111 PLACES IN LOS ANGELES THAT YOU MUST NOT MISS

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© Cover icon Montage: iStockphoto.com/bebecom98, iStockphoto.com/Davel5957
Design: Eva Kraskes, based on a design by Lübbeke | Naumann | Thoben
Edited by Katrina Fried
Maps: altancicek.design, www.altancicek.de
Printing and binding: B.O.S.S Medien GmbH, Goch
Printed in Germany 2016
ISBN 978-3-95451-884-5
First edition

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Foreword

Dear Los Angeles,
So often you are misunderstood, viewed by the world through the narrow lenses of the media and outsiders. Their images portray a fame-obsessed metropolis filled with beautiful people in scenic locations wearing seriously curated wardrobes. There’s also the traffic of course, so thick at times, drivers may as well turn their ignitions off. But we devoted Angelenos know that much more is going on outside of the picture frame. Beneath your gridlock and glitzy veneer lies a marvelously sprawling city filled with experiences diverse, strange, titillating, nutritious, and imperfect.

We know you as a place of opportunity; of big dreams, searing disappointments, and painful ideals. A city where the wild meshes with the urban, the beautiful with the ugly, the magical with the real. Brimming with surprises, you offer access to wildly contrasting places and experiences: a club where Mexican drag queens lip sync to 1970s hits, a punk-rock DIY perfume lab, a museum housing the collection of the real Indiana Jones – and always close by is a hike on a chaparral-scented trail.

And the people! Angelenos speak 224 different languages and come from more than 140 countries. You harbor deep thinkers and innovators, contributing to the world cutting-edge art and architecture, scientific advancements, and brave new ideas. To explore your deepest secrets we hung out with surfers, rock climbers, niche collectors, two-steppers, artists, and historians – all of whom helped us discover and divulge the rich and unexpected tales and locales disclosed within these pages.

Sweet LA, this book is our humble attempt to celebrate your depth and complexity. You’re the city so many love to hate, and hate to love. But we know the explorers who read this authentic chronicle will, like us, come to adore you, and that means all of you.

– Laurel Moglen & Julia Posey
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The 2nd Street Tunnel  
*Basking in the glow of traffic*

Philip K. Dick fans, get your *Blade Runner* on and see something truly beautiful by entering the 2nd Street Tunnel in the evening at Figueroa Street and heading east. Watch the red reflections of brake lights illuminate the rainbow-shaped tunnel in a glittering spectacle. In the movie, solitary replicant hunter Rick Deckard drives through the tunnel awash in blue hues, the entrance and exits dripping with the constant acid rain of the futuristic city of Los Angeles.

Although Deckard is a loner, he’s not alone. The white tiles that line the 2nd Street Tunnel and the ability to easily cordon off the area to traffic and lookie-loos have made it a favorite location for car commercials and fashion shoots as well as other films like the notable sci-fi cousins *Terminator* and *Gattica*. The tunnel may be one of the most filmed unknown icons in Los Angeles. And it almost didn’t happen.

Construction began on the 2nd Street Tunnel in 1916. Downtown Los Angeles wasn’t the cluster of emerald skyscrapers it is today. It was Bunker Hill, primarily a residential wealthy suburb of opulent Victorian mansions, which separated Downtown from the rest of Los Angeles. That is, until the tunnel came through. The signature white tiles were sourced from Germany and as anti-German sentiment during World War I grew, so did opposition to using a German product. But the architect of the tunnel stood his aesthetic ground and the tunnel was completed, Teutonic tiles and all. Ironically, many of the wealthy inhabitants of the Bunker Hill enclave began to leave the area as the war came to an end and urbanism encroached on their formerly suburban lifestyle.

Many of the Victorians were later partitioned into apartments, two of which became home to writer John Fante and artist Leo Politi (see p. 126), who both went on to champion the new working class of Bunker Hill in their work.
Address 2nd Street between Figueroa and Hill Streets, Los Angeles, CA 90012 (enter by car from Figueroa Street heading east toward Hill Street for the best view) | Hours Always open. Reflections are most dazzling from dusk to dawn. | Tip The Blue Ribbon Garden atop nearby Disney Concert Hall (111 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012) is almost an acre of tranquility amid the business of Downtown. Enter via the stairs on Grand Avenue near 2nd Street.
Adams Pack Station
“Haulin’ ass since 1936”

In the foothills where Sierra Madre, Arcadia, and Monrovia meet, the Adams Pack Station in Chantry Flat has been providing asses, as in pack mules, since 1936, and cold beer and other sundries since 1953, to Angeles National Forest hikers and the 81 recreational cabins (serving as private vacation residences) that populate the area around and leading to Sturtevant Camp.

A walk in Big Santa Anita Canyon is like stepping back in time. Trails of varying difficulty start from the Adams Pack Station parking lot. A 3.8-mile round-trip hike past some of the cabins to Sturtevant Falls will make the bottle of icy suds awaiting your return feel like a well-deserved reward. The rustic cottages that dot the trails near Chantry Flat were built between 1907 and 1936 with materials carried in by mules and humans. The cabins exist on a special use permit from the U.S. Forest Service and cabin owners lease the land upon which the dwellings sit.

For those looking to spend the night, primitive campsites at Hoegee and Spruce Grove Campgrounds, about a two- and four-mile hike, respectively, from Chantry Flat, operate on a first-come-first-serve basis. If that seems too hardy, Adams Pack Station’s proprietress, Deb Burgess, recently acquired Sturtevant Camp. The nostalgic mountain resort offers cabins for rent on the weekends with flushable toilets and hot showers (learn more at www.sturtevantcamp.com). All food and supplies must be brought in. Make arrangements at least a week in advance with Adams Pack Station to have a mule do the heavy lifting.

Friday to Sunday, the station grills hot food on outdoor barbecues next to the main building, offering excellent burgers and fries and sometimes pulled-pork sandwiches. Live music is performed on Sundays from noon to 5:30pm. Get to the station by 8am on Friday morning for the best chance of seeing the mule team head out on their weekly canyon haul.
Address One Chantry Flat Road, Arcadia, CA 91024, Tel +1 626.447.7356, www.adamspackstation.com, dburgess@adamspackstation.com | Parking On-site lot and street parking along Chantry Flat Road. Adventure Pass required for parking. Passes can be purchased at Adams Pack Station or at other adventure retailers. | Hours Fri–Sun 7am–5pm | Tip Like camping? Millard Campground (4041 Chaney Trail, Altadena, CA 91001) is like a mini-Big Santa Anita Canyon with fewer recreational cabins. A handful of sites sits next to a small stream. No potable water.
Amèrica Tropical

A long-lost triumph rediscovered

In the late 1960s, just as the Chicano political movement was establishing its identity, hints of a mural were found bleeding through a whitewashed wall just off Olvera Street in Los Angeles. Originally created in 1932 by revered Mexican muralist and activist David Alfaro Siqueiros, the painting’s discovery was perfectly timed. Siqueiros, along with artists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, had become an inspiration for the then burgeoning Chicano art movement.

Siqueiros had been commissioned to create an image of America as the land of plenty. But the artist had other plans. Amèrica Tropical depicts two soldiers in the Mexican Revolution aiming at an American eagle sitting atop a double cross on which a Mexican Indian is being crucified. The painting was an enraged criticism of United States oppression and immediately sparked controversy. About a month after his shocking mural was unveiled, Siqueiros was deported from the United States. Within a year, the work was completely covered over. Later, Siqueiros said he’d never intended to paint “a continent of happy men, surrounded by palms and parrots, where the fruit voluntarily detached itself to fall into the mouths of the happy mortals.” It’s said he often painted at night to keep his artistic choices secret.

Effective protection, not restoration, of the mural began in the 1990s by the Getty Conservation Institute. It took more than 20 years to clean and preserve the discovery. The choice to restore was rejected because experts believed the original colors and artist’s hand would be impossible to duplicate.

The mural can be viewed from a rooftop landing quite a distance away. Still, it’s profound to gaze upon, especially knowing its history. The building beneath houses the Amèrica Tropical Interpretive Center. It’s full of interactive features with rich insight into the times, Siqueiros, and his nearly forgotten masterpiece.
**Address** Amèrica Tropical Interpretive Center, 125 Pasco De La Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012, Tel +1 213.485.6855  
**Public transport** Any means of public transit to Union Station; the center is across the street.  
**Parking** Paid lots and metered street parking  
**Hours** Tue–Sun 10am–3pm; admission is free  
**Tip** Explore the Art Deco-era Los Angeles Central Library (630 W 5th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90071), which has a gorgeous rotunda ceiling and a children’s reading room that’s been restored to its original splendor.
Angelus Temple
Step right up to hear a tale both wondrous and true

Showman. Preacher. Charlatan. Healer. Aimee Semple McPherson is tough to define. Today, most Angelenos have never heard her name, but it was quite a different story in the 1920s. Her popularity at one point was so great that 10 percent of Los Angeles belonged to her Angelus Temple, which she designed with her mother in 1923.

Widowed at age 19, McPherson remarried at 22. Her call to preach was so strong, she got her start broadcasting sermons through a loudspeaker from the back of her “gospel car,” touring up and down the Eastern seaboard with her two children as passengers and her mother at the wheel. Outrageous behavior for a woman in those days. Like any good showman, she traveled, set up tents, held boisterous sermons, and inspired “speaking in tongues.” As her fame grew, so did her bank account, and she soon made her way to Los Angeles. Her philosophy focused on the rapture that comes from serving God rather than the torment suffered for forsaking Him. When preaching, she told relatable anecdotes with a permanent smile, a girlish giggle, and down-to-earth humor. Sometimes she spiced up her sermons with theatrics – like when she rode a motorcycle down the church aisle. Apparently she spent bank on Parisian gowns and kept her dyed-blond hair fashionably styled.

After she purportedly healed a wheelchair-bound woman, word of her faith-healing powers spread exponentially. She was the first woman granted a broadcast license from the FCC and the first to preach on the radio. She purchased the radio station KFSG and aired sermons and programs directly from the temple, leveraging the then-modern medium to reach millions.

But along the rise to stardom were also scandals: a kidnapping; a disappearance; and a walk, Jesus-style, through a Mexican desert. There were nervous breakdowns, a falling-out with her daughter and mother, and finally an accidental fatal overdose, in 1944.
Address 1100 Glendale Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90026, Tel +1 213.816.1109, www.angelustemple.org, info@angelustemple.org | Parking Metered and unmetered street parking | Hours Sermons: Sun 9:30 & 11:30; Thu 7pm. Be advised that some proselytizing will likely take place. | Tip Keeping up the religious theme, cruise over to the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels (555 W Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012) and absorb the airy interior featuring fresco-like tapestries depicting saints standing with anonymous people from around the world.
Audubon Center

Into the wild

The Audubon Center is a hidden gem on the northwest tip of the 282-acre Debs Park. This little-known park delivers a gorgeous outdoor experience without the crowds. Don’t expect to find conventional swing sets or jungle gyms. Here, nature is the playground. Decomposed granite trails connect to reveal a hand-operated water pump. A small man-made pond holds frogs, which careful hands are welcome to catch, observe, and release. Small buckets and shovels are available for young adventurers to dig and play with. Three solar-powered fountains are home to fish and native riparian plants in an expansive courtyard. Dashing bright blue iridescent damselflies dip and sip in the water. Alert eyes can watch them bend into a C-shape, ovipositor protruding as they lay eggs. Native plants, many propagated on-site, flourish in a wild but well-maintained garden.

Created in 2003, the Audubon Center creatively brought environmental education to an underserved area. Outreach programs, day camps, musical performances, outdoor movie screenings, and of course bird walks, are all part of what the center has to offer.

The airy conference building with taxidermied bird specimens displayed on upper shelves is the first completely off-the-grid government building in Los Angeles. Solar panels supply enough energy to run the entire building, bathrooms, and accompanying fountains. Recycling and reuse is a theme: even the rebar in the concrete structure was made from melted-down handguns.

Although open to all ages, the center is especially good for young families: the complex and gardens are fenced off, allowing little explorers to roam without entering the surrounding parkland.

Feeling more adventurous? A .25-mile trail into the park starts at the far side of the courtyard. It is an easy hike but with a slight elevation that might challenge a child accordingly – and perhaps facilitate an early nap.
Address  Audubon Center at Debs Park, 4700 N Griffin Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90031, Tel +1 323.221.2255, www.debspark.audubon.org, debspark@aubudon.org | Public transport  Gold Line to Southwest Museum Station, then a .5-mile walk | Parking  Free on-site lot and unmetered street parking | Hours  Tue–Sat 9am–5pm, closed Sun & Mon except for special events | Tip  Erica Dakings's gluten-free and vegan restaurant, Kitchen Mouse (5904 N Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90042), is one of the reasons why Highland Park is worth the hype. The breakfast “sausage” is beyond delicious.