

THESE PAGES A cantilevered steel and glass pavilion and a pool with a view are just two of the standout features of the Pierre Koenig-designed Stahl House in Los Angeles.

# LA TIMES

Once renowned for only one kind of star power, the City of Angels is revealing itself to also be a stellar design destination.

PHOTOGRAPHS PEGGY WONG WORDS CARLI PHILIPS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The facade and entrance (left) of Frank Lloyd Wright's Ennis House, which is on Laura Massino's architecture tour. Iconic mid-century furnishings at Stahl House. Stop for a snack at The Pie Hole. Panoramic LA views. The Farmers Market is an LA institution. Joan's on Third is a popular haunt.



It might be the City of Angels, but Los Angeles has some heavy crosses to bear. "Anyone who says LA has no culture is crazy," says local architect Duncan Nicholson. Standing at the entrance to the extraordinary modernist Sheats Goldstein house – of which Duncan is project manager – it's hard to disagree. Indeed, tucked within the concrete sprawl is a metropolis with some serious design pedigree.

Built by Duncan's boss, legendary architect John Lautner, the iconic private residence is concealed from street view and seamlessly blends water, space and light. Both futuristic and in touch with nature, retractable roofs welcome the outdoors in, televisions drop from ceilings, and floor-to-ceiling glass exposes jungle terrariums. A secret floating path leads to artist James Turrell's extraordinary site-specific LED Skyspace.

"It's Lautner's magic, his abracadabra of the imagination that concentrates an idea," says Duncan, who has worked on the property for more than two decades and is currently overseeing its new multimillion-dollar extension encompassing a theatre, nightclub, and rooftop tennis court with cosmic views. It comes as no surprise that the house is regularly hired out for music videos and magazine shoots.

We navigate our way through the impossibly steep hills of West Hollywood to Pierre Koenig's cliff-hugging Stahl House. Immortalised through the lens of Julius Shulman and still owned by the visionary family that commissioned it, the mid-century treasure offers a rare opportunity to see inside one of America's most beloved and privately owned 'Case Study' houses. The aqua pool is framed by a daringly cantilevered steel and glass pavilion. The site is small, but we're enthralled and stay way past our allocated viewing time to see the views at dusk.

Taking a break from sleek modernism, things get decidedly old world as Sunset Boulevard meanders into the exclusive neighbourhood of Bel Air and the Dorchester Collection's newly renovated Hotel Bel-Air. Courtesy of Alexandra Champalimaud and the Rockwell Group, the luxurious upgrade fuses the legendary estate's pink mission-style architecture with hints of '30s French deco and modern intuitive technologies. Our hillside suite is saturated in sun-bleached SoCal hues: nutty limestone floors, milky polished marble, and pops of fanta-coloured soft furnishings.

A hideaway for movie stars and film execs, the hotel was built on the site of former horse stables, with the surrounding stone canyons offering protection from prying eyes. Walking through the rambling grounds to Wolfgang Puck's open-air restaurant, we pass intimate nooks, bubbling fountains, bougainvillea, blossoms and flowering peach trees. Tucked into a lantern-lit alcove, we feast on delicious Hawaiian swordfish.

The following morning, I take a dawn dip at the hotel's oval pool (originally an equestrian ring), before room service ordered via the ingenious integrated in-room iPad. It's an early start so we can head to the famous Rose Bowl Flea Market in Pasadena. By 8am, we're fossicking in the company of interior designers, prop stylists, set decorators, and furniture pickers who source for some of LA's best design stores. It's eBay on steroids, with thousands of vendors selling antiques, collectables and vintage, but *Belle* photographer Peggy Wong proves there are treasures amid the kitschy chaos, negotiating to buy a Minotti chair for \$85.

As the sun comes out the foot traffic increases, so we veer off the tourist path and drive to the hipster enclave of Silver Lake. Centred around a reservoir, the neighbourhood is home to a creative community of writers, artists, musicians, photographers, independent designers and young actors. A haven of residential modernism, the area boasts houses by Richard Neutra, Gregory Ain, John Lautner and Rudolph Schindler.

The first person we see at boho-luxe hangout Lamill is actor Jake Gyllenhaal. The locals barely look up from their MacBooks, but it's probably because the coffee is so good. The irreverent deco-inspired interior boasts antique chandeliers, Monteverdi Young chairs and hand-painted wallpaper. Nearby, Lawson-Fenning's furniture and homewares store is full of vintage and mid-century pieces with a log-cabin vibe. The store shares space with Ivanhoe Books – full of glossy design tomes.

After a casual lunch at delicious Vietnamese eatery Gingergrass, we head to the fashion and lifestyle haunt, Mohawk General Store. Americana surplus with a boutique tomboy twist, there's everything from buttery Clare Vivier leather bags to Japanese brand Nonnative.

We meet up with architectural historian and guide Laura Massino for some customised sightseeing, including one of LA's oldest districts, Angelino Heights, where dilapidated Victorian haunted houses are often used as film backdrops. We also visit the historic centre of Downtown which is experiencing something of a revival as old theatres and deco buildings are converted into apartment towers, clubs and restaurants. It's adaptive reuse at its best, and another gem hidden in the heart of LA.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The modernist Sheats Goldstein house. In touch with nature at the Sheats Goldstein house. James Turrell's LED Skyspace. Lawson-Fenning offers an eclectic range. Reunion House, one of Dion Neutra's designs. Bottega Louie has a cool interior by View Design Studio.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Lamill makes some of LA's best coffee. Trash and treasure at Rose Bowl Flea Market. Hotel Bel-Air's pink mission-style architecture, and its pool, perfect for chilling. Shop for design tomes at Ivanhoe Books. Coffee and more at Intelligentsia. Vintage glass at Rose Bowl Flea Market. Spot the celebrities browsing at Foothill 5 Fifty.



## LA GUIDE

**PLACES TO STAY** **Hotel Bel-Air** 701 Stone Canyon Road, LA, CA 90077. Old glamour revamped with plush decor and La Prairie spa. We love the complimentary Mercedes offered for short trips. [hotelbelair.com](http://hotelbelair.com) **Maison 140** 140 Lasky Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212. This affordable Kelly Wearstler-designed hotel has small guestrooms but is sweet and conveniently located. [maison140.com](http://maison140.com)

**ARCHITECTURE** **Architecture Tours** LA historian Laura Massino hosts fascinating architectural tours of LA. [architecturetoursla.com](http://architecturetoursla.com) **VDL House** 2300 Silver Lake Blvd, LA, CA 90039. Neutra's former home and office is open to the public. [neutra-vgd.org](http://neutra-vgd.org)

**HOMEWARES/DESIGN BOUTIQUES** **Foothill 5 Fifty** 719 E. Route 66, Glendora, CA 91741. Where celebrities go for Eames prototypes, Knoll textiles, restored Sérgio Rodrigues furniture and Sam Malouf's beautiful wood pieces. **Lawson-Fenning** 1618 Silver Lake Blvd, LA, CA 90026. Understated mid-century furniture with a rustic vibe. Customised pieces made locally. [lawsonfenning.com](http://lawsonfenning.com) Out the back is Ivanhoe Books – great new and pre-loved hard-to-find photography, art and design tomes. **Mohawk General Store** 4011 West Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90029. Apothecary, lifestyle, stationery and fashion with a twist. Shares space with **Amsterdam Modern**. Restored 1950s-70s-era pieces direct from Holland. [amsterdammodern.com](http://amsterdammodern.com) **Broome St General Store** 2912 Rowena Avenue, LA, CA 90039. Sip coffee with cool Gen Ys, or browse the nostalgic knick-knacks inside. [broomstgeneral.com](http://broomstgeneral.com)

**RESTAURANTS/CAFES** **Lamill** 1636 Silver Lake Blvd, LA, CA 90026. Brilliant coffee and homemade brioche doughnuts at this ultra-cool, deco-inspired cafe. [lamillcoffee.com](http://lamillcoffee.com) **Intelligentsia** 3922 West Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90029. Rivals Lamill for the coffee crown. [intelligentsiacoffee.com](http://intelligentsiacoffee.com) **Cliff's Edge** 3626 West Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90026. Seasonal menu and inventive cocktails in a secluded courtyard. [cliffsedgecafe.com](http://cliffsedgecafe.com) **Bottega Louie** 700 South Grand Avenue, LA, CA 90034. Euro-glam restaurant and hip gourmet food market in a striking setting by View Design Studio. [bottegalouie.com](http://bottegalouie.com) **Forage** 3823 West Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90026. Organic health cafe. [foragela.com](http://foragela.com) **Gingergrass** 2395 Glendale Blvd, LA, CA 90039. Delicious Vietnamese eatery. [gingergrass.com](http://gingergrass.com)

**OUTDOORS** **Rose Bowl Flea Market** 1001 Rose Bowl Drive, Pasadena, CA 91103. Trash 'n' treasure at the foot of the picturesque San Gabriel Mountains. [rgcshoes.com/rosebowl.aspx](http://rgcshoes.com/rosebowl.aspx) **Griffith Park** 4730 Crystal Springs Drive, LA, CA 90027. One of the largest and most beautiful rustic parks in North America. [laparks.org/dos/parks/griffithpk](http://laparks.org/dos/parks/griffithpk) **Griffith Observatory** Hike the southern slope of Mt Hollywood to the iconic LA planetarium with views across the city and out to the Hollywood sign. [griffithhobs.org](http://griffithhobs.org) **The Trails** 2333 Fern Dell Drive, LA, CA 90068. Feast on freshly baked goods at this secluded shack. [thetrailstosfeliz.com](http://thetrailstosfeliz.com) **Sunset Ranch** 3400 North Beachwood Drive, Hollywood, CA 90068. Horsingering on authentic equestrian tracks. [sunsetranchhollywood.com](http://sunsetranchhollywood.com)