

TRAVEL TALES

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE JEWISH TRAVELLER

By MIKE COHEN

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES: In the city of Los Angeles (www.discover-losangeles.com), the downtown area is known for a fabulous convention centre, the magnificent Staples Center, the LA Live Entertainment complex and a number of other attractions.

This is actually a pretty good place to base yourself, specifically because of an excellent Metro (subway) system. Not only was it quicker than a

cab to reach our destinations, but the monetary savings were significant.

I am told that Downtown Los Angeles is experiencing a renaissance. Things to do in include world class entertainment venues and museums, incredible restaurants, a thriving nightlife scene and walkable streets. LA Live is a spectacular entertainment complex offering nightlife, restaurants and live music venues, including the

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BUILDER STAN FELDMAN WAS AMONG those inducted recently into Baycrest's Pro-Am Hockey Hall of Fame. The Baycrest Pro-Am Hockey Hall of Fame highlights and honours individuals who have gone above and beyond for Baycrest's annual Scotiabank Pro-Am for Alzheimer's hockey tournament, reconnecting key participants with the cause for which they fundraise. This year a total of 10 people were inducted under the categories of Player, Builder, and NHL Alumni. Pictured above Stan Feldman is seen with the legendary Gordie Howe at the inductee ceremony.



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Grammy Museum, ESPN Zone, Lucky Strike Lanes and Regal Cinemas. Across the street, The Staples Center is across the street.

WHERE TO STAY:
The Sheraton Los Angeles Downtown Hotel (www.sheratonlosangelesdowntown.com) turned out to be a terrific place to stay. Located in the heart of the downtown financial district, this large facility boasts 495 guest rooms, two restaurants, a lobby lounge, a full-service business center and a fitness center. The hotel is an easy walk to museums, theatre, and sports attractions. A Macy's Department store is located right next door.

Located on preferred floors, Sheraton Club guest rooms offer upgraded amenities, and complimentary fitness center access. Club guests also have special access to the Club Lounge, a relaxing, upscale space offering complimentary breakfast, afternoon hors d'oeuvres and a variety of beverage options. A copier/fax/printer and complimentary office supplies are ready to go. Guest rooms are completely smoke-free. They feature 37 inch flat screen TVs. Officials at the hotel are excited about a huge makeover which is

about to occur in their area, dubbed The Bloc. The hotel is being renovated and upgraded to the tune of \$40 million. It is part of a \$160 million development of The Bloc itself. Over the course of seven months, the guestrooms of this prominent hotel will receive an Art Deco transformation that draws inspiration from the city's significant historical architectural details.

Expressing a modern interpretation of time-honored classics, the design will include Sheraton's signature offerings and technological amenities geared towards the connected traveller: Sheraton Sweet Sleeper® bed, designed to meet AAA's Five Diamond Award® Criteria; distinctive, decorative lighting, including power outlets at the base of all fixtures; completely renovated marble tile bathrooms; technologically-enabled guestrooms, with high-speed Internet, an LCD flat panel television and an MP3 docking station; and state-of-the-art wireless radio frequency identification locks that allow for guests to bypass the front desk and check-in remotely. Other features will include an in-room safe, refrigerator and new carpeting. The hotel's 26,000

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square feet of transformed flexible indoor and outdoor event space and many new amenities will include a swimming pool for everyone,

plus an outdoor spa and cabanas on the third floor, along with adjacent meeting space for social and corporate clients wanting easy access to the pool area. Food and beverage service will be available. A variety of new dining choices will accommodate the needs of guests in the hotel and the new eateries to be located in the adjacent mall, where a convenient new Metro subway station will serve visitors, local residents and business commuters.

"Some very exciting changes are taking place at our hotel that will create a more inviting atmosphere for our guests to relax or connect with friends, family and colleagues," said the hotel's Jewish general manager, Jonathan Litvack.

JEWISH COMMUNITY: According to the newspaper Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, the LA Jewish community is in a state of flux thanks to a constant deluge of newcomers: Persian Jews, Russian Jews, Israelis, a large population of openly gay and lesbian Jews and a constant stream of creative young Jews from around the world lured by the entertainment industry. Even the city's mayor, Eric Garcetti, personifies this ethnic mosaic, with a Mexican-American father, a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish wife. As a member of IKAR, a non-denominational, progressive, egalitarian Jewish community, Garcetti also exemplifies another trend that characterizes Jewish LA: Post-denominationalism. That is, rabbis and congregations that refuse to put themselves in a box and feel beholden to a "movement," whether that be Orthodox, Conservative or Reform.

Mike Cohen's email address is info@mikecohen.ca. Follow his travels at www.sandboxworld.com/travel and on Twitter @mikecohencl.

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