

# Guidelines for Coit Tower Usage

Prepared by the San Francisco Arts Commission  
for the San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department

Coit Tower is City Landmark number 165 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The murals, which are an integral part of Coit Tower's history and significance, decorate the entire first and second floor public spaces of Coit Tower and are internationally recognized cultural assets. As such, the murals require adequate safeguards to ensure their long-term preservation. Painted by twenty-five different artists, the murals represent the largest assemblage of true frescoes on the western coast of the United States. The murals were commissioned after construction of Coit Tower was underway and were the first Public Works of Art Project in California. Accordingly, appropriate measures must be implemented to ensure the preservation of the murals.

The guidelines outlined in this document shall be followed by each visitor to Coit Tower, the Concessionaire, and any activity that may take place at Coit Tower. These guidelines shall serve as protocols for the protection and preservation of the historic murals at Coit Tower and to the extent that any information in this document conflicts with existing documents this document shall prevail.

Coit Tower was not originally designed to house and protect such prominent and delicate artwork. Close quarters within the public spaces are not conducive to large numbers of visitors and preservation of the murals is challenged by visitor traffic, special events, film and photography and maintenance crews.

Prevention is the best form of preservation for the murals. The fresco surfaces have integral color pigment in plaster that is very sensitive to damage from touching and abrasions. The porous aspects of the frescoes permit airborne pollutants, such as smoke and grease, to be absorbed into the pores of the plaster. When these agents become fixed into the plaster, it is extremely difficult to draw them out of the painting structure. Cleaning the surfaces can be costly and requires a high level of expertise by specialized mural conservators.

The Arts Commission and the Recreation & Parks Department therefore mandates the following guidelines be adhered to within the mural rooms at Coit Tower:

## Restrictions

- No touching of wall surfaces.
- No smoking.
- No open flame, heat lamps or candles.
- No food/drink or food preparation.
- No posting of signs on walls or barrier system.
- No commercial or vending displays.
- No leaning or sitting on the barrier railing.

## Requirements

- Backpacks, purses, tool belts or other bags must be carried on the front of the body.
- All maintenance work plans and protocols must be approved by the Arts Commission.
- All staff and volunteers (contractors, concessionaires, park rangers, city employees, etc.) must undergo training on these guidelines by Arts Commission staff before commencing with work at Coit Tower.

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## Special Events

Special events within Coit Tower are limited to the Observation Deck at the top of the tower. Guests at events may access the mural rooms only when escorted by park ranger or docent, and must be apprised of the restrictions outlined in this document (do not touch, no food or drinks, etc.) before entering the space.

## Event Requirements

- The Arts Commission must be notified of the event calendar for events taking place inside Coit Tower, and provided with a specific description of each event plan.
- Event operator must receive and sign a copy of these guidelines. The guidelines must be appended to any event contract and referenced as a part of the contractual agreement.
- It is the responsibility of the event operator to ensure the condition of the murals. Costs for any damage to the murals, including any damages that were not previously documented, are the responsibility of the event operator.
- Special events are limited to the Observation Deck at the top of the tower.
- Events are limited to 49 guests, including staff, as dictated by the Fire Marshal.
- All persons preparing and attending the event must be apprised of rules and restrictions prior to entering the building.
- Guests, caterers and event staff and volunteers may access the mural rooms only when escorted by a park ranger or docent.
- Food and drink are only permitted at the top observation deck of the tower. Food and drink are not allowed in the mural rooms; this includes the carrying of drinks during guided tours.
- A Recreation and Parks ranger or other city staff must be stationed in all accessible mural spaces for the duration of the event.
- A Recreation and Parks ranger or other city staff must be on site during event setup and breakdown to insure that the event contract is followed as agreed.
- Access to the second floor murals is limited to groups of no more than six and must be guided by park ranger or docent.
- Movement of materials and equipment for special events must follow guidelines for “Equipment Movement” outlined below.
- Only the elevator can be used for access to the observation deck. Bringing materials through the staircase is prohibited.
- **Tours:** Tour guide operators must receive and sign a copy of these guidelines. The guidelines must be appended to any tour guide permit and references as part of the contractual agreement. Tour guide operators must be licensed and insured and abide with all City and State requirements.

## Equipment Movement

Movement of materials and equipment through the building has caused repeated damage to the murals. One must always be mindful of one’s presence and movement around the murals. The walls are delicate and irreplaceable, and the space is narrow and difficult to navigate.

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The following restrictions are intended for projects of short duration, one day or less. For projects of extended length, such as for building maintenance, repairs or construction, a mural protection plan is required for approval by the Arts Commission prior to commencement of work.

- The Arts Commission must be notified in advance of any activity in the mural spaces including, but not limited to, special events, elevator and building maintenance, and permitted activities such as photo and film shoots.
- It is the responsibility of the event operator, contractor, photographers, or any other party using the facility to ensure the condition of the murals. Costs for any damage to the murals, including any damages that were not previously documented, are the responsibility of the user.
- Storage of materials in the Keeper's Quarters on the second floor or in the stairwells is strongly discouraged unless additional mural protection measures are put in place.
- Storage is to be limited to the first floor storage rooms.
- The elevator to the second floor is to be used at all times for the transport of equipment to and from the second floor landing and terrace. Under no circumstances are equipment, tools or materials to be brought up through the staircase.
- When accessing the second floor terrace, care must be taken in transporting equipment from the elevator to the terrace doorway. Materials in excess of 2-feet in length when carried horizontally must have a staff member at each end. For longer materials (ladders, scaffolding, etc.) a Recreation and Parks ranger or staff from the Arts Commission must act as a "spotter" to watch the path of travel and ensure that the ends of the equipment do not come into contact with the walls.
- Longer materials are to be blanket wrapped at the ends to further mitigate potential damage to the walls.
- Extra care must be taken when entering and exiting the elevator as the wall corners are especially vulnerable and unprotected.
- Tool belts are not allowed inside the mural spaces. Tool belts are to be carried, not worn, through the mural spaces.
- Backpacks, boxes and all other items are to be carried on the front of the person's body.
- Carts must be pushed in front of the operator. It is preferable to have one person in front and one person in back of the cart.
- Mural rooms are not to be used as workshop, staging or storage spaces.
- No equipment, materials or tools are to remain overnight unless pre-approved by the Arts Commission.

### Contact Information

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