

3 DAYS IN LA

A revitalized downtown plays a starring role in a Southern California getaway

BY LESLIE FORSBERG



THE FORMER LA TERMINAL MARKET HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO ROW DTLA.

● **HIGH ATOP THE SOARING ROOFTOP BAR**, a lively evening see-and-be-seen scene is playing out. A techno beat thumps as fashion-savvy women and sunglasses-clad men holding craft cocktails colonize faux-grass benches around flickering firepits. My partner, Brian, and I look beyond the social milieu as we survey the landscape rolling off into the distance. Brian lived here for 17 years, and he's eager to show me more of his favorite spots during our latest three-day visit. The landscape is vast from this vantage point. I spy the City of Angels' iconic Hollywood sign perched atop rumpled, sun-bleached hills to the north. To the south is a Christmas-light tangle of freeways, overpasses and off-ramps,

and to the west we can see a faint blue strip of ocean where the sun, a melting peach, is rapidly sinking. >> We're at Spire 73 in LA's towering new InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, where we have a plush view room. The edifice pierces the sky at 1,100 feet, making it the tallest hotel west of the Mississippi. This skyscraper, which opened in 2017, is

an apt symbol of the renaissance currently taking place in downtown LA, where cranes are swiftly constructing sparkling new high-rises and hotels. Added to the dynamic Hollywood scene, exciting arts and culture, fashion-forward shopping, nearby beaches and scintillating nightlife, there is more to see and do in LA and its surroundings than ever before. >>



HOT SPOTS INCLUDE SPIRE 73 AND CITY MARKET SOUTH (RIGHT). OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANGELS FLIGHT, WEXLER'S DELI AT GRAND CENTRAL MARKET AND A BATMOBILE FROM THE WARNER BROS. FLEET.



“LOOK, HONEY, I SHRANK!” I call out to Brian from beneath a giant-sized table at The Broad, a mind-boggling, 120,000-square-foot contemporary art museum that opened downtown in 2015. But he’s too busy appraising patterns cast by sunlight seeping through the intricate, honeycomb-like exoskeleton. The \$140 million building was funded by philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad (general admission is free, but some exhibitions are ticketed).

The astonishingly broad (excuse the pun) collection, with more than 2,000 post-WWII and contemporary works, is a shrine to pop icons. Works by legendary artists, including Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, draw my attention, but what fascinates me is the sheer brilliance of the works by diverse, lesser-known artists. *Under the Table*, 1994, by Robert Therrien, is surprisingly accessible; *eXelento*, 2004, by Ellen Gallagher, is a humorous study involving vintage newspaper ads and plasticine “hairdos”; and Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui’s *Red Block*, 2010, made of thousands of red liquor bottle labels, is an immense, undulating blanket that evokes kente cloth.

It’s lunchtime, and we stroll downhill to the historic Grand Central Market, whose airy arcade houses ethnic eateries reflective of the city’s many cultures. When this beloved emblem of the city celebrated its centennial last year, a vivid neon wall was installed at the entrance that mesmerizes with its quirky animation. After delicious lobster rolls at Prawn Coastal, we head back uphill. It’s a hot December day, and we opt for the “no sweat” option, joining other delighted tourists aboard what is billed as the “shortest railway in the world.” Angels Flight, a bright-orange, 1901 narrow-gauge funicular, chugs uphill and deposits us all of 100 feet above where we started.

A real railroad—the Southern Pacific—was the centerpiece of the former LA Terminal Market, built between 1917 and 1923 alongside the tracks in downtown’s Produce District. Today, these rows of brick buildings are



JOHN, BY CHUCK CLOSE, AT THE BROAD

being refashioned into a massive (32-acre) retail and dining destination, ROW DTLA, with beautifully renovated brick buildings facing narrow, cobbled lanes. It’s only 8 minutes south of the market via ride-hailing service, which we find is the best way to get around in downtown LA.

Brian and I eye creative, contemporary lighting fixtures at A+R furniture and lighting store, and I have a hard time peeling myself out of Yolk, a sunny gift shop with wares made by local artisans. The cherry on top is The Manufactory, a 38,500-square-foot food hall by San Francisco’s highly vaunted Tartine Bakery.

At dinner, we linger over tender handmade pasta at Rosoblu with Brian’s old LA friend (also a Brian) and his

girlfriend, Stacey. Inside a warehouse, and with a vivid, full-wall mural and light-strung patio out front, this eye-catching northern Italian restaurant is making waves for its cuisine and its location: It’s the anchor of yet another major downtown project, City Market South, which opened in 1909 as a farmers’ co-op. “LA Brian” regales us with entertaining, behind-the-scenes tales of the TV and film industry—he’s a camera operator for *Dancing With the Stars* and other popular TV series—and we make the decision to dive into Hollywood the next day, starting with a Warner Bros. Studio Tour.

Hopping into our rental car, we motor 11 miles northwest to Burbank, where a young aspiring filmmaker is our tour guide. We’re joined on the cart by visitors from England, Brazil

and Australia as we putter through alleys behind make-believe, false-front towns that do double-time, standing in for a number of different TV shows. At a display of historic Batmobiles, we learn that only one of the cars is drivable—the Joker’s brash magenta-and-gold number—and that one of the Batmobiles was designed with just a slight mistake ... no door. A capsule, built to rectify the error, only added insult to injury. It was too short, and Batman’s helmet “ears” didn’t fit. The solution? A redesign of the iconic crime-fighter’s helmet.

As we drive down one side street, our guide’s nonstop patter suddenly stops, and everyone cranes their necks to see why. A moment later, everyone talks at once. We’ve just

[THE ESSENTIALS]

Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is served by most major airlines and is just minutes from Santa Monica, while Hollywood Burbank Airport (BUR) is smaller, more user-friendly, and closer to Hollywood and downtown LA. Downtown lodging options include the Intercontinental Los Angeles Downtown, the JW Marriott Los Angeles L.A. LIVE and the Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza (near The Broad). Call or visit your nearest AAA store (find locations on page 2) or visit AAA.com for help planning your own trip.





SANTA MONICA PIER.

Pier, with its whirling Ferris wheel. We pass a 3-story-high pink-and-purple house Barb claims was inspired by Barbie's Dream House, and then the house where John Lennon spent his infamous, 18-month-long "lost weekend." Turning around, we head south to Venice Beach.

We know we've arrived by colorful souvenir stands, rap music blaring from speakers and a crowd ringing street artists performing a powerful capoeira dance. We pass guitarists busking for change; the skateboard bowl (with some youngsters impressively shredding the cement); and Muscle Beach, where

Arnold Schwarzenegger transformed the sport of bodybuilding ... before he transformed action films and the office of the Governor of California.

Just beyond, we motor up and onto tiny, arched bridges linking the streets between Venice's postcard-worthy canals, where skiffs and canoes are tied up outside sweet cottages. The wealthy industrialist Abbot Kinney dug miles of canals here, draining marshes, to build Venice of America, which opened in 1905. The heyday didn't last long; by 1924, many canals were paved in, and today only six exist.

Abbot Kinney would have appreciated the capitalism on the boulevard named after him, where we wander past high-end boutiques, after our bike jaunt. "In Hollywood, I could dress in black every day of my life," I overhear one woman opining to her companion. The prices along this street are fit for the stars, but on our way to Hollywood Burbank Airport, Brian introduces me to a place with clothes for the stars (and mere mortals) at more down-to-earth prices: It's a Wrap is a consignment shop featuring garments worn in TV and movie productions. The fashions run the gamut from garish to flamboyant to schoolmarmish. I fall in love with a burgundy velvet blazer with WB17 on the tag (Warner Brothers 2017).

As we wing homeward, Brian says, with a laugh, "I planned to show you around, but instead, the city showed us around." Somehow, I think this will always be the case in this dynamic, vibrant city that is always reinventing itself. We both look forward to the sequel. 🍷

driven past Simon Helberg, aka Howard Wolowitz, from *The Big Bang Theory*, as he hoofs it between set locations.

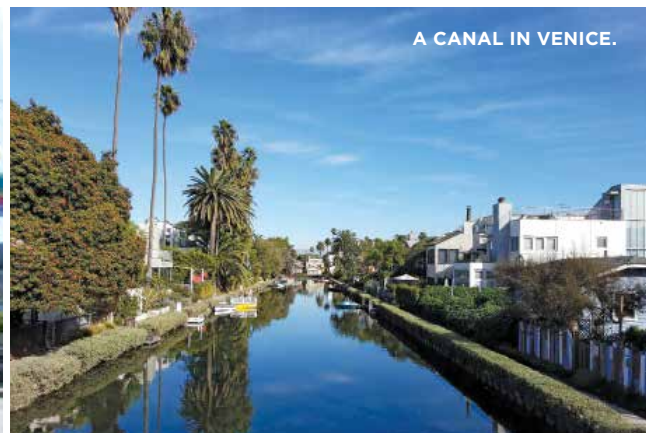
While LA is synonymous with the film industry, it's also pivotal to the music industry, with deep roots in rock-and-roll, and the Grammy Awards ceremony is held annually at L.A. LIVE, in downtown's South Park District. A block away, at the Grammy Museum (a part of the L.A. Live entertainment complex), I'm inspired by a video of Taylor Swift's 2017 Grammy speech offering encouragement to young female artists to pursue their craft, regardless of those who attempt to undercut their success. As we wander through the galleries, we come across a thought-provoking Seattle display, which weaves together the historic jazz programs at Garfield and Roosevelt high schools, Jimi Hendrix's ascension and the grunge movement.

It's dark when we emerge, and lively crowds are mingling in bars and restaurants, while skaters of all ability levels shuffle and spin around a massive Christmas tree on an outdoor rink.

Christmas is the farthest thing from our minds the next day as we set out to explore the area beaches on a Pedal or Not Electric Bicycle Tour, based in Santa Monica, 15 miles west. "Wow! You could pop a wheelie on one of these!" Brian enthuses, as we power up our bikes, looping around a few times before shoving off, with our guide Barb leading the way. Sequined waves are washing onto a long strip of fine gold sand to our left, and a string of mansions are on our right, as we head toward the Santa Monica



ABBOT KINNEY BOULEVARD.



A CANAL IN VENICE.

BOTTOM RIGHT: LESLIE FORSBERG



EASY TO PLAY

Home to SoCal's famous attractions



EASY TO STAY

Affordable travel for all



Headline text: California's best attractions are just a short drive from the Anaheim Park. The park is a great place to stay, with a variety of accommodations to suit every budget. From luxury hotels to budget-friendly options, there's something for everyone. The park is also a great place to visit, with a variety of activities and attractions to enjoy. So, what are you waiting for? Book your stay at the Anaheim Park today!