

Los Angeles & Orange County



Driving north from San Diego or south from Santa Barbara, you start to feel a vortex sucking you in. And you thought it was just the cruise control! You've just entered the throbbing jugular of Southern California, the land of countless starstruck dreams, a place never so easily defined as when it's contained in a screen. It's the nucleus of all the stereotypes borne of nearly a century of Tinseltown magic bludgeoned into our collective subconscious. Even – nay, especially – if you're one of those out-of-hand LA-haters (some of you close-minded San Franciscans out there, I'm talking to you), you've got to see la-la land for yourself.

You won't need much to act out your own LA story. Credit card, wheels, beach towel, and you're golden. What you can forget are your preconceptions. Though you'll find your share of surgically enhanced blondes and industry types weaving lanes at 80mph, Los Angeles is intensely diverse – 70% of LA county residents are not white – and the town bristles with fascinating neighborhoods and characters that have nothing to do with the 'biz'.

LA likes to think that if it's focaccia, tortillas and rice bowls, then Orange County is Wonder Bread. Well, that's part arrogance and part truth. Though the county could be generalized as a hodgepodge of suburbs, the beach towns maintain unique personalities, like surf-serious Huntington Beach and gracious Laguna Beach. And let's not forget that the OC also contains that high temple of kitsch...Disneyland.

It's a siblinglike relationship between LA and the OC. But at the end of the day, boundaries don't exist much around here. Especially in the imagination.

LOS ANGELES & ORANGE COUNTY

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watching the death-wish bodyboarders face the towering waves at the **Wedge** (p211) in Newport Beach
- Browsing in the junk, treasure and everything in between on display on Long Beach's **Retro Row** (p197)
- Spending the day gazing at priceless works of art high above LA at the **Getty Center** (p195), in itself a spectacular piece of work
- Screaming through the galaxy on Space Mountain at **Disneyland** (p209), then sticking around for the fireworks display
- Joining in on the human freak parade at Ocean Front Walk in **Venice** (p196)
- Watching the sun dip below the horizon in artsy **Laguna Beach** (p213)
- Eating your way through the **Third Street Farmers Market** (p187)
- Playing 'Name that Celeb' while cruising down the star-studded streets of **Beverly Hills** (p194)



LOS ANGELES

pop 384,500

Of the beach towns, Santa Monica is the most equipped for tourists and the most accessible from Downtown, though Malibu is tops for star-spotting. Everything about Venice is colorful: the hippies, murals and boardwalk, making it an especially appealing stop. Bustling Long Beach has some big showcases in the aquarium and the Queen Mary, but what's most interesting is a stroll through its burgeoning arts district.

About 12 miles inland, Downtown LA combines outstanding architecture and museums with global-village pizzazz. Hollywood has its happening 'hoods of Los Feliz and Silver Lake, and *très* gay West Hollywood (WeHo) is all about urban chic. South of Hollywood, Mid-City's main draw is Museum Row, while further west is swank Beverly Hills.

HISTORY

Following the common pattern, the hunter-gatherer existence of the Gabrieleño and Chumash peoples ended with the arrival of Spanish missionaries and pioneers in the late 18th century. Known as El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles, the first civilian settlement became a farming community but remained an isolated outpost for decades. LA was incorporated as a Californian city in 1850, but a series of events caused LA's population to swell by 1930: the collapse of the Northern California Gold Rush, the arrival of the transcontinental railroad, the birth of the citrus industry, the discovery of oil, the launch of the port of LA and the birth of the movie industry in 1908. The deluge of new residents after WWII shaped LA into the megalopolis of today, with its attendant problems including suburban sprawl, air pollution and racial strife. Add soaring real estate to the list of problems that continue to cloud LA's sunny skies. But with a strong economy, low unemployment and a now-decreasing crime rate, overall morale remains high.

ORIENTATION

Getting around is easiest by car. The Fwy system isn't as convoluted as you may fear, despite the fact that most interstates go by several names in addition to their route number and direction. (For example, US-101 northbound is called the Santa Monica Fwy, but

southbound it's the Hollywood Fwy. Pay attention!) Hwy 1 still hugs the coast, with the 405 running roughly parallel a few miles to the east. The I-10 lies east-west, deadending at the ocean in Santa Monica. US-101 cuts diagonally through Downtown until merging with I-5 on its way down to San Diego.

For navigating within neighborhoods the maps in this book should be sufficient. Otherwise, pick up a street map at a gas station or bookstore.

INFORMATION Bookstores

Listed here are some favorite indie bookstores.

Acres of Books (☎ 562-437-6980; 240 Long Beach Blvd, Long Beach; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun) The largest used bookstore in the state – around a million titles – and a favorite hang of Ray Bradbury. The shelving system is gleefully random: a category label may read 'insects, circus, guns, fraternal groups'.

California Map & Travel Center (Map pp192-3; ☎ 310-396-6277; 3312 Pico Blvd, Santa Monica) Travel bookstore with frequent readings.

Equal Writes (☎ 562-491-5600; 344 E 4th St, Long Beach; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun) This part bookstore, part queer community center carries hilarious bumper stickers.

Internet Access

Cybercafés are notoriously short-lived, so call ahead to confirm that the following are still in business.

Cyber Java (Map p191; ☎ 323-466-5600; 7080 Hollywood Blvd, Hollywood; per 10min \$1.75, wi-fi free; ☎ 7am-11:30pm)

Interactive Café (Map pp192-3; ☎ 310-395-5009; 215 Broadway, Santa Monica; per 10 min \$1; ☎ 6am-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) Doubles as an art space.

Media

For entertainment-listings magazines, see p203.

KPFK 90.7 fm (www.kpfc.org) Part of the Pacific radio network; news and talk.

LA Weekly (www.laweekly.com) Free alternative news and listings magazine.

Los Angeles Times (www.latimes.com) Nation's fourth-largest daily and winner of 37 Pulitzer Prizes.

Medical Services

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center (Map pp188-9; ☎ 310-855-5000; 8700 Beverly Blvd, West Hollywood; ☎ 24hr emergency room)

LOS ANGELES & ORANGE COUNTY

Post

Call ☎ 800-275-8777 for the nearest branch, or see the maps to Downtown LA (p190) or Hollywood & Los Feliz (p191) for locations.

Telephone

Thanks to the growth of electronic communication devices, LA County is now divided into six (and counting) area codes; all telephone numbers in this chapter are accompanied by the appropriate area code. When making local calls from a land line between numbers with 310 area codes, you must dial a '1' and the area code first.

Tourist Offices

California Welcome Visitors Center (Map p207; ☎ 714-667-0400; www.visitcwc.com; Westfield Shopping-town Mainplace, Suite 112, 2800 N. Main St, Santa Ana; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Downtown Los Angeles Visitor Information Center (Map p190; ☎ 213-689-8822; www.visitlosangeles.info; 685 S Figueroa St, Downtown; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Hollywood Visitors Center (Map p191; ☎ 323-467-6412; Hollywood & Highland complex, Hollywood; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun) Sells discounted theater tickets.

Santa Monica Visitors Center (Map pp192-3; ☎ 310-393-7593; www.santamonica.com; 1920 Main St, Santa Monica; ☎ 10am-6pm)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Extra caution should be exercised in East LA, Compton and Watts, sections which are still plagued by gangs and drugs. Hollywood and Venice also yield dangers, especially in poorly lit side streets. Downtown LA is safe in the daytime, but still empties out after sundown. Downtown is also home to numerous homeless folks, especially on Skid Row, an area roughly bounded by 3rd, Alameda, 7th and Main Sts.

SIGHTS

Hollywood, Los Feliz & Silver Lake Hollywood Blvd (Map p191), where Richard Gere cruised Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*, has been spruced up in recent years, though it's still far from recapturing its Golden Age glamour. Historic movie palaces bask in restored glory, Metro Rail's Red Line makes public transport easy and some of LA's hottest bars and nightclubs have found their footing here. The most interesting mile runs between La Brea (la bray) Ave and Vine St along the

ALL ABOUT THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN

LA's most recognizable landmark first appeared atop its perch in 1923 as Hollywoodland, an advertising gimmick for a real-estate development. Over the years pranksters have altered the sign's 50ft-tall letters to variously read 'Hollyweed' and 'Hollywood', among other monikers. A letter mailed to Peg Entwistle – the 24-year-old starlet who jumped from the 'H' in 1932 – the day before she killed herself was an offer to star in a play...about a woman driven to suicide.

Hollywood Walk of Fame, which honors more than 2000 celebrities (a good half of whom you've likely never heard of) with stars embedded in the sidewalk.

The Hollywood & Highland Mall dwarfs the 1927 **Grauman's Chinese Theatre** (Map p191; ☎ 323-464-6266; 6925 Hollywood Blvd), famous for its forecourt where screen legends have left their imprint in cement: feet, hands and – in the case of Jimmy 'Schnozzle' Durante – his noseprint.

Following Hollywood Blvd east beyond Hwy 101 (Hollywood Fwy) takes you to the neighborhoods of **Los Feliz** (loss fee-les) and **Silver Lake**, both boho-chic enclaves with off-beat shopping, funky bars and a hopping restaurant scene and resident cool kids like Beck and Flea.

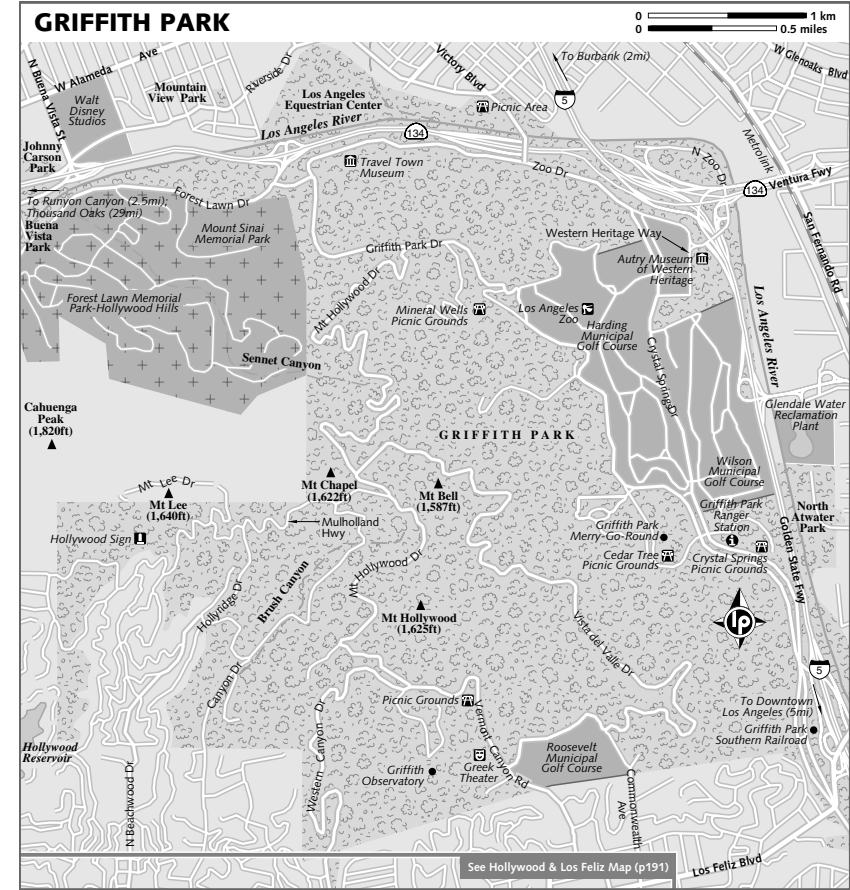
The Metro Red Line (p205) serves central Hollywood (Hollywood/Highland station) and Los Feliz (Vermont/Sunset station) from Downtown LA.

Griffith Park

Five times the size of New York City's Central Park, **Griffith Park** (Map p187; 4370 Crystal Springs Dr; admission free; ☎ 6am-10pm; ♿) is an escape from urbanity, embracing an outdoor theater, the city zoo, an historic merry-go-round, an observatory, two museums, playgrounds, hiking trails and even the Hollywood Sign.

For information and maps stop by the **Griffith Park Ranger Station** (Map p187; ☎ 323-913-4632; 4730 Crystal Springs Dr; ☎ 5:30am-10:30pm). Trails include the 3-mile **Mt Hollywood Hiking Trail** with spectacular view of the sign.

On the southern slopes of Mt Hollywood, the landmark 1935 art-deco **Griffith Observatory** (Map p187; ☎ 323-664-1181; www.griffithobs.org; 2800 E



Observatory Rd; ♿) has flung open its doors once again after a face-lift, showing off new exhibition halls and a snazzy underground 'event horizon theater'. The planetarium's technology has also been upgraded to cutting-edge (even as one of its planets has been downgraded).

Access to the park is easiest via the Griffith Park Dr or Zoo Dr exits off I-5.

West Hollywood

Brash, brassy West Hollywood is an independent city that packs more personality into its 2 sq miles than you can shake a boa at. And how fabulous is it that the city, the epicenter of LA's gay scene, is abbreviated WeHo? It's also the heart of SoCal's design community

and the adopted home of about 6000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union. LA's fabled nightlife mecca, the Sunset Strip, is its main artery.

Mid-City

Fresh produce is an afterthought at the landmark **Third Street Farmers Market** (off Map p191; ☎ 323-933-9211; www.farmersmarketla.com; 6333 W 3rd St; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat, 10am-7pm Sun; ♿), in business since 1934. The scene is more about the specialty grocers (don't miss the hot-sauce shop with its lineup of bottles sporting R-rated labels), the vendors proffering edibles from every corner of the globe and the intense

(Continued on page 194)