

# Travel



**L.A. GORGEOUS** When in Los Angeles, shop as the young Hollywood elite do. Elyse Glickman and Angela Braden hit the town to expose the below-the-radar shops, spots and stuff adulated by celebrity word-of-mouth.

If your notion of the ultimate L.A. experience is shaped by the lifestyles of the local Hollywood elite, go about your visit with the mindset of a determined actress looking for that juicy plum of a role. Don't count on skyscraper-sized billboards to tell you what's hot – you'll risk spending a small fortune while missing out on the true treasures. Covert, not overt, is the secret to L.A. style – all those insider shopping haunts, hush-hush sales and word-of-mouth credo make valuable information for the young starlet who wants to stand out on the red carpet in an outfit as original as she'd like herself to be seen. While Gucci, Prada and Louis Vuitton can easily make heads swivel and flashbulbs pop, the mixing of high fashion with highly original fashion (read: vintage, up-and-coming designers, customisation) has all the makings of a premiere hit.

## CITY OF COOL

Anything easily incorporated into the L.A. uniform of jeans-and-a-sexy-top (dressed up or down depending on whether you are attending a premiere or attending to a Chai latte craving) is quintessentially L.A. This official fashion capital of casual chic has produced several up-and-coming brands as well as established-as-hot designers, making a new shopping list unavoidable. Start off with fabulous silk appliquéd tanks from Akiko for that so-beautiful-without-trying look and slinky camis from Pink Polkadot. For off-duty T-shirts, Soulful Self's image-building "mirror tees" (a hit with Courtney Cox and Cindy Crawford) can be found at the beloved Intuition boutique on Pico Boulevard. The breast-cancer-supporting line, founded by Leslie Dry, a 30-something survivor, is



truly heartwarming ([www.soulfulself.com](http://www.soulfulself.com)) with words like “charming” “brilliant” and “strong” printed in reverse so the wearer gets a healthy dose of self-love each time she looks in the mirror.

Lingerie-inspired sex appeal is always an L.A. staple. This look is always smartly executed by L.A.-based brands Chica Loca, Tail Bait, Desanka and Troo's, which adorn their pieces with strategically placed brooches (an L.A. twist to this steadfast fashion accessory). And to broach the truly paramount article: jeans that do all the right things. Slim, “butt-lifting” jeans from Kasil, and equally flattering denim creations from Carpe Denim and Blue Cult Jeans are the new sources for the pair that gets you there.

While Fred Segal West, Kitson, Tracey Ross, Lisa Kline and H. Lorenzo are oft-coveted favourites for A-list stars, the pre-Oscar

events introduce us to boutique buyers who painstakingly comb L.A.'s fashion fields for items that ensure true fashionistas won't see clones of themselves walking down the street. That buzz-worthy spot that may cause you and Jessica Simpson to be in on the same secret, if even just for a moment, could be the glamorous Emphasis (8659, Sunset Boulevard) or The Pure Hardware Society (147, Bay Street, #18, Santa Monica), featuring exquisite jewellery from Shankari, who claims to be a silversmith, healer and mystic. Take a chance and let “The Alchemist” pick a piece that aligns with your spiritual needs.

For a dose of boho chic, hit Ehlan (12192, Ventura Blvd.) and Lisa Angel (12206, Ventura Blvd.) that bring a refreshing blast of hipness to the San Fernando Valley. Jennifer Kaufman (at The Beverly Center) offers an incredible up-to-the-minute costume and fine jewellery crash course; the mosque-inspired space Sage (73771/2, Beverly Blvd.) simmers with a spicy mix of bejewelled skirts, shawls, jewellery and home accents while Sama Eyewear (8460, Santa Monica Blvd.) tops the list for brilliantly designed prescription frames and sunglasses.

## TREND TREASURE TROVES

West Coast chic, contrary to the East, is not label-conscious. Not to say that designer labels are not obligatory – take a look at Rodeo Drive and you will be blinded by the bling of logos walking up and down the street – but they are worn in a very different way. Here, you can mix things up: Chanel with Havaianas, an It item with vintage, sportswear with couture. There's a lot more casual flair here; where groomed perfection is a necessity in New York, nonconformity is a virtue in L.A. It's the only city where you can't really define the style as it's all about liberation, breaking the rules.

As looking good makes up any Angelo's job description, whether you're a young actress, hot producer or entertainment lawyer, the challenge is to set yourself apart from the other beautiful person next to you. And the latest, not-yet-on-Ebay (read: popularity bordering on passé) finds include sunglasses by Robert Marc (creator of Jessica Simpson's latest shades), Blinde shades by Richard Walker, colourful cords from True Religion and biker-chic cashmere sweaters and ponchos from Raw 7.

Leather handbags of the moment are from Allison Burns, Isabella Fiore and Mae & J, bold baubles from Good Times Charms make fashion fare, while jewellery designer Gigi Garner (daughter of Hollywood legend James Garner, [www.gigigarner.com](http://www.gigigarner.com)) get considerable attention from trendsetters like Halle Berry, Penelope Cruz and Kate Beckinsale.

## BEAUTY BINGEING

Evidence of the pampering possibilities Los Angeles offers, spas and salons are an obvious draw for all. Some are so cleverly thought out and feng shui-ed that they feel like self-contained vacations, perhaps designed to evoke the “natural”, in L.A.-lingo, “beauty from within”. Lovely examples include Privé/Ona Spa on Beverly Boulevard, B2V Salon on Doheny Drive and Chaz Dean Studio. And sample on-location pampering, like the stars on set, by Spaah, the only travelling spa in the world. The West Coast flagship of Fresh, Jessica Nail Salon (a favourite of the city's fashion and beauty elite) and Kalologie on Robertson Boulevard exemplify the one-stop beauty shop trend. They also feature signature products worth a look. Kalologie is an oasis of aesthetic enhancement, from the most advanced skin care to dermatologist-administered Restalyn injections (considered basic

The avant-garde Prada Epicenter store in Beverly Hills designed by Rem Koolhaas of OMA



O.C.'s Mischa Barton gets into the Californian groove with a knit top, torn jeans and stilettos

grooming in L.A.). The ultimate medi-spa is still Epione, Beverly Hills, specialising in the latest laser skin treatments, including laser hair removal effective on Asian skin. The most advanced technology, from non-surgical, liposuction-like fat reduction to laser stretch-mark relief, is administered by the Harvard-trained Dr. Simon Ourian ([www.epione.com](http://www.epione.com)).

## FOOD FINDS

The hottest L.A. eateries double as great lounges complete with imaginative cocktails. And sushi still rules: Sashimi Blowfish Sushi To Die For, White Lotus (a favourite of Britney Spears and other members of the MTV set), Sushi Roku, Chaya Venice (the best sushi happy hour in L.A.) and Koi are all firmly a part of L.A.'s stream of consciousness. Also on our A-list: Hollywood's Falcon, Justin Timberlake's Chi and Yi Cuisine. Of all our incredible dining choices, we found ourselves at Señor Fred toasting our fashion and beauty conquests with the purest of intentions as well as superior margaritas, topping our enchiladas with the best guacamole in town and finishing up with hot Mexican chocolate, a house specialty. For the best Beverly Hills haunts, chance on Crustacean (gorgeous ambience and friendly staff), Nic's and Mastro's (the prawn appetiser is worth breaking your diet for and their Cosmos are generous and strong). See-worthy Santa Monica spots include Typhoon, Border Grill, Lincoln Steak House and Gualguetza (the best molé this side of Oaxaca, Mexico). While in Santa Monica, The Room (1323, Santa Monica Boulevard), is the don't-miss spot to experience the eclectically stylish bar scene at the close of your best of L.A. day. Drew Barrymore and Jennifer Love Hewitt have been known to drop in and might like to know where you found your incredible earrings, vintage stilettos and perfect lip gloss, you L.A. goddess!



Milla Jovovich dresses up for a night out in Rodeo Drive

Lindsay Lohan in true L.A. tummy-baring mode



he and husband Laffoon in dress down they head home from in

## NIGHT LIFE, BABY

For a classy club experience, step back in time with Forty Deuce (A Wednesday to Saturday striptease lounge, but with Broadway-calibre dancers and not a trace of sleaze). The Rainbow boasts the best Asian shrimp salad, rock memorabilia and, frequently, rock stars themselves. Frequent patrons include Motorhead's Lemmy and members of Velvet Revolver. The Abbey, Lava Lounge and Late Bloomer (also an after-hours boutique) all hit the noteworthy nightclub mark. The Spider Club, Firefly, Max (on Ventura), Star Shoes (which also sells vintage shoes and serves as a museum for famous footwear) and The Beauty Bar (buy a US\$10 cocktail and get a free manicure) are also great choices. For more location information, visit [www.LA.com](http://www.LA.com).



A beautifully appointed room at The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel



Isabella Fiore's bags, exclusively designed for Emmy nominees, are a must-have



Santa Monica's eclectic bar lounge, The Room



Desperate Housewife Eva Longoria with her Soulful Self image building "mirror tee"



Gourmet Japanese fare at Sashimi Blowfish To Die For

## AS I LAY MY SOUL TO SLEEP

Once your day of L.A. mania comes to a close, you will be glad you chose one of these places to prepare for the next shopping-filled day ahead. There's only one way to live in L.A. and it's the way the celebrities do it. The legendary Chateau Marmont has played house with Hollywood since Rita Hayworth graced its exquisite interiors. The castle is located above the Sunset Strip (8221, Sunset Boulevard).

For a touch of historic class, head over to Hollywood's only historic hotel that's still in operation. Celebrating its 75th birthday with a US\$15 million (RM57 million) renovation, The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel (7000, Hollywood Boulevard), that was home to the very first Oscars in 1929, has had an influx of modernism with bright, hip and extremely trendy rooms to go with its reputation as a glamorous gathering place.

To go unnoticed, check into the Far East-inspired Maison 140 (140, Lasky Drive), an intimate 43-room luxe boutique hotel in the heart of Beverly Hills. Once owned by silent film star Lillian Gish, the property was given an image overhaul and turned into an inviting, striking and contemporary place to call a home away from home, thanks to the interior decorative ideas of Kelly Wearstler, who is famed for her scene-stealing decorating style. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES; ANGELA BRADEN; ELYSE GLICKMAN



Kalologie - The one-stop L.A. beauty shop