

Getting Away: Southern California



By Stacy Morris

No one who owns a television set or who has been to the movies has not laid eyes on Los Angeles. It's home to some of the most filmed real estate in the world. Los Angeles may have the Dodgers, the Beach Boys, and some of the most extravagant shopping in the world, but it's the film industry that has put it on the map for the past century. From the opulence of Rodeo Drive to the carnival atmosphere of the Santa Monica Pier, we've seen the images of perpetually sunny Southern California again and again. Most of us, however, have probably never penciled it in as the next vacation getaway.

Florida's closer and, if you're like most Easterners, you're well into the double digits of return visits. Los Angeles is not only sunny and laden with beaches; it's

downright enchanting. And stereotypes of both coasts aside, it is indeed an entirely different culture — and one worth experiencing. Ironically, it's the film industry and its ensuing wealth and glamour that also keep tourists away; the image is a little intimidating to most mortals.

The Bentley-driving A-List residents and their resort-sized mansions are embedded in the scene, but the truth is that the welcome mat is rolled out for visitors who drive a mid-sized American model rental car, too. "Beverly Hills is actually a very welcoming and friendly place," says Claire Delacruz Soe of the Beverly Hills Visitors' Center. "It's a town known for luxury and high-end dining, but there's also a wonderful array of arts and culture here as well, and it's very walkable for sightseeing."

And then there's the outdoorsy factor; an irresistible lure in January and February for East Coasters. It's the surfing culture that has made Los Angeles ground zero for approachable flip-flops-and-shorts dining with hamburger stands such as In-N-Out, Fatburger, Carl's Jr., and Astro Burger dotting the landscape. Conversely, vegans and their ilk are well-represented via the juice bars on practically every corner, ubiquitous yoga studios, daily farmers markets, and health food stores the size of supermarkets.

Two of the most famously filmed and storied districts of L.A. are Beverly Hills and Santa Monica. From *Top Gun*, *Beverly Hills Cop*, and *Pretty Woman*, we've all seen the surf and the splendor. It's a town that's made for both showbiz and tourism.

Must Sees

TCL Chinese Theatre (formerly Grauman's)

6925 Hollywood Boulevard
Hollywood
(323) 461-3331
TCLChineseTheatres.com

Most visitors never set foot in the theater. It's the historic forecourt and its gray checkerboard of hand- and footprints from iconic celebrities ranging from John Barrymore and Marilyn Monroe to Melissa McCarthy and Warren Beatty that lure tourists. The theater is set along the fabled Hollywood Walk of Fame where dozens of celebrities are immortalized with a circled star in the sidewalk.

Rodeo Drive

Rodeo Drive and Dayton Way
Beverly Hills
rodeodrive-shop.com
2rodeo.com

Yes, the necklace in Cartier's window costs seven figures. And more than a few armed guards stand inside the glass doors. But Rodeo Drive and its merchants are savvy enough to cater to tourists as well as the film industry's wealth. The neighborhood offers a range of shopping and dining experiences, both on Rodeo and in the surrounding 16-block area known as The Golden Triangle. Besides Louis Vuitton and Prada, check out the Nespresso Boutique Bar, Nike Town, Brighton Coffee Shop, The Cheese Store of Beverly Hills, and Voges Haut Chocolat. For the full walking tour, start at 2 Rodeo (near Wilshire) and work your way up. Considered the crown jewel of the shopping district, 2 Rodeo is a small collection of high-end boutiques on a cobblestone pedestrian-only street.

Best Places for Families

Santa Monica Pier

(310) 458-8901
santamonicapier.org

Set smack at the end of Route 66, Santa Monica is known for its laid-back hipster vibe, celebrity residents, and its sweeping views of the Pacific. Situated just below the famous promenade is the Santa

Monica Pier, a massive amusement park on stilts that stretches into the ocean and contains roller coasters, eateries, pinball arcades, sidewalk sketch artists and the nearly century-old Looft Hippodrome Carousel, a national historic landmark.

Griffith Park Observatory

2800 East Observatory Road
Los Angeles
(213) 473-0800
griffithobs.org

A longtime tourist attraction as well as the site of many a movie (*Rebel Without a Cause* and *The Terminator*), the observatory sits atop Mount Hollywood and has panoramic views of the city. The vistas are especially sparkly after dark. Open since 1935, admission has always been free and the main building features extensive space and science-related displays.

Best Places for Couples

Paley Center for Media

465 North Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills
(310) 786-1000
paleycenter.org

Smack in the middle of the glitz is a gem of cultural history. Considered the foremost public archive of television and radio programming, the center has an international collection of nearly 150,000 programs spanning almost 100 years. View the celebration of television with a wide range of events that examine the creative process behind great entertainment.

Greystone Mansion

905 Loma Vista Drive
Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210
(310) 285-6830
greystonemansion.org

Built in 1928, the former Doheny Estate was built in 1927 and took three years to complete. To this day it's still the most celebrated and largest home in the city. The mansion has also been featured in numerous films such as *Spiderman* and *Air Force One*. The entire 18-acre site is now owned by the city of Beverly Hills. The grounds are free and open to the public.



Marilyn Monroe's handprints
at TCL Chinese Theatre



Greystone Mansion

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The Intercontinental in Los Angeles



Roasted red snapper at Spago



Hot dog options at Pink's

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Outdoor Activities

Will Rogers Memorial Park

9650 Sunset Boulevard
Beverly Hills
(310) 288-2807
beverlyhills.org/exploring/cityparks/willrogers-memorialpark

When this picturesque and fountain-filled park opened in 1915, it was called Sunset Park. But when entertainer Will Rogers was named honorary mayor of Beverly Hills in 1952, the city renamed the park in his honor. The lush landscaping, shady trees, and banks of flowers make it the perfect spot for a picnic or a respite from touring the city.

Franklin Canyon Park

2600 Franklin Canyon Drive
Beverly Hills
(310) 858-7272 Ext. 131
lamountains.com/parks.asp?parkid=14

The park's history dates back to 1914, when William Mulholland and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power began construction of a reservoir in upper Franklin Canyon for water distribution. The park now contains 605 acres between Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley and includes grasslands, oak woodlands, a three-acre lake, picnic grounds, and more than five miles of hiking trails. The park is also home to the Sooky Goldman Nature Center and the Sam Goldman Amphitheater.

Dining

Spago

176 North Canon Drive
Beverly Hills
(310) 385-0880
wolfgangpuck.com

Wolfgang Puck's movie-star-magnet of a restaurant is as emblematic of Tinseltown as the Hollywood sign. Established in 1982, you're sure to spot multiple generations of Hollywood royalty at more than one elegantly appointed booth, whether it's Norman Lear in his trademark hat or

a discreet Leonardo DiCaprio squiring a date. Spago has more than just star-gazing though: it received two stars in the Los Angeles edition of the Michelin Guide, won AAA's Four-Diamond Award, and has won *Wine Spectator's* Grand Award for five consecutive years.

Pink's Hot Dogs

709 North La Brea Avenue
Los Angeles
(323) 931-7594
pinkshollywood.com

This 75-year-old landmark proves that a hot dog stand is not just a hot dog stand when it's a third-generation legend that serves the blue collar crowd, college kids, and stars ranging from Betty White to Bryan Cranston. Favorites include the Double Pastrami Swiss Cheese Burger, the 9-inch Stretch Chili Dog, and the Mulholland Drive Dog topped with grilled mushrooms, grilled onions, nacho cheese, and bacon.

Nate & Al's

414 North Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills
(310) 274-0101
natenal.com

Imagine the mouthwatering options of New York's Stage or Carnegie Deli delivered by uber-competent, no-nonsense waitresses. Now picture it all in sundrenched L.A. where showbiz deals are sealed over platters of Pastrami Eggs Benedict, Brisket on Rye, and Wild Nova Lox. They're open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, have fantastic soups and salads, and their prices are reasonable.

Accommodations

The Intercontinental

2151 Avenue of the Stars
Century City at Beverly Hills
Los Angeles
(310) 284-6500
IntercontinentalLosAngeles.Com

Minutes from the heart of Beverly Hills and a few miles from Santa Monica and the



Will Rogers Memorial Park

Best Time to Visit

When temperatures start to plummet in the Northeast, it's the best time to head to southern California. Late fall, winter, and early spring are ideal.

Try to Avoid

Los Angeles is famous for clear and sunny skies and summer-like temperatures for the majority of the year, but there are brief bouts of rain in early winter. It also tends to get gridlocked with an overflow of humanity during Oscar week.

beaches, this luxury hotel contains an on-site spa, terraces in every room, a 24-hour fitness center, and a heated infinity pool.

Loew's Santa Monica Beach Hotel

1700 Ocean Avenue
Santa Monica
(310) 458-6700
SantaMonicaLoewsHotel.Com

Situated just a few steps from the famed pier, the hotel's 345 rooms have the Pacific Ocean in their backyard.

Channel Road Inn

219 West Channel Road
Santa Monica
(310) 459-1920
channelroadinn.com

A 15-room bed and breakfast with common areas, a private yard, and outdoor lounging areas.

Crescent Hotel

403 North Crescent Drive
Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210
(310) 247-0505
crescentbh.com

This funky boutique hotel was built

in 1927, is green sustainable and was recently renovated. It even has its own recording studio and a restaurant serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner. **W**

For more information on the Beverly Hills area, visit lovebeverlyhills.com.

For more information on the Santa Monica area, visit SantaMonica.com.



Farmers market in Santa Monica