



Local Guidebooks

Need help **navigating the city**? These are page-turners **BY LEILAH BERNSTEIN**

IN A COUNTY THAT SPANS 4,000 square miles, old-fashioned paper-and-ink guidebooks that parse every neighborhood are still a lot more useful than a random Google search. Of the dozens we surveyed, a handful stood out. Some are works of art, with color photographs and detailed maps; others are niche publications, focused on a theme or region. All, however, take a practical approach to understanding Los Angeles and its sprawl, leading their readers to hidden haunts, hot spots, and everything in between.

Total Recall

Though an all-inclusive guidebook for L.A. would be virtually impossible to produce, Borislav Stanic's **LOS ANGELES ATTRACTIONS** (Museum, 512 pages, \$24.95) comes close. It has an artistry that Fodor's and Time Out lack. Its glossy pages are jam-packed not only with maps, photos, and concise descriptions of landmarks but also with contextual historical information. **Surprising spot:** Who knew that Blue Jay Way in the Hollywood Hills inspired the Beatles song of the same name? **Navigation tools:** Vintage photos and succinct overviews explain how the region became a center for agriculture, architecture, transportation, fashion, and beach culture. **Star smarts:** Maps to celebrity gravestones and a nod to the "Hugh Grant Arrest Site," where the actor was picked up for soliciting a prostitute.

Taster's Choice

As much as we treasure Jonathan Gold's *Counter Intelligence*, it's eight years old, and we've been hungering for a new food resource. We found it in **EAT: LOS ANGELES** (Prospect Park Books, 320 pages, \$19.95). Written by a team of dining scene veterans and edited by Colleen Dunn Bates, it encompasses more than 1,000 restaurants, farmers' markets, bakeries, wineshops, and kitchen supply stores. **Surprising spot:** El Pique taco truck, in a Highland Park car wash lot, for its *al pastor* and chorizo. **Navigation tools:** Tabbed sections (a device we love) include "Food That's Fast," "Gourmet to Go," and "Breakfast + Lunch." **Star smarts:** The Ivy on Robertson, where the food is "actually good."

Foot Traffic

The 38 walking tours in Erin Mahoney Harris's **WALKING L.A.** (Wilderness Press, 263 pages, \$17.95) trace paths through residential neighborhoods and urban centers. **Surprising spot:** The Hollywood Heights neighborhood, accessible to residents by an elevator tower and to everyone else by stairways. **Navigation tools:** Each walk includes a map, parking options, and any nearby Metro stops. **Star smarts:** The West Silver Lake walk begins with a climb of the 100-plus steps featured in Laurel and Hardy's 1932 film *The Music Box*.

Play Time

Jade Chang's compact **ART/SKOP/EAT LOS ANGELES** (Blue Guides, 191 pages, \$13.95) is a light but informative mix of tips on the best museums, galleries, boutiques, and food. **Surprising spot:** Diddy Riese, the cookie mecca in Westwood. **Navigation tools:** Floor plans of several museums accompany brief descriptions of the collections. **Star smarts:** The Beverly Hills Hotel's Fountain Coffee Shop, for its Old Hollywood vibe.

Map Quest

If the yellow pages married the Thomas Guide and they got a hip makeover, their offspring might look like the **NOT FOR TOURISTS GUIDE TO LOS ANGELES** (Not for Tourists, 514 pages, \$21.95), which features dozens of neighborhoods and street maps, alongside gyms, banks, schools, gas stations, pharmacies, pet stores, mall food courts, and coffeehouses with Wi-Fi. **Surprising spot:** Little Tokyo's Anzen Hardware, a tiny shop crammed with tools, kitchenware, and gardening supplies. **Navigation tools:** A foldout freeway map is useful in a pinch. **Star smarts:** A movie theater directory comments on the best bargains and venues.

Valley Fever

The new, updated edition of **HOMETOWN PASADENA** (Prospect Park Books, 282 pages, \$24.95), part of the series that includes *Hometown Santa Monica* and *Hometown Santa Barbara*, is both lushly designed and in-depth—the ideal guide to the San Gabriel Valley town and its surrounding communities. Five writers cover everything from hotels and restaurants to architecture and cultural events. **Surprising spot:** The Craftsman bungalow that's headquarters for the Planetary Society cofounded by Carl Sagan. **Navigation tools:** Themed sections list the area's best children's activities, nonprofits, and bookstores. **Star smarts:** Pasadena's famous residents include Sally Field (born there) and W.C. Fields (died there).

Homegrown

David Gebhard and Robert Winter's **AN ARCHITECTURAL GUIDEBOOK TO LOS ANGELES** (Gibbs Smith, 543 pages, \$24.95) is still considered the bible on the subject. Charles Moore's popular 1984 guide, *The City Observed: Los Angeles*, may devote a whole chapter to Disneyland, but Gebhard and Winter's brief, no-nonsense entries are easier to consume. **Surprising spot:** "Hansel and Gretel cottages," circa 1925, in the Palms neighborhood. **Navigation tools:** Numbered black-and-white photos correspond to maps and descriptions. **Star smarts:** Plenty of celebrity homes—as long as you consider Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra celebrities. ■