- In 2018 Forbes named Silicon Valley “California’s hottest new tourism hotspot”.

- Facebook, Google, Apple and many other companies have become “secular shrines” and pilgrimage destinations.

- 15,000 people visit Facebook’s headquarters every month.

- Today Silicon Valley provides work to more than 300,000 people.

- It is the place with the highest rents and median income in America (145,000 dollars).
Menlo Park. Two tourists photograph themselves with Facebook headquarters in the background, which faces a salt lake that for much of the year is dry.
San Francisco. Offices in the area of East Cut: many startups have their headquarters not only in Silicon Valley but also in the city of San Francisco, often in offices they share with co-working spaces.
Santa Clara. Visiting the Intel Museum.
Los Altos. A tourist takes a selfie in front of the garage of Steve Jobs’ house at 2066 Crist Drive, where they say Apple was born.
Menlo Park. Facebook employees playing basketball on the company grounds.
Why are Facebook, Google and Apple the new secular shrines?

It must be Google’s familiarity (3.5 billion hits every day), Facebook’s success (more than 2.2 billion active users) or Apple’s penetration of the entire world (more than one billion iPhones sold since 2007). It must be all the books and the films that have told the tale of Silicon Valley, or its unparalleled numbers: thousands of established businesses and young startups providing work to almost 300,000 people, with the highest rents and median income (145,000 dollars) in America.

In fact, in May 2018 Forbes named the valley south of San Francisco “California’s hottest new tourism hotspot”. Companies like Facebook, Google and Apple (but Adobe, eBay, HP, Intel, Tesla, Twitter, Uber and many others as well) have become places of pilgrimage, secular shrines in front of which you can take a selfie.

But Silicon Valley is more than Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg. As the historian Leslie Berlin maintains in her recent book Troublemakers: Silicon Valley’s Coming of Age “what happened here and is still happening is the result of the work of hundreds of engineers from dozens of different countries, whose names no one has ever heard of”. The same engineers that meet up at Stanford University – the real incubator of Silicon Valley – or in the cafes of Palo Alto and Mountain View, where at this very moment two unknown nerds in t-shirts and flip-flops are probably inventing something which has never been imagined before.
San Francisco, Madame Tussauds, wax museum. The figure of Steve Jobs, founder of Apple.
San Francisco: An event organized by Google in the Yerba Buena Garden.
Cupertino. Inside the Apple Park Visitor Center a few tourists look at the new Apple headquarters, enhanced by means of an iPad.
Mountain View. The Google logo also adorns street signs nearby the company’s complex.
Mountain View. A tourist takes a selfie in front of one of the symbols of Google (Android Oreo), on the company grounds.
The view onto Fremont and Silicon Valley from Mission Peak, a 758-meter hill with one of the best views over the valley.
Palo Alto. The famous HanaHaus is a cafe and co-working space where many ideas and startups first took shape.
Palo Alto. Tourists observing the plaque in front of the house that has the garage (back left) where in 1938 William R. Hewlett and David Packard, two Stanford University students, founded their startup (HP) and where, as tradition would have it, Silicon Valley was born.
San Francisco. The Eatsa restaurant, a startup where you can order things to eat (by app, too) and pick up your food without any human interaction at all.
Mountain View. Visiting the Computer History Museum.
Mountain View. Google employees on the company grounds can use branded bicycles for free.
Stanford University’s new hospital.