

Los Angeles: City of Angels - And Stars!

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

Los Angeles -- those two words invariably get people thinking. Perhaps of the thousands of movies that have come out of the city, perhaps of the designer names scattered throughout Beverley Hills, that famous Hollywood sign, or maybe the smog and the traffic congestion.

Whatever it is you think of, Los Angeles certainly makes its mark on people, whether they've visited the city or not, and with good reason. It's the second largest city in America with a population of more than four million people, spread over something like 500 square miles -- and that's just in the city! It's reckoned the Los Angeles metropolitan area is home to another 13 million people. If you're heading to California, it's one of those places you have to visit -- and of course it's easy to get to for anyone visiting Disneyland.

But where to start? Nearly every tourist heads for Hollywood Boulevard and it's easy to see why. The sight of Mann's Chinese Theater is one that's immediately familiar to any Disney fan that's seen it's likeness at the Disney-MGM Studios. When you see the real thing for the first time though, you're immediately struck by how much vision and showmanship Sid Graumann had. This place really is unique and certainly doesn't blend in with anything around it, but that's one of its attractions! And of course another attraction is the handprints in front of the theater. It's worth arriving early to get any photos, as this place gets mobbed later in the day.

Hollywood Boulevard is also home to the Walk of Fame, and while not as prestigious as getting your handprint done, it's really fun to find your favorites - be sure to print off a list before you leave home. The Walk of Fame literally goes on for miles and you do need to have an idea of where to find the star that you're looking for. A couple that Disney fans should keep an eye out for include Walt Disney at 7201 Hollywood Boulevard, Roy O. Disney at 6833, Mickey Mouse at 6925, Donald Duck at 6840 and Snow White at 6910.

This area is also home to the Kodak Theater, which hosts the Oscars. Part of the Hollywood and Highland complex, it's fascinating to walk down the stairs and see the names of the movies which have taken the Best Picture Oscar each year. If you want to see more of the theater, guided tours run daily and can be purchased at the box office. This complex is also home to shops and restaurants and a very reasonably priced car park, where parking will cost you up to a maximum of \$10 per day -- a good bargain for a major city!

Let's be honest -- we're all fascinated by the lives of the rich and famous, otherwise the press wouldn't cover their every move with such detail. That could explain why Beverley Hills is such a huge attraction for visitors to Los Angeles. Packed with world famous designer names, this area of the city just drips with money and of course, there's always a chance you could spot a star out doing their shopping. It really is worth seeing, just to see how the other half live! If stars are what you've come to Los Angeles to spot, then this is also the area to find their homes. As well as taking a guided tour, you can also do it yourself with guides to where celebrities live. One guide that's particularly comprehensive is *Celebrity and Movie Star Addresses*.

Although movies may have made LA famous, they're only half the story for visitors. The city also has a lot of history that many never see. That history really started with La Brea Tar Pits, which were formed around 42,000 years ago, when oil rose to the surface of the earth. Animals became trapped by that oil and their remains were then fossilized. The Page Museum here allows visitors to learn about the city during the last Ice Age, when the city was dominated by sabre toothed tigers, rather than movie stars!

History is just as evident, but a lot more recent at Olveda Street, the birthplace of Los Angeles. It's also known as El Pueblo Historic Monument, after the original pueblo that was built by the 44 settlers of Los Angeles in 1781. Today you can still find many historic buildings here, including the oldest brick home in the city and there's also a traditional Mexican-style market to browse. It's an odd area, set right in the middle of modern downtown, and considering the development in LA over the years, it's amazing it's survived so well.

A far more modern structure that's also well worth a visit is the Hollywood Bowl. The summer home of the LA Philharmonic since 1922, it's a unique concert venue and it is worth checking to see if anyone will be playing there during your trip. Even if there isn't anything that appeals, the museum is open year round from Tuesdays to Saturdays and is free to visit. Just remember, if you do get a chance to go to the Bowl, be sure to hike up high enough to get a photo with the Hollywood sign in the background. It's not an easy climb, but it's worth it!

And speaking of the Hollywood sign, you'll get some superb views of it from Griffith Park. Covering 4,210 acres, this park got its name from Colonel Griffith J. Griffith, who donated the land to the city in 1896. As well as the wonderful views, the main attraction here is the Griffith Park Observatory that has recently reopened, following a massive renovation and expansion. One of its main draws is its superb planetarium and the 12-inch Zeiss telescope, located in a roof top dome at the east end of the

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building, allowing people to view the stars and planets for themselves.

With so much to see, you might be wondering where to grab some good food. Unsurprisingly, LA is packed with a myriad of places to eat, but some of the best include the Farmers' Market which was started during the Great Depression of the 1930's as a place for farmers to sell their produce. Today the food here is still first class and you'll be hard pressed to find fresher meals. If you like hot dogs then don't miss Pink's at 709 La Brea Boulevard. A family owned hog dog stand since 1939, you'll see lines around the block at almost any time of the day, even the early hours of the morning!

There's so much to see in Los Angeles that ideally you'll either need a car to get around or you can also join a guided tour. As you'd expect, there are many to choose from -- we went for Starline Tours and were very impressed with the tour and the knowledge of our guide. In recent years, with the creation of a new subway system in the 1990's, public transport has become another way to get around Los Angeles. The metro system includes rail and bus services, which will take you to most of the major sights.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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