

Hey V.,

Thank you for letting me write a Los Angeles guide for you. It will be brash and quick and fast and expansive and probably boring, so there's an index at the end.

Within the guide, interesting stuff is in italics, good stuff is in bold. Truth be told, you can probably just read Jonathan Gold's 101—dunno if they keep updating it since he died a few years ago (apparently so, but at least not under his name)—the guy knew the Los Angeles culinary scene in and out, high and low, very much internationally, so what you'll get below... is not that.

[ed. I've scrapped the idea of an index and, much rather like French books, I'll put in chapter headings at the end of the guide, that'll be easier, since you can spot the bold and italics a mile away and the rest is just drivel.]

Ah, Los Angeles—and not 'LA' as everyone calls in the bone I pick even with the locals. Regrettably, it's actually a kind of nice place. There are nicer people and wonderful food and surprisingly more culture than New York—why else would Werner Herzog live here if he's not such a post-modern shill nowadays?—but it also has worse catchy names for shops and the dumbest fads like matcha. Fucking matcha. Or some dude calling himself 'Chief Nasologist' selling 'energizing inhalers'—uh, dude, I'm pretty sure those are poppers. And, unfortunately, nearly all the good stuff is all behind closed doors, and I think this is why people network like crazy in this city, because otherwise it's lonely and tiring in a house with terrible insulation and a no-good ceiling fan.

Los Angeles was not anything like I thought it would be after watching three seasons of *Californication* and stopping before halfway the show was over because even that much sex by an anti-hero novelist seemed gratuitous, but my experience in the city was also severely G-rated.

I highly recommend watching 'Los Angeles Plays Itself'. Thom Andersen didn't like my TV movie, and now that he's made the movie he was born to make, he can rot in a California forest fire that consumes CalArts for all I care (I mean... I do care.), but that film really gets to the nitty-gritty of this city. Esotouric Tours also does unconventional bus/walk tours—I always wanted to go but couldn't. Also, 'City of Quartz' by Mike Davis was a fascinating urban studies book that made me have some appreciation about it all, with the greatest quip of all time by Alfred Döblin who came here fleeing from the Nazis, and said: "Indeed, one is much and extensively in the open here—yet, am I a cow?"

It's quite amazing how in love Los Angeles is with being in love with itself and the dream it projected out into the world, a dream that adapts in content and but never in form as some ideal, free, utopian frontier. It's like shit never changes here, and they pride themselves on it. Every bar is stuck in some decade of the 20th century, the best Chinese restaurant is still called Mr. Chow, and they still look through the smog to say it's a great view. Not gonna lie, however, there are wonderful chemical sunsets.

This is basically a rendition of everything I knew between July 2016-September 2017, with a April 2019. Take it with a grain of salt.

West Hollywood

First off, I will never call this place We-Ho out of respect. It's apparently the male-gay neighbourhood, according to my heavily cursory knowledge, and one which on Melrose there is actually some kind of nightlife compared to literally anywhere else.

Have I been to *Employees Only*? It sounds like a place I would like, or at least sit down to read in some mahogany faux-intellectual bar, but honestly, I can't remember.

If you like something more common fare, there's *Barney's Beanery*. I've only been to the one in Westwood, and it's basically the proto-American bar you see literally anywhere else around in the world—decorated with licence plates, photos, and tokens, plays The Doors all the time, terrible drinks and beer. However, it's kinda nice to know that it exists too, especially since it has existed for almost a century. Eve Babitz hung out around there and so did a bunch of the 60s 70s Los Angeles crowd of musicians and such.

In the same vein, there's *Troubadour*, which actually holds more clout than somewhere like The Bitter End in New York. It's actually a really nice, intimate venue! The same can't be said about *Whisky A Go-Go*, which started out with The Doors and Stooges and had the biggest heyday during glam rock phase, but is still stuck there with Motley Crue and KISS reunions... And don't get me started about *Roxy*, where the best you can find is the Johnny Depp/Alice Cooper supergroup Hollywood Vampires and the off-shoots of Goldenvoice live shows, which is actually Republican, all the while finding Coachella. Haven't been to neither *Viper Room* (ugh), nor *Rainbow Bar & Grill*, which is supposed to be similar, but there might be something about the intersection of queer culture and glam rock, as well as Republican companies finding Coachella, or just Scientology.

I feel like that's what makes Los Angeles so special: people arrive here because it's the frontier, coming with all these ideas from their origins, only to sieve them through some weird monoculture that's simple and inclusive enough to sell it to the rest of the world. Every interaction has the potential to be a new religion.

At least there's always a place like *Chateau Marmont* to ground you. I've never been, but it always seemed like a classier place, which I'm sure it was not.

If rock 'n' roll and heroin are not your thing, but you still wanna feel uncomfortable, there's always the *Comedy Store* or *Laugh Factory* or *Largo*. Ha ha!

Okay, let's get to the good stuff, which is the food, which can be missed because you are too busy trying to avoid the gigantic billboards about the new dumbass TV show they want to force feed you.

There's a *Mendocino Farms* around here too. I've always wanted to, but I've never tried their much-lauded sandwich, even if they had something like 65 locations throughout the city.

Night + Market Thai Food. Have a cheap beer. Have everything on the menu. I hope they haven't gotten cocky since they opened up in two new places.

There's *Shake Shack* and *Serafina* if you miss New York.

I always wanted to go to *Wahlburgers*, just because of the pun (it's basically Mark Wahlberg and his sadder brother Donnie Wahlberg's chain), but I left the city weeks before it opened.

Oh, oh, oh, there's a *Sweet Lady Jane* here? To be perfectly honest, the Santa Monica location is more ideal—more trees, calmer mood, unlike the designer row on Melrose, but still, if it's close by and you need a pick-me-up (a *tiramisu*, if you will, and yes, I still make that joke), you gotta go.

My god, and a *Tartine Bakery*? Maybe they are more chain-like now since they used to be just in San Francisco, but man... good bread.

Alfred Coffee might have an outdoor sign of 'But First, Coffee' and even worse posters inside, but it's a rather pleasant location indoors and outdoors. You escape the heat and the sun and the cement by getting into this little hallway, and there's a patio too. I highly recommend, especially if you are around the area against your will and need to breathe.

There's also *A.O.C.* for fine dining. Really nice interior—that's how they get you. I literally had an appetizer because that was the only thing I could afford (and on some app I need to check off) and the waiter was really weird about it. Haven't been to *Laurel Hardware*, but same deal.

Otherwise, I've never been to the *Pacific Design Center*, it looks nice but there's nothing to do nearby. Any attempt at outdoor spaces is a disgrace, and the parks, much like in the entire city, are an abomination. Maybe the library nearby is nice?

Oh, right, there's also a *Soho House*. Because everyone in Los Angeles dreams of creating 'a space' for 'creatives' because their spacious homes aren't enough, and this is basically its teleological end.

Beverly Hills

It's kind of amazing how the homes in Beverly Hills are shut off by this green strip that has maybe two benches to sit on and nobody goes there because they would probably set off some alarm or something. It's just passing through and appreciating the two minutes of quiet before coming into Beverly Hills. I also love how the Beverly Hills Park is a gigantic shallow pool, but apparently there are some sculptures around. FYI.

Gotta say, the houses are truly nice in the hills. Not only like mansions, but weirdo houses as well—that's one thing Los Angeles has got for itself. Even the air is fresher because there are at least more than five trees together to allow some oxygen compared to the rest of the city. It's really lovely to walk all these mansions...but there's literally nothing else to do. Arrive with a car.

Anyhow, Beverly Hills! Which is so weird, because I don't think anyone will remember the kind of association foreigners had with it. It's still the richest place blah blah blah, but nowhere do you see some Turkish guy fawning about 'beverli hils', you know?

And yet... I like Beverly Hills (except the *Beverly Hills Hotel*, which makes you question the taste of the wealthy not as gaudy, but pure idiotic). It's spacious, for one thing. Cars are luxurious but they drive slow and peacefully in order to show off. Large-ass clothing stores to walk in and touch the fabric while pretending you're a nouveau riche from Oman.

I could have sworn I have sat in a restaurant patio, but maybe that was just a rich dream.

I have also never tried *Mr. Chow*, even though I am perversely curious about it.

I do not know why I have a business card from *Villa Blanca*, formerly owned by Lisa Vanderpump.

I guess I don't have any recommendations here and the glitzy life must have gone to my head like a dream. I mean, there's always Rodeo Drive... And maybe the modern architecture is nice, compared to the simple neo-whatever it is for all those places?

Also, what library closes for two hours at lunch?

Century City

One of the few places in Los Angeles where they could build skyscrapers either because of the lack of housing associations or durable ground. I do not know.

Annenberg Center for Photography is... not bad. Alright, but at least wide parkish outdoor space. There was an outdoor photography festival early May here, maybe it's still there.

Westfield Mall is also airy, but I don't know if there are many places to sit down on your own. In all honesty... what's there? You know? Like, at least a mall should have something interesting, but it's all the same brands and all the same advertisement and it's constantly under construction. **RockSugar Southeast Asian Kitchen** was alright. That was the first place where I learned Black strangers nod at each other.

Gotta say... **Avenue of the Stars** is very eerie. The *CAA Building* is designed by I.M. Pei, but under the Los Angeles sun, it doesn't really stand out. I walked from there to Pico Boulevard all the way to Venice once. I don't recommend it.

However, what I do recommend is biking around *Beverlywood*, on the South and East side of the Cheviot Hills, probably the largest green area in Los Angeles, especially at sunset. It's not like this city offers you a lot of options for sightseeing, so kinda rich, kinda closed communities are always nice to get away from the busy avenues.

Pico-Robertson

I don't think I've ever been here properly except when biking up to Fairfax from Venice. I have a business card from a closed Peruvian restaurant named Picca, but god knows when/why/how I was there. There used to be a cool Italian restaurant named **Sotto**. Other than that, it seemed alright, somewhat more relaxed, but always felt like it would be a sweltering neighbourhood. I think there was a

gigantic, pink second-hand costume shop here, but it might have been in Sawtelle as well.

Westwood

Now we're talking! Maybe it's the brick, or the narrower car lanes, or the weirdass *Broxton Brewery* building, but Westwood is always comforting.

For example, the Trader Joe's in Glendon Avenue is in a shaded street and is filled with a sweetly gray breeze whenever I passed through. Pleasant experience, but tiny store.

Even the *Westwood Village Square* offers some shade located next to some stairs that lead to some kindergarten, I think, but ultimately in line with 'staircases in Los Angeles that don't really matter'¹. You know? Where the hell in Los Angeles can you sit in seclusion? In large metropoli, you can dissolve amongst the crowd, but since there's like two people on the sidewalk here and two more at the park, you are always in view.

Anyhow, I think I can just write this down as it is, almost give you a perfect day, and then describe the avenues that lead out.

First off, get some coffee from *Espresso Profetta* and head onto *Hammer Museum*, totally free. Mainly California artists and two rooms of some rich guy's old collection too. Nice wobbly chairs. Lovely atrium. My only misgiving is one for all Los Angeles Museums: even if an artist is from Antarctica, there will invariably one section, or even a blurb, about California and how it's inducing creativity, or allowing more freedom, or even warmer. Once you start noticing it, you can't miss it.

A stupid *Cava*, which is not so bad in taste when it comes to food, just in branding. Because we all wanna go to some pristine falafel stand.

Fat Sal's Deli is all the calories you'll need in one sandwich if you want to walk the entire UCLA campus twice. Cheap and really tasty and lowers your life expectancy by a month with every purchase.

I believe this is the *Barney's Beanery* I've gone to. I never thought Jim Morrison was the shit, so, it's worth a single look inside and walking away without looking back.

I've never gone to *iPic Theaters*, they are apparently very fancy—with Marilyn Monroe's crypt nearby to boot (also, though... why???)—but the *Regency Bruin* and *Regency Village* theaters in front of each other were always a lovely sight. It's honestly not so common to see the 'movie theater' experience in Los Angeles as compact as this with sibling theaters in a relatively dense neighbourhood. I always loved its sight. There are students at the nearby coffee shops, everyone's busy with something, nobody's there to show off. Really sweet.

Anyway, you have four options after Hammer Museum:

¹ Like Rodeo Drive and Hollywood's inner malls.

East: Wilshire Boulevard, no matter how uncomfortable it looks, is actually quite captivating to walk around. *Beverly Hills Plaza Hotel* is cool, the *Sephardic Temple* is cool, condominiums are cool. And there's very little light at night, which would seem somewhat dangerous if there was anyone else on the sidewalk but you, but I think they are really pretty to look at night.

The problem is that you see the next six buildings in one go, and walking along six gigantic buildings will take you thirty minutes, so it's easy to get bored. That's why you dip south a bit and check out the quaint several-million-dollar houses with their gardens and whatnot.

North: You have to go to UCLA at sunset and in the summer when the pesky students are not around. Walk the shit parts first, like the stadium and whatnot, but then walk around the dorms, enter a building because you can, there's a wonderful belleveue on the main quad called the Dickson Court, and, when the sun sets, go through the ***Botanical Garden*** and see the lights coming from the music school etc. I don't think I've seen it all, but I'd gladly go again. Makes me yearn for the campus education I never had.

West: Brentwood is for later, even though it will be five sentences. I can't believe I've never gone to the *Los Angeles National Cemetery*. Maybe because it was up a hill or something?

South: Well, that has its own section, too.

Westwood Avenue

(There used to be a ramen shop called ***Ramen Yamadaya*** to your left as you walked down. Apparently, they closed many locations, but they are still serving in Torrance, if you ever go there. Also, they seemed like they fancied up their brand a bit, which is nice.

So now I'm going to start this part as if that place didn't exist.)

Right after you cross Wilshire Boulevard, on your right there will be ***Emporium Thai***. Highly recommended.

There used to be an Indonesian restaurant named ***Ramayani***, but it seems that it has closed, which is sad. It was very quaint. The menu was hit or miss in both extremes, but I really enjoyed its presence. Perhaps they opened under a new name.

There's a Lebanese bakery called *Sunnin*; I can't recommend it because I don't remember going there. Beyond it, however, to the east, is a huge *Latter Day Saints Temple*. Once again, California and religion in all of its forms go hand in hand.

And after crossing the highway, you basically walk for what amounts to a dozen blocks that I don't remember anything about except that it's kinda like Little Persia of the city, so you'll find all kinds of stores and restaurants and whatnot. It's really sweet, accommodating, and traditional-Los-Angeles-looking without the overwhelming desolate conditions that you find towards the eastern counterparts of the city. Maybe it's because we're close to the sea, I dunno.

But once you reach Pico Boulevard and see the gigantic mattress store across the gigantic Guitar Center, I highly recommend withdrawing some cash and going to ***The Apple Pan*** for quality diner burgers and amazing pies. ***The Landmark*** at the

mall is also a commendable movie theater that showed popular indie and European fare.

After that, I recommend going west from *Pico Boulevard*. The weird cluster next to the highway with Party City and 99 Cents Only is not as bad as it could be, and if you take a right up north from Sawtelle Boulevard, you end up in...

Sawtelle

...Sawtelle! The admittedly less Oriental-looking Little Japan of the Westside compared to the Little Tokyo of Downtown.

Honestly, I don't have much to say about Sepulveda Avenue, the avenue's cousin on the other side of the highway, and I feel bad about it...

Oh well. Sawtelle is really nice, though. Shame it's only a few blocks. Not to be reductive, but Toronto also has a Japanese/Korean strip on a relatively sparser area and it also feels similar in a way of 'desolation all around, but this pristine mochi shop looks is exactly what I need'—but in Los Angeles, any block in a residential area where you can find two restaurants together feels like an oasis. Hence, Sawtelle.

Tsujita Ramen, obviously.

Oh, ***Plan Check*** moved here? I liked its Santa Monica location better, because everywhere else around was kinda drab, but if you are here and want to have a good burger with something called Ketchup Leather™, there you go.

Karaoke Bleu was above my expectations, especially because it's difficult to find public karaoke bars. The world is simply too shy! Anyway, we had a reservations at ***Max's Karaoke Studio*** (there's a convenience store across the strip mall for liquor but I'm sure it was overpriced), so we went to Karaoke Bleu for a quick second, where I blasted *Livin' da Vida Loca*, serenaded some women, got on some chairs, and left before the song was over because the bar was singing the last few choruses together already.² My only complaint is that they close at 1:30am.

I don't remember much about ***Sushi Kiriko***, where I had what could amount to the only casual date in my life there, but I had no complaints.

There's a bunch of stuff when Sawtelle crosses Santa Monica Boulevard. I'm sure you can find cool stuff. I've only been to a bar. *Nickel Mine*, I believe. Too dark, I think.

If you keep going, however, eventually the road will curve westward because the rich people don't want any avenues coming their way. On San Vicente Boulevard, there's the overtime of Sawtelle over a few blocks I've never been to. If you follow it downwards, however, there's Brentwood—the blandest place in Los Angeles, and that's saying something.

² I had to get *one* karaoke boast in!

Brentwood

Now, I've never been to *The Getty*, which lies farther north of here. It sounds nice—most of all, it sounds huge, but someone told me they saw everything in 45 minutes, which is disheartening, to say the least.

At least Brentwood is an apt neighbourhood to be in its proximity.

Ah, Brentwood. The first place I rode my expensive bike because I thought the *Diesel Bookstore* at the *Brentwood Country Mart* was the second closest one after the one we had in Venice, barring a Barnes and Noble in Santa Monica.

And how could I have guessed that bookstore was going to be an ersatz version of every single dumb independent bookstore selling marked up books? At least they didn't brand themselves as 'progressive', but I'm sure they have after the protests, for there was nothing out of the ordinary in that bookstore. It was like stumbling into Amazon.com's books recommendation section.

And the rest follows suit: there's *Farmshop* for expensive table d'hôte and olive oil! There's a Blue Bottle Coffee! ***Sweet Rose Creamery!*** (I mean, to be honest, I think it was good.) Etsy stores in real life!

The one outlier is ***Reddi Chick***, which is bolded not because of its rotisserie chicken, which was okay, but just seemingly remaining from a past time when Brentwood (if it ever did) looked less like a boutique store. But maybe that's just its aesthetic.

A much better idea would rather bike the *Palisades* if they weren't so hilly. Plus, *Rustic Canyon* has an old Nazi farm called Murphy Ranch—check it out. It ain't no ***Slab City (MY GOD, IF A. HAS A CAR, GO TO SLAB CITY, IT IS THE BEST PLACE ON EARTH. Bring a six pack or more for the locals.)***, but it'll do.

Malibu

It's alright. Nice surf spots, apparently. I'd rather watch 'All the Light in the Sky' by Joe Swanberg for much better images.

Montana-Wilshire-Arizona-Santa Monica-Olympic etc. Avenues

Basically, all these avenues will end up in the shitshow below Lincoln Avenue and called Downtown Santa Monica, 3rd Street Promenade and The Pier. But I want to save them from the chaos over there, so I will tackle the avenues one by one, and will deal with *that thing* later.

Montana Avenue: Technically it's still Santa Monica, and the people probably hate that the neighbourhood shares a name with an uncool state, but this is the one true peace and quiet you will have before Santa Monica, Santa Monica's Mid City, and Venice.

Here's the deal for *Montana Avenue*: Go to ***R+D Kitchen*** before a film at ***the Aero Theatre***. Or, go to ***Sweet Lady Jane*** before a film. Do whatever you want, because all the trees, the wide sidewalks—despite a lack of space to sit down... just where do you expect to eat your dessert outside on a nice day, goddamnit!—

honestly, looking at these streets again on Google Maps make me wonder why I liked this area so much. I like the Montana Avenue, that's for sure; I do like that there are a bunch of trees in the residential streets; perhaps there was an ocean breeze that's simply not possible to emulate on a computer? I do remember its being pleasant... I swear...

There's a **Father's Office** here with its famous burgers, but I'd rather go someplace else and save this one for Culver City.

Wilshire Avenue: More commercialized, blander version of Montana.

Here's the deal for *Wilshire Avenue*: See a 8pm movie at the **Arclight Promenade** [I mean, they're closing down now, but I hope to all gods, fictitious and movie-made, to have a benevolent billionaire producer buy the theatres. Seriously, Los Angeles will suffer if it's gone, and I didn't even like it *that* much!] and then bike to **Belcampo** gorge on a much heavier burger.

Melisse is supposed to be good if I'm not mixing it with a restaurant in Montreal [ed. nope, I totally am, but give it a try, who knows?], at the far end there is **Milo and Olive** for good pizza.

Arizona Avenue: I think I've only been to **Metro Cafe**, which has a really nice patio and, if I remember correctly, a minimalist, barebones décor, which is the most you can do for a coffee shop if you really wanna go for the cool aesthetic, in my opinion.

Santa Monica Avenue: Car dealerships.

Broadway: **Bay Cities Italian Deli**. Get a sub. Enough said.

Olympic Boulevard: I don't want to talk about it. It feels like the definition of the word 'dearth'.

I will talk about *Water Garden*, with which its absolutely ridiculous landscaping (you need bridges to walk across the fucking quad!), the Ralphs across, the DMV on the other side, is one of the worst places in Los Angeles. Like, all these places are where you have the mid-sized studios, Headspace, video games, Hulu, and it just... doesn't make you feel hopeful.

I know I complain a lot, but god, it's sad. Either lavish architecture for no reason or just concrete.

Afterwards, towards the East, there's *Blueys*, which, yes, okay healthy food, but why am I eating an acai bowl in a car park?! How's that healthy?

I will say, however, **Teddy's Diner** is very traditional, very sweet, and cash only. It makes you feel like that *that* is old Los Angeles, you know? Or at least like old Santa Monica; and Teddy's located between a shell of a beach town and a busier Los Angeles, must have been an inconspicuous place back in the day, whereas now it's almost a landmark.

In case you haven't noticed, I'm not too kind on Santa Monica as one goes farther West. Maybe we should switch it up to avoid a depressing suite of chapters.

Or maybe not. I'd rather go through hell right now to talk about the much better parts later on. Oh boy, this is going to be tough. You might want to go to the index for the next two, three chapters. But you never know: my excruciating pain in recounting the Westside can result in some of the most florid and hale passages I've ever written in impassioned hatred, though I highly doubt that.

Santa Monica Downtown

It starts so well if you arrive from the East. There are tiny bits of density, pleasant areas, even a park!

For example, if you start from Wilshire, *Sidecar Donuts* is good and traditional. Same with *Bluestone Lane Coffee* next door. *Holy Grounds* at the Santa Monica Church³ probably has worse coffee, but... come on, who can resist a good pun?

There was *Swingers Diner*, to go with the surprisingly sweet movie. It was one of the few places open 24 hours, and now it's apparently closed at the Lincoln location, but has opened up in Beverly and closes at 10pm, which kinda takes away the fun of it if you ask me, but it's still *something!*

There's even *Blue Daisy*, which is a quite busy brunch spot, amongst the rectangular steely condo areas. And even that's... kind of fine.

But as you count down the streets to the *3rd Street Promenade*, the damage is clear. So many people have rued the gentrification of their neighborhoods, but I don't think anybody has had it as rough as Santa Monica and Venice did. This is massive overhaul of the entire region to build... malls. Someone said 'gentrification without any of the benefits' and I couldn't agree more. Sure, fewer gangs—the Venice Crips is relegated to spray painting doors, more on that later—but who wants to live around here now?

As I've said above, *Arclight* was the saving grace of the main shopping mall court, and now that's gone too. I can spout off random brands and 80% will stick. H&M, Apple, West Elm, Cheesecake Factory, Zara... fucking sweetgreen.

True Food Kitchen had alright food, but do you really want to sell your soul?

At the promenade, there are always the same buskers. Near the pier, there's the same Hanson-like teenage rock family cover group. There's *Bubba Shrimp Co.*, or *Big Dean's Ocean Front Café*, where a beer is 10\$ and probably more now.

I don't like the pier. The *Trapeze School New York* at the end is fun, it would be fun to try it out for a lesson, fyi.

Please don't get me wrong: I used to bike to Santa Monica all the time to take the subway, and even at its worst, that stretch from the Santa Monica Auditorium to the Courthouse, finally biking up Olympic and letting go of the pedals to reach the mall, the whole area gives this idea of expanse and ease once you, but the feeling is more hollow than comfort, you know?

³ Can't believe I've never been to a church in California (though I went to CalTech, so maybe that counts for Scientology!), and I'd assume the Hispanic influence must have made the interior zealous, while the Mission Revival influence must have produced an offset in a wave of chillness.

Even the supposedly nice places are bereft of fun. *The Bungalow*, for all purposes is *gorgeous*, for an event or a nightclub or to sit down, but who wants to talk to anyone there?

Same goes for *Shutters on the Beach* and a nearby restaurant *Catch*. It *should* be good, and it is, but why do I feel so empty afterwards?! Why is one of the nicer buildings a goddamn *Urth Caffé*?! Why does this beach feel like Las Vegas?

(For the *good parts of the beach*, by the way, I recommend going far up north towards the Palisades. Perhaps a bit too winy, but fewer people.)

The one place I really liked was *Vidiots*, this huge rental DVD store which will open in Eagle Rock later this year I think, and the other place is *Cha Cha Chicken*, because it seriously has a shack-like quality and you know people hung out there when this was a beach town. But now it's busy exploiting its past with *Dogtown Coffee* or *Dogtown Real Estate*. Just... ugh.

Let's blast through *Main Street* and what's called *Ocean Park*:

Thai Vegan—good in a pinch.

Jinya Ramen—good a notch above a pinch.

2665 Main Street—cool building, cool clock.

The Victorian—alright, that's actually a really nice nightclub with three floors and bands and a basement bar etc. Highly highly recommended.

Library Alehouse—meh. Some beer that's not Heineken.

Angel City Books & Records—eh.

Chaya—woow, it's closed? Whatever, it was alright.

I dunno, I guess you can walk on the beach or something since that's the main attraction—maybe that's why the restaurants and shops and such are lacking so much. There are the bodybuilders and runners and bikers and happy people, but I wasn't one of them.

Venice

Ah Jesus fucking Christ, as the Americans say.

If you saw me when I was 16 and watched Californication and saw David Duchovny hate Venice after moving there from New York and having sex with women in his expensive Porsche, only to hate it more, who would have known I would live in the same place (with my childhood best friend's office literally on the next block, just like the plans we made about living in America when we're older in adjacent houses!), but now jaded, hating the masculine sexist show now after a comparative literature diploma and a hookup with a militant feminist—not to mention not getting laid because my aura gave off repulsive vibes from being depressed and annoyed?

I guess it wouldn't be such a stretch to know that back in the day.

I hate Venice overall. I don't care if Fiona Apple lives there. I would have said it's nice to visit, if making itself look touristy was not the main reason it turned to such shit. The *Ballerina Clown* sculpture now sits on top of a CVS to show how much of a joke this neighborhood has become. Some place called Floyd's does 35\$ haircuts that took ten minutes—just had to put it there. Gah.

Now that's out of the way, we can talk about what's good. Just a warning, I will blow my lid off twice more during this chapter.

You know you'll be in Venice right as you cross *Rose Avenue* because the environment will be less dense than Santa Monica and people will be basking in techno-optimism. *Gold's Gym* is famous, as is the *Google Binoculars Building*. **Rose Cafe** is... okay really good, but better to have a glass of wine in the afternoon. Same with **Cafe Gratitude**, where the dishes are affirmations, so, instead of ordering a breakfast burrito, you say 'I am... AMAZING!' and the servers go 'You are... AMAZING!' I would have burned the place down if the servers didn't seem like they were in on the joke and the food was admittedly delicious. **Flake's** has nice breakfast sandwiches, don't skip out on it if you are in a rush. **Jeni's Ice Cream** is far superior to whatever ridiculous flavor of lardy cream *Salt and Straw* serves (I am a disgusting person and I like lardy cream, but still!) on Abbot Kinney. Do some deli shopping at **Gjusta**, if you have money. I did not like *Groundwork's* filter coffee, to each their own, but I don't trust anywhere that includes the word 'Community' in their branding slogan.

If you HAVE TO have Mexican food on this side of the city, don't go to *Tacos Por Favor*, go to **La Fiesta Brava**.

On *Lincoln Avenue*, The Whole Foods seems like it's your friend, and sometimes is, because you think expensive and unnecessary food will temporarily satisfy the hole in your soul living in Venice creates. And it does... for like thirty seconds. No joke. Behind the building there's a mural of Abraham Lincoln and a rose, because it's on Rose... and Lincoln. Surprisingly, not the worst mural you'll see in Venice.⁴

I have a business card from *RIZE Thai and Sushi Infusion* (?!), but I do not remember if it was good. Probably. Just the name though... like, great pun on 'rice', but why does everything have to be inspirational here?! **Satdha Thai Vegan** is closer to Santa Monica but it's quite delicious!

The Department of Water and Power across the Ralphs (no apostrophe...) is a decent building. This is what's so crazy: There was a history to this place. But that it exists in such scant quantities make me feel crazy.

Wurstküche has quality sausage and beer, or at least pretends to. Does the trick. **Baby Blues BBQ** is also recommended. Neither is 'the real deal', but if it makes me think I'm not in Venice, I'll take it.

⁴ The worst one will always be the 'love wall' of bunch of sprayed hearts that I wanted to douse with pig blood—especially after seeing the same shit in Downtown. For the rest, in no particular order, they are: The Californication mural in an alleyway around; Ronda Rousey Mural on the boardwalk; the several Jim Morrison murals; the 'Birth of Venus as a rollergirl in Venice'; the scientists murals, where Alan Watts would have been an acceptable choice if he wasn't next to Einstein because these people try so hard to be broad.

The only truly redeemable one is the Touch of Venice mural near the Venice sign, recreating the opening shot of *Touch of Evil*. That's a good one, I'll give 'em that.

If you ever want to torture me, put me in a room where all the walls resemble the 'love wall' and everyone around me is taking Instagram photos in front of it.

Superba Food + Bread is reliable brunch. **Great Western Steak and Hoagie** is similarly reliable, but only because it's probably the only place around here to get truly unhealthy food.

Deus Ex Machina is a shop that should not have existed. Their full name is 'Emporium of Post-Modern Activities' and makes me want to vomit.

Credit where it's due, Venice is the most 'post-' of all neighborhoods in Los Angeles, simply because it has fucked up progress and change in schizoid proportions.

Before we move closer to the beach, check out the houses between *Lincoln Avenue* and *Abbot-Kinney*: There are funky houses, fun houses, not so great houses, and it would have been so much better if one black didn't take thirty minutes to clear, but here we are.

Walk the **Walk Streets**. It's a shame that such a word combination called 'Walk Streets' even exist, but it's a very pleasant diversion.

There's a bicycle shop named **Bicycle Whisperer**, and his owner Vernon (actually his name is Lance, he used to be on Vernon St... I was being racist because for me Vernon seemed more appropriate for a Black guy) is a nice man. He seems like he belongs to the old Venice, but keeps getting pushed out from his locations, now has to work from the back of a truck.

And then you eventually will reach *Abbot Kinney*, which is only acceptable in the morning fog because you can't see anything. It used to be the cool place, 'the last bastion of hipness, man...' and now there's an Adidas store that's 'community-focused' (which means there's some inane inspirational writing on the interior wall), so that tells you everything you need to know, even though it was hopeless way before then.

If you can squint, you can make out the five good places on Abbot Kinney that is not some futile volunteer group—called 'The Good Crew' or some dumb shit like that—, a health-food store called *Kreation* (their music was always the absolute worst of some tropical remix of a TikTok whatever; apparently it's closed, good fucking riddance), an restaurant or bar that serves little purpose for the overall mood, and Ayurveda dreamcatcher smoke shops... and a billion expensive clothing stores.

I'll be quick:

- There was a bar/club called *the otherroom* and it was so dimly lit that you couldn't see anyone. It was, simply put, quite fucking stupid.
- *Blue Star Donuts*: Overrated. But a donut is a donut.
- There used to be a falafel place who advertised with '100% NON-GMO CHICKPEAS' and had kombucha. That's how bad it got.
- ***The Butcher's Daughter***: Terrible crowd, very good food.
- *Greenleaf*: Nice patio in the back, not bad food, but I'd avoid it out of principle.
- *Aviator Nation Clothing Store*: Better than Everlane, but that doesn't count for anything.

- *Intelligentsia Coffee*: That these fucking dolts have not heard of something called a chair and a table is infuriating.⁵
- *TOMS Coffee*: Hey, I'm all for sustainability, and their coffee is bad-but-highly-caffeinated, but again, the mere fact that there are only two chairs and this weirdass seating place outside where you have to almost be in the view of everyone else—I JUST WANT A GODDAMN CHAIR AND A TABLE!
- *Salt & Straw*: Interesting flavors, shit cream.
- A fucking matcha⁶ store I will not even deign to name even if hadn't taken the place of the last affordable bar/coffee place, whose name I had forgotten and feel terrible because I can't find it on Google since that website has just become listicles. [ed. *Abbot's Habit*]
- *Abbot's Pizza Co.*: I mean... not really worth a mention, but it's a blast from the past... or pretends to be one?
- *Gjelina Take Away* and *Gjelina*: I mean, yes, this is laudable. Go.
- *The Tasting Kitchen*: Haven't been, but heard great things.
- *The Brig*: Gah. Give me a break. Is this a dancing place? A casual bar. *Everything?*
- *Saltair*: There must be better seafood around. Oh good, it's closed.
- *Lemonade*: Honestly, you must be sick of them around, but also... it's good food, whaddaya gonna do?
- Right around the corner *Erewhon*—parodied on *You* as 'Anarvin'; nice touch, but lacks the Armenian aspect—there used to be Vice offices across, and this French bar called *Zinque* with a 'no laptops after 5pm' policy. Literally the only establishment to read, if only the tables weren't so scrunched together.

This is where you hit *Venice Boulevard*, with the *Venice Memorial Branch Library* and a little graffiti on the pavement at the nearby 'park', teaching you how to do the cha cha. Though I've constantly complained about a lack of space to read in Venice (I dare anyone to find a café with a chair and a table), I've never been to that library... simply because all this were literally placed in the middle of a two-way boulevard with the cars zooming past. It is unappealing and apocalyptic, but at least it's there, you know.

Oh yeah, one last thing: if you go to Abbot Kinney on *First Fridays*, there are all these food trucks and some places open their stores at night and whatnot. It's too

⁵ By the way, there's a place called *Electric Lodge* behind it—on an avenue called, you guessed it, *Electric Avenue*, which never fails to evoke the song as I walked by (also, the electric poles buzz so much around here!)—and that's where I watched definitively the dumbest art show I ever saw in my life, where this man pretended to become his Japanese fan, who emailed him constantly or something, and reading the mails on her voice. It was surreal.

⁶ Did you know that matcha is, like, soooooo much healthier than coffee? But, no, like, wait, you don't get it, it's not that you like coffee more, matcha is simply *good for you*. Fuck off. (And I say this as the friends of some matcha dudes I know, who are truly cool—well, not cool, but, you know, not terrible—people!)

crowded. Somewhat depressing too, when you live a block away and all you wanted was some alone time, but at least houses in Los Angeles are quiet.

Venice, in a surprising turn of events, will get better right after here, but I don't want to go back to being depressing, so I will cover the Boardwalk before moving on.

The Boardwalk is surprisingly the dingiest, but the least unattractive strip in all of Venice after Lincoln and Abbot Kinney. Actually, that's a lie: the *Speedway* before the Boardwalk is somewhat nice, because it's not crowded and quieter than the concrete sequence of shops that blare Drake without exception.

The boardwalk is a perfect example of shitty American strip mall aesthetic combined with a third-world motivation of peddling whatever you got. It is so loud, so blaring, so crowded, and so hot—and at night it is so quiet and empty, except when they have an *Electric Light Parade*, which is nice to catch if you are in the area, but not so nice if you live around and have to hear another Top 40 song for the nth time... what the hell is it with Los Angeles and Top 40 songs, man?

The beach, on the other hand, is boring, like most beaches, but here there's usually a group around a bonfire calling themselves a fucking 'tribe'. It's also dangerous! Did you know that it is recommended to not swim in the ocean for three days after it rains because the sewage leads there? I tried surfing a few times, but I suck at it—at least I got why there's an entire literary genre devoted to it. There's nothing like feeling as if you are on some cloud and not in Los Angeles when riding a wave.

Aaaaany way, here's what's alright, starting from the Santa Monica side:

- *Venice Ale House*: I mean... whatever. I wish you could drink in public in Los Angeles, but noooooooo, it has to be in an expensive bar.
- *Venice Beach Freakshow* has a cool exterior at least.
- *Zelda's Corner* has okay sandwiches. I think I had something from *El Huarique*, but doubtful why you'd go for any Peruvian here.
- There's also a cool building inside *Westminster Ave* called ***El Bordello***, but apparently only the exterior is funky, because inside is just split into tiny rooms. That being said, one time we saw a couple having sex on the balcony, so at least they were living the bohemian dream.
- *Small World Books*: Well, at least there's a bookstore. And they had certain uncommon titles at hand, so I'll give them that.
- The skatepark's cool, though. The art walls... eh. Muscle Beach... eh on steroids.
- There's an *eggslut* next to the Venice sign, and the name is edgy because they think they are cool, and the food is alright. Nice breakfast sandwich, but up to you if you want to if you want to give it more than 10\$.
- *Mao's Kitchen*: Edgier name than *eggslut*, to be honest. Large portions Americanized Chinese, but it lacks a kick.
- ***High Rooftop Lounge***: Literally the only good thing about here, because you are far above the crowd and can enjoy the sunset from a

better view, as opposed to just watching the sun set dismally (usually, sometimes it's amazing) behind Malibu hills.

- *Hama Sushi* around the roundabout: I mean... sure, why not. Good décor.

And then, something weird happens once you hit *Venice Boulevard*. It doesn't get *that much* better, but suddenly, everything's a bit quieter; the shops go away; there are fewer restaurants—***James Beach*** is a staple, but I mean... *I Love You, Man* was more than a decade ago—and everything just becomes *calmer*. It's a shame that this little, thin strip goes for ten minutes at most, but you gotta be grateful for what you have.

But it's still objectively better. You turn left, and bam! You're at the world famous ***Venice Canals***! Not the actual Venice canals, but an imitation—literally man-made, the water is kinda murky, but, still, not so terrible! The ***Beyond Baroque*** building on Venice Boulevard, and the fire station next to it, and the Public Art Resource Center... these have a dialogue, which is unprecedented in Venice, let alone Los Angeles! It's kinda quiet around! ***Venice Fishing Pier*** and that short row of bars and restaurants at the beginning of *Washington Boulevard* is both relatively empty *and* pleasing to the eye! ***Nighthawk Bar*** looks classy! A decent bar *and* the sea? My god! Could this be a change for good?

Well, not really, but it'll do. Especially when *Abbot Kinney* ends at *Washington Boulevard*⁷, there's ***Scopa Italian Roots***. They are usually booked, so call as your assistant and say that you are confirming your reservation... it worked for me! *Nueva* is apparently a new spot at the place of Sunspot/Sweetspot/Sunsweet/whatever it was, but maybe still has good breakfast. *C&O Cucina Ristorante* is probably still advertising its world famous garlic rolls and also world famous Rat Pack Lounge. *JFM Boxing Club* is where I learned boxing—good community, not-so-amazing lessons, sparring is fun though. ***Firestone Walker Brewing*** is reliable for good beer.

Crossing Lincoln Boulevard, there's a Costco (can't go on without mentioning Costco) and *In-N-Out Burger*, which is surprisingly scarce in Los Angeles for a California staple.

And, just as a detour, if you take a right while going up north at any point, you'll end up in...

Marina Del Rey

Weird, weird place. If its largest restaurant, named *Killer Shrimp* with an appropriately slasher font, doesn't raise the hair on your back, perhaps the *Bellona Freshwater Marsh* will. Contrary to the Google reviews, I didn't see that many bird, but I guess I just didn't care.

⁷ There's an avenue called Coeur d'Alene, and for a year I thought 'Oh, French, how nice,' only to realize it's the name given to a Native American tribe. Ehhh... I don't know if they would call themselves that.

It's Venice for people with yachts—an idea of what Los Angeles could be for a crowd who cannot get away from the sea. Not a bad place to go for a jog. If I could run farther than usual, I would like to go to this secluded housing development and living area on *Maxella Avenue*, which was always shaded and felt like it had more nooks and crannies than your usual Los Angeles fare. It's like when you are a kid and you are at the mall and you wonder what's behind that gray door, even if it's just a few management offices. Maybe it's because there was a Barnes and Noble there, which comforted me, because rest of the shops and restaurants certainly didn't. But to have a relatively more complex design, narrower streets, some kind of a microcosm... I dunno, I get romantic for the stupidest things.

A bit beyond, there's a strip mall of all the expected Los Angeles chains: Sugarfish, Mendocino, sweetgreen.

Way beyond is Facebook—that quadlike strip across is the last gasps of hip restaurants in the city; there also used to be the offices of MVMT there, and those guys still took us to *Panini Kabob Grill* chain restaurant. Afterwards there's Electronic Arts and YouTube and Loyola Marymount. But it's all very condo-ey.

However, right after them and before LAX, the restaurants on Lincoln Boulevard and Manchester always reminded me of a quainter, townier vibe, as if the city is showing its true colors. That always existed as whenever I left Los Angeles.

If you go further down, you'll end up in...

Huntington Beach, Redondo Beach, Manhattan Beach

Manhattan Beach is quite nice but too white, even fratty. ***Fishing with Dynamite*** was good, but couldn't try anywhere else.

The first girl I ever liked in America was from Redondo Beach. I ended up in mental hospital custody a week later because I had issues about hookup culture.

Tapping the Source is a highly entertaining novel about infiltrating a heroin dealing surfing gang in Huntington Beach, because the thrill equals the drug, maaaannn...

Anyway, let's go back to Los Angeles.

Pico – Sunset Park – Mar Visa

Basically, what's above Santa Monica and Venice. It's *somewhat* nice to bike around here, except when it gets hilly on inland side.

I'll do this like I did the avenues before Santa Monica, but it will be more neighborhood focused.

Pico: They say it's still rough out there, but all I see is car repair shops. Kinda hot, weatherwise. ***Gilbert's El Indio*** is a reliable Mexican-American restaurant. Nice

interior too. **UnUrban Coffee House** is also colorful and not an eyesore. I think I was there to get a cookie or something, because I had wanted to go to *Caprice French Pastries*, only to realize the dude did full cakes and wasn't a dessert shop.

Santa Monica College is included here only because it's an area of some respite if you are around. Google Maps says there are parks nearby... but I haven't seen them, and I believe my own eyes.

Sunset Park: Santa Monica Airport is where Evan Spiegel comes in and goes to Snap Inc. Wonder what he's up to and if Snapchat still exists. It's quite a cool place: there's a theatre company, a *Museum of Flying*, a drive-in theatre (I didn't know that!), an aviation school (I think), and an event venue at a hangar! It's a shame that I always just passed it by car or bike without really thinking of it, you know?

Ocean Park Boulevard is the only place with a semblance of life. **El Torito** is shit Mexican, but it has a personal history for me, because, apart from one location, next to where I lived in Istanbul, this is the only other place in the entire world I've seen an El Torito. The Istanbul location was probably a money laundering front. **The OP Cafe**... I think I had a piece of pie here? I recommend **Crimson** to eat. Our accountants were here so I just have a few hazy memories of going around and grabbing a bite in order to delay my return back home. Plus, that hill was annoying to bike up.

Mar Vista: Ah, Mar Vista, the sign that I was close to home, making me both sweetly tired and slightly dreadful. Houses are alright, there's a slight incline down towards the sea—it's a nicer ride to the West, but the good things are on the East.

Venice Boulevard is where everything will be at, and, gotta be honest, it's really quaint! Sometimes they block off part of the roads to make a block party! How nice is that?! There's **826LA Time Travel Mart**, which is exactly how it sounds, and you get to write stories with school kids on weekdays if you volunteer! I've never read Dave Eggers, he sounds too twee, but man, this place was such a blessing. Wonderful people, one dude even had a Tristero tattoo. There was a rare bookstore here, if I'm not mistaken, but I can't find it.

As for establishments, **Coffee Connection** had a nice patio but the floors were dirty, and that was a no-no, according to a friend. **RYOT** used to be there, back when Chris Milk used to be my idol, but he's a bit too into VR. There are **taco trucks** around and it's a shame I never stopped biking to have a bite. **Mitsuwa Marketplace** is cute. **Little Fatty** was good, cocktails were good, food was good, it was... good.

It's really a shame I didn't bike from *W Washington Boulevard* or even *Washington Place*, since Venice Boulevard was always the quickest route. But even though those two avenues always seemed less interesting, they still felt a bit more cooler for having been tucked away. The only place I've been was to get a second-hand dress (for myself, it was for a wedding, which was for a video) at the now closed **Silverlining**, where they apparently employ people with special needs... but I didn't notice that. Apart from that, I'll say **Rutts Hawaiian Café** is alright, if not different.

That all being said, the weird criss-crossing restaurants and whatnot at the highway intersections is highly recommended. *Tito's Tacos* is shit, and has been shit for so long that it's an establishment. **Maple Block Meat Co** is quality. I *think* I've been to **Moto Ramen** (or was it **Ramen Yamadaya**)? Didn't have any complaints. **Joxer Daly's** bar is whatever, but at least it's an old school sports bar. Have to say, all this was terrifyingly unappealing during daytime with heat from concrete and all, but at night there's a gentle breeze and fewer lights and it wasn't so bad to stop by on the way home.

Culver City

Even if you don't consider the chapter above as Culver City, Culver City *Downtown* is one of the best neighborhoods in all of Los Angeles, literally only because of one place and one place only: **THE MUSEUM OF JURASSIC TECHNOLOGY**.

Ah, ah, my love, my one and only love in Los Angeles. The one place that made moving to Los Angeles for a year worth it, gave me hope this place is not some scrappy put-on readymade city on a dessert, *while* making me think that it *is* that! How can you play so well with all the mysticism of Los Angeles that makes one flee this city—due to the chances of that randomly encountered person is a Scientologist or just a screenwriter or just in it for the good vibes—and exalt it! How can that aviary at the top floor could always be so serene, even if the weather is sticky and migraine-inducing? This is what Ricky Jay saw in this city, and why he's so accessible and yet mysterious. If only Los Angeles was more like this place—and more compact—it would be the most curious city in the world... but then The Museum of Jurassic Technology wouldn't be so special.

It evokes not only The Museum of Innocence in Istanbul (I mean, Orhan Pamuk definitely visited here once or twice, and apparently it was even mentioned in the book?⁸) but other, smaller, unintelligible museums that are designed for random and silly causes. It evokes what it *can* be, but makes you appreciate what it is. I believe it's been founded by a couple, and I'm sure there's politics involved and some disgruntled staff, but, by god, if there's some fucked up Epstein thing, or even a MeToo, or even some connection to L. Ron, I will burn it down myself, for there is no hope in this world.

Gah, I miss it so much, even though it takes like two hours at most to visit and I remember most of it. Fucking hell.

By the way, the weirdo Los Angeles tour isn't over yet: Don't forget to check out **The Center for Land Use Interpretation** right next door. It requires more imagination, as it is more academic, but it's still quite interesting. And then, walk up—see all you need to see in terms of sightseeing on the way, like the **City Hall**—to **Arcana: Books on the Art** to spend a couple of more hours browsing through art books. Then get a beer and a burger at **Father's Office** (worth not going to the one in

⁸ ed. It is, but it's placed quite ingeniously, and I don't know if intentionally, because it goes like 'Oh I didn't know museums could depict other times so well,' says the fictitious character about a real museum depicting fictitious things, before in turn designing a real museum (like, physically present in our world) about a fictitious story. Layers!!!

Santa Monica now), and then you walk back down—maybe this time, checking out the architectural weirdoes from **Hayden Tract**—get a drink at **The Culver Hotel's Velvet Lounge**, contemplating the Munchkin orgy that took place in the hallways when they were shooting *The Wizard of Oz*, and then walk near the **Culver Steps**: they are not amazing, but who cares?, it looks lovely when the lights come on at sunset.

The funny thing about Culver City is that the whole neighborhood seems like it's broken down to tinier neighborhoods, but that adds a certain sense of novelty unfound in Los Angeles. It's almost as if the solution to being a suburbanized city like Los Angeles is to create further clusters within those clusters. Downtown Los Angeles has that naturally because it's a downtown, and Echo Park/Silver Lake does it to a point, but, my god, Culver City is the best.

There are people who will say 'No, it's boring to look at studios and HD Buttercup or some shit while walking along Venice or Washington Boulevard,' and that is true, but where else can you *discover* a neighborhood in its nooks and crannies, you know? Yeah, Venice, maybe, but Venice sucks.

Anyway, let's not get ahead of ourselves when we already have gotten a page ahead of ourselves just because of **THE MUSEUM OF JURASSIC TECHNOLOGY**. Now, if you were arriving here from the west, here's what you would encounter:

Oldfield's Liquor Room is a nice bar. Quite empty. Somewhat like the counterpart of **Blind Barber** on Washington. **Mayura Indian** is delicious—and I think they either run a bootleg Bollywood DVD shop in the back or simply show movies, but something was going on. Check out **The Brazilian Mall** for a place that did Blu-ray imports. (*That's* why my capoeira class was nearby! I only went a few times because my forearms started hurting, but it was very very fun. It's like being children! Plus, a lot of locals go there too.) Dunno why you'd need to look at Sony Picture Studios, but you can rest on the stairs. **The Conservatory** is a lovely spot in the afternoons—they also don't have WiFi—and on a windy, gray day, it makes you feel melancholically alive. There's also the **Hobbit House**, just in case if you want to walk past it.

Like, I went to a Mexican restaurant here and it was alright, also went to another fancyish place but I don't remember anything about them (except something with pepper at the former and a cocktail at the latter), but who cares? There's just *so much* here. There's like at least two theatre companies... not that I'd go to any of their plays!

Again, at the risk of repeating myself, what's so great about Culver City is this diversity in landscape. You don't like the nouveau bougie mall quad called **Platform**? Fuck it! Go across to the home design shops and stuff where **Arcana: Books on the Art** and **Father's Office** are. If you're bored of basic-ass buildings and trite art shit, go to **Hayden Tract**! And if your blood boils because motherfuckers have put up a stupid Love Wall there, go up north for more stuff, or, better yet, go south to **Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook**—if you go on Tuesday nights (if I'm not mistaken), you can catch fireeaters and whatnot practicing! It's such a trip!

Apparently, *Overland Avenue* has some stuff way deep in. Great! You can cross *Ballona Creek* (such a shame I didn't) walk to *Inglewood Oil Field* if you want to! I'm sure it's boring as shit, but still! An oil field! Oh shit, there's an *Obama Boulevard*? I thought America stopped naming presidents on avenues! (Not to be reductively racist, maybe it's because the boulevard leads to Crenshaw. And since we are talking about Crenshaw, here's...)

Crenshaw – Leimert Park

Honestly, this is not my place. This place belongs to Black people and Afrofuturists and Black academics and free jazz musicians who sang once with Alice Coltrane and even talking about it makes me feel like I'm gentrifying it.

And yet, unlike Culver City, or even Venice, it feels like Leimert Park would be a good neighborhood to *live*. All others feel like attractions or places to go, but especially Leimert Park feels like a place where you could walk to on a Sunday, get some books from *Eso Won Books* to read at the *Hot and Cool Café*, which is, out of ALL the space in Los Angeles, feels like THE ONE PLACE where it's airy and chill, if you can excuse the racial bias. Walk a bit more, check out the architecture around *Vision Theater* and see what's at the *Art + Practice Exhibition Space*.

And what's kind of amazing is that there's little traces of chain stores and whatnot right around Leimert Park. (There's a McDonalds on its outskirts, so you know I'm wrong.) If you need to do some boring shopping, you can go to the mall on Baldwin Hills.

Even on a Tuesday night, when some people are doing free jazz at *World Space*, just to walk there from home... I don't know. I'm romanticizing like crazy here. Truth is, Vision Theater was closed, and apparently still is. I saw a homeless tent around the south corner, where there's a relatively large construction. But, I dunno, for a second, it feels like some cultural revivalist ideal, until you realize it's probably not.

Now that that's been said, let's get through my other 'South Los Angeles' credentials out of the way:

Inglewood

I only know the gentrified parts, sorry, except an Iranian restaurant called *Jino's Pars*, which was tasty. If you ever find yourself in Inglewood... because you are checking out the giant donut of *Randy's Donuts* or something.

Anyway, here are the gentrified parts:

Apparently Tesla is here.

I went to *The Forum* to see Kanye but he lost his voice mid-show.

Also went to *Three Weavers Brewery* to pick up some beer, and you know what? It was great! Again, such a shame that Los Angeles doesn't have more places like this when they have such an open space.

I think a more important question is: Why do I have a business card from *Phil Yoakum's Bowling Supply*? As I recall, we had went to the *Bowlero* in Culver City, and not to the bowling place nearby. But maybe Phil Yoakum left his business card at the *Bowlero* in Culver City? I simply do not know.

Torrance

Obviously, never been, but *LA Galaxy* plays around here?! Hahahahahaha.

South Los Angeles

Never been, always wanted to, and not even because of Watts or Compton or any of that, but simply because it's apparently more historic, and a local friend told me that it has great Italian food, which made me even more curious.

Apparently I have walked through *Historic South Central*, which is farther up north, but I probably won't refer to it as such.

Huntington Park

If I'm not mistaken, this area is also slowly being gentrified. That's all I have to cynically say about it.

Downey

Went to an artist's huge warehouse over there for a Chinese New Year BBQ, and that's when I also realized the things in Los Angeles were behind closed doors. Make friends.

Koreatown

For a while, I thought Koreatown was one of the best neighborhoods to live in Los Angeles. After all, you can bike to Downtown and as far as Fairfax, go up to Hollywood if you need be, and letting the Westside remain an outing, as it should be.

I still somewhat see that, but I think there are two Koreatowns: the night and the day.

Because I slept over at a friend's who lived there, and, waking up to get a cup of coffee, I found myself thinking "This is *too* busy." Because yes, *The Wiltern* and some churches look cool, and it's fun to hop from one thoroughfare to another, but is that what you really want in the heat? And once you leave the vicinities, then it's just low houses and houses until you reach either USC or Downtown—there's no way you'll reach East Hollywood by walking, let me tell you, and don't get me started on *MacArthur Park*, which evokes the word 'dearth' and makes me recoil faster than the surrounding area's name of 'Rampart Village', and that's saying something.

At least the subway's nearby, so your escape feels closer.

But, more importantly, the night is a different issue, because you have all these Korean grills that are open at night. And *I know* having a car means easy access, but it's the vibe, you know? It's the idea of thinking 'Wow, Los Angeles is not some lame place where even the post-Oscar party ends at 11pm!'

Hence, who cares if ***Dang Sung Sa*** isn't *that* good? The atmosphere, as well as knowing that you can have a decent meal at 2am, are enough. And if you wanna be picky about it, ***Soowon Galbi*** closes earlier, even though I don't remember ever going there.

USC – Expo Park

Honestly, *University of South California* is not bad at all! I guess that you can have a good life when you have ridiculous donors. The layout is meh, some buildings are quite interesting—who'd have thought of a mosque there?—and, most importantly, the quad is amazing. I wish there would be a patioed bar on campus, but maybe it's for the best that the only thing you can sip on is tea or smoothies.

The Shrine Auditorium is also somewhat needlessly huge, but it's a landmark regardless, though it takes more than fifteen minutes to walk around it.

I would write more, but I'd rather leave it here and just say 'If you are in the area, USC is a nice place to walk around and sit down for a while.'

And the only reason why you would be in the area is the ***Natural History Museum***, which is not amazing, but it feels very 80s-90s, especially the birds of America section, and it makes you feel yearning for the Natural History Museum in New York or somewhere else other than here. And, to be fair, there's a wonderful mineral collection, nearly all of which is around California, I believe.

Haven't been to the ***California Science Center***, but I love that shit.

The park where the museum is located, which is mostly ***Rose Garden*** is alright, but it's kind of a fucking bummer that one half of the park is just the Coliseum and one other stadium... I hate college football, though I understand the need for it, because how else will Americans spend their Sunday during and after college?!

More important than any of this stuff above, however, is ***Mercado La Paloma*** across the 110, next to the DMV. It's... a food market! Authentic, too! (Even though I hate how 'authentic' has negative connotations, but, honestly, the 'authentic' here, meaning that it's somewhat poor or 'not fancy-looking' is miles ahead of any other dumbass idea of Los Angeles they try to feed you. I'd rather live near here than Venice.) I've only been there once, but ***Chichen Itza*** was really good!

Fashion District

I mean... more like Wholesale District, but whatever.

The issue is that yes, it is bustling and loud and Mexican and somewhat interesting, but it's also hot, tiring, crowded, music blaring. Don't get me wrong, similar garment districts exist all over the world and there's something mesmerizing in seeing all these dress stores next to each other practically screaming to sell something, but it is the worst in Los Angeles heat, you know?

In any case, if there's anything you want regarding clothing, fabric, beads (I literally went to three bead stores to get some beads once, there were probably many more I didn't even check), it will be here, and that's cool.

So it's at least interesting, and you should go to **Santee Alley** regardless, so might as well see what bootleg DVDs you can swipe. And Santee Alley works because it's so concentrated and almost exists as a microcosm on its own. You know what I mean? If there are long streets that take twenty minutes to clear a block, and there are 50 stores on each side, that's tiring. Whereas if it's one narrow alley where you can climb some stairs and look at people below and such, then it's somewhat exhilarating.

Downtown

Oh boy. Let's get the behemoths out of the way. *STAPLES Center* and the *Los Angeles Convention Center* will be impossible to miss if you arrive by car. I don't think I've ever been inside the convention center, but was around Staples, where they kinda condo-malled it. To be perfectly honest, it *is* well made: whoever thought of alleyways in a pre-conceived mall plans is a clever person, because it feels like the place is inviting and mysterious and whatnot.

And yet... whereas Sony Center in Berlin is like five minutes from Tiergarten... where do you leave from here? Back to your car? Back to grimy Downtown, which you probably shouldn't go at night? This area near STAPLES and the convention center is not a curiosity, but the reality, if you catch my drift.

Honestly, Downtown LA is also a mess, but I'll try to keep it in an encompassing manner from south to north.

ROW DTLA, or however people call it, opened as I was leaving. I had no idea it was even there before seeing it on Google Maps just now. Good idea, I'm sure there are a few nice places and spots inside to make you feel you are not in the sweltering Los Angeles, that right outside is Skid Row, but overall, it makes me feel bittersweet. Whereas stuff like this in Culver City wouldn't really seem out of place, Downtown is dirty and grimy and probably dangerous, so it definitely feels like there's some dystopian shielding of the rich going on. That there is a Stranger Things: Drive-Into Experience there tells you everything you need to know.

Oh wow... I just got why they called it ROW! They're trying to divert the attention from *Skid Row*! Wow! Fucking Los Angeles, man. Yes, it's a shitshow, but the Downtown felt at least like the edgy place New York tries to boast about with 'Crime was at an all-time high in 1978!' But unlike Los Angeles, New York still has its fair share of maniacs and weird buildings and whatnot out on the street, whereas

Los Angeles, who can never let go of its fancy history of Hollywood and shit, tries to gloss over it again and again.

I am quite taken aback, I tell ya. This sheen... this attempt. Oy vey.

The worst part is that I would have been okay with it if the name wasn't ROW. There are all kind of overt gentrification attempts going on near the viaduct and all around the center Downtown (which I guess now has to be talked about later), and they have even made these little hip strip malls with the fucking Love Wall and such. But then again, those are okay, even with a name that you can imagine like **Arts District**. Yes, strip malls are an abomination, but they are a part of the history, and you might as well pay homage to it. Or there are a shitton of warehouses all around and I'm sure they had to kick out their fair share of squatters, but you get **Bestia** (never been, always wanted to), or **Zinc Café** (It's moreso the market idea I love, and that they got Club Mate!), a **Stumptown** if you miss New York, some other hippish Italian fare like **The Factory Kitchen** and **Brera**. Sure, there's an Urth Café and a Café Gratitude, but they come with the spirit of gentrification, you can't stop them, it's in the contract.

You go farther up and this part of Los Angeles is truly something else, even a bit like industrial Montreal, with brick buildings and arching garage doors and all the tacked-on tech, but then to get on the East 4th bridge to look *down* at the viaduct and the railroads... that's nice and rare.

And then you cross that bridge⁹ to enter the somewhat more immediate **Arts District** and **Angel City Brewery** (where the fact that you can't sit outside is still such an annoyance, but at least the windows are open and wide) and of course **Arts District Brewery** (where you can sit outside and the inside is worse than Angel City, but has a bunch of parlor games)

And it's still weird because I see now that there is another Salt and Straw, another Father's Office, another Würstküche, as if you transplant the same shit from the Westside to the East. And you know what? It's still okay! I don't mind that there are gunshots around the neighborhood at night and the condos have spiked wire fencing. It's gentrification, and it's happening, and it's shitty, but that's what it is.

But ROW...

Because right after the Arts District, you come to **Little Tokyo**, and let's be honest, it's a reductive neighborhood. A facsimile of an idea of Japan, where the Japanese used to live, and in the late 1970s, when large Japanese corporations (keiretsus, apparently) were moving into Los Angeles—hence, Nakatomi Plaza of *Die Hard*—this plaza was somewhat created as a nice and somewhat racist gesture.

But it's still quaint. The *Japanese American Cultural and Community Center's Plaza* (only bolding the last part because I haven't stepped foot inside) is really nice, designed by Isamu Noguchi, whose museum in Queens is truly a treasure of the city. A Chinese friend said **Daikokuya's** 'authentic ramen' tasted like bathwater, and

⁹ Here's where I was gonna crack a joke about La La Land and how you could pretend to be in the movie and how all the bridges over the viaduct are so similar that people must be striking the same pose on different ones... until I just learned that the bridge they shot is in Pasadena! You got me, Chazelle... You might whitewash jazz music, but you are a clever son of a bitch, I'll give you that.

maybe that's true, hence, I'd recommend *Shinsengumi Ramen* instead. If they're full, go to *Men Oh*, but try to go to Shinsengumi regardless.

Check out the DVD shops for movies you'll never watch. Get some sweets from all the stores. *Mitsuru Grill* was alright, I'm sure you can find better places. Obviously go to the *Geffen MOCA*, the book fair is overwhelming, but the exhibitions are quite well made. If you have that much space, I guess it's not surprising.

And at least Little Tokyo is not as offensive as *Olvera Street*, bolded only because it's such a fucking sham to 'celebrate' the Mexican culture by putting in an ersatz shopping street that is only designed to attract tourists... It's... just... my brain cannot comprehend the levels of insanity here. I'm sure there are Hispanic vendors who benefit from the traffic, but I'd understand it if Mexicans did it in Mexico, just like many cultures slightly exaggerate their authenticity for tourism—but to have it done by Americans after basically invading their land?!

And the sad thing is that *Union Station* and even the *City Hall* with its shitty park and shitty *Triforum* is acceptable as some Californian understanding of Art Deco. Perhaps it's my East Coast sensibilities that want to elevate this style as an intellectual identity of this city that wants to be so bereft of one, but... come on! This is so much better than—I'm sorry—pimping out the minority culture!

Ah, for fuck's sake, I promised myself I'd do the main Downtown first, but I got excited about my general annoyance regarding this city. Honestly, let's blast through the Downtown core, and then come back up to Chinatown and more.

And, that's fine! Because unlike the rest of Los Angeles where it takes an hour to cross two blocks, the beauty of Downtown is that you can go back and forth multiple times—if only in a day!—through the neighborhood! That's what I call city planning.

Too bad Downtown core has little of it, but whatever. I'm a sucker for Beaux Arts.

I would recommend taking the long way around to get to the core, walking from the City Hall (the *LAPD Headquarters* is... trying to be an open book? I guess? Ugh.) to *Walt Disney Concert Hall*, bolded because there's a quiet garden-ish place on the outer balcony. Check out the line at *The Broad*, obviously. It's better if you go with a reservation, and much better than other "I'm a rich dude getting a tax break!" museums, especially the permanent collection. And if it's full, you can always go to *MOCA Grand*, which, in a twist of fate, has a limited permanent collection, and the temporary exhibitions are usually somewhat better, but I cannot imagine someone learning modern art through here. Both museums are kind of strange in depicting American modern art: they both are huge, have great artworks (the Rothko room of MOCA is how it should be displayed), but also, it's a bit... like advertisement? It's as if they are proclaiming "Do you know the name... ANDY WARHOL?! Well, here's one of his works!!!" It's a bit like grade school shit, but whatever, at least the examples are well chosen.

And right nearby is the *Grand Promenade*, which, truth be told, I never sat down to eat or anything, but always felt airy in a city that has a lot of open space and never feels airy. Kind of like how a condoplex in a dense city creates an open space.

Same goes for what's behind MOCA Grand, and I would have said "Take the Angels Flight to Grand Central!" if the ride hadn't been defunct.¹⁰

On the way down *Grand Street*, there's the **Los Angeles Central Library**, which has a lovely Illuminati exterior and an alright inside—it's always cool to see how they've managed building on a slope. **The Biltmore** is New York fancy, and once I snuck into the ballrooms with a friend; I can see where *The Shining* came from.

And, slowly, you are entering Downtown Los Angeles...! or where a lot of movies pretended to be New York! Still, it's cool, you can't deny it. It's grimy and dirty and somewhat dangerous—basically what New York boasted about regarding the past—and the fact that it's around a five block radius makes it precious—I believe, with Century City, it was the only place in Los Angeles that had the ground to accommodate heavy buildings in case of an earthquake. And, once again, very weirdly, compared to Toronto or even New York, I find it okay to have a mixture of old and new in this neighborhood. I think they were still building **FIGat7th** or whatever it's called when I was living there, and I'm sure that the interior stores only the blandest shops imaginable, but hey, it's a nice looking building! **THE BLOC**, or however dumb way it's stylized (almost like ROW... I'll never get over that) is obnoxious in the blaring pop music, but it's an alright place to sit and look at the buildings from below... if there is not some robotic security guard around to make you feel uneasy.

Obviously, the romance lasts for only a few blocks, but you gotta make the best of it. I've only been to **B.S. Taqueria**, but that seems to be closed, so might as well spend some more money to eat at **Broken English**. **Hank's Bar** is a dive bar, which is rare around, so, FYI. **The Ace Hotel** is pretty, obviously, I've never been inside, but David Lynch had his festivals there.

And then you'll probably go up north once again from either *Main*, or *Olive*, or *Broadway*. They are all very close, so I'll do a swam explanation of what's good:

- **Jewelry District**: It's amazing to see the converted movie halls into jewelry stores. Not many people think it's great, but it both reminds me of a Mexican/Cuban market, and also how much something symbolic about glamor and whatnot.
 - Important! There's an inner alleyway called **St. Vincent Court**, and, well, I'll leave it up to you to discover what it's about. It's cool, even if it's unintentional.
- There's a **Guisados** here?! Well... if you want to, otherwise, wait for the location at the Echo Park/Angeleno Heights chapter. Hence, I recommend the Filipino **Ricebarb**.

¹⁰ [ed. I take it back, it's apparently opened now—good for them. Take it if you want to, especially because it's a much better way to arrive at the Grand Central Market than the shoddy Broadway entrance, but it always made me uneasy (especially how it's located in a condo courtyard), because it used to connect Bunker Hill to Downtown before being a tourist attraction, thus sequestering the workers' neighbourhood in Bunker Hill and paving the way for residential overturning. Or something like that. Whatever Thom Andersen said in 'Los Angeles Plays Itself'.]

- **Pershing Square:** Terrible in heat, really nice at night, wonderful at winter when there's ice skating and you can feel like you are in Bryant Park, which is a better feeling than being in Pershing Square.
- **KazuNori:** It wasn't too expensive, but it was expensive to the point where I can't give a proper judgement. It's on *Gallery Row*, but I've never been to one of them. All that wideness feel a bit overwhelming.
- **Bradbury Building:** Of course.
- **The Last Bookstore:** Of course. Don't forget the old book vault at the back that sells forgotten titles for cheap.
- **Grand Central Market:** Of course.
 - There's another **Belcampo**, but I recommend the Santa Monica location.
 - A place that says 'Authentic currywurst from Berlin' and their thumbnail is a fucking egg on a roll.
 - Have a beer at **Golden Road Brewery**. Nice place to read.
 - **Horse Thief BBQ** was also decent.
 - **McConnell's Ice Creams** if you can stand the line and if you don't plan on going to Santa Barbara anytime soon.
 - **Wexler's Deli:** Fuck yeah.
 - **I mean, they're all good.** It's like they probably have to pass an industry standard or whatnot.
- **Artisan House** is closed, which, I don't remember what I had there...
- And, finally—oh no, **Baco Mercat** is also closed?!

As for nightlife, I've been to **The Edison** (I know, I know, I'm a sucker for old-timey shit; if Los Angeles wants to sell me on Art Deco or something, I'll buy it) and **The Redbury** (I know, I know.) and **Clifton's Republic**, which is three storeys, pirate-themed (?) on one, live music on other. It's just such a lovely shitshow. I've been to two other bars closer to the Arts District, but they escape me for now. One of them was minimalist, marbled, and played minimal techno (I have a feeling it's **Death and Co.**, but I do not know) and the other one had an arcade game in it? Or something? All I know is when we left, people said 'Don't flash your phone outside,' which is the unfortunate reality of the Downtown nightlife. I'm sure there are so many wonderful bars—even looking on Google Maps I was envious—but you either end up in an empty place, which is fine, or you end up in a three-storeyed crowded place and you want to take a nice walk right outside after feeling the buzz but your friend has already freaked out and called an Uber. Even in the densest neighborhoods, people live the sparse Los Angeles lifestyle.

Oh my, Chinatown might need its own chapter, since it's such a different kind of vibe than Downtown and how it opens up to Echo Park. So, with only several pages of ado, here's:

Chinatown

It's much better to take the long road and arrive via *Grand Street*, because then you can see the **Grand Arts High School**, with its funky architecture.

And then, Chinatown!

And then, to make a 180, my first recommendation will not be Chinese cuisine, but **Howlin Ray's Fried Chicken**. The line's a bummer, so go with a friend you haven't seen in ages and catch up for an hour as you wait in line. It is worth it. Damn... I am jonesing for some fried chicken right now.

Oh, no **Velveteria** is closed! It used to be this room full of velvet paintings, and it cost 10\$ to get in, so me and my friend took a peek and said "Yup, that's all paintings in velvet alright," and left. Was worth a peek.

Regarding Chinese food, I believe I ate at **Full House**, but I don't know if it was the restaurant or the seafood location across. I do know that **Ocean Seafood** is good. In all honesty, might as well go to Acadia if you have a car, but if you don't, I'm sure Google will help you.

And if you are there at night, go to **General Lee's**, which only now I understand is a joke on General Tso's. Way to co-opt, people('s Republic of China[town])!

Once you've reached the end, there are only three things you can do:

- Take either *Spring* or *Main Street*, laugh at the Los Angeles Historic State Park if it's still in shambles, cross the bridge, and end up in probably **San Antonio Winery**¹¹, but mainly its gift shop. Again, these areas surprisingly Montreal-like, but maybe that's all industrial neighborhoods.
- Go up from *Hill Street* to watch a Dodgers game, one the few things I regret not doing when I was living there.
- Orrrrr, spend a long time realizing where Sunset Boulevard starts, realize a completely different street leads there, and walk West for what might be one of the more complete (and nicer!) walks in Los Angeles.

Angelino Heights – Echo Park – Silver Lake – Los Feliz

Basically, this and the next few chapters can be crossed—basically from Chinatown to Glendale, and I'm not including the end points—in one go in a long-ass walk, which will take several hours, but I still highly recommend it, since it will have you see *Sunset Avenue*, where Echo Park, Silver Lake, and Los Feliz all lie on a single path—plus, you start in the heat of the day and shit only gets stranger as you move on north as the sun is setting.

¹¹ I would have been more sure of myself if that was the place I went to—and given it a better recommendation—if the owner decided to put some user-contributed photos up on Google Maps. Note to self to not be so rigid regarding this stuff.

Go to the **Guisados** at *Sunset Boulevard* and sit at the terrace. The walk up Sunset is not particularly great, but there's a nice dinginess to it. And it's calm!

I include *Angelino Heights* because the houses are lovely and I stumbled upon 10cc's 'I'm Not in Love' playing in some rich kid's backyard. Even before my small weed gummy kicked in, it felt quite dreamy.

Echo Park, meaning the park itself, is alright. I never got the idea about it. Living in the heights around *Echo Park*, however, sounds really nice. I prefer the surf of the highway to the ocean waves I never hear from my home anyhow. And some parts of it even have a pleasant, easygoing greenery.

On the other side of the park is *Filipinotown*, and I've only been to **Kubo**, which... whatever, but the ambiance was pure sweaty tropical weather, so at least it felt authentic, like you were eating at a construction workers' middle-of-the-road lunch place. You know what I'm talking about? It's the ordinary venues that give you the real feeling of a place.

But from there, go back to Sunset Boulevard. You don't want anything to do with Macarthur or Rampart.

Back on Sunset, **Ostrich Farm** was where I went after playing Pokémon Go for 24 hours (and still had 24 to go) for a video. It was an expensive dinner, and I couldn't care less. Worth it, but I dunno if I'd get the same pleasure if I wasn't really tired.

Stories had good books, but has a lovely patio, which, with the lack of seating in Los Angeles, is worth the price for a market price book.

Tacos El Primo was good as well—it's a taco cart, and it's in the middle of the road, and it's quite romantic, to be honest. In reality it's kind of a dreary stretch, nothing there expect narrow sidewalks and cars constantly pass by, but, I don't know, at 9:30PM, you have a nice taco, sit down, appreciate the cars.

And then you arrive at **Silver Lake** which is also graffiti-clad and gentrified and hip like Echo Park, but I believe it has less of that calm hilly idea.

Silverlake Ramen will be recommended by anyone, so might as well go. Silverlake Wines has a drunk baby on its post/business card, so that gets a vote. Never been to a concert here, though it's always really appealing because it all feels very local with places like Los Globos or the Echo, but to go there and come back if you don't live around... yeesh. But if it's walking distance... that might be nice as some sort of hip enclave. Even Los Angeles people try to escape Los Angeles.

And it's all hip and kinda like lower Williamsburg-y and it makes you yearn for New York, so might as well go. But it ain't no Williamsburg, nor even Gowanus, because there are no hundred year old bridges and old buildings and whatnot.

Now, right after this will be Los Feliz and people will be like "Omg just follow Sunset Blvd or Hollywood Ave," but those people are idiots, because, despite a few potentially interesting establishments, *Hyperion Avenue* (and likewise, before arriving at Silver Lake, *Glendale Avenue*) contain quaint-ass little avenues, with Walt

Disney's first studio lot and whatever. There's also **Ricky's Fish Tacos**, which I've never been, but have heard many a panegyric.

Granted, now on Google Maps I see a sunny day and it looks somewhat overwhelming—and I like Pinkberry, but I'm gonna pull a NIMBY on this like a true Los Angeles Homeowner Association Asshole. But, on an overcast sunset, walking after taking a weed gummy drop and slowly idling up Hyperion... it felt almost Northwest/Washington State-ish, and it felt nice.

But maybe it's just the golden hour. Maybe the daytime is too hot and the nightlife is too hipster. Because I like **Hyperion Public** more than **Tenant of the Trees**, but they would all contain too many people posing. At least you'd have good food options afterwards.

And, honestly, it's nice to go around this way than to bulldoze through Sunset, because I think one should enter Los Feliz with a peace of mind and not through one of the busiest avenues in Los Angeles.¹²

Because **Los Feliz** is honestly quite lovely! I say this because it is connected to the subway, has more than two avenues with stores/shops/entertainment, and a really nice layout, if I may say so. The main avenues are kinda sweltering, but the off-shoot streets like *Hillhurst Avenue* just give off the air of walking in a—dare I say—European city—no I don't dare that, it's not like that, but it's somewhat pleasant and soothing, but I get what you mean, Miranda July.

And if you feel like there's too much cement, you can always go to **Barnsdall Art Park**! It's not that artsy, and it's just one Frank Lloyd Wright house you can't really get into—it also closes around sunset, which, no disrespect to the homeless, but would improve the facilities—but it's one of the few parks I just felt like I could read and not be bothered by people around. Perhaps it's the respect everyone pays to the house inside, and that it's just not some common park.

Go to **Skylight Books**, obviously. Man... if there's one thing I miss about New York or Los Angeles, it's places like these where you can really, truly find independent, off-kilter books, (even if that sometimes means conceding second-hand bookstores). I asked for a Jarret Kobek and the guy was like 'Oh sure.' Hipsterdom has its benefits...

Bru Coffeebar... sure whatever. At least it's spacious.

But check out the movie theaters, even though they might not play anything good.

Glendale

Oh you think we are finished with the walk. It's been eight hours, perhaps more, since you've left Downtown. Your feet are aching, you have eaten four meals today to offset the calories, and you are fucking tired. Your home is on the Westside.

¹² *Frogtown*, across the 5 (this is the only time I will ever refer to a highway like that), is another hip little neighbourhood. Never been, but a friend went to brunch at **Spoke Bicycle Café**. At your own risk.

Nope. You gotta keep going, because you will never see what you will see if you don't head there now.

Basically, you take either Hyperion or Los Feliz Avenue to further east. You cross the Los Angeles River to either end up in *Atwater Village* or Costco, respectively, depending on your avenue. They are specks in the face of what you will face in your travel. You move on, because you see a glimmer on the far north.

What is that? Is that a bed of stars? Is that you, hallucinating?

You don't know, but your legs do, because you still take a step in front of the other.

You pass the car dealerships; you're telling yourself this is the stupidest part of Los Angeles, but the light blanket grows after dipping out for a second, and you tell yourself you cannot leave this neighbourhood, this city, this world, without seeing what it is.

It's a cube. It's a gigantic beige cube with palm trees surrounding the perimeter.

It's fucking *Americana*. Yes, there's Galleria right across, but how can that match the Venice canals of whatever minimalist faux-Roman architecture of Americana? It's welcoming, just like the Glendale Armenians it caters to, one of which was somewhat miffed but still kind enough to give me a cigarette when I had no money—my exhausted and somewhat disappointed and probably deranged face must have told him the necessary info.

There's also the tiny *Museum of Neon Art* across the street if you care, but why should you? Americana is just the biggest punchline to an eight hour non-stop walk that took me through three prominent Los Angeles neighborhoods as I questioned my life, what I was doing in this city, what it all meant. A goddamn mall, one all too easy to see in Istanbul, in which I have spent years to escape the city noise. I don't blame the people, but... I dunno, I took a 40\$ Uber back without thinking twice.

Pasadena

But we'll go even further than Glendale now—past *Eagle Rock*, where I've never been—as if the walk wasn't over.

Juust kidding. Take the subway from Downtown or go with a car if need be.

The first thing you'll notice is the unnecessarily huge *City Hall*. Sure, City Beautiful and whatnot, but... really? This? For Pasadena.

But it somewhat makes sense, because the more you look into it, the more you realize that Pasadena is the more... religious part of Los Angeles. It's eerie how the past is still so present in Pasadena, what with the Antique Mall and the flea markets and such. Hence, religion. Both mystical and reverent, sure, but also something about the hallowed past. And it's almost palpable. There's a reason why L. Ron Hubbard's buddy Jack Parsons did stuff at *CalTech* to summon ancient demons. And CalTech, truth be told, is no UCLA or USC, but still has a very pretty lawn to chill out.

That's how Pasadena seems like, to be honest. It's what you do on a weekend. There's the **Rose Bowl Flea Market**, one of the few things I regret not going to, so is **The Huntington Library and Art Museum and Botanical Gardens**. I did walk around the sculpture garden of the **Norton Simon Museum**. That was nice.

Otherwise... you can basically walk around. Old Pasadena is not much different from new Pasadena, and then you have to take a right turn on *Lake Avenue* or else things get suburban. A bar like **Pie 'N Burger** can have a jazz trio but, like the other bars around, it might still feel a bit fratty, a bit Santa Barbara-y. Honestly, it's better if you can avoid those bars and go to a more secluded place. I went to **Calestino** for Italian food on a Sunday evening with a friend, and it was exactly what you want your Sunday evening in Pasadena to be: a bit breezy, middle-aged people dressing up for an old-timey Italian restaurant that has quality, unassuming food. That's the way I'd want to remember Pasadena, not with its large buildings and loud bars and Scientology.

Arcadia – Monterey Park - Alhambra

Further east, only reachable by car is Arcadia. You will go there for dim sum.

The funny thing is, I didn't go there for dim sum, but I went to **Elite Restaurant** in Monterey Park/Alhambra, and that was still delicious. I don't see why else you would ever step foot in any of these neighbourhoods.

East Hollywood – Thai Town – Little Armenia

Alright, so, whatever you do, don't end up in this area in a heatwave. All of Los Angeles is bad, but particularly this part of east side is too much cement and not enough greenery. Or run to Griffith if you can. For example, I think I had lunch at **Ruen Pair** once, but I can't even remember what it was, or even if I enjoyed it (though I must have, even the photos are mouth watering) simply because my mind was wiped the second I left the restaurant and faced the heat wave.

Otherwise, there are two main avenues that make up Thai Town and Little Armenia, and I only had Thai food here (apologies to all my Armenian friends, as well as that dude at a nightclub who was very chill until he asked me where I was from and I said Turkey and he got serious and close and told me "I'm from Armenia," as if I killed his grandfather), but in nicer weather, the Armenian side seems a bit more... welcoming? Is that too polarizing? I just mean that they have a stronger community, which makes you go "Oh, here's the tailor and the lawyer and whatnot."

Then again, most of the restaurants here are Thai anyhow.

Hence, obviously go to **Jitlada**, which is truly freaky when it comes to certain dishes, but can still be a hot spot. Props to them. **Luv2eat** is also quality stuff despite worse aesthetics. **Pailin Thai** is probably not the hidden gem I think it is, but my god, it's insane. True Thai, I say arrogantly without knowing if it is or not. But sure felt like it!

Atmosphere-wise, I know I've kind of shat on it, but when the weather is nice, East Hollywood really is an attractively weird place. ***Trianon Apartments*** is worth a look for their towers—when my friend moved in there, the neighbor, without a prompt, brought back a six pack from his grocery run. ***The Dixie Motel*** is all neon and looks wonderful in sunset. Far east on *Hollywood Boulevard*, where *Obet & Del's Coffee* is (I can't recommend, since I don't think I was there, but I was at a cool-ish light purpled coffee shop), there are a few brick apartments that are hip and quirky. Again, don't go if there's a heatwave, but if it's gray (the best Los Angeles weather, in my opinion), it feels very moody and cool to walk around and maybe even saunter over to Los Feliz.

One last tip: this area is where—I believe, so don't trust me—tacos are supposed to be great. The best taco trucks are always the ones a local takes you by car at 2AM in bumfuck underpass, but... this is the best you can get—again, don't trust me—by public transport.

Griffith Park

It's accessible by foot! I think! There's an abandoned zoo! ***Fren Dell Drive*** is supposed to be beautiful!

Then again, the planetarium was always closed when I was there and on a cloudy day the sunrise and the sunset both kind of suck. Maybe the sunset would be better. Whatever, I rarely think the Los Angeles view is pretty.

But still, nice hike! Stuff to discover! *La La Land!*

Hollywood

Iygh. To be honest, I feel like Hollywood at daytime—even when grey—is simply dreary. It's just a sad sight of Guitar Centers and inward folding strip malls with the tourists and YouTubers living on 1600 VINE and costumed entertainers. You are better off just looking down at the Walk of Fame.

At night, however, Hollywood is surprisingly fun! I don't think I can do an avenue by avenue rundown, but I'll just tell you what to do at night:

For entertainment:

- Whether it's ***Pantages***, or ***The Chinese Theatre***, or ***The Egyptian***, or ***El Capitan***, they are all racist from the outside—except maybe Pantages, but that has a weird Parthenon ring to it—but inside, they are spectacular! Much better than Radio City Music Hall. I don't know if the sound system is as good as the Walt Disney Hall, but catch a movie, or better yet, a double feature, regardless.
 - Here's a tip if there's a movie premiere: Call the festival agency, or the booking agency, or hell, even the movie theatre (one of them will know what to do), fake a British accent, pretend you

are from the British distributors of the film, and say that you have a famous Vlogger or something arriving from England with the last plane, and that you need to book extra tickets under your name. Works like a charm, and it's a fun night out.

- Or, even better, catch a movie at **Hollywood Forever Cemetery**. I don't like outdoor showings, but maybe you do, and this is certainly a staple.
- Or, the best, go to **Hollywood Men** for some questionable fun. That's where I realized that I had a knack for stripping, and that, unlike female strip clubs, male strip revues are so campy and fun! I promise that you'll have a good time.

For bars:

- Of course you can go to a place called Te'Kila if you want to be lowbrow, but when in Hollywood, you have a surprising amount of classy options. Old Hollywood (or new Old Hollywood) bars give a run for its money, and it's a shame that they are located in Hollywood. I frequented them very little because I was trying to avoid the neighborhood. As far as I know, **The Bourbon Room** was a bit too narrow, but had good drinks. I'm sure you can find more online.
- Definitely go to **Pour Vous**, at least just for me, because I can't go there anymore after absolutely failing to flirt with a really sweet woman who was into me. I still have Tourette-like reactions upon remembering it. Nightly silk acrobatic show, boxcared patio in the back, nice music.
- **Velvet Margarita Cantina** oscillates between classy and basic. Would recommend, especially if you are waiting for a show/movie/my performance at Hollywood Men.
- Have I been to **Good Times at Davey Wayne's**, or was that where a friend's date got taken away by Joaquin Phoenix on a motorcycle? I do not know.
- If I'm not mistaken, **The Highlight Room** has like three floors and a nice view. It's also where I met my aforementioned Armenian friend who crisped upon hearing I was from Turkey.

For food:

- I've been to **El Compadre**, and that was decent Americanized Mexican. Strong margaritas.
- And that's it, I think. As you can see, my primary fuel for this neighborhood was alcohol.

Hollywood Hills

You think finding someone who lives there and going to their house to enjoy their pool or BBQ or whatever would be worth it, but it's surprisingly hit or miss. Ennui hits without discrimination.

Still, nice drive. Go at night and find a place on *Mulholland Drive* to look at the city.

Studio City – Valley

Honestly, should you go to a studio tour? Is this 1992? Just know that like most things in Los Angeles, it will be fun but won't satiate you. I've been to **Universal Studios**: it was crowded, manic, and not so terrible, but even not truly kitsch. At least in Disney World you can pretend you are pirate or something. Here, it's just very much 'the magic of movies'.

On your way though, on the *Hollywood Freeway*, stop at **Joe's Falafel**. Good stuff. Right across is Vivid Entertainment, which always provided a good occasion to chuckle when people had no idea what it was, sometimes because the company itself is so outdated. Again, it is not 1992 anymore.

Studio City... eh. It's just strip malls of fancy offices.

And I will spare my words about the Valley out of respect for A. She can show you better spots. I think I went to a Mexican spot that shared a restaurant with a Thai spot? But it wasn't like the Cuban/Japanese restaurant in New York.

The Grove – Little Ethiopia

And we're back in the city for the final stretch! Let's pretend that we have done a counter-clockwise loop from West Hollywood to end up back where we almost started, and now we are going to finish the inside loop.

Basically, from West Hollywood, if you take *La Cienega Boulevard* to *West 3rd Street*, you will end up at *The Grove*. If you take it to *Wilshire Boulevard*, you will end up at **LACMA**.

West 3rd Street, I'll admit, is quite lovely, and I feel like it's both because the restaurants/shops are closely packed and also because that compactness allows them to spill out onto the street. **Little Next Door's** patio is wonderful to have a coffee and make pretend you are anywhere else but Los Angeles. **Son of a Gun** is supposed to be top-notch—never tried it.

The Grove is, shopping-wise, weird, and it's almost schizophrenic at Christmas time when you hear the songs but the weather is above 20 Celsius. **The Original Farmers Market**, on the other hand, is spectacular. The paths are as narrow and a bit shoddy as the cobblestone pavements of *The Grove* are wide (that sentence makes grammatical sense, I promise you), and the overwhelming, crowded feeling is a rare one to find in Los Angeles. Eat as many pancakes as you can at

DuPars, which is one of the few places in Los Angeles that has any rights to call itself an establishment. **Loteria Grill's** original location here has closed, so go to W Pico if you want, but honestly, it was more decadent than delicious.

If you take *Wilshire Boulevard*, you will inevitably end up in **LACMA**. There are wonderful temporary exhibitions, as well as a few very out of the ordinary off-shoot pieces like Dürer's sketchings on a single wall or Japanese vertical paintings. And the permanent collection will keep you busy for one or two visits. It's not the Met, obviously, and it's not even a quality collection compared to other serious museums, but it has a lot of variety thanks to the disparate pavilions and the larger space. A fun day out for the family. **LaBrea Tar Pits** is also supposed to be educationally interesting, but it's both expensive, and you can just walk around yourself. Alright park, shit grass.

If you go south on *Fairfax*, you'll end up in... *South Fairfax Avenue*, where a small stretch is called Little Ethiopia. **Messob** was really good, their mead-ish drink was strong, and the atmosphere was colorful. Couldn't ask for more.

La Brea – Larchmont – Melrose – Fairfax

From LACMA, if you go further down Wilshire, it's honestly kind of a drag. *El Rey Theatre* is a nice landmark, but everything is just drenched in sun and feels tiresome, to be honest.

This will be easy: Basically, take *South La Brea Avenue* up north, stop at **La Brea Bakery and Café** if you want something reliable. I have an innate problem with modern Vietnamese restaurants because they seem to prim and proper. (I also have a problem with old looking Vietnamese restaurants, because it feels like they might just follow a recipe and not care for the extra step.) But whatever, both are good, and **Nong Lá** was quality Vietnamese, if not a bit too clinical.

When you reach *Beverly Boulevard*, make sure to catch a feature or two at **New Beverly Cinema**, which is a true landmark. People are really nice, there are a lot of regulars, and they are not afraid to yap on about Brian DePalma for ages in a really nice manner. Afterwards, have a beer or two at **Wirtshaus**. Their patio is soothing.

And then, take the Beverly Boulevard east to *Larchmont Boulevard*. I've never been here, and it seems a bit too gentrified. However, there's **Osteria Mamma**, which was delicious, and there also seem to be a stretch of Peruvian restaurants should you feel homesick! There's also *Paramount Studios* on the *Melrose Avenue* crossing, and that might be fun.

Take Melrose back west, enjoy all the cafes and ice cream parlors I've never been to (there was a place called **Froma**, but it's been permanently closed, so there goes my only recommendation), and stop at Fairfax to go south once again.

Alright, this stretch is honestly one of my favorite stretches in Los Angeles, because it felt just so old and traditional. I believe it was a Jewish neighborhood, hence **Canter's Deli** with its weird concert room at the back, and more importantly,

there was *Cinefamily*, which I have no idea what it is now, because it's the unluckiest place in town. A century old movie theatre that survived a fire as the Silent Movie Theater, a murder upon reopening, and perhaps will survive a sexual harassment case.¹³ Honestly, I'm not surprised there was a scandal—it broke out a few months before #MeToo—and may it close for all I care, but, having volunteered there, it was one of the few places in Los Angeles that gave me hope. I'd bike for 1,5 hours from Venice and back every week. And right across Cinefamily is apparently a high school, but I had only noticed the flat green space. Nice houses around. It always feels like a cool evening around here.

Anyway, you go down south even more and have something at *Jon & Vinny's*, which is expensive pasta for their casual airs, but still, worth it. On the other side of the avenue is *animal*, which, if you had one expensive meal option in Los Angeles, I would suggest you do it here.

And I would like to end on a personal note, if all thi wasn't personal enough. Once, just a few months before leaving Los Angeles, I stayed at an Airbnb around here by myself for a few days before visiting Turkey. We were renting out our place in Venice, and I wanted to stay for a bit longer, because I was trying to have dinner with this Brazilian woman I had fallen in love with at first sight, but the texting suddenly stopped. Even though I spent my remaining days with friends from Los Angeles, there was a blistering heat, and I didn't have WiFi at the apartment, so I just felt lonely and bored.

And this was a double-edged sword. Because here I was, in the part of the city I wanted to be in. Walking around was still out of the question due to the city layout, nothing was as nice as coming back from Fairfax to a place to myself, where I had no Internet distractions. And it felt good and hopeful.

But then I realized: this is how many newcomers to the city might feel. A place to yourself, coming and going, pretending to work or feeling like this is a step in your destiny. But I wasn't like those people, because I was doing something relatively successful in Los Angeles and not really liking my life. I felt like a tourist, so to speak. So I never knew if I was enjoying something that was temporarily pleasant, or I had felt the high of Los Angeles for the first time.

I also don't know if I would have ever pondered this much if there wasn't any Internet at the place. But it was definitely a feeling. (I realized the morning of my checkout that the apartment actually had WiFi, and I was just too stupid to see the modem under the television.)

¹³ Just checked. Nope, they did not. It's a goddamn ad agency now.

Table of Content (get it? Because everything is content now, and Los Angeles is about the entertainment industry, hence, content... yeah.)

West Hollywood	2
Beverly Hills	3
Century City	4
Pico-Robertson	4
Westwood	5
Westwood Avenue	6
Sawtelle	7
Brentwood	8
Malibu	8
Montana-Wilshire-Arizona-Santa Monica-Olympic etc. Avenues	8
Santa Monica Downtown	10
Venice	11
Marina Del Rey	16
Huntington, Redondo, & Manhattan Beach	17
Pico – Sunset Park – Mar Vista	17
Culver City	19
Crenshaw – Leimert Park	21
Inglewood	21
Torrance	22
South Los Angeles	22
Huntington Park	22
Downey	22

Koreatown	22
USC – Expo Park	23
Fashion District	23
Downtown	24
Chinatown	29
Angelino Heights – Echo Park – Silver Lake – Los Feliz	29
Glendale	31
Pasadena	32
Arcadia – Monterey Park – Alhambra	33
East Hollywood – Thai Town – Little Armenia	33
Griffith Park	34
Hollywood	34
Hollywood Hills	36
Studio City – Valley	36
The Grove – Little Ethiopia	36
La Brea – Larchmont – Melrose – Fairfax	37