

Great view from Nob Hill, low cost bedrooms with plain décor

University Club, San Francisco, CA



SUMMARY

We visited the University Club one evening in November 2010 while attending a dinner lecture, and toured two bedrooms. The building is located close to the top of Nob Hill near Grace Cathedral, on two cable car lines. The bedrooms have just been re-done, but in a rather plain style, and are rather boxy. The price is right, though.

CLUB HISTORY, FACILITIES AND RULES

The Club was founded in 1890 by the graduates of various universities, in response to the creation of similar clubs in other cities, and because the key founder had been impressed with his experience at the Harvard Club of San Francisco. The present building was first leased and then bought from Leland Stanford.

Members have included John Muir, Luther Burbank, President Herbert Hoover and numerous San Francisco writers, political leaders, artists and musicians. The building has four stories and is decorated in traditional, elegant style with a red brick exterior. There are 16 bedrooms (5 suites and 11 standard rooms) and various meeting rooms,

The location of the club is almost at the top of steep Nob Hill, near Grace Cathedral. Walking up the five blocks from Union Square to the Club is a workout. One can take the convenient and famous cable car that runs right by the club, but be prepared to pay \$5 each for the privilege. (The Powell and California cable car lines cross near the club.) Chinatown is several blocks NE of the club, and the walk back is not quite as strenuous.

The club sport is squash, with two double courts and three international-sized single courts. The club website states that it is “the premier squash center on the West Coast.” The club even has a squash pro, who holds 75 winning squash titles. There is also a modern workout room, sauna, steam room, and locker rooms.

The club is fully open Tuesday through Friday, although lectures and functions do occur on weekends, and reciprocals can stay during the weekend. Dress at the club is business casual. The club is reciprocal with about 230 clubs around the world, a very large list.

Parking is available to non-members (including reciprocals) only at nearby public parking lots; this is quite expensive.

FOOD

We ate dinner at the club, and had a set meal provided with a lecture. The meal consisted of a mixed green salad, sliced turkey, beans, and potatoes. Pumpkin pie was the only dessert available. The meal was acceptable but not distinguished. The third floor dining room has a great view to the east of the financial district and San Francisco Bay. Wine is available from the club cellar at 25 percent above wholesale, a bargain.

BED ROOM DESCRIPTION

We visited two bedrooms, a queen standard room and a queen suite. The suite had a small, narrow sitting room, with a sofa. We did not feel that this room added much, and would prefer to save money and stay in a standard room. The standard room was about 12 x 12 feet, en suite, with a high ceiling, rather boxy. Both rooms had been redone very recently, with yellow walls and white trim. Although the décor was fresh, we felt it was rather plain and non-descript. T

he room rate for the standard room was \$119 per night, while the suite was \$149 (both plus taxes). These rates were a bargain at perhaps half to a third of the rates at the nearby Mark Hopkins and Fairmont, although the décor at those hotels is nicer. (I recently obtained a quote of \$259 plus tax for a standard room at the Fairmont.) The prices I was quoted may vary by season, day of the week, vacancy rate, and other factors, according to University Club staff.

