



8 Cool Things to Do in Downtown LA

The Last Bookstore

The Last Bookstore is the largest new and used bookstore in California, but it's so much more than just books!

This two-story bookstore is housed in a historic 100-year-old bank building. You can even find bookshelves lining the old bank vault.

Lose yourself in a maze of towering bookshelves at the Labyrinth, walk under the famous book tunnel, and browse through a vast collection of new and used books inside different themed rooms.

In addition to books, this funky and eclectic space is also home to several art studios and galleries, a comic book store, a record shop, a cafe, and even a yarn store.

It's a great place to find the latest books, search for rare first editions, and lose yourself for a few hours!

The Biltmore Los Angeles Hotel

Step back in time with a visit to the Biltmore Hotel, a historic landmark that exudes old Hollywood glamour. The Biltmore is one of the most iconic hotels in LA. It was built in 1923 and was the largest hotel west of Chicago.

If you are fascinated by old Hollywood history and beautiful architecture, then step inside to marvel at the hotel's lavish interiors, adorned with ornate chandeliers, marble floors, and intricate woodwork.

The Biltmore's storied past over the last 100 years has helped shape the city's cultural landscape.

A few significant moments in history include a luncheon at the Crystal Ballroom where the idea of the Academy Awards was first conceived. The ceremony was then held at this hotel from 1931-1942. The Oscar Statue was even first sketched on a napkin here!

The 1960 Democratic National Convention was also held here and was a pivotal starting point for JFK's presidential campaign.

During the Prohibition Era, several hidden speakeasies could be found here, and during WWII, the second floor of the hotel served as a military rest facility.

One of the most infamous unsolved murders is even linked to this hotel. Actress Elizabeth Short was last seen in the lobby of The Biltmore before being brutally murdered a few hours later.

The Biltmore continues its legacy today and has been featured in movies like Ghostbusters, Rocky III, Spiderman, The Italian Job, National Treasure, Independence Day, Alias, Cruel Intentions, and more.

Several music videos have also been filmed here, including videos for songs by Taylor Swift, Britney Spears, Ed Sheeran, John Legend, Jennifer Lopez, and Janet Jackson.

The hotel has also made cameo appearances in TV shows such as Mad Men, Scandal, ER, The West Wing, and 24.

It is said that this hotel even inspired Disneyworld's Twilight Zone Tower of Terror ride!

Famous guests at the hotel include the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Judy Garland, Nelson Mandela, and numerous US presidents. Al Capone even stayed in the presidential suite, and The Beatles once had to avoid the crowds by landing on the roof to sneak into the hotel!

You may want to consider [booking a room](#) at The Biltmore where you can swim in the indoor pool that was inspired by the lost city of Pompeii and still maintains lavish details from the 1920s.

You can also make reservations for afternoon tea at the Rendezvous Court and enjoy a sophisticated spread of delicate finger foods with champagne and a selection of teas.

Whether you're a history buff or simply appreciate grand architecture, the Biltmore Hotel is a must-see destination in Downtown LA!

Grand Central Market

No visit to Downtown LA would be complete without a stop at Grand Central Market, a bustling food hall that's been serving up delicious fare for over a century.

This open-air market has been in continuous operation since 1917 and boasts over 40 vendors.

From gourmet tacos to artisanal coffee, you'll find a diverse array of vendors offering cuisine from around the world.

I would recommend ordering a slice of lemon meringue pie from Fat + Flour, a grass-fed burger on a toasted potato roll from For The Win, and fried chicken & homemade biscuits from Lucky Bird.

The chow mein and fried rice from China Cafe is also delicious. This restaurant is one of the oldest in the market and has been in continuous operation for over 50 years.

Grand Central Market also hosts several [events](#) throughout the year, including comedy shows, a market bazaar, and art nights.

I would also recommend catching a show at the historic [Million Dollar Theater](#) located right next door to Grand Central Market.

Angels Flight

Angels Flight, often referred to as "the shortest railway in the world," is a historic narrow gauge funicular railway that has been around since 1901.

It originally served as a mode of transportation for residents traveling between the bustling commercial district below and the upscale residential neighborhoods at the top of Bunker Hill.

Its distinctive orange cars, named Olivet and Sinai, have become beloved iconic symbols of the city.

In 1969, the railway was dismantled and relocated due to redevelopment efforts in the area. However, in 1996, Angels Flight was lovingly restored and reopened to the public.

Angels Flight is located at the intersection of Hill Street and 4th Street in Downtown LA, adjacent to Grand Central Market.

The railway operates daily from 6:45 am to 10:00 pm. The fare is only \$1 and the short nostalgic ride will take visitors to the top of Bunker Hill.

The Grammy Museum

The Grammy Museum is a fun spot for music lovers where you can dive into the rich history of the Grammy Awards.

We had fun exploring the interactive exhibits and seeing memorabilia and costumes worn by legendary artists. Our kids especially had fun trying their hand at mixing tracks in the museum's recording booths.

The museum features rotating exhibits, live performances, workshops, and other events.

We stayed at [The Moxy Hotel](#) and they provided complimentary tickets to the museum for all their guests. It was a fun way to spend an hour, but you probably don't need much more time than that.

If you are looking for more family-friendly things to do in LA, see our guide [13 Unique Things to Do in LA with Kids](#).

The Bradbury Building

The Bradbury Building is an architectural and historical landmark that was built in 1893. It was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1977 and is one of the most photographed buildings in LA.

This stunning masterpiece is the oldest remaining commercial building in DTLA and is renowned for its stunning Victorian design and timeless beauty.

It boasts a soaring atrium, ornate ironwork, intricate marble staircases, and open cage elevators.

You may even recognize the building as it has even been featured in numerous television shows, music videos, and movies, such as the blockbuster hit *Blade Runner*.

The building was originally commissioned by mining millionaire Lewis L. Bradbury to serve as a grand office space.

Today, the building is still used as an office space and visitors are welcome to step in and see the building during open hours.

Feel free to stop by from 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday, and 10 am to 2 pm on Saturday and Sunday. The stairways and upper floors are closed to visitors, but you can walk around the lobby.

I would recommend taking a [historic walking tour of Downtown LA](#) where you'll visit landmarks like the Bradbury Building, and learn more about the history of DTLA.

LA Live

LA Live is a vibrant entertainment district that is buzzing with energy during the day and night. Here you will find the Lucky Strike Bowling Alley, Regal Movie Theater, the LA Convention, and Crypto.com Arena where the LA Lakers, LA Clippers, LA Kings, and LA Sparks play.

The famed Peacock Theater is also located at LA Live.

This theater hosts movie premiers and award shows throughout the year, such as the Emmy Awards, American Music Awards, Nickelodeon Kid's Choice Awards, and many more.

You'll also find 17 different restaurants and cafes at LA Live.

A few of our favorites are Yard House for classic American dishes done exceptionally well, Craft by Smoke & Fire for delicious BBQ, and Fixin's Soul Kitchen for downhome southern cooking.

There are different events held throughout the year, check the [LA Live website](#) for a full calendar.

Best Restaurants in Downtown LA

Downtown LA is home to some of the best restaurants in the city.

One of our favorites is Pine & Crane, a chic restaurant serving authentic Taiwanese dishes. Some of our favorite dishes include the Beef Noodle Soup, Dan Dan Noodles, Minced Pork on Rice, and Pork Belly Buns.

Be sure to save room for the Fruit Shaved Ice for dessert!

Here are a few more of the best places to eat in Downtown LA:

- **Little Sister:** A trendy restaurant that serves fresh and authentic Vietnamese dishes.

- **Bottega Louie:** An elegant and chic Italian eatery serving delicious pizza, pasta, and salads. You can also pick up freshly baked goods like macarons, eclairs, and croissants from the bakery. Packaged gifts are also available for purchase at the market.
- **Pi La:** Grab a slice of gourmet pizza from this neighborhood joint. You'll find unique flavors like the Big Aloha with smoked spam, jalapenos, and pineapple, or the Seoul Kitchen that's piled high with pork belly, Asian pears, shiitake mushrooms, and kimchi-tomato sauce. They also serve soup, salads, baked goods, and gelato.
- **Sonoritas Prime Tacos:** These hefty burritos are filling! Order the Chicken Burrito, Al Pastor Tacos, or the fajitas.
- **Prank:** Prank serves classic American dishes and is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Try the French Toast, Southern Beef Sliders Medley, Prank'd Spicy Cauliflower, and Truffle Fries.
- **Denae's Diner:** Denae's Diner adds a modern twist to a classic diner. Order a stack of silver dollar pancakes, biscuits & gravy, grilled cheese & tomato soup, or a smash burger. Just save room for a slice of Meemae's Blueberry Cheese Pie or a Strawberry Short Shake!
- **Cafe Balzac:** This cozy little creperie serves both sweet and savory crepes.

For a fun way to experience the tastes of LA, try taking a [Downtown Walking Food Tour](#)!

A few more of the best things to do in Downtown LA:

- **Walt Disney Concert Hall:** Enjoy an evening of transformative music by the [Los Angeles Phil Harmonic](#) at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.
- **La Plaza Church:** Stop by and see the historic La Plaza Church. This chapel was built in 1822 and is the oldest church in Los Angeles.
- **Union Station:** The world-famous Union Station is considered "the last of the great train stations". It was built in 1933 and still holds the title of the largest railroad passenger terminal in the Western US. Stop by and admire the architecture, grab a bite to eat at the Traxx Restaurant, check out the artwork, and attend an event.
- **Chinatown:** LA's Chinatown has been around since 1938. It is the best place to find homemade noodles, authentic Chinese cuisine, and kitschy souvenir shops.
- **Los Angeles Central Public Library:** The historic LA Central Public Library was built in 1926 and still remains standing despite two different arson attempts. Step inside and admire the beautiful architecture and soaring atrium.
- **Ghost Tour:** Take a thrilling look into LA's darker history with a [Ghost Tour](#)! We've done a few different ghost tours before and it's always fascinating to learn about a different side of the city that you never knew existed.
- **The Broad:** The Broad is a contemporary art museum with immersive exhibits. Admission is free to the public, but advanced timed reservations are required.

I hope this guide will help you discover the best things to do in Downtown LA!

