

Get to Know the New L.A.

Written by Katarina Kovacevic

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Los Angeles is often associated with three things: traffic, celebrities and people out to become celebrities. This sprawling metropolis, though, has much more to offer.



Hollywood

Hollywood's restyling is bringing the neighborhood back into the spotlight in a major way. There's plenty to keep you occupied in the area, and it's also a convenient home base for travelers that affords easy access to other pockets of L.A.

For a trendy but comfortable stay, check into the W Hotel Hollywood where an expansive lobby acts as a cozy retreat during the day and a swanky watering hole at night. At the on-site Delphine Eatery & Bar, the menu's highlight is a cheeseburger piled high with aged cheddar and a cracked egg.

Many of Hollywood's dining highlights are independently owned mom and pop-like shops. John Kelly Chocolates and its truffle fudge pieces count among its fans celebrities like Leonardo DiCaprio and Colin Farrell.

At the nearby Original Farmers Market, family food stands passed down through generations sell everything from fresh produce to sweet treats. Stop by Short Cake for an iced coffee and artisanal pastries, then make your way to Shine Gallery to shop for vintage collectibles.

One of the most popular attractions in this area of L.A. is the Hollywood Bowl, an outdoor amphitheater where you can bring your own picnic for concerts from Norah Jones, Yo-Yo Ma and the like.

Downtown

The re-energized streets of downtown L.A. are packed with familiar scenes—literally. A myriad of films, from blockbusters including “Independence Day” to indie favorites like “500 Days of Summer,” were shot here.

A redevelopment effort is making downtown a popular hangout for both locals and visitors. A focal point of the revitalization is L.A. Live, an entertainment complex home to hot spots like the GRAMMY Museum and Nokia Theatre, which hosts headlining performances from acts like Kanye West and The Eagles.

Next door to L.A. Live is a towering, shiny new skyscraper where Wolfgang Puck's modern Asian restaurant, WP24, sits sandwiched between The Ritz-Carlton, Los Angeles and JW Marriott Los Angeles. Come for a drink at sunset, when floor-to-ceiling windows in the lounge grant some of the best views of the City of Angels.

But celebrity chefs aren't the only ones excited about the area's makeover. Downtown L.A. is very much a local foodie labor of love. Nowhere is this more evident than at Mo-chica, where Chef Ricardo Zarate—a kind and smiley Lima-born culinary master named “Best New Chef, People's Choice” by Food & Wine—puts a fresh spin on traditional Peruvian comfort food.

Brentwood

If you're wondering why the streets of Hollywood aren't packed with celebrities, it's because they're all in Brentwood. Reese Witherspoon lives and jogs here. Zooey Deschanel shops here. Brentwood is suburbia for Hollywood's rich and famous.

While spotting a Hollywood starlet disguised as a regular person at Brentwood Country Mart isn't unusual, chances are, you may have to settle for studio execs and their families instead. This quaint spot is strewn with California-chic boutiques and eateries.

Label mavens get their kicks at Intermix, a multi-brand retailer with a well-edited collection from top fashion brands, and then head to Caffe Luxxe for a cup of rich, bold coffee or espresso. With no WiFi connection, Caffe Luxxe is what coffeehouses used to be—a social hangout where friends meet for a planned or spontaneous rendezvous.

At Farmshop, designer moms with their well-dressed babies order yellow tomato gazpacho alongside businesspeople and retirees noshing on dishes like roasted Jidori chicken and oil-cured Kampachi crudo. Make time to peruse the restaurant's market that's chock-full of imported beer and wine, gourmet cheese and to-go goodies.

Phoenicians will appreciate Brentwood's unexpected connection to the Valley of the Sun by way of Frank Lloyd Wright. It's the only place in Southern California with a structure constructed in Wright's modern Usonian design. The George Sturges House, built in 1939, is a single-family home that remains a private residence.

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Malibu

Long known as a quiet enclave for surf and sun, Malibu is making waves with wine aficionados thanks to locally owned operations like the one at Malibu Family Wines.

Here, varietals like cabernet sauvignon and Viognier grow on 65 acres of rocky soil in cliffs tucked high above the coast. Sip wines from the two labels, Semler and Saddlerock, on hilltop grounds shaded by sun-kissed Italian olive trees or pick out the perfect bottle to pair with dinner at the winery's restaurant.

For classic serenity, head to The Getty Villa overlooking the Pacific Coast Highway. With an exquisite collection of Greek, Roman and Etruscan antiquities, it's a museum experience unlike any other. Displays are arranged by themes like "Gods and Goddesses" and "Stories of the Trojan War," and gardens are dotted with Roman-inspired architecture.

Don't leave Malibu without a trip to the beach or a quintessential California hike. One of the most scenic stretches of sand is between El Matador and Lechuza Beaches. Sea cliffs, tide pools and 30-foot rock formations make for a dramatic backdrop. For hiking, Zuma Canyon Trail is a local favorite and feels like a woodsy escape.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

dineLA Restaurant Week is taking place Jan. 21-Feb. 1. Make the trip and enjoy special, pre-fixe menus at L.A.'s top culinary hot spots starting at \$15 for lunch and \$25 for dinner.

www.discoverlosangeles.com/dinela.