

The Seattle Times

Travel/Outdoors
Insider's California: Five essential Hollywood sights

http://seattletimes.com/html/travel/2023819544_hollywoodcalifxml.html

The Seattle Times Says—From Hollywood movie heritage sites to a Frank Lloyd Wright house. As a resident of Los Angeles, I'm always surprised to hear people speaking poorly of the "Hollywood" experience, as if a few persistent buskers and a bad wax museum near the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue actually define the entire neighborhood. That would be like writing off midtown Manhattan, simply because Times Square can sometimes be awful. A century after the first motion-picture companies set up shop here, today's Hollywood can, at times, still feel incredibly close to its colorful past. For that reason alone, it's impossible to exclude it from any Southern California itinerary. Here are five essential stops to get you started.

1. The Hollywood Bowl

This historic amphitheater tucked away in the hills rates as one of the best venues of its kind on the planet, featuring a world-class lineup of classical, jazz and pop. It's one on a short list of places that people from all over traffic-choked Southern California will agree is absolutely terrific — a picnic on a warm summer evening with a backdrop of terrific live music will be a highlight of your visit to L.A., guaranteed. Shuttles and a nearby subway station mean you never have to deal with parking. hollywoodbowl.com

2. American Cinematheque at The Egyptian

Before there was Grauman's Chinese, there was Grauman's Egyptian, notably the site of the first actual Hollywood premiere — literally, the first movie premiere in the Hollywood area — in the early 1920s. Fittingly, the Egyptian is now the permanent home of American Cinematheque, a nonprofit, viewer-supported organization screening a nonstop selection of what they call "America's indigenous art form." (The rest of us call it the movies.) From the best classics to exciting new art, this is essential viewing for any film buff. americancinematheque.com

3. Musso & Frank's

Opened in 1919 and still going strong, this dimly lit hideout is a living monument to a very different time, back when waiters wore cool outfits and everyone drank martinis like they were water. From F. Scott Fitzgerald to Greta Garbo, there's hardly a star that isn't said to have considered Musso's an extension of her own living space at one time or another; the restaurant certainly does retain a pleasantly haunted quality. Better still, the food remains quite good — you can't go wrong with a juicy steak, a wedge salad and a side of potatoes (Lyonnaise would be best). Wash it all down with as many martinis as you can handle. mussoandfrank.com

4. Hollywood Heritage Museum

You might wonder what a renovated barn on Highland Avenue has to do with Hollywood history. Except that this isn't just any barn, this is where New Yorker Cecil B. DeMille set up shop to produce "The Squaw Man," said to have been the first American feature-length moving picture, just over 100 years ago. Today, the barn is a small but interesting museum paying tribute to Hollywood past. hollywoodheritage.org

5. Hollyhock House

It's a short drive — or a couple of stops on the subway — down the Boulevard, but this Frank Lloyd Wright home, built for oil heiress Aline Barnsdall in 1921, perched above the city in what's now a pleasant public park, is one in a long line of incredible architectural treasures tucked away within the city of Los Angeles. As with so many Wright homes, it's almost always under some sort of renovation, but docent-led tours are available. Tip: Come on Wednesday afternoons for the fun farmers market, held right in the park. hollyhockhouse.net



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The Seattle Times
June 14, 2014