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Los Angeles

101 REASONS WHY L.A. SHINES LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Base Camps //

Where to Stay in Los Angeles

Downtown LA, Hollywood and Santa Monica: Three distinct areas ranging from legendary to laid-back, all ready to be discovered for their eclectically appealing attractions.

By Eric Hiss Illustrations by Josh Cochran

1. Downtown Los Angeles

Long overlooked by visitors—and even many locals—Downtown LA is having a renaissance of epic proportions. Once-neglected art deco and Beaux Arts buildings are being transformed into lofts, restaurants and clubs, while mused-haired hipsters tote yoga mats on their way to bamboo-floored studios. Downtown's mélange of microneighborhoods includes South Park, with its striking new modernist silhouettes and the multibillion-dollar sports and entertainment zone, LA Live, and the architectural gems of the "Historic Core" district.

Base Camps: A high point (54 stories to be exact) of the makeover currently changing the face of downtown is the striking LEED-certified

home to both the new **Ritz-Carlton Los Angeles** and the **JW Marriott**. Downtown's first true five-star property, the Ritz-Carlton occupies a privileged perch on floors 22 to 26 (Ritz-Carlton private residences and the JW Marriott occupy floors above and below) and features a swank full-service spa and 26th-floor pool deck, and it's just steps from **LA Live**, the city's multibillion-dollar-sports and entertainment zone. Downtown diva **The Standard** still boasts



the area's hippest pool deck scene—complete with party pods and DJs. Inside, a hipper-than-thou élan is evoked with polished surfaces, bold graphics and a stylish staff.

Dining: Start the day with a hearty breakfast at **The Original Pantry**, a straight-no-chaser diner that would make Philip Marlowe feel at home. Generations of locals, city politicians and celebrities have been coming here for more than 80 years to nosh on Portuguese sausage and eggs and other home-style selections, most for under \$10. And just as in the old days: Cash only, please. Come lunchtime, downtown trendies and groomed professionals bump iPhones at brash and noisy **Bottega Louie**, a neo-Neapolitan multitasker earning accolades as a popular eatery, gourmet market and patisserie. Popular items inside this marble and glass temple to the good life include the portobello fries, prosciutto pizza and delish macaroons. Meanwhile, **WoodSpoon** offers up Brazilian comfort food—think everything from yam fries to a Portuguese croquette—while still focusing on locally sourced ingredients. Near Little Tokyo, don't miss **Wurstküche**,

where patrons line up for Belgian fries, Belgian and German draft beers and gourmet grilled-sausage selections that include everything from traditional to exotic, such as rattlesnake and rabbit with jalapeno peppers. And old is new again at preservationist's gem **Cole's**, which oozes early LA history with its 40-foot-long mahogany Red Car Bar and deep, dark booths, where customers graze on classics such as the French dip sandwich, which originated here 100 years ago.

If you like it raw, **R23** mixes impeccable sushi with an art gallery environment. Hidden discreetly in the Warehouse District inside a former railroad loading dock, it's a true find (but bring your GPS just in case). For a late-night bite, head west on 2nd Street to discover a venue that's a cross between a set from the movie *Brazil* and an underground Parisian nightclub. **The Edison**, housed in a 100-year-old former power plant—complete with antique gauges and boiler room



1

- 1 Cole's
- 2 Ritz-Carlton Los Angeles
- 3 L.A. Live
- 4 An Amelie cocktail at The Edison



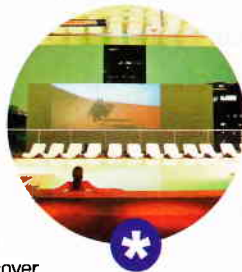
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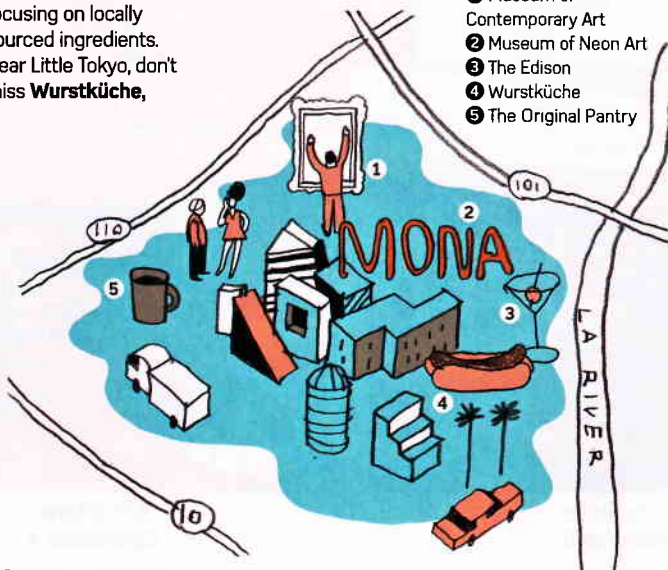
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A movie on the roof of The Standard

Downtown

- ① Museum of Contemporary Art
- ② Museum of Neon Art
- ③ The Edison
- ④ Wurstküche
- ⑤ The Original Pantry



machinery—serves up bistro cuisine, artisanal cocktails, live music and burlesque.

Shopping: Whether you are a collector or simply culturally curious, **Quick Culture**, founded by two former museum docents, gives you insider access to the galleries and artists of downtown's burgeoning arts scene via private and small group tours. Another artful option is the museum shop at the Arata Isozaki-designed **Museum of Contemporary Art**, featuring everything from Devo hats to books highlighting the MOCA's permanent collection. **Skimgraft**, the edgy urban design house with a flagship boutique on 4th Street, purveys darkly dramatic designs that would be at home on the set of *The Matrix*. Or dive into the fashionista free-for-all sample sales that take place the last Friday of every month at the **California Market Center** at 9th and Main in the heart of the Fashion District.

Culture: Located on downtown's northern fringes, **The Brewery Arts Complex** is, yes, a former brewery, but it houses the largest artists' colony in the world. Shows of local and

international artists are regularly hosted here, but The Brewery is best known for its popular biannual ArtWalk, when hundreds of artists' lofts and studios are open to the public. (Next ArtWalk: April 16 & 17). **Grand Avenue's MOCA** and the **Geffen Contemporary at MOCA in Little Tokyo** are siblings whose permanent collections house more than 5,000 works by modern icons such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jackson Pollock. Temporary installations by the likes of Murakami and Rodarte ("States of Matter," March 4–June 5) are also worth checking out. **MONA (Museum of Neon Art)** meanwhile celebrates that most SoCal of artforms: neon, featuring exhibits of midcentury and contemporary works. And as the sun sets over downtown, head to the sculpted stainless steel marking iconic **Walt Disney Concert Hall**, designed by über-architect Frank Gehry, to enjoy the Los Angeles Philharmonic led by Gustavo Dudamel. Just a block away, ballet and first-run theater performances grace the three other venues that make up downtown's cultural core, **The Music Center**.



1

- 1 Shin Hollywood
- 2 The Hollywood Bowl
- 3 Off Vine
- 4 W Hollywood



3



4

2



2. Hollywood

Like the stars emblazoned on its sidewalks, Hollywood has had its share of ups and downs over the years. Today, LA's most famous neighborhood is enjoying a comeback worthy of an A-lister, thanks to a vibrant scene fueled by diversions ranging from restored historic theaters and swank new hotels to enticingly eclectic shopping.

Base Camps: The site of the first Academy Awards, **The Roosevelt Hotel** is one of Hollywood's biggest comeback stories. Sheltering the stylish in Spanish rococo splendor, it includes a bevy of bars and restaurants such as the Library Bar (home of cocktail maestro Matt Biancaniello); the Spare Room, featuring two bowling lanes; the poolside Tropicana Bar

and the newly opened Public Kitchen & Bar. Heading east to the iconic intersection of Hollywood and Vine, year-old **W Hollywood** is pure postmodern polish, with rooms featuring marble-clad bathrooms, Hollywood sign views and miniplunge bathtubs. Party people should not miss the pool deck scene at rooftop **Drai's**, home of private cabanas, stellar views and celebutantes.

Dining: After a night on the town, weekend brunch at **Off Vine** is a local secret housed in a 100-year-old Arts and Crafts-era former residence. Breakfast binge on a frittata Toscana as you enjoy the sun-drenched parlor. Since Hollywood's



Pair a cocktail with Middle Eastern-inspired small plates at Cleo.

earliest days, Tinseltown power-lunchers have been dining on old-school fare such as New York steak at **Musso & Frank Grill**. The mood here is further burnished with original furnishings and a soundtrack of golden era tunes. Riffing on Hollywood's past but with a contemporary Middle Eastern spin, just-opened **Cleo** oozes sensuality and exotic flavors. Try the tasty mix of small plates including baba ghanouj, hummus, lamb kebabs and meatball tagine. The best Korean food outside of LA's K-Town can be found at **Shin Hollywood** in a sleek space of zebra-wood tables and recessed lights. Simon Shin borrows the authentic flavors of his family's kitchen to create novelties such as Shin tacos (marinated prime rib on thinly sliced radish) that intrigue the eye and satisfy the

palate. More adventures in Asian cuisine can be found by heading east on Hollywood Boulevard to Thai Town. **Palms Thai** offers up a vast menu of Thai flavors with a side of novelty: Eat your goy see mee while watching a Thai Elvis impersonator croon "Blue Suede Shoes." As the sun sets, sample a premium sake at **Yamashiro**. Perched high on a hill above Hollywood Boulevard, the restaurant and garden's stellar views make the city below look like millions of electric gems tossed at your feet. Finally, to sample Hollywood's red-hot cocktail culture, step through an armoire concealing a hidden door and travel back in time (this is Hollywood, after all) to retro Havana at **La Descarga**. Once inside, soak up a heady mix of salsa music, boisterous laughter and more than 130 types of rum.

Shopping: Near the Hollywood Hills, you'll discover **Lost & Found**, a collection of shops brimming with everything from designer ready-to-wear to ethnic-eclectic housewares. Be prepared to be overwhelmed by the world's largest indie music store, **Amoeba Music**. A fan's nirvana, the city-block-sized store boasts millions of titles from every genre and presents live performances by everyone from Ben Harper to Paul McCartney. East on Hollywood Boulevard in alt-trendy Silver Lake, **Confederacy** feels like a 1940s atelier, purveying specialty

Hollywood

- 1 Griffith Observatory
- 2 The Roosevelt
- 3 Shamrock Social Club
- 4 Amoeba Music
- 5 Off Vine





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books, perfumes and designer wear in an art-filled, exposed-brick environment—with vintage phone booths for dressing rooms (should you need another size, the phones are connected to the front desk). Want a permanent memory of your Hollywood experience? Sunset's **Shamrock Social Club** is where famed tattoo artist Mark Mahoney tats top celebs such as Angelina Jolie, Johnny Depp and Cher. Maybe you're next.

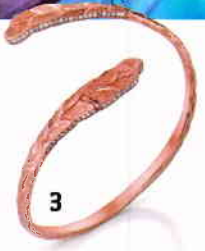
Culture: Adjacent to Grauman's Chinese Theatre, the Hollywood location of the famous **Madame Tussauds** wax museum is where you can go to say you saw everyone from Lady Gaga to Samuel L. Jackson. Nestled in the Hollywood Hills, three different open-air amphitheaters—**The Hollywood Bowl, Greek Theatre** and **John Anson Ford Theatre** all bring LA nights alive with inspired programming featuring international stars from the worlds of jazz, classical, world music and rock, ranging from the Los Angeles Philharmonic to Radiohead. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright spent some of his most productive years in Los Angeles during the 1920s. Though you can't visit private homes he designed in the area, you're welcome to explore and admire the neo-Mayan splendor of his **Hollyhock House** located in Barnsdall Art Park in East Hollywood.

Santa Monica/Venice

- 1 The Yard
- 2 Aero Theatre
- 3 Shutters on the Beach
- 4 Primitivo Wine Bistro



- 1 Casa Del Mar
- 2 Quilted Monkey boutique
- 3 A bracelet from Roseark



3. Santa Monica/Venice

Nowhere is LA's sultry, sun-drenched side better showcased than on the stretch of sea, sand and beach-city life bordering the Pacific in Venice and its sister city, Santa Monica. LA's version of Ipanema Beach, this is where tanned and sculpted bodies Rollerblade along palm-fringed boardwalks, yoga studios seemingly dot every corner and locals sip lattes and shop trendy boutiques along desirable avenues such as Montana Avenue and Main Street.

Base Camps: Two stately siblings mark the most desired hotel addresses in Santa Monica, just steps from the sand. Imagine a craftsman-

style California bungalow living large and luxe and you have **Shutters on the Beach**. Relaxed refinement is the ambiance here, summoned by Obama White House designer Michael Smith in the airy, art-filled lounge, spacious patio areas and beach-cottage-chic suites. **Casa del Mar's** sea views are second to none: Two stories of glass provide epic vistas of the ocean and nearby Santa Monica Pier while you enjoy a mojito at the hotel's popular bar, The Veranda. Just north, at the sleek and stylish **Viceroy**, Regency design elements blend with West Coast cool, showcased to posh effect poolside where generously sized cabanas

PHOTO: RICHARD ROSS (4)

host a scene that heats up during spring and summer.

Dining: If you're staying at Shutters, you're in luck. Wake up to ocean breezes, house-smoked salmon and a bagel or lemon ricotta pancakes at the hotel's **Coast** bistro. If it's a Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday, don't miss one of **Santa Monica's four farmers markets** (8:30 a.m.–1 p.m.), featuring a bounty of everything from locally sourced veggies to freshly baked bread. Located where Sunset Boulevard ends and the Pacific begins, **Gladstones**, a SoCal classic, has a new interior, executive chef and menu. You still get the great clam chowder and sea views, as well as newer offerings such as the baked salmon cartoccio.

Happy hour at **The Yard** gastro pub is all the more festive thanks to a top-shelf collection of craft beers and artisanal wines, but the real draw here is the house-ground burger and specialties such as fresh fish tacos with cumin slaw. If wine and tapas are your thing, head to the fiesta at vivacious **Primitivo Wine Bistro** on Venice's Abbot Kinney Boulevard, where locals crowd a wine bar stocked with malbec and tempranillo. And amid fierce competition by the beach, **Gjelina**, just down the street, stands out as pretentious, pricey and fabulous. Reservations are a must.

Shopping: In a spare, stylish space on Montana Avenue, celebs and the savvy stop at **Roseark** for a treasure trove of



all that glitters, including bangles, bracelets and earrings from designers such as Karma and Jennifer Meyer. Another Montana Avenue find, **Quilted Monkey**, stitches together an eclectic and endlessly appealing array of quilted handiwork, including pillows, duvet covers, purses and children's bedding. On Main Street, **Le Sanctuaire** offers a gourmet-friendly collection of professional quality cookware, chef supplies and ingredients. Santa Monica's newest shoppers' paradise, Santa Monica Place, is

home to the **AllSaints Spitalfields** store, the place to get your Bono look on. And just a block from the volleyball courts on Santa Monica beach, at **Canyon Beachwear** you'll find the best in bathing suit designs so you can beach it like a California girl.

Culture: In nearby Malibu, **The Getty Villa** is the former home of the early oil magnate and an exactly recreated Roman villa that transports you in time and place, featuring priceless treasures from ancient Rome and Greece and exquisite gardens. Designed in streamline moderne style, the historic **Aero Theatre** is a neighborhood treasure that opened in 1939. Come here for great art house flicks and specially curated film series.



4 The Getty Villa
5 A guest room at Shutters on the Beach
6 Surf 'n' turf at Gladstones

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