

Take Your Seats, Please!

Celebrity homes, crime scenes, cutting-edge cuisine—whatever you fancy, tour guides will take you there

By James Morel
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Photograph by Justin Stephens

Backstage Pass

[Paramount Studios](#)

Of all the studio tours, the Golf Cart Cruise through the Paramount lot is the most intimate. Your guide favors casual banter over canned speeches and occasionally lets slip some gossip. Broad access to soundstages and snap-at-will outdoor photography mean you may return home with a shot of last year's Oscar winner munching on a PowerBar. \$45.

Looky-Loo

[L.A. City Tours](#)

The open-top bus is the perfect vehicle for ogling at oft-ogled homes. L.A. City Tour's three-hour A-2 Hollywood & Movie Stars Homes expedition stretches from Hollywood to Bel-Air and features smart commentary and prime photo ops unobstructed by window glass. Expect something new every time—thanks to their high divorce rate, celebrities move often. \$55.

Foodie Fantasy

[Melting Pot food Tours](#)

The boisterous Scalia sisters offer a few tasting tours, including ones that take in Old Pasadena and East L.A. We particularly enjoyed the Farmers Market/3rd Street Walkabout, which starts at the famed market and proceeds through the restaurant corridor, where you can graze on a global scale at ten establishments. The food is covered by the ticket price. \$53.

Up in the Air

[Another Side of LA](#)

Fly 500 feet above-ground in the same helicopters the paparazzi use to track celebrities fleeing through city streets. The Ultimate Helicopter Tour hovers near the Hollywood sign, circles downtown skyscrapers, drifts over the mega-mansions of Beverly Hills, and follows Sunset from the Whisky a Go Go all the way to the Pacific. \$224.



Alcohol Content

[Urban Adventures](#)

On the Stars and Bars outing, an informed guide (who's better versed in Clark Gable than in the Kardashians) bypasses flash-in-the-pan clubs and escorts you to Hollywood haunts that have hosted celebrity drinkers and starred in movies themselves. The itinerary includes Musso & Frank, Miceli's, and Boardners. \$59.

Most Unfortunate

[Dearly Departed tours](#)

Lloyd Wright's Sowden House, where the Black Dahlia may have been murdered; the hotel where Janis Joplin OD'd; the street where Hugh Grant hired a hooker—the Hollywood Tragical History Tour goes to locations where things went infamously bad. Guides supplement their shtick with crime scene photos and 911 tapes. \$40.

For Art's Sake

[Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation](#)

A Holmby Hills mansion built by the architect who designed Edward Doheny's estate and the *Los Angeles Times* building now houses more than 400 works of modern and contemporary art. The collection includes pieces by Picasso, Cézanne, De Kooning, Calder, Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Ruscha. Guided tours are by appointment only. *Free*.

Case Studying

[Architecture Tours LA](#)

Of the seven excellent tours architectural historian Laura Massino offers, we're most enamored with the Silver Lake excursion, which opens 30 homes to the public. As she navigates her van through winding streets, Massino supplies deep background on houses built by Lloyd Wright, Richard and Dion Neutra, John Lautner, and Rudolph Schindler. \$75.