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Los Angeles

By [Angela Ash](#)



Los Angeles... some call it the City of Angels, or the City of Dreams. I call it the City of Wow... There is so much to do here!

I bet the locals haven't seen everything... experienced everything. So how does one decide where to stay, what to do, and even what to eat? Well, reading this is a good start!

And I always say that the most important decision is where to stay. You want to be CLOSE to the action, but not always IN the action. Something

else to keep in mind is your sense of adventure. It's your getaway, so get away from the ordinary. Find unique accommodations... something with character or amenities that just seal the deal. I know of one such place already.



Located just down the street from the Staples Center, in the heart of bustling downtown Los Angeles, is another world. No... quite literally.

The Hotel Figueroa, or "the Fig", as the locals call it, is an oasis from the sights, sounds, and even the smells that one would associate with a big city. Upon entering, realize that you will leave LA behind, and you will be fully immersed in a vibrant, Moroccan wonderland. Hmmm... and you thought you were just checking into your hotel.

There is so much attention to detail that it is really difficult to describe. The walls are not walls. They are the backdrops for ethnic paintings, intricate pieces of art, and woven tapestries. The corridors do not merely lead to rooms, but offer an overload of visual imaginings that have transformed your thoughts before you even arrive. In other words, this

place is pretty freaking cool.



If you can manage to tear yourself away from the sights and sounds of the lobby, reminiscent of an exotic marketplace, the wonders of your temporary abode awaits. Once a YWCA residence, no residue of anything remotely mundane has survived. Offering guest rooms to accommodate every traveler's needs, the Hotel Figueroa mixes comfort and the eclectic into a blend of spices that provide both the modern amenities and the exotic touches that so eloquently chronicle its entire existence. And if you need even a bit more theme, try one of the Moroccan Suites. I have no idea HOW they can improve upon the standard rooms, unless the upgrade involves overseas travel.

And no oasis is complete without a sparkling outdoor pool and hot tub. The pool area is directly connected to the bar, which is as charming and mystical as everything else... probably even more so after a few of the carefully crafted libations that are offered.

In short, this is THE best hotel I have had the opportunity to call my temporary "home" for a very long time. And I am in terrible withdrawal. A whiff of incense or a smooth floor beneath my feet sends me right back to my happy place... the magnificent Hotel Figueroa.

Visit them [online](#) for additional information, or call 213-627-8971.

So now that you know where to stay, next on the agenda begins the overwhelming decision of what to do in Los Angeles... primarily the attractions in Hollywood.

Ahhhh... and when one thinks of Hollywood, the mind conjures images of James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, and Universal Studios!



Walking through the gates of Universal Studios is like walking straight into a movie. There are no auditions. There are no casting calls. Just pass through the turnstiles, and you're there.

One can instantly feel the magic of Hollywood... building into an excitement that is nearly uncontrollable. And this is even before experiencing the plethora of attractions that await.

Universal Studios most decidedly had the entire family in mind when

designing this theme park. There are multiple shows, highlighting everything from celebrity animals to high speed water stunts that literally have you on the edge of your seat.

I can honestly say without any pause that the Studio Tour is worth the price of admission in itself. Seeing actual sets that you've seen at home while watching your favorite television show is an unforgettable experience, but you never know what may await around the next curve. You will be exposed everything from floods to Jaws, and then Godzilla in 360 3-D.

And Universal Studios does not stop there. The rides that are offered draw in the entire family... either while hopping on the Simpsons or Jurassic Park rides, or taking the thrill seekers on the Revenge of the Mummy. There is an even a "Haunted House" style attraction called the House of Horrors, where the scariest characters hop off of the silver screen and right in front of your face!

The newest thrill ride at Universal Studios is the Transformers: The Ride -3D. Utilizing media and flight simulation technology, the rider will feel like they are realistically a part of the action. You are totally immersed into the sights... the sounds... the action... and the total world of Transformers like never before!

While in the Hollywood area, a trip to Universal Studios is an absolute must!

Visit them [online](#) for additional information, or call 1-800-UNIVERSAL.

Now with the big screen on your mind, it is against the law to leave Hollywood without actually catching a flick in one of its beautiful, historic theatres.



When trying to pick a theatre in Hollywood, you just can't find a more "magical" selection than Disney's El Capitan.□

This fascinating, Spanish Colonial structure was built in 1926 during the golden days of Hollywood.□ It was a theatre, and a playhouse, and the years had taken its toll on the magnificent architecture.□ But in 1988, Disney did what they do best, and they swooped in and completely restored the building to its original grandeur... and in a record two years.□ (They like to show off that way.)□

Now this luxurious theatre shows first run Disney films, as well as seasonal offerings and classic films brought back to the excitement of purely enchanted audiences.□

And in typical Disney style, seeing a movie in 3D in one of the most gorgeous theatres in the world is not quite enough for their movie patrons.□ Most first run films begin with a live stage performance, incorporating characters from the movie.□ There is crowd interaction, dancing, singing, and an exciting prelude to what is always a fantastic film.□

The employees (or would they be called "cast members") at this theatre are the most friendly that I have ever come into contact with.□ One of the

managers, Ozzie, was all over the place... helping with tickets, greeting excited families as they came in, and even taking a few minutes to "speak Disney" with me. (I am, of course, fluent in this language.)

When in Hollywood, the El Capitan will provide the most exciting, compelling experience that you'll ever have in a theatre.

I wouldn't lie. I know Mickey Mouse.

Visit them [online](#) for additional information, or call 818-845-3110.

And when you are looking for other sources of entertainment or amusement, Hollywood definitely has that covered!



You've seen it on television. You've read the books. Now come and see with your own eyes what it takes to be in the Guinness World of Records Museum!

This is an interactive adventure that will entertain and delight the entire family. With exhibits that offer the opportunity to test your weight against the world's heaviest person or your height against the tallest man, you will be astounded, astonished, and often in a state of utter disbelief. Portions of this museum feel like a science center turned on its head, while others leave you marveling at the absolute power of human potential.

Located right on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the museum is easily accessible by all means of transportation.

Visit them [online](#) for additional information, or call 323-463-6433.



The Hollywood Wax Museum is also not to be missed! This is easily one of my absolute favorite attractions on the boulevard, and it isn't difficult to see why! This museum is the longest running wax museum in the entire country. So you had better believe that this is the real deal!

These figures are almost unreal. Offering the opportunities to pose with icons like Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, and Charlie Chaplin, this museum offers photo experiences like no other. And let's face it, ladies, the unfortunate fact is that this is probably as close as we will ever get to Johnny Depp, so let's take advantage of it!

Located just across the street from the Guinness World Records Museum, visit both and have a night to remember!

Visit them [online](#) for additional information, or call 323-462-5991.

Of course, there are so many options when deciding which additional attractions you may wish to visit. Time is also of the essence, as that you always hope to fit as many memories into your allotted "getaway" time as possible! So never fear. Just head over to [CityPass](#) and purchase your

Hollywood booklet! While all of the CityPASS locations offer such a great value, I found that the Hollywood pass also offers such a peace of mind. With so many people out on the boulevard selling tickets for attractions, it is so nice to know that everything that you need is already in your pocket!



CityPASS offers the opportunity to visit four of Hollywood's top attractions at 50% savings! Admission to Madame Tussauds is included, where mingling with the wax stars and posing for pictures is not just allowed, but encouraged! You may also take part in the Hollywood Behind The Scenes Tour, a 60 minute walking tour that actually takes you inside Hollywood landmarks. And then come the choices for your remaining two tickets! You may take a Starline Movie Stars' Homes Tour, or spend the day on the Starline Citysightseeing Hop-On Hop-Off Bus. You may also take part in a 30 minute guided tour of the magnificent Dolby Theatre, or have an amazing afternoon at the Hollywood Museum, where the golden age of Hollywood is immortalized within the beautiful Max Factor building.

And while rounding up your "to do list" for attractions, your mind may wander to the darker side of Hollywood. After all, it is considered one of the most haunted cities in the country. And it makes perfect sense, because so many tragedies have occurred here, and the spirits seem to linger... reliving their glory days, or seemingly trapped where they drew their

last breaths.



While all glitz and glamor on the outside, Hollywood definitely has her secrets, mostly full of intrigue, murder, and death. In a place where so many came with a suitcase full of dreams, their hopes often ended in heartbreak and despair, sometimes retold in newspaper headlines and notorious news stories.□

Interested in seeing where Sharon Tate and her friends had their last meal? Do you want to see where Michael Jackson and Bela Lugosi drew their final breaths?□ Then [Dearly Departed's Hollywood Tragical History Tour](#) is something that can not be missed!

This tour has been featured on countless television specials, and Scott Michaels is definitely the premier expert on Hollywood's grim history.□

While you will hear so many unnerving tales that you will surely leave your hotel room light on, you will also see homes of the stars... where they lived, entertained, and often died. This tour is a perfect way to really be introduced to the history of Hollywood, especially if you want to delve a little bit into the dark side.□ Well... a whole lot actually.□ That's what this tour is about, right?

You will see around 100 sites in two and a half hours, in the luxury of an air-conditioned vehicle, accompanied with the knowledge of an expert tour guide. Make sure you also take a look at the office, as well, to see artifacts from some of the most gruesome acts committed, or memorabilia from well-known celebrities who have departed. It's like a tour and a museum... all for one price!

Visit them [online](#) for additional information, or call 1-800-979-3370.

And by now you must surely be just dying (You liked that, didn't you?) for a good meal.



Words can really not express the delicious aroma that wafts out into the Grove, a dining and shopping mecca in the heart of Los Angeles. La Piazza offers up traditional Italian cuisine, with a touch all their own that could never be duplicated. If you plan to eat while you are in LA, then you are doing your taste buds a terrible disservice if you do not dine at least twice at La Piazza!

Everything here is delicious. Even the bread does not taste like regular bread. It, also, is under the delectable spell that has been cast over such

entrees as Tortelloni di Zucca & Funghi, Lasagna al Forno, and a plethora of other pastas, pizzas, and meat specialties.□

The desserts are bordering on magical, with the Souffle al Cioccolato a must... even if you think that ending your meal with chocolate is out of the question.□ You will somehow find a space in your stomach to accommodate this wonderful end to a perfect meal!

Visit La Piazza [online](#) for additional information, or call 323-933-5858.

With so many superb options for dining in Los Angeles, make sure that you take the time to treat yourself to yet another ultimate dining experience!



Located inside the magnificent Walt Disney Concert Hall, Patina offers luxury dining that is unparalleled.□ Master Chef Joachim Splichal offers a creative, distinctive menu that will utterly redefine your image of culinary elegance at its best.□

The White Truffle Risotto is a perfect prelude to such offerings as Seared Scallops, Jidori Chicken, and Alaskan King Salmon.□ Every bite is an adventure, culminating in the Passion Fruit Chiboust or Caramel Chocolate Namelaka.□

Visit them [online](#) for additional information, or call 213-972-3331.

With so much to offer, a trip to Los Angeles takes a lot of preparation. A visit to [Discover Los Angeles](#) is a must! Through the eyes of residents like

Mario Lopez and Magic Johnson, you can plan away to your heart's content, and find out where the locals go, discover family friendly itineraries, and see just why Los Angeles should be your next vacation destination!