



Lombard Street Printable Reading Comprehension

Grade Level: 5+ | Word Count: 444 | Lexile 950

San Francisco, California, is famous for its steep hills, foggy mornings, and iconic landmarks. Among its many attractions, Lombard Street stands out as one of the most unusual and recognizable streets in the world. Nicknamed the “crookedest street in the world,” Lombard Street is not the steepest street in San Francisco, but its dramatic curves and colorful scenery have made it a symbol of the city.

Lombard Street runs east–west, but the section that fascinates tourists is located on Russian Hill. In the 1920s, the hill’s natural grade was so steep—about 27 percent—that it was considered unsafe for vehicles. To solve the problem, city planners designed a series of eight sharp switchbacks, creating a winding path down the hill. The new design reduced the slope to about 16 percent, making it safer for cars and pedestrians. The brick-paved roadway, lined with manicured gardens and flowering shrubs, quickly became a landmark.

Today, thousands of visitors drive or walk down the famous block of Lombard Street every day. The speed limit is just five miles per hour, forcing cars to creep slowly through the curves. Crowds gather at the top and bottom of the hill to take photographs, and nearby residents live with the constant presence of tourists. For them, Lombard Street is both a source of pride and a daily challenge, as the heavy traffic can make it difficult to come and go.

Lombard Street’s fame extends far beyond San Francisco. It has been featured in films, television shows, commercials, and even video games. Its twisting design has become a visual shorthand for the city itself, as recognizable as the Golden Gate Bridge or Alcatraz Island. At the same time, Lombard Street highlights the creativity of city planning—an example of how practical solutions to engineering problems can evolve into cultural icons.

Visitors are encouraged to respect the neighborhood by keeping noise down, staying on sidewalks, and not littering. Despite the challenges of living alongside a tourist attraction, the residents of Russian Hill understand that their street holds a unique place in San Francisco’s story. Lombard Street is more than a roadway; it is a living symbol of the city’s character, blending practicality, beauty, and history in a single, unforgettable block.

1. Why was Lombard Street redesigned with curves in the 1920s?

- A. To attract tourists
- B. To reduce noise in the neighborhood
- C. To make the steep hill safer for cars
- D. To create space for gardens

2. How fast can cars travel on Lombard Street today?

- A. Ten miles per hour
- B. Five miles per hour
- C. Twenty miles per hour
- D. The passage does not say

3. What nickname is often used for Lombard Street?

- A. The crookedest street in the world
- B. The steepest street in San Francisco
- C. The brickiest street in America
- D. The fastest street in California

4. Which of the following is NOT mentioned in the passage?

- A. Lombard Street has been in films and video games
- B. The street is lined with gardens and shrubs
- C. Tourists gather to take photos at the top and bottom
- D. Lombard Street is the oldest street in San Francisco

5. Why do residents of Russian Hill have mixed feelings about Lombard Street?

- A. They dislike the gardens planted along the street
- B. Heavy tourist traffic makes daily life difficult
- C. The city prevents them from driving there
- D. They believe it should be closed permanently

6. Which statement BEST summarizes Lombard Street's significance?

- A. It shows how a traffic problem turned into a cultural landmark.
- B. It is the steepest and fastest road in San Francisco.
- C. It is a peaceful, hidden street few people visit.
- D. It was designed only to increase tourism in the 1920s.

7. What does Lombard Street symbolize about San Francisco?

- A. That the city values quiet over tourism
- B. That engineering solutions can shape culture and identity
- C. That residents dislike visitors in their neighborhoods
- D. That San Francisco has the steepest roads in the world

Answer Sheet

1. C — To make the steep hill safer for cars
2. B — Five miles per hour
3. A — The crookedest street in the world
4. D — Lombard Street is the oldest street in San Francisco
5. B — Heavy tourist traffic makes daily life difficult
6. A — It shows how a traffic problem turned into a cultural landmark
7. B — That engineering solutions can shape culture and identity