

Los Angeles City Guide

Diversity, dreams, and drama
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In spite of its reputation as Mecca for the entertainment industry, Los Angeles suffers from an identity crisis. It's known by a number of names, such as La-La Land, Tinseltown, the City of the Angels, and the abbreviated "L.A.," but none of these really convey the vast geographical, cultural, and economic diversity found in this large, complex city. Fueling its disjointed image is the fact that Los Angeles is actually a network of over 60 smaller communities, each supplying its own unique take on what it means to be part of the second-largest city in the country.



Greater Los Angeles is famous for having temperate weather, and for good reason. With an annual rainfall total of only 15 inches, cloudless days are the norm. The city's sunny disposition is just one of the reasons that 24 million people visit Los Angeles every year. Tourists and the nearly 4 million locals are intrigued that the city has everything you could want within its 34,149 square miles. If you were so inclined, you could begin your day in mountain foothills, spend the afternoon in the desert, and still be at the beach in time to watch the sunset give way to a starry night sky. And Los Angeles is one of only a few cities in the world where you can also see stars during the day. Because it's home to 12 movie and television production studios, it's not uncommon to see celebrities filming at locations throughout the city.

Work and play

In spite of having an image as celebrity central and offering non-stop entertainment at multiple amusement parks, 300 museums, 80 stages, theatres, and myriad other tourist attractions, Los Angeles *isn't* all play and no work. As a major player in the Pacific-rim economy, and home to some of the world's largest corporations, it employs workers in every imaginable field, including aerospace, import/export, oil, tourism, and healthcare. The city's healthcare workers number nearly 400,000, and its hospitals are among the best in the country. Eight Southern California hospitals made the *U.S. News and World Report* America's Best Hospitals 2002 list, and UCLA Medical Center made their honor roll.

Whether at work or at play, there's one fact about Los Angeles that's hard to escape: It's a good idea to have a car. Although mass transit options are available, the sheer distance between one end of the city and the other makes it more practical to have your own transportation. And if you're driving, you may want to carry a map, since some Los Angeles streets wind around and change names.

The New Ellis Island

In keeping with Los Angeles International Airport's (LAX) reputation as the new Ellis Island, the city has tremendous cultural diversity. The fact that over 40 percent of L.A.'s inhabitants were born in other countries is evidenced throughout the city on store signs in every conceivable language. And the housing options and neighborhood profiles are as diverse as the people who inhabit them. Although the average L.A. home price is \$256,000, every possible housing type is available, from one-room apartments in inner-city buildings, to huge mansions overlooking the beach. The high housing costs, plus the California state income tax and a high city sales tax, work together to create a cost of living that is approximately 23 percent above the national average. But its inhabitants know the value of living in this unique, diverse city, and are willing to pay the price to live in the "City of the Angels."