and Norras at 109. Return to Washington and turn left. Walk one block to Stockton Street, turn left and continue south. These blocks embrace the main Chinese neighborhood district -- a glorious conglomeration of ginger roots and bamboo shoots, golden-glazed ducks and whole drawn pigs, lychee nuts, sharks' fins, tanks brimming with fish and crates of cackling chickens. Interspersed among the food bins are herb shops dispensing ancient potions, teahouses dishing up dim sum (Chinese dumplings) and a bakery devoted to fortune cookies. The role of the Chinese in the Old West is capsulized at the **Chinese Historical Society [10]**, 965 Clay Street. **Kong Chow Temple** at 855 Stockton **[11]** (above the Chinatown Post Office), is the oldest family association in America. To reach Union Square, walk straight ahead seven blocks via the Stockton tunnel or board a southbound Muni 30-Stockton bus.



Distance: 15 blocks.