



03 Mar 2015
MX (Sydney), Sydney

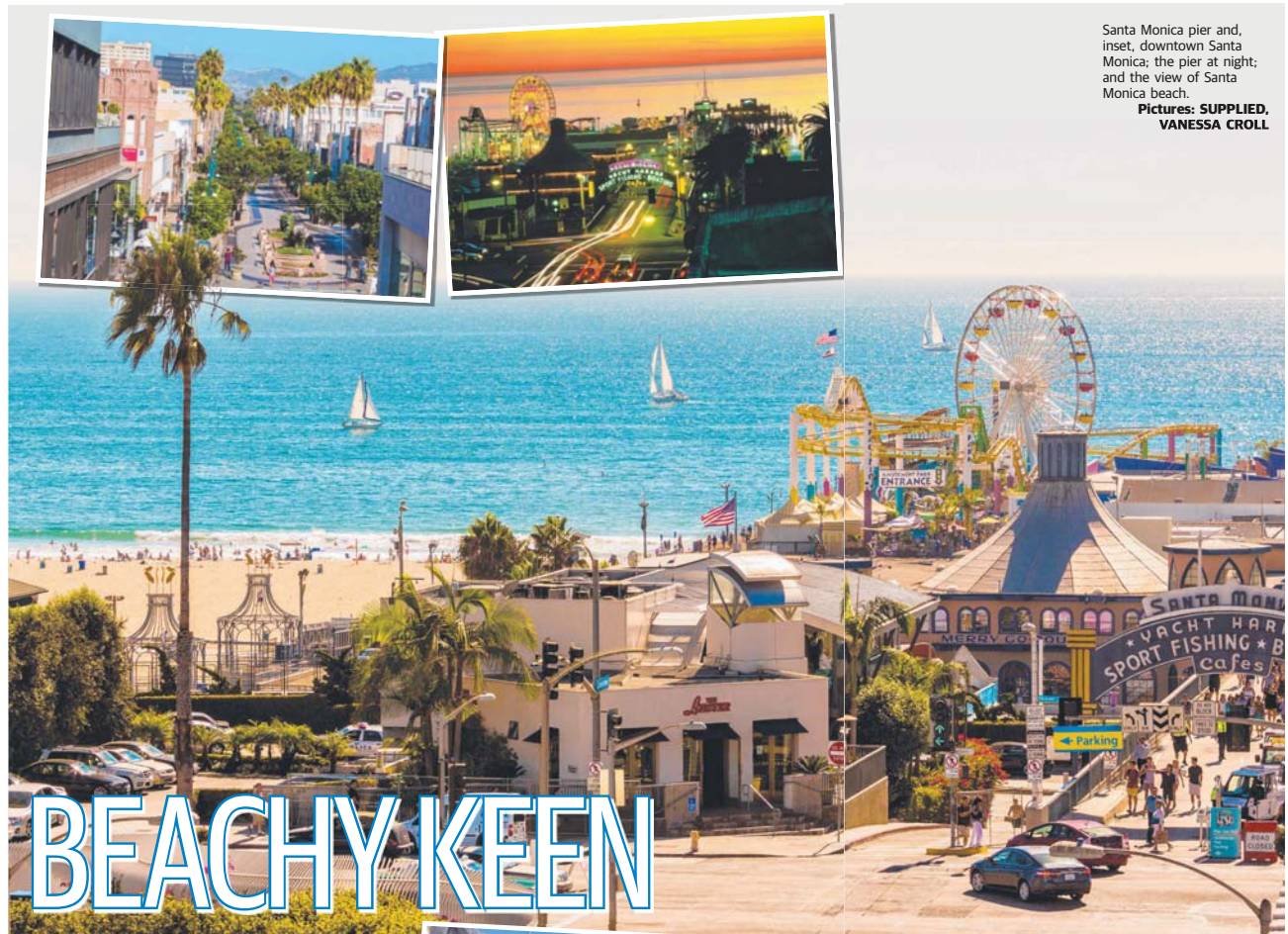
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mx Wanderlust



Santa Monica is
just like walking
straight onto a
film set ... oh, you



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can, as **Vanessa Croll** discovers

Not getting my vagina steamed is my biggest regret about visiting Santa Monica. Actor Gwyneth Paltrow — who lives near the western Los Angeles beach city — recently blogged enthusiastically about a local spa offering the Mugwort V-Steam treatment. "You sit on what is essentially a mini-throne, and a combination of infra-red and mugwort steam cleanses your uterus, et al ... If you're in LA, you have to do it," she wrote. Dang Gwyneth! I was just there. Why didn't you tell me sooner?

How I ended up here

I hit Santa Monica with my one and only Tinder date — a tall, dark and handsome man, who it turned out was an

actor living in Hollywood. Fast forward a couple of months from our first date in Oz and we're cruising LA en route to Santa Monica. It's a city where your creme de la creme celebrities are photographed just chillin' and also one popular for film sets. After a cruisey hour drive from Hollywood with, let's call him Tinder, our first stop is the iconic and breathtaking Santa Monica Beach. The city has 5.6km of well-maintained beach locations, so it's obvious why *National Geographic* ranked it as one of the world's "Top Ten Beach Cities". Groovers on all sorts of wheels whiz around the sand-hugging footpaths while giant frond-crowned palm trees tower over them.

We check into our fancy-pants — for a first-timer, everything here feels all "fancy-pants" — hotel Le Meridien Delfina Santa Monica. It seems a long way from the beach — four blocks to be exact — but on opening

the doors to our room, the view really can't be beat. We are pretty much ruling over the city. King and Queen Tinder.

And what is that I see one block down? Damn straight, it's a movie set. A stroll past and a sneaky selfie is definitely in order.

Glam-me-up Santa Monica

Usually, flick my eyelashes with mascara and dust my cheeks with bronzer and I'm ready to leave the house. But here, in my mind, I'm someone cool. So I've booked to get my hair and make-up done at Benefit Cosmetics salon in the boutique micro-hood, Montana Avenue. This is a strip for the ladies. Think of it like Disneyland for your body. With the range of boutiques, salons and wellness centres, you can take any of

your bits on a fun ride. The chicks at Benefit are so lovely and cool. The one with wicked blue hair works her magic on my face before I get the "full service shampoo and blowout". It's then up the road for a manicure and pedicure and I'm ready for a swanky but chilled dinner under the stars — of the cosmic variety — at Sonoma Wine Garden.

Next morning recovery

Before the hangover sets in, we chuck on our exercise gear and walk from our hotel to Venice beach for a greasy breakfast, serenaded by a couple of old pirate rockers. Even with an unsteamed vagina, I am perfectly happy.



WANDERWALL

Each week we will publish some of the best Instagram snaps of our featured destination. Here are some of our favourite Santa Monica pics.



Picture: @cabrown_35



Picture: @rikkspikks



Picture: @davidgelady



Picture: @kaitbee3



Picture: @jennahriviera



Picture: @valenquirogaa



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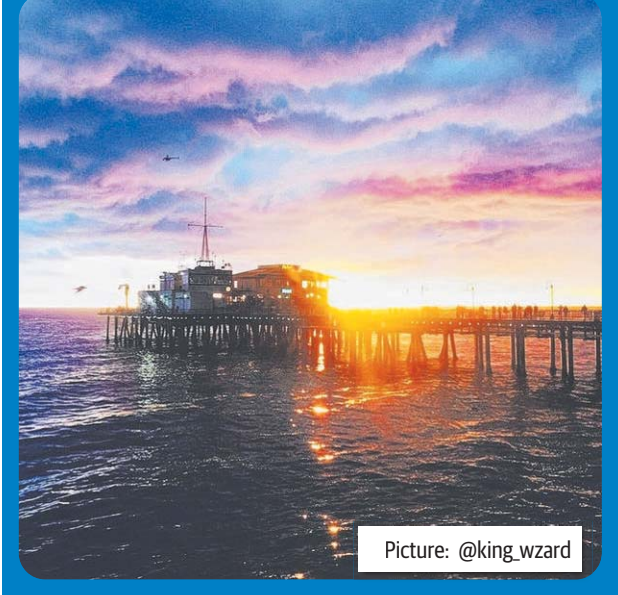
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Picture: @roobgomes



Picture: @king_wzard

Next we're off to Byron Bay! Have you got a great snap there? Tag us @mxsnaps on Instagram and we'll publish the best here next Tuesday.



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WANDERABOUT

We've got the rub on Santa Monica. Forget the guide books, we'll have all you really need to know right here each week, with the best tips from the mX tribe.



SIP

Shutters on the Beach

Pico Blvd

If you really want to feel cool in Santa Monica, head to the Living Room at Shutters on the Beach and order yourself a cocktail. Grab a seat on the balcony of the warmly furnished bar and sip that sucker down while overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Shutters is a beautiful ritzy-ditz hotel with all the luxuries to make you feel fancy.



SHOP

Montana Ave

Slip on a pair of comfy shoes and take your credit card for a walk up Santa Monica's idyllic Montana Ave. This strip of 10 tree-lined blocks is the city's upscale retail destination, with stylish boutiques and wellness experiences. You can imagine many of these unique stores evolving from bored rich housewives deciding to try their hand at business — and succeeding.



SLEEP

Le Meridien Delfina

530 Pico Blvd

Le Meridien Delfina Santa Monica hotel sits just a few blocks from downtown Santa Monica. It's easy to find, the staff are super friendly and helpful and the rooms are moderately sized and comfortable. Make sure you book a room facing the ocean because it's a lovely sight to wake up to, and you'll have a view of the pier. See: lemeridiendelfina.com

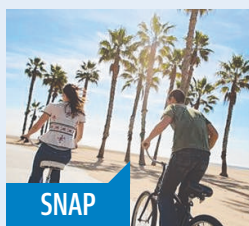


SNACK

Farmers Markets

2640 Main St

This Californian beachside city has an extensive array of organic eateries, but for freshest pickings check out the Santa Monica Farmers Markets. Named the best in the country by Travel+Leisure, the markets harbour up to 200 different growers and food purveyors at the beach city's four weekly farmers markets and attract celeb chefs.



SNAP

Film set, palm trees

There are so many opportunities to take social media-worthy snaps in this city. Go on the hunt for a film set and snap a selfie in front of the action. Try to get a palm tree against the blue sky and watch the "likes" grow. It's actually quite difficult to snap a bad photo here. You're surrounded by sun, sand and immaculately maintained garden areas.



SEE

Santa Monica Pier

Santa Monica Pier is a must-see. It's a true southern California icon and packed with history. Built in 1909, the pier is home to an amusement park, restaurants and the Santa Monica Aquarium. Make sure you check it out during the day, then head back at night when the place lights up. And there's plenty of eating spots. See: santamonicipier.org

Our boss is too tight to send us to Byron Bay next week. So if you've been, be the mX travel guide. Got a Stay, Snap, Snack, See, Sip or Shop recommendation in Byron? Tell us the venue name and why you liked it. Tag @mxsnaps on Instagram or email wanderlust@news.com.au.

