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BAYSIDE BEAUTY

A BOUTIQUE HOTEL IN SAUSALITO, CALIF., BLENDS LUXURY WITH CUSTOM TOURS AND EXPERIENCES

words by **Shaun Tolson**

“You see the Transamerica Pyramid?” captain Paul Dines asks me as I take the helm of Freda B, an 80-foot-long, classic gaff-rigged topsail schooner. “Take her directly on that line.”

Seconds later, I’ve repositioned the sailboat a few degrees portside and steadied her into a steely 15-knot wind blowing across San Francisco Bay.

Soon, we’re passing Alcatraz Island and heading south toward the city’s sun-splashed skyline. “These are our prevailing winds,” Dines informs me. “This is what we sail in 150, 180 days of the year.

“You’re now controlling 43 tons,” he adds. “Pretty impressive feeling, huh?”

Dines and his fiancée, Marina O’Neill, organize sailing



tours aboard Freda B through their firm, SF Bay Adventures.

They also partner with Casa Madrona Hotel & Spa in neighboring Sausalito, Calif., to arrange bespoke sailing tours for guests staying in the hotel’s recently renovated mansion guestrooms and suites.

All is new again: This former 1920s guest house is now a swish luxury hotel offering an array of San Francisco tours and experiences.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CASA MADRONA HOTEL & SPA

The 64-room boutique hotel, set on a hillside overlooking Richardson Bay, opened its doors as a bed and breakfast during the 1920s and today provides guests with a variety of luxury accommodations.

Thirty-one high-ceilinged, contemporary guestrooms offer courtyard or bay views and feature either loft-style bedrooms or balconies with sitting areas.

Twenty-two hillside cottage rooms and suites are accented by king-size four-poster beds, and most of the suites have balconies and wood-burning fireplaces.

But the hotel's most exclusive - and impressive - accommodations are found in the 11-room mansion, which was built in 1885 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

The landmark building comprises 10 standard guest rooms and suites featuring a variety of restored Victorian accents such as vintage crown moldings, ceiling accents, window casings and fireplace surrounds.

The mansion's crown jewel, however, is the Alexandrite Suite, with 5,000 square feet of exceptional indoor and outdoor living space.

Named after the prized gemstone that changes color based on its exposure to various light, the suite is bathed in subtle hues throughout the day thanks to its steel blue, light green and crisp white décor and floor-to-ceiling foldaway glass doors.

Other distinct features include a Turkish marble fireplace, Blue Jean granite countertops and a Samsung media wall delivering a variety of entertainment options such as Netflix, Apple TV and video conferencing.

A secret door behind a mirrored wall also connects the suite to the second floor and can be unlocked when the entire mansion is booked for exclusive use.

Guests staying at the hotel can indulge in a day of pampering at the 3,000-square-foot spa, book a private tour and tasting at Ram's Gate Winery in Sonoma (including transportation provided by the hotel) and take a ferry to downtown San Francisco from the pier right across the street.

Still, the most memorable boating experience occurs aboard the magnificent *Freda B*, which, as captain Dines explains, offers breezy sailing opportunities for guests who want to tack their way across the bay.

Dines can also scale back the cruises to give less seafaring guests a taste of the relaxed boating lifestyle while still maximizing leisure time on the water.

THE DETAILS
For more information, visit casamadrona.com.

"That's one of the things that's unique about the bay," he says. "We have all these islands that we can use to find the right amount of wind and the right amount of sun." **OH**



The suite life
Many of the stylish accommodations at Casa Madrona offer spectacular views of San Francisco Bay.

