

Australia's world tour: the politics of performing arts

virgin australia

MAY 2016

voyeur

In Full Swing

SANTA
MONICA'S
NEW
MOMENTUM

THE
AMAZING
RACE

LOUISVILLE
SADDLES UP FOR THE
KENTUCKY DERBY

TRAINSPOTTING
LONDON'S OVERGROUND
REVEALS HIDDEN GEMS

Local's Guide

Santa Monica

With a new rail system providing easy access to Downtown LA, former mayor Pam O'Connor explains why it's never been easier to visit Santa Monica.





YOU MIGHT HAVE seen photos of Santa Monica Pier and the beach — and they are fabulous — but there's a lot more that sets Santa Monica apart. While I love Los Angeles and think that it's one of the most vibrant, fast-paced cities in the world, Santa Monica stands out because of its laidback atmosphere. The residents here are well known for their healthy lifestyles and a preference to jump on a bike rather than into a car. We care deeply for the environment — the Pacific Ocean is at our front door — and Santa Monica is consistently ranked one of the most sustainable cities in the world.

Located on the coast in western LA, it's a progressive city, always striving to innovate with its Silicon Beach tech industry and a thriving culinary scene. And we are transforming the way people get around — from walking along the new Colorado Esplanade and Palisades Park, to using bike-share or connecting to the region with our new Expo Light Rail.

For amazing panoramic views taking in Malibu and the Santa Monica Mountains to the north, Venice Beach and the South Bay to the south, and the entire Santa Monica Bay in between, take a ride on the ferris wheel at **Pacific Park** on the Santa Monica Pier. It is the only solar-powered wheel of its kind in the world.

Also in the record books, the **South Bay Bike Trail** is the world's longest oceanfront bike path at 35 kilometres, and winds its way through Santa Monica State Beach, under the famous Santa Monica Pier, through the Venice Beach Boardwalk and past the Venice Pier, all the way into Hermosa and Redondo Beaches.



MEET YOUR GUIDE

Pam O'Connor has served on the Santa Monica City Council since 1994, including five times as mayor, where she has championed policies and partnerships that enhance community liveability and wellbeing. She is on the Southern California Association of Governments' Regional Council and was on the Los Angeles County Metro Board from 2001 to 2015, steering the planning, coordination, design, construction and operation of the transit system for the nation's most populous county. She is currently chair of Metro's Sustainability Committee.

You'll feel like you're light-years away from the buzz of the city at **Tongva Park**. More than two hectares in size, it is Santa Monica's newest public recreation space. It was designed by James Corner Field Operations, the same team that created New York's High Line. Among my favourite areas here are the two viewing platforms designed to look like the inside of a wave with views of the ocean, as well as the park's walking paths and fountains.

Then there's always the question of where to eat. **The Misfit Restaurant + Bar** is a favourite among the Silicon Beach crowd and the food is amazing. Its bar fly menu offers \$5 lunches during the week, if you can get a seat at the bar.

Ashland Hill opened early last year on Main Street and is now one of the most



1. The Venice Beach Boardwalk is dotted with palms and cyclists. 2. Tongva Park's viewing platform. 3. The Misfits Restaurant serves up delicious snacks like these 'crispy lobster nik niks'. 4. Esters Wine Shop & Bar pours top drops in an Art Deco setting. 5. Santa Monica Pier's famous neon sign. 6. Santa Monica Beach's prime real estate. 7. Ashland Hill is popular for its open courtyard. 8. Suite 700 is well positioned for a drink with a view.



popular spots in town. Its outdoor beer garden is always packed with local residents enjoying a draft brew or two in the sunshine. And the cauliflower dish will make you wonder why you've avoided the vegetable your whole life.

Husband and wife dream team Josh Loeb and Zoe Nathan have hit another culinary home run with **Cassia** (they also run perennial favourite Rustic Canyon). Cassia has quickly become one of the most sought-after reservations in town because of its fresh, vibrant South-East Asian-inspired cuisine. Go early to grab a glass of wine from their adjacent store, **Esters Wine Shop & Bar**.

With the catchphrase: 'Almost always open', **Interactive Cafe** on Broadway next to the **Third Street Promenade** has great snacks and coffee when you're looking for a place that is open early and late. Then grab a drink at one of Santa Monica's fabulous hotel bars. And make one of them your home while in town.

Suite 700 at Hotel Shangri-La has to be one of the most stunning places in the world to have a drink. You can enjoy a glass of wine from this rooftop bar and lounge, a former penthouse suite, while watching the sun set over the pier. It is a must-do while in town.

One of my favourite places to send visitors to is the **Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows**. Not only is it ideally located and home to beautiful bungalow suites, it's also a great place to really get a ➤





9

DETAILS

SEE & DO

Annenberg Community Beach House 415 Pacific Coast Hwy; www.beachhouse.smgov.net. **Big Blue Bus** www.bigbluebus.com. **Exposition Park** 700 Exposition Park Drv. **Pacific Park** 380 Santa Monica Pier; www.pacpark.com. **Staples Center** 1111 South Figueroa St; www.staplescenter.com. **South Bay Bike Trail** www.labikepaths.com. **Third Street Promenade** www.3rdstreetpromenade.com. **Tongva Park** 1615 Ocean Ave; tongvapark.smgov.net.

FOOD & DRINK

Ashland Hill 2807 Main St; www.ashlandhill.com. **Cassia** 1314 7th St; www.cassiala.com. **Esters Wine Shop & Bar** 1314 7th St; www.esterswineshop.com. **Interactive Cafe** 215 Broadway; www.interactive-cafe.com. **Suite 700** 1301 Ocean Ave; www.shangrila-hotel.com. **The Misfit Restaurant + Bar** 225 Santa Monica Blvd; www.themisfitbar.com.

STAY

Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows 101 Wilshire Blvd; www.fairmont.com. **Le Méridien Delfina** 530 Pico Blvd; www.starwoodhotels.com. **Shutters on the Beach** 1 Pico Blvd; www.shuttersonthebeach.com.

feel for the community. Its Exhale Spa, fabulous Fig Restaurant and cool bar The Bungalow are all favourites with locals.

The cosy **Shutters on the Beach** also has a great location — it's literally on the sand. Much like Santa Monica itself, Shutters feels luxurious while retaining a laid-back beach ambience. Its restaurant, Coast, is one of the best spots for weekend brunch — not just for its ricotta pancakes but also for the incredible people watching along the beach bike path and at the foot of the Original Muscle Beach. And if you're there later in the day, you'll see fabulous sunsets over the ocean.

Le Méridien Delfina is another place I always suggest as it's close to Downtown Santa Monica and Main Street, but also just a few blocks walk to the beach. People love their beach cruiser bicycles — it's just a great way to see the city.

Annenberg Community Beach House is a Santa Monica must-do. The facility is the only public beach club in the country and it occupies the same spot in which newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst once built a 110-room mansion for his mistress, actress Marion Davies, back in the 1920s. The now-demolished home was the epicentre of Hollywood glamour during its heyday, where lavish parties were hosted for studio executives and movie stars. Today, visitors can take tours of the original Marion Davies Guest House (which has survived), go for a swim in the



10

9. Annenberg Community Beach House's marble pool. **10. The Fairmont Miramar Hotel** is one of Santa Monica's best accommodation options. **11. A lifeguard tower** at Santa Monica Beach. **12. Shutters on the Beach** is the ideal spot for people watching.



11



12

marble pool, do some yoga, play beach volleyball or even take a class in the art of synchronised swimming.

Definitely check out my stomping ground, Montana Avenue, while you're in town too. It stretches from Ocean Avenue to west LA, and it's one of the most authentic parts of the city. The tree-lined streets are bustling with boutique shops, spas, fitness studios, cafes and some of the

city's best restaurants. It's a great place to spend an afternoon. Catch the **Big Blue Bus**, which will take you there.

Meanwhile, the Expo Light Rail, scheduled to open this month, will connect Santa Monica to Downtown LA, Pasadena, San Fernando Valley, South Bay, Long Beach and a dozen points in between. If you're staying at the beach, the railway will get you to Downtown LA in 45 minutes. That means if you want to visit the museums at **Exposition Park** or go to a Laker's game or a concert at **Staples Center**, you don't need to rent a car — it's all at your fingertips without ever needing to navigate through LA traffic. 🚗

GETTING THERE TO BOOK YOUR FLIGHT TO LOS ANGELES, VISIT WWW.VIRGINAUSTRALIA.COM OR CALL 13 67 89 (IN AUSTRALIA).

PHOTOGRAPHY ALAMY, ANNE FISHEIN, CHRISTINE MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY, CORBIS, GETTY IMAGES, DAVE LAURIDSEN, EMILY HART ROTH