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A self-guided walking tour of Downtown Los Angeles

07/11/2017

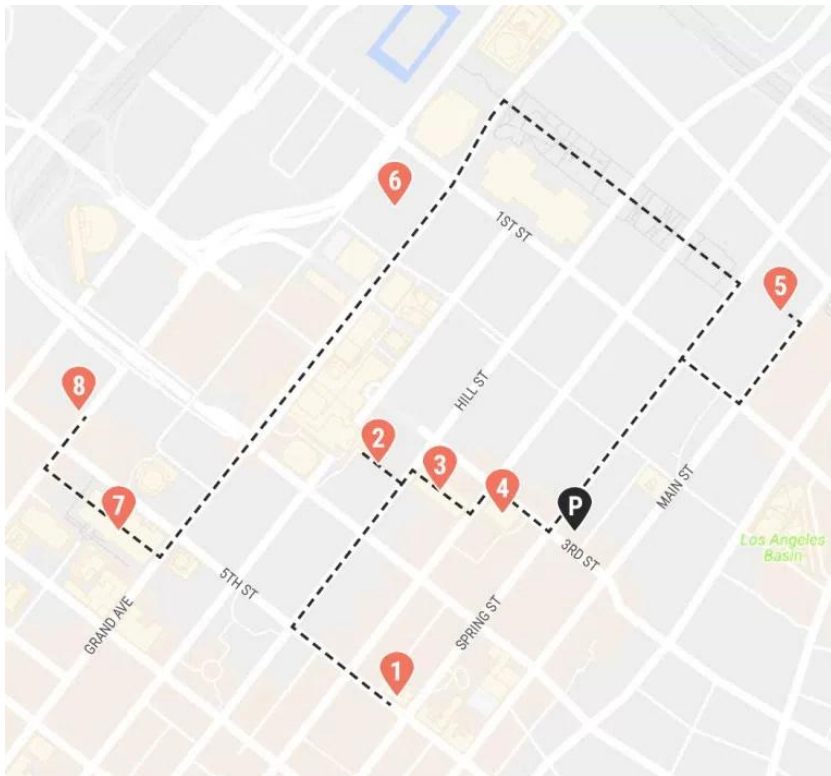


I have visited Los Angeles a total of 4 times, and only in my most recent visit did I finally explore Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA).

A few months ago, I purchased tickets for the Museum of Ice Cream – a pop up museum in the LA Arts District which was showing for the summer of 2017. The museum was nearby downtown, so I considered this the perfect opportunity to venture into the city center.

Most visitors will skip Downtown LA in favour of Hollywood, Santa Monica, or the theme parks. It's understandable – LA's inner city district isn't really known for having tourist hot spots, but I believe that it's worth putting aside a morning or an afternoon to explore.

I did some research before my visit, scouring various internet articles on the best things to see in DTLA. Here's my self-guided walking tour of Downtown Los Angeles, plus a map I made for your reference!



Note: Los Angeles is a driving city. There are some trains and buses, but generally people drive everywhere. We spent at least 20 minutes driving around DTLA trying to find cheap street parking before we gave up and went into one of the paid car parks. I'm fairly sure we ended up parking in Joe's Garage on the corner of 3rd St and Spring St, which cost us about \$11 to park there for a few hours.

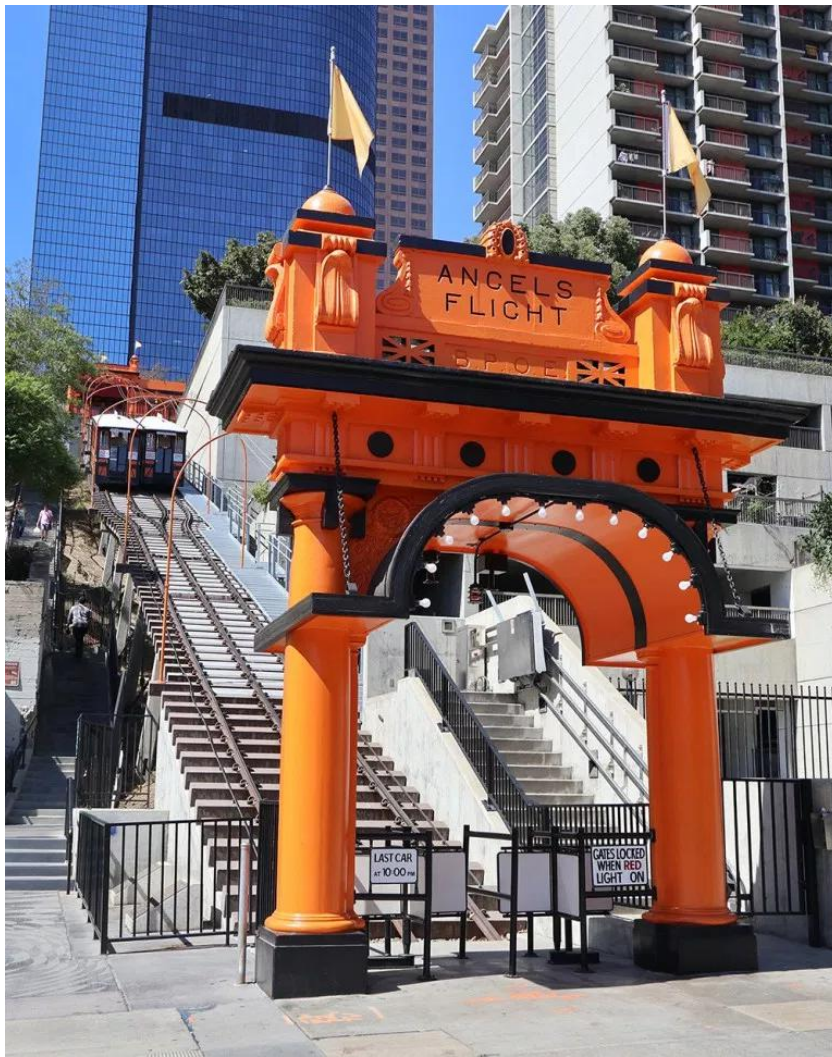




1. THE LAST BOOKSTORE

We started our walking tour at **The Last Bookstore** (<http://lastbookstorela.com/>), a highly Instagrammable book shop in DTLA. This place might seem like a regular bookstore on first glance, but when you look a little closer, you'll find that it has a wonderful collection of book themed art hidden throughout the shelves.

Upstairs, there are book sculptures like the above magical warped bookshelves, or regular bookshelves with circular holes in the middle, or books ordered not by any particular genre but by the rainbow colours of their covers. It's what I imagine the mind of *Matilda* looks like on the inside.



2. ANGELS FLIGHT RAILWAY

Angels Flight Railway (<https://angelsflight.org/>) is a funicular that opened in 1901. It was originally used to take passengers between Olive St and Hill St to shop in the markets at the bottom of the hill. You can still ride these adorable railway cars for just \$1.00.

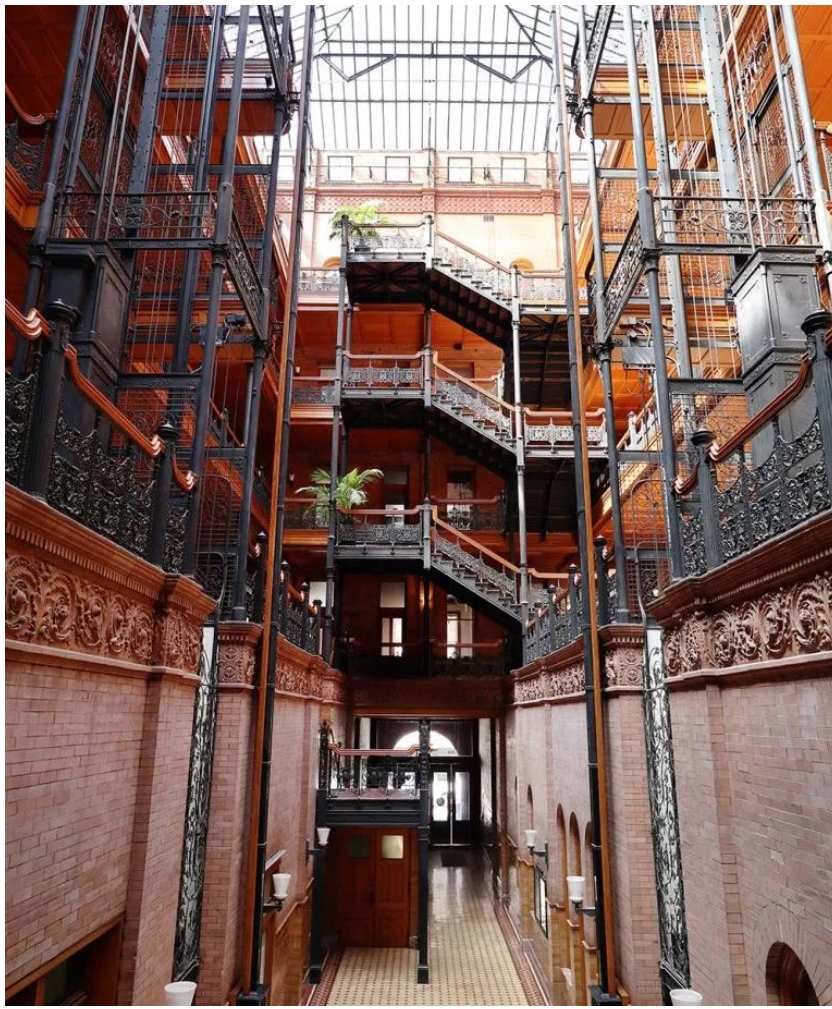
Unfortunately the railway was closed for maintenance when Rob and I visited, but it was still interesting to see this historic piece of Los Angeles juxtaposed with all the new skyscrapers surrounding it.



3. GRAND CENTRAL MARKET

Grand Central Market (<http://www.grandcentralmarket.com/>) is another historic point in DTLA. This market has been operating since 1917 (100 years!) and was once the go-to place for LA's stylish residents to buy their produce, baked goods, flowers, and coffee.

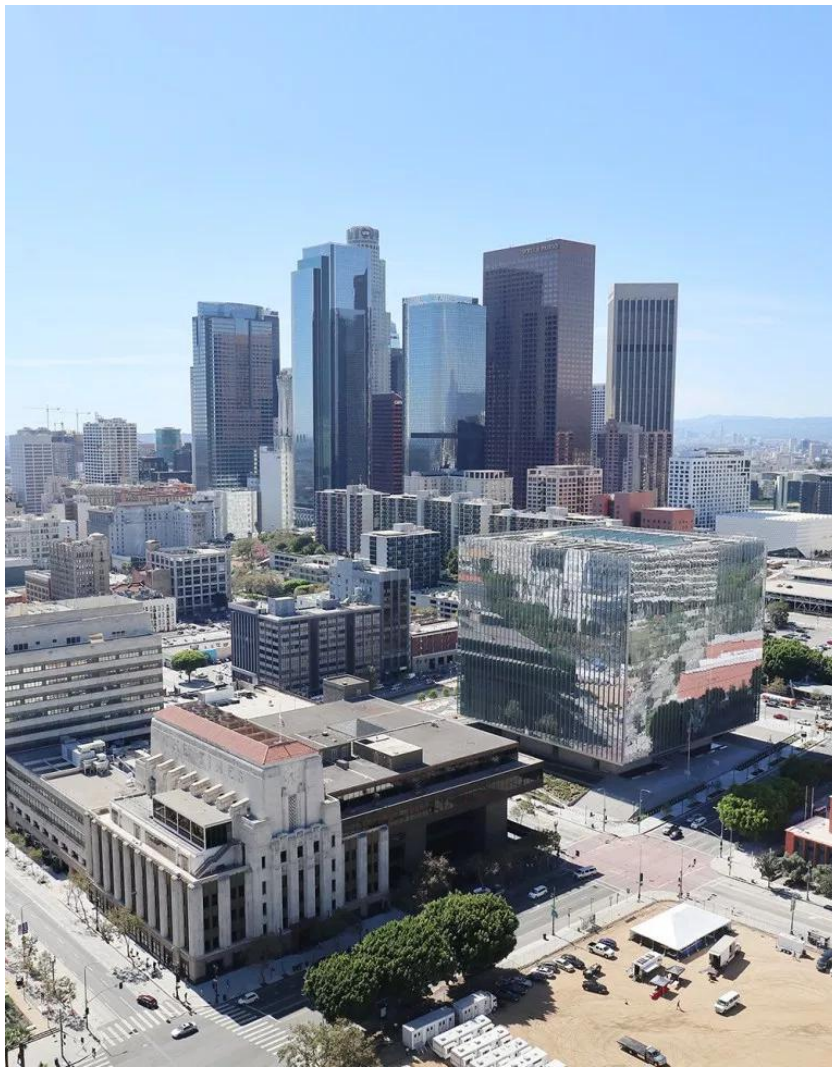
The current market is full of everything you would imagine fancy LA people to be craving, like organic kale salads and freshly pressed fruit juices. If you're interested in discovering the history of the market while you wander the stalls, try this [Downtown Walking Tour](http://www.dpbolvw.net/click-7638986-11769739?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tours4fun.com%2Flos-angeles-downtown-old-new-tour.html%3Futm_source%3Dcj%26utm_medium%3Daffiliate%26utm_campaign%3Dfeed&cjsku=3001-70561) (http://www.dpbolvw.net/click-7638986-11769739?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tours4fun.com%2Flos-angeles-downtown-old-new-tour.html%3Futm_source%3Dcj%26utm_medium%3Daffiliate%26utm_campaign%3Dfeed&cjsku=3001-70561).



4. BRADBURY BUILDING

I only knew about the [Bradbury Building](http://bradburybuilding.blogspot.com.au/) (<http://bradburybuilding.blogspot.com.au/>) as an architecturally beautiful landmark from a list of things to see in DTLA, but Rob got pretty excited when he realised that this building was a major part of the set of Blade Runner (the old movie, not the new one!).

The building is mostly closed to the public except for the lobby area. If you enter from 3rd street, you'll step right up to the most photogenic spot on the first set of stairs. The interior has a huge skylight ceiling, which lights up the wrought-iron balustrades and Victorian-style architecture.



5. CITY HALL

I was desperate to find a place to see views of downtown, so when I discovered that City Hall has a free observation deck, I quickly added it to my tour of DTLA.

It was a little confusing to get up the tower as there is no signage for it. What you have to do is this: Go in the visitors entrance off Main Street, then tell the security guard that you want to go up to the observation deck. They'll give you some instructions, which is to go up 20 or so floors in one elevator, then switch to another elevator to go up another few floors, then once you have gone as far up as possible you take the stairs the rest of the way.

On a clear day, you'll get a fabulous view of Los Angeles from this viewpoint! When you're ready to leave, exit onto Spring Street then walk through the lovely Grand Park.



6. WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

The Walt Disney Concert Hall is known for its unique appearance. Designed by the famous architect Frank Gehry, the concert hall opened in 2003 and has been a center of musical culture in Los Angeles ever since.

While Rob and I just admired the building from the outside, you can actually explore the inside as well. [Self-guided tours](https://www.musiccenter.org/visit/Exploring-the-Center/Self-Guided-Tours/) (<https://www.musiccenter.org/visit/Exploring-the-Center/Self-Guided-Tours/>) are available on most days between 10AM – 2PM or [guided tours](https://www.musiccenter.org/visit/Exploring-the-Center/Guided/) (<https://www.musiccenter.org/visit/Exploring-the-Center/Guided/>) are offered twice daily on most Thursdays to Sundays. Both tour options take 60 minutes and are 100% free!



7. LA PUBLIC LIBRARY

I have a thing about photographing libraries. I just love the towering bookcases, and the architecture of a library is often grand and interesting. The Los Angeles Public Library was no exception.

We initially took the escalators up to the top level for views of the atrium, which was mildly impressive, but the real wow-factor was found in the rotunda. This space has a gigantic dome ceiling, and every surface except the floor has been covered with elaborate paintings, some of which have been there since the library opened in the 1920s.

I really can't describe how beautiful this room was, you have to see it for yourself! If you want to learn more about the architecture of the Los Angeles Public Library, the building is included as a stop on this [Downtown Architecture Tour](http://www.jdoqocy.com/click-) (<http://www.jdoqocy.com/click->



8. BAR WITH A VIEW

In true Rob-and-Ash-style, we wanted to end our afternoon tour at a rooftop bar. Originally my plan was to go to [The Standard Hotel](http://www.anrdoezrs.net/click-7638986-10479934?) (<http://www.anrdoezrs.net/click-7638986-10479934?>

[url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.expedia.com%2Fpubspec%2Fscripts%2Ffeap.asp%3FPRID%3D1%26GOTO%3DHOTDETAILS%26HotID%3D886918&cjsku=8](http://www.anrdoezrs.net/click-7638986-10479934?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.expedia.com%2Fpubspec%2Fscripts%2Ffeap.asp%3FPRID%3D1%26GOTO%3DHOTDETAILS%26HotID%3D886918&cjsku=8) their rooftop bar, but as we exited the elevators, a security guard promptly told me that there were no cameras allowed and that I would have to check it in downstairs before coming back up to enjoy the bar minus my camera.

Now I have no idea why the hotel thinks that banning cameras at the rooftop bar is a good idea. What good is a view without a way to capture it? And wouldn't people just use the cameras built into their smartphones to take photos instead? Fuming, I left the hotel and looked up another bar which would give us views of the city and allow me to take my camera with me.

We settled on the BonaVista Lounge, located in the [The Westin Bonaventure Hotel](http://www.tkqlhce.com/click-7638986-10479934?) ([url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.expedia.com%2Fpubspec%2Fscripts%2Ffeap.asp%3FPRID%3D1%26GOTO%3DHOTDETAILS%26HotID%3D11376&cjsku=11](http://www.tkqlhce.com/click-7638986-10479934?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.expedia.com%2Fpubspec%2Fscripts%2Ffeap.asp%3FPRID%3D1%26GOTO%3DHOTDETAILS%26HotID%3D11376&cjsku=11) From the outside, the hotel appears as a set of golden glass towers. The lounge on the 34th floor is actually a revolving restaurant. The dream of the 70s is alive in Los Angeles.

While this kind of venue isn't usually one that I would choose to visit on my travels, I have to admit it was satisfying to sit on the puffy armchairs and drink wine while the lounge did a full rotation over 1.5 hours. The view was pretty great – we could even see as far as Venice Beach right as the sun was setting over the ocean!

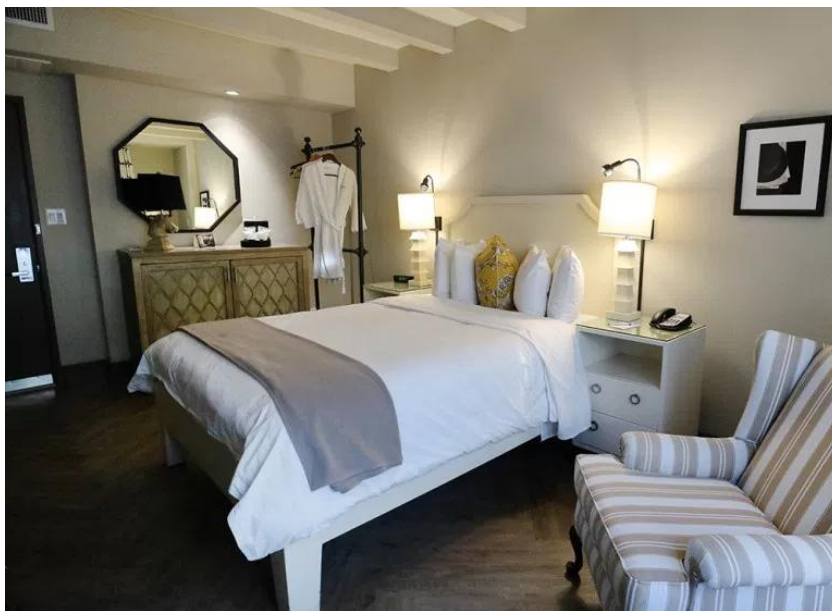


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WHERE I STAYED:

I based my stay in Los Angeles at the [Hollywood Hotel](http://www.hollywoodhotel.net/) (<http://www.hollywoodhotel.net/>). This hotel is not actually in the heart of Hollywood as its name might suggest, but on the far east end – much closer to DTLA (which is one of the reasons I wanted to stay there). The location was within 15 minutes drive of Downtown, Griffith Observatory, and Hollywood.

The hotel has a bunch of recently updated rooms, one of which I was lucky enough to get for my booking. If you decide to stay at the Hollywood Hotel, you should definitely ask for one of these rooms if you have the option to choose!



([HTTP://WWW.DPBOLVW.NET/CLICK-7638986-10479934?URL=HTTP%3A%2F%2FWWW.EXPEDIA.COM%2FPUBSPEC%2FSCRIPTS%2FEAP.ASP%3FPRID%3D1%26GOTO%3DHOTDETAILS%26HOTID%3D12553&CJSKU=12553](http://www.dpbolvw.net/click-7638986-10479934?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.expedia.com%2FPUBSPEC%2FSCRIPTS%2FEAP.ASP%3FPRID%3D1%26GOTO%3DHOTDETAILS%26HOTID%3D12553&CJSKU=12553))

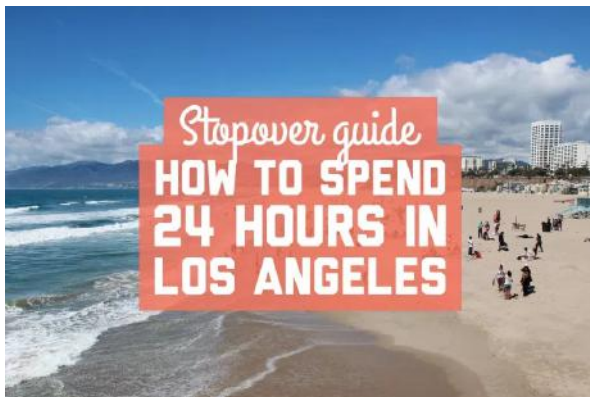
The rooms at The Hollywood Hotel were tastefully decorated with local art, including canvases and framed pictures of Hollywood and Los Angeles, which really got us into the LA vibe.

The hotel also had a truly adorns inner courtyard with a private bar that was open for 2 hours each evening, and the rates also included a full breakfast with an omelette + pancake bar (booyah!). This was honestly an amazing place to stay in Los Angeles.

**I was a guest of Hollywood Hotel (<http://www.hollywoodhotel.net/>) during my stay in Los Angeles. I'm proud to be an honest and transparent blogger, so every opinion expressed on AGWT is a true review of my experience!*

Are you heading to Los Angeles soon? What are you looking forward to seeing in Downtown LA? Share your thoughts with us in the comments!

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How I'd love to visit LA one day. When I do, I'll make sure to check this blog post again!

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I think LA is actually an underrated city – the first few times that I visited I didn't really enjoy it, but once I got past the generic tourist stuff and started digging deeper into the city's attractions, I began to love LA! I hope you get to visit the city sometime soon, Charmaine!

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