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HOME & AWAY

Remembering the Summer of Love

Half a century has passed, and San Francisco is throwing a party.

By Rich Warren

Fifty years ago this summer, up to 100,000 young people from all over the U.S. and abroad—lured by a song urging them to wear flowers in their hair—converged on the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco. Dismissed by some as merely a time of “drugs, sex and rock ‘n’ roll,” the summer of 1967 also was the apex of a period when those who came to be called “hippies” believed they could transform the nation with their spirit of peace and love.



Shops along Haight Street embrace the psychedelic spirit that permeated the Summer of Love.

Rich Warren

To celebrate that transformative time, San Francisco is throwing a huge party this year to commemorate The Summer of Love. Nearly every cultural entity in the Bay area is observing the anniversary in some way. Highlights include museum exhibits, special events and concerts, including the 50th anniversary of the Monterey Pop Festival, which also had its start during that amazing summer, a time when San Francisco was the epicenter of the popular music scene in the U.S.

The Haight

Every Summer of Love visitor will be irresistibly pulled towards a single street corner—the intersection of Haight and Ashbury streets. Thousands of photos will be taken of the iconic street sign framed to include the clock face beside it that’s permanently frozen in time to 4:20. Nowadays, the neighborhood is filled with vibrantly colored Victorian homes, which in 1967 would have been painted in drab whites or beiges, reflecting the then “down at heel” neighborhood with incredibly cheap rents.

Though much has changed, the spirit of 1967 lingers in the neighborhood locals call the Haight. Commercial Haight Street is still lined with stores selling vintage clothing of the era, tie-dye shops, boutiques selling octopus candelabra and skull-shaped ice cube trays, and

vinyl record shops. It's possible to snag an original 45-rpm record of *White Rabbit*, released in 1967, at Amoeba Records for just \$1.99.

Just as in 1967, a few visibly dazed people roam the streets, muttering to themselves and waving their hands, but more upscale folks also can be seen flocking to places like the Magnolia Gastropub. A Whole Foods store stands incongruously at one end of Haight Street, and a Ben & Jerry's is located at the corner of the famous intersection itself, but there's still very much a feeling of another time in this unique neighborhood.



"Wild Wes" leads a Free Love tour with Wild San Francisco Walking Tours.

Rich Warren

Take a Tour

A variety of tours are available all yearlong showcasing Haight-Ashbury's highlights, including the former home of the Grateful Dead, directly across the street from a house once occupied by the Hell's Angels (The Dead made special efforts to stay on their good side). Janis Joplin lived down the street and previously resided in a nearby apartment where she trysted with Jim Morrison of The Doors and where she also was evicted for owning a dog.

Patty Hearst hid out here during the time she was on the lam with the Symbionese Liberation Army, and other famous residents over the years have included Jimi Hendrix and ballet star Rudolph Nureyev, who, when he was arrested for possession of marijuana, performed a grand jeté into the police car.

Several walking tours take different approaches to showing off the neighborhood. Flower Power Tours offers a wry and witty overview, discussing the area's history from its beginnings and

directing guests to places where \$5 t-shirts can be found or a spot where John Lennon supposedly wrote his name in fresh concrete. Foot Tours hires actors and comedians to lead their excursions, telling their patrons they're "frequent flyers on the Jefferson Airplane" and playing snippets of music from the era, including an amazing solo by Charles Manson, who resided in the neighborhood for a while.

The Wild San Francisco walking tour also focuses on the musical heritage of the many singers, songwriters and musicians who made The Haight their home but examines the social upheaval of the time as well. Not into organized tours? Download the app put together by Detour's Walking Tour, narrated by actor Peter Coyote, also a resident of the Haight during the Summer of Love.

Vehicular tours include San Francisco Love Tours, transporting visitors in a VW hippie bus throughout San Francisco in addition to the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. Similarly, the amazing Magic Bus Experience visits the whole city, periodically raising screens to cover the windows, turning the bus into a moving movie theater that shows footage of the time and provides commentary on the important historic events of the '60s. Songs of the period

are played, a light show duplicates psychedelic experiences and there's even a simulated LSD trip in this multisensory experience. The Hard Rock Cafe at PIER 39 on the waterfront near downtown has such artifacts as a painting of Jerry Garcia by Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane and a hand-painted, sequined cape worn by Joplin.

Remembrance

Tsvi Strauch ran a "mod" clothing shop called In Gear on Haight Street during the Summer of Love. He and his wife befriended Joplin, who shopped there often. "She was a sweet, lovely, tragically brilliant lady who unfortunately didn't make it out of her 27th year," he said. He also was a neighbor to the Grateful Dead, remembering "lots of partying, lots of women coming and going."

Though the neighborhood was pushed to its limits during that historic summer with tens of thousands of new residents arriving in a very short time, he remembers the period as largely peaceful. "It was such an exciting time," said Strauch, who still resides in the Haight. "But not a single one of us had any idea we were in the middle of a cultural movement that would still be having an impact today."

Notable events and exhibits include:

- **Through June 27:** San Francisco Commission Galleries at City Hall: "Jim Marshall's 1967." Marshall's photos that year focus heavily on music icons, including Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead.
- **Through Aug. 20:** The de Young Museum: "The Summer of Love Experience: Art, Fashion and Rock & Roll"
- **Through August:** The Cartoon Art Museum, "Comix from the Summer of Love."
- **Through Sept. 10:** California Historical Society, "On the Road to the Summer of Love." Curated by Dennis McNally, former publicist for the Grateful Dead, this show will focus on the diverse historical movements that were precursors and converged to create the Summer of Love.
- **June 7 through July 2:** American Conservatory Theater: A Night with Janis Joplin
- **June 10:** Magic Mountain Play Festival, "HAIR!" In Concert
- **June 11:** Haight Ashbury Street Fair 40th anniversary
- **June 16-18:** 50th anniversary of the Monterey International Pop Festival
- **June 24 through Oct. 1:** Asian Art Museum: "Flower Power"

Planning Your Trip

A complete list of events, information about walking and bus tours in Haight-Ashbury, and other information about observances of the Summer of Love anniversary can be found at summeroflove2017.com. For more information on the city, contact the San Francisco Travel Association at sftravel.com. Contact your AAA Travel agent or visit AAA.com/travel for vacation-planning assistance.



Janis Joplin was evicted from this house for having a dog.
Rich Warren