

Beverly Hills noted for shopping, dining and its rich and diverse art and cultural history

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The Suburban

BEVERLY HILLS- Synonymous with luxury, from world famous Rodeo Drive to five star restaurants and hotels, Beverly Hills (www.lovebeverlyhills.com) is one must stop on any visit to California. During our recent visit we were fortunate to secure reservations at the Sofitel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills.

Besides its reputation as a shopping and restaurant paradise, Beverly Hills has a rich and diverse art and cultural history. Sightseeing tours are popular for discovering architectural highlights, famous landmarks and celebrity haunts. From Anne Fontaine to David Yurman, more than 100 retailers are located on swank Rodeo Drive. It was just announced that model Kate Moss will return as the emblematic face of David Yurman's, after a three-year break from the brand.

"The fall campaign is about a return to the classics," founder and CEO David Yurman wrote of the collaboration. "Our jewelry has evolved, but the style is always timeless. We chose Kate because she is iconic, sophisticated and rock and roll all at the same time – a combination that is the very core of this brand."

According to Maor Batito, one of the sales executives at the Beverly Hills store, the Yurmans bring staff like herself to their head office in New York to keep them very much up to date with the trends.

Rodeo Drive is one of the world's great streets for designer label and haute couture boutiques and shops. Near there is another popular tourist attraction, the Paley Center for Media, where visitors can select, view and listen to titles from a library of 120,000 TV shows and radio programs.

The Saban Theatre (<http://www.sabanthatre.org>) is an Art Deco venue built in 1930, formerly known as the Fox Wilshire and one of 20th Century Fox's premier movie theatres for several decades before it was renovated into a stage theatre in 1981. Since 2005, it has been owned and operated by Temple of the Arts, an organization dedicated to the integration of Judaism with the arts. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in April 2012---

Run by the City of Beverly Hills, the Trolley Tour is a great introduction to the neighborhood. Think of it as the 411 on the 90210. As the name suggests, an old-fashioned-looking trolley car transports riders through the city, while the tour leader shares information on its art, architecture and history, over the course of 40 minutes. Operating days depend on the season, but all tours depart from the southeast corner of Rodeo and Dayton hourly from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The cost is \$5 for adults and \$1 for kids.

The sprawling Greystone Mansion, built in 1928, serves as the location for many movie shoots and weddings. Since it functions as a public park, the outdoor areas of the estate, including the manicured lawns and courtyard areas, are all free of charge—even parking is free. Unfortunately, access inside the Tudor-style home is not permitted except at very special private events.

You can get up close and personal with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, a non-profit organization of actors, directors, writers, technicians and producers in the film industry that you probably know first and foremost for their yearly Academy Awards. The organization is headquartered in Beverly Hills and has a couple of galleries for perusal. On the first floor Grand Lobby and Fourth Floor are gal-

leries open to the public seven days per week.

The Rose Garden at Beverly Gardens Park lies along a two-block stretch between Foothill and Alpine, and, just like the rest of the park, along the north side of Santa Monica Boulevard. You'll find two metal dome trellises, a water fountain and lighted bollards for night-time visits among the bed of roses that features a variety of different types. While you're there, walk along the granite path as you look for the other features at Beverly Gardens Park, including the Wilshire Electric Fountain and Cactus Garden.

Following an excellent experience at the Sofitel in New York City, we found accommodations at the Sofitel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills (<http://www.sofitel-los-angeles.com/en>) at 8555 Beverly Blvd. This spot blends Hollywood glamour, European elegance and French style to create a sophisticated experience. There is nothing quite like awakening to sweeping Hollywood Hill views and sun lit French doors. You can savor distinctive and delicious French and local cuisine at Estérel Restaurant and discover masterfully crafted cocktails, with nightly live entertainment at Riviera 31 Lounge Bar. Guests also have the opportunity to indulge their senses at Le Spa.

The hotel boasts a prime location, one mile from Beverly Hills and West Hollywood, at the epicenter of LA style. It is located across the street from Beverly Shopping Center, just minutes from world-class shopping on Rodeo Drive, Robertson, Melrose, The Grove and the vibrant nightlife of the Sunset Strip and 30 minutes from LAX airport and Santa Monica Pier.

There are 295 rooms here on 10 floors, including 26 suites and two Presidential Suites. Room amenities include: the SoBed - Sofitel's luxurious feather-top and duvet sleep system; high-definition LCD television, with a laptop connection; wired and wireless Internet access; a Bose Wave music system; minibar; safety deposit box; and a spacious bath with the most wonderful rainfall shower, along with luxurious French toiletries.

We stayed in a Beverly Luxury King room. There is a lovely outdoor pool with lounge chairs on the second floor. While I enjoyed using the business centre near the front desk, with a number of iMac computers at one's disposal with a printer, in the evening when the second floor banquet hall was quiet I found myself a couch and table and I was able to work comfortably by spreading my work about.

The staff here are extremely polite and helpful, with a full concierge desk at your disposal. The latter helped me out a lot with directions, restaurant

options and tour stops.

Many of LA's best restaurants are in Beverly Hills. On North Beverly Drive, you will find St. Urbain Bagels and Nate 'N Al of Beverly Hills Delicatessen - two spots with deep Jewish backgrounds. Native Montrealer Rudy Meleiezer opened the former and upon entering the bagel and sandwich stop you are greeted by a message which describes St. Urbain Street in Montreal and its Jewish history. The latter was established in 1945 and is one of the Los Angeles area's most noted Jewish delis.

In zeroing in on one fine dining spot to sample, people kept pointing me towards Mastro's, for which there are locations in California, Nevada, Arizona, Illinois and soon New York City. We made a reservation at Mastro's Steakhouse (www.mastros-restaurants.com) at 246 North Canon Drive in Beverly Hills, arriving towards 8:30 p.m. on a weekday evening. The place was packed, with many people waiting for tables. In the dimly lit dining room, a singing group belted out tunes from today and years past. We were greeted by not one, but two, charming waiters attired in white tuxedos and general manager Patrick Barrett.

Recognized as one of the top 10 steakhouses in the U.S., it is also recognized for its sumptuous seafood selections and one of the best desserts I have ever tasted in my life – the famous and irresistible warm butter cake.

Mastro's was purchased last year by Landry's Inc. of Houston, which already owns the Mortons chain.

There was a wide choice of appetizers and salads to choose from. We targeted our attention towards the signature Iced Seafood Tower to start. You basically build your own tower. In our case we opted for the Dungeness crab cocktail and some large shrimp and. It was a delicious combination, with three side sauces available to complement the taste. The next decision was to go with meat or seafood? We settled on sharing a 12 ounce bone-in filet, which was out of this world, cut like butter and was so tasty we did not even need any steak sauce. In addition, we split a two and half pound lobster, which our two waiters brought to the table and cut up so neatly we only needed our own knives and forks to enjoy every morsel – no messy utensils required to break it apart. Among their wide selection of sides, we chose the garlic mashed potatoes and they were superb. The rack of lamb and veal chops looked appetizing as well, perhaps for consideration next time.

At Mastro's you need to make sure to leave some food on your plate if necessary in order to save room for their warm butter cake. One large piece is easily enough for three or four people to share. It is topped with vanilla ice cream and served with a generous side of whipped cream. The cake, which includes cream cheese (the recipe is top secret), cuts so easily you only need your fork. Every morsel is so absolutely delicious that without any self control any person in their right mind can keep carving away on your own until there is nothing left. It is simply that addictive.

Mastro's also has a very wide selection of wines, liquors and beers. It is open Sunday through Thursday, from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.; and Friday and Saturdays, 5 p.m. to midnight. Info: 310-888-8782 .

