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A year in San Francisco

By Bonnie Wach, special for USA TODAY

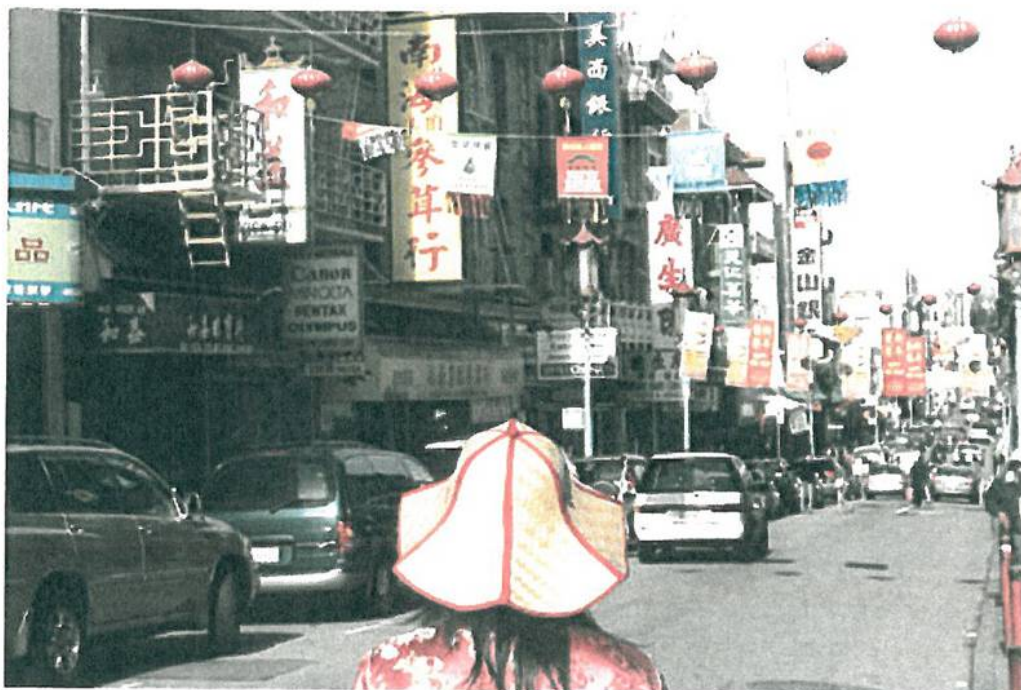
Events round the Bay Area's calendar:

Bay to Breakers Race — May

May in San Francisco should be renamed Extrovert Month, with a series of annual events that never fail to bring out the uninhibited in full farce, er force. The third Sunday in May, some 70,000 weekend warriors and jogging loonies take to the streets for the spring ritual known as the ING Bay to Breakers Race. Ostensibly, this is a foot race — and there are indeed serious seeded runners — but really it's more about watching giant cocktail weenies, Fruits of the Loom, Dollie Parton look-alikes, and naked guys two-step their way from the foot of the Bay to the breakers of the Pacific Ocean in what has become the world's largest costumed conga line. The 7.5-mile course is fairly tame, but even if you've never jogged down the street for a carton of milk, the sheer momentum of the crowd will get you to the finish line. Don't miss the school of spawning salmon who run the race "upstream" every year, and the finale Footstock Festival at the Polo Fields (36th Ave. and John F Kennedy Dr., Golden Gate Park). Race begins at 8:00 a.m. at Howard and Beale streets.

Nutcracker — Throughout December

For those who like their holiday rituals straight up, the San Francisco Ballet's *Nutcracker*, is as traditional as it gets. The renowned troupe holds the distinction of being the first American company to perform the full-length *Nutcracker* in the United States in 1944. The current production, as envisioned by Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson, is true to the story, with enough modern touches, lush sets and special effects to make it exciting for the media-saturated generation. War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave., www.sfballet.org.



Bonnie Wach is the author of *USATODAY.com's San Francisco City Guide*.

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