



A look at LA: From the Montage Beverly Hills to the Warner Brothers Tour

By *Mike Cohen*

BEVERLY HILLS

Should we stay in Los Angeles, Hollywood or Beverly Hills? This was the decision we had to make for the second leg of our trip to California. Downtown LA is best suited for the business crowd; Hollywood, in my opinion, is just a little too busy; and Beverly Hills (www.lovebeverlyhills.com) is simply one of world's most sought-after locales.

Centrally located in Greater Los Angeles, this is recognized as a premier vacation and business travel destination, boasting beautiful weather year-round, acclaimed full-service and boutique hotel accommodations, sumptuous dining, and incomparable shopping. Synonymous with Hollywood glamour, Beverly Hills enjoys an international reputation as the home and playground of A-list movie stars. The city is not only known worldwide for its grand mansions and trends shops along Rodeo Drive, but also for its multitude of art and architecture, spas and salons, and exceptional walkability.

There are self-guided walking tours of Beverly Hills, screenings at The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the historic Greystone Mansion, museum exhibits, art shows, concerts and film festivals.

THE MONTAGE

We were thrilled to experience the beautiful Montage Beverly Hills (www.montagehotels.com/beverlyhills), ideally situated for shopping and dining among Rodeo Drive's storied collection of shops, restaurants and galleries. The hotel features 201 well-appointed guestrooms, including 55 suites as well as 20 private residences and Spa Montage Beverly Hills. We stayed in a luxury one bedroom 875 square foot Beverly Suite, which features a king-sized bed, a private living room and one and one-half bathrooms. There is a very large book shelf, with reading material. Overlooking stunning views of the Beverly Hills skyline, the living room offers a comfortable sitting area with a queen-sized sleeper sofa and a dining table for two in select suites. Every indulgence imaginable is provided, including stunning marble and mosaic-tiled bathrooms with generous tubs and dual sinks, an executive desk with a 42-inch LCD television and an in-room guest tablet featuring access to all of the hotel's amenities and services at the touch of a button. There is complimentary champagne awaiting for you in the mini-bar upon arrival.

Montage Beverly Hills was the first hotel and residences to receive Gold LEED certification in Southern California. In 2015, Montage Beverly Hills was named the #1



The front of the gorgeous Beverly Hills Montage Hotel.

Hotel in Los Angeles in the Condé Nast Traveler Annual Readers' Choice Awards.

Guests here have access to the rooftop retreat, complete with a saline swimming pool and an exceptionally large whirlpool. Private poolside cabanas, The Rooftop Bar & Grill and lush landscaping are set against the backdrop of panoramic views of the Beverly Hills cityscape and the Hollywood Hills. The Rooftop Grill serves fresh California cuisine in a comfortable atmosphere that perfectly complements an afternoon by the pool. We were absolutely enthralled with this setting and the welcoming staff, who set us up so comfortably and kept checking on us.

The valet parking system works beautifully. Call from your room and your vehicle is waiting outside.

The Montage has 10 ADA Accessible rooms (two are suites). Three of the rooms have roll in showers and seven rooms have grab bars in the shower. There are two emergency evacuation chairs in case the elevators are out during a power outage. The hotel provides escorts for guests with disabilities or those coming from the hospital. All of the entrances and exits and food and beverage outlets are ADA Compliant. I noticed lift chairs located at the ninth floor for the pool and Jacuzzi usage. Elevators access every

level. There is a ramp on the second floor, with direct access to rooms 214 to 226.

DINING OUT

Montage Beverly Hills has partnered with chef and restaurateur, Geoffrey Zackarian who brought two new concepts, Georgie (<http://www.georgierestaurant.com>) and The Garden Bar, to the hotel and local community. Georgie, Zakarian's first Los Angeles restaurant, is a lush and textured space with a relaxed and playful ambience. Located on the ground floor of the hotel, The Garden Bar is a bustling, dynamic lounge adjacent to Georgie and offers classic cocktails and all day fare in a comfortable yet refined setting. Both concepts feature indoor and outdoor seating overlooking the spectacular Beverly Canon Gardens.

Georgie, with its warm and welcoming environment, is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers vibrant, thoughtfully balanced dishes that showcase Zakarian's Modern American cuisine. The Garden Bar serves as a glamorous neighborhood gathering place with a robust beverage and cocktail program, in addition to a lighter food menu offered morning to night.

We thoroughly enjoyed our dinner at



Georgie, where our wonderful server Olivia guided us perfectly through a very impressive looking menu. For starters we shared some delicious Dungeness crab and a dozen East and West Coast oysters. For main courses we opted for the smoked beef cheek, the poached Dover sole and the New England rack of lamb, each beautifully presented and tantalizing. Olivia surprised us with an order of beet risotto, something I would not have selected on my own. It was superb! So was another appetizer, the pâté en croute and a side of mushrooms (stuffed with more mushrooms). Dessert was an absolute delight, with some Georgie donut bites, lemon basil roasted peaches, pineapple upside down cake and house made sorbet and gelato. It was a warm summer evening, so we dined on the lovely outdoor terrace. Whether you are staying at the Montage or are anywhere near the LA/Beverly Hills area, make Georgie a stop on your dining tour!

The restaurant and terrace are completely handicapped accessible.

THE PALM

Last summer we experienced the Palm Restaurant (<http://thepalm.com/Beverly-Hills>), for the first time while in Atlantic City. When we found out there was a relatively new Palm location in Beverly Hills it moved to the top of our list. Just a few blocks East of Rodeo Drive at 267 North Cannon Drive, this 6,000 square foot 185 seat dining establishment opened its doors on November 7, 2014. It did so at the same time as the long-established West Hollywood location was closing its doors.

General Manager Jeff Kops and Executive Chef Pedro Inoscencio run a well oiled machine here. We had the novelty of walking only a few doors away from our hotel. There is valet parking for those who drive there.

Leather booths dot the main dining room. There is private dining area in the back, as well as a large window-side table directly in the front. As per the Palm's signature, the main wall depicts iconic L.A. destinations. In fact it serves as a living wall where caricatures of new "regulars" are being painted over time.

We started off with one of their outstanding house drinks, a cherry blossom- CIROC Vodka, PAMA Pomegrante Liqueur, hand-squeezed lemon juice, cane syrup, topped with Nicola Feuillet Brut Champagne. As an appetizer we shared a delicious order of baked clams, served on top of some superb sauce which our server recommended we dip our bread in. It was a good tip. The Monday Night "Chop Chop" Salad (finely chopped romaine, iceberg, tomato, onion, roasted pepper, radish, scallion and anchovies) was amazing. Then came the main course, a fabulous surf and turf we put together – a 28 ounce prime Porterhouse steak and a four pound lobster. The steak was cut nicely from the bone and divided in two. A staff member then came over and cracked the lobster for us, something I always appreciate. We added some whipped potatoes with roasted garlic on the side. What a spectacular dining experience this was! And it was not over. For dessert we had the house speciality, warm cinnamon sugar donut holes with raspberry and chocolate sauce along with whipped cream and some ice cream

Signature dishes at The Palm also include jumbo shrimp, stellar bacon-wrapped scallops, classic Italian fare like chicken parmigiana, prime steaks, seafood staples such as jumbo lump crab cakes and swordfish steak, with a cherry tomato olive relish and signature sides such as Half & Half, cottage fries and fried onions and asparagus fritti with lemon garlic butter.

The restaurant is completely handicapped accessible and on one level. For reservations call 310-550-8811 or do so directly via their website.

WARNER BROTHERS TOUR

When in LA you really should not miss an opportunity to experience the Warner Brothers Studio Tour (<https://www.wbstudiotour.com>) in Burbank. This is a three hour visit inside a real working Hollywood studio. Guests get to explore outdoor sets and soundstages used to create productions such as Gilmore Girls, The Big Bang Theory and Argo. Each tour includes exclusive access to original props, costumes, picture cars, and sets used from Batman to Friends. Additionally, studio tour guests stop at the DC Uni-

verse - DC Comics Exhibit, the real Central Perk Friends set, spots used for the motion picture La La Land (such as the café where Emma Stone's character worked), the original Batman Museum - Batmobile Collection, and so much more. We went into the buildings where the Ellen Degeneres and Conan O'Brien shows are recorded. There is plenty of time to pop out of your trolley and take photos.

While we were at the WB, we went behind the scenes of the hit tween drama Pretty Little Liars. We had the opportunity to see and experience a collection of authentic props and wardrobes from the show for the first time, including iconic costumes worn by the

beloved Harry Potter films. Highlights of the Fantastic Beasts experience include costumes worn by Eddie Redmayne (Newt Scamander), Katherine Waterston (Tina Goldstein), Alison Sudol (Queenie Goldstein), Dan Fogler (Jacob Kowalski) and Colin Farrell (Percival Graves), as well as Newt's case of creatures. Tour guests are now able to explore how J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World has been brought to life on the silver screen over the past 15 years.

Soundstage and Backlot availability is subject to change daily due to production on the lot. No two tours are alike. A studio and deluxe tour experience is unique every day of the week. And with more than 450,000



A scene from the Warner Brothers Studio tour.

show's five lead characters: Aria Montgomery (Lucy Hale), Hanna Marin (Ashley Benson), Emily Fields (Shay Mitchell), Spencer Hastings (Troian Bellisario), and Alison DiLaurentis (Sasha Pieterse). In addition to authentic character wardrobes from the series, *Pretty Little Liars: Made Here* also showcased a variety of memorable set design elements from the show, including a recreation of A's lair, complete with costumes, props, and décor; all five *Pretty Little Liars* dolls; select pieces from the Caleb, Ezra, and Toby characters, including Toby's Rosewood police uniform; the Liar's Lament "endgame" board; Radley Sanatorium; Halloween/Masquerade Ball episode costumes; and an interactive green-screen photo opportunity.

On December 9, 2016, a reimagined exhibit opened offering an up-close look at authentic props and costumes from *Fantastic Beasts* and *Where to find them* and the

registered artifacts, the Warner Bros. Prop Department contains countless treasures used in nearly a century's worth of entertainment. The latter was established in the early days of the Studio to house the antiques from the very first Warner Bros. productions. Today, it has grown to over 200,000 square feet and four floors of set dressing. From *Casablanca* to *The Hangover*, you'll see history unfold right before your eyes during your journey through arguably the largest prop department in the world.

Stage 48: Script to Screen features an interactive soundstage exploring phases of the film and television production process. Here is where you see how Hollywood is made. The knowledgeable tour guides, like

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ours named Tim, will happily answer all of your production-related questions—and reveal even more of Hollywood’s best-kept secrets—during this 45-minute, self-guided experience at one of the best things to do in Los Angeles. From screenwriting and casting, to audio mixing and the glory of awards season, guests will enjoy a truly immersive look at how the magic of Hollywood is made. I even got to hold a real Academy Award trophy for the camera, weighing in at eight pounds.

The best way to purchase tickets is online via wbstudiotour.com and clicking the “Buy Tickets Now” button, located at the top of the website. Online purchases allow you to print your tickets at home for your convenience. The parking lot is located at 3400 Warner Blvd. Burbank, CA 91505.

Warner Bros strive to create an environment that is accessible to all guests. If you or a member of your group has questions regarding special assistance, call 1-877-4WB-TOUR or email studio.tour@

warnerbros.com in advance. In the event that someone in your party requires a loaned wheelchair, this can be provided free of charge. Registered service dogs are allowed on the tour. However, pets and all other animals are not permitted. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters are available upon request. If you require an interpreter during your visit, contact the tour Center 72 hours in advance so that they may guarantee this service for you.

MORE ON ACCESSIBILITY

Los Angeles is one of best cities in the country to visit for those with disabilities, offering convenient access to transportation and attractions throughout the city. LAX provides various services for the disabled, including ground transportation and wheelchair services. Access Services is the LA County Consolidated Transportation

Services Agency (CTSA), which provides a shared ride service. All Metro Rail lines and stations are accessible to persons in wheelchairs, while Metro buses are equipped with automatic wheelchair lifts. LA’s most popular attractions provide disabled access, including elevators and ramps at the California Science Center, wheelchair seats at Dodger Stadium, wheelchair service at The Grove Shopping Plaza, various rides and attractions at Universal Studios Hollywood, and many more. Los Angeles airports are committed to ensuring the best travel experience and equal access to all of its passengers and visitors, including those with disabilities and special needs. The following sections highlight disabled access and services provided by Los Angeles International Airport, Bob Hope Airport, and LA/Ontario International Airport.

For the most current information on passenger and baggage screening, visit the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website at www.tsa.gov. Los Angeles is one of the most disabled-accessible cities in the world according to the true experts — not bureaucrats, but disabled visitors themselves who know what really works and what doesn’t. They know that a couple of high steps at the front entrance can make a place off-limits. In LA, visitors with disabilities can they really enjoy themselves and fully participate.

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Spider-Man and friends help special needs kids

Spider-Man rappelled down a building in downtown Montreal September 26 as part of the Société des enfants handicapés du Québec’s Drop Zone fundraiser, which raises funds and awareness for disabled children in Quebec.

Spider-Man was on hand in advance of his show MARVEL UNIVERSE LIVE! AGE OF HEROES, which will be presented at Laval’s Place Bell November 10-12, 2017. This newest installment will see Spider-Man accompanied by his Guardians of the Galaxy friends, including Star-Lord, Gamora, Groot, Rocket and Drax; The Avengers, including Iron Man, Thor, Captain America, Black Panther, Hulk and Black Widow and many more.

Info: www.enfantshandicapes.com and www.evenk.ca

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