

Stay Cool

The past two years have seen a boom in trendy new—and newly renovated—hotels in the Southland. Our team of Westways staffers set out to discover what you need to know to plan your next SoCal getaway.



The Swim Club at Ace Hotel & Swim Club

Ace Hotel & Swim Club

701 E. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs
(760) 325-9900; acehotel.com/palmsprings

THE STORY: The third outpost in the hip-meets-cheap Seattle hotel chain, this Ace provides some luxury you'll appreciate (cushy bedding) while forgoing other stuff you might not miss (a bathtub). Built on the bones of a 1965 Howard Johnson Hotel and an old Denny's restaurant next door, the 180-room midcentury hotel jibes perfectly with its Palm Springs locale. The decor goes for "a bohemian camping feel," which translates into tent-like canvas curtains and homespun decorative objects. —Keren Engelberg

WHAT'S SPECIAL: The Ace seems to cater to 20- and 30-somethings who want a place to sleep that also has a scene. The swimming pool/Jacuzzi area (a.k.a. the Swim Club) is home base, with an 85-degree heated pool, lounge chairs and hammocks aplenty, a DJ on Sundays, communal fireplaces, and quirky amenities like an adult snow-cone bar.

COOLEST THING: The hotel's laid-back, welcoming vibe is evident in many of the details: There are bikes you can borrow to ride into town and a newsstand where you can check out magazines. Dogs are welcome, and a little dog park out back is outfitted with water for Fido and scoopers for you.

UNCOOL: Perhaps our room service meals were a little on the salty side, and the bed was a little too soft. But this is us being pretty nitpicky.

RATES: \$119–\$629, plus \$20 per night resort fee, AAA discount available; free parking.

Hotel Indigo San Diego Gaslamp Quarter

509 Ninth Avenue, San Diego; (619) 727-4000; hotelindigo.com

THE STORY: Located in San Diego's bohemian East Village east of the Gaslamp Quarter, this 210-room boutique hotel opened in July 2009 as the city's first LEED-certified hotel. Its roof is covered with drought-tolerant plants that insulate the building, reducing the amount of energy needed for heating and air-conditioning. The lobby design maximizes the use of natural light, and floor-to-ceiling windows in the first-floor bar and restaurant open to let in cooling ocean breezes. There's also an on-site recycling and composting program, and guests who drive green vehicles can get reserved parking spaces and discounted parking rates.

—John Lehrer

WHAT'S SPECIAL: The Phi Terrace Bar on the ninth floor—with fire pits, a reflecting pool, and terrific views of the city and Petco Park—is a great low-key spot to have drinks with friends and share small plates of sweet potato fries, crab cakes, and calamari. If you feel the need for solitary reflection, there's a meditation deck at the opposite end of the floor.

COOLEST THING: Not even Ed Begley Jr. would stay at a hotel based solely on its green cred. Fortunately, the Indigo has lots more going for it: Its eclectic mixture of colors, textures, and design themes—spacious hallways with burnt-orange walls and sculpted ceilings, a lobby with huge photomurals of San Diego—area native plants and bodies of water—create an ambience that's both invigorating and relaxing.

UNCOOL: The Phi Bar and Bistro, adjacent to the lobby, is a great place to meet friends for drinks, snacks, and conversation, but the music is too raucous for intimate dining.



RATES: \$200–\$350, AAA discount available; valet parking \$32 per night (\$22 per night for hybrids).



Phi Terrace Bar at Hotel Indigo



An ofuro tub at Miyako Hybrid Hotel



A WOW suite at W Hollywood

W Hollywood

6250 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood
(323) 798-1300; whotels.com/hollywood

THE STORY: Open since late January on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the 305-room W Hotel creates a scene with its rooftop pool and Drai's Hollywood nightclub. Stars should feel fab in the cavernous lobby decorated with red carpets and a mirrored spiral staircase. For those without limos, the hotel is built above a Metro Red Line station, and Hollywood attractions, such as the Pantages Theatre, Palladium, Amoeba Music, and the Cinerama Dome, are a short walk away. —*Al Bonowitz*



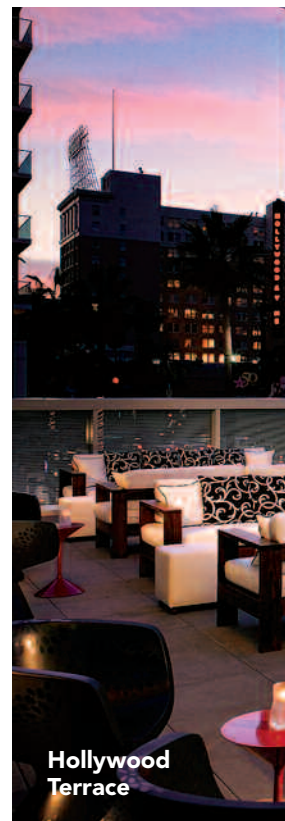
The Station

WHAT'S SPECIAL: The airy Delphine serves all three meals with some French brasserie favorites, such as *croque monsieur* and steak au poivre. Prices are reasonable for the neighborhood, which makes it a good preshow choice.

COOLEST THING: Rooms include Sanctuary gadget chargers. Cushions and pillows in the windows provide an inviting spot for daytime reading, despite the bland parking lot view to the east.

UNCOOL: Thin walls. And \$9 for in-room bottled water is obscene.

RATES: \$219–\$639, AAA discount available; valet parking \$35 per night.



Hollywood Terrace



A warm welcome on the hotel's opening day

Miyako Hybrid Hotel

21381 S. Western Avenue, Torrance
(310) 212-5111; miyakohybridhotel.com

THE STORY: Called "hybrid" because of its energy-efficient and eco-conscious design, construction, and operation, this elegant hotel blends Japanese amenities with Western boutique hotel comforts. The 208 guest rooms feature floor-to-ceiling windows, huge flat-screen TVs, and bathrooms with heated water bidets. Guests can also enjoy the traditional Japanese ritual of bathing with a quick shower and a long soak in the deep *ofuro* tub. —April D. Bailey

WHAT'S SPECIAL: Gonpachi restaurant offers a menu of Japanese fusion cuisine, along with fresh-from-Japan sashimi and sushi and house-made soba noodles. The newly opened Relaxen Day Spa offers Japanese-inspired spa therapies and is the only facility in the country that features *ganban-yoku* (bedrock bath) treatments, said to help detoxify the body and improve circulation.

COOLEST THING: That relaxing *ofuro* soaking tub and adjacent shower in each room—you suddenly feel like you're in Japan. Also, the hotel is LEED Silver certified.

UNCOOL: Limited room service hours.

RATES: \$99–\$335, AAA discount available; self-parking free, valet parking \$8 per night.



Terranea Resort terrace

Terranea Resort

6610 Palos Verdes Drive South
Rancho Palos Verdes
(310) 265-2800; terranea.com

THE STORY: In transforming the Palos Verdes Peninsula site where Marineland once stood, designers hoped to make this 582-room resort feel like a home. They succeeded—you'll feel like you're visiting your multimillionaire aunt's cliff-top house. The enormous lobby features overstuffed couches, a fireplace, and coffee tables tastefully decorated with sea-themed art objects. The staff treats each guest with an enthusiasm and kindness that feels genuine, not scripted. Rooms are big and comfortable, but you'll probably spend most of your time sunning by one of the three pools, being pampered at the spa, or gazing at the ocean from one of the bluff-top benches. —Robin Jones

WHAT'S SPECIAL: There are four main restaurants: Mar'sel, a special-occasion spot; Catalina Kitchen, an all-day restaurant that's casual enough for kids; Terranea Grill, a poolside bar and grill that serves breakfast, sandwiches, and salads; and Nelson's, a cliffside surf bar where locals and guests watch the sunset.

COOLEST THING: The setting. You can watch the ocean crashing on the ragged sea cliffs from almost any point on the property.

UNCOOL: The location, which is a lengthy drive from L.A.'s top points of interest. But maybe the point is to just get away from all that.

RATES: \$335–\$1,190, AAA discount available; self-parking \$20 per night, valet parking \$30 per night.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: COURTESY TERRANEA; COURTESY W HOLLYWOOD (3); MASATAKA NAKANO; CAUGHT IN THE MOMENT



Andaz rooftop pool deck



SLS Patisserie



Athletic Club basketball court

Andaz West Hollywood

8401 Sunset Boulevard, West Hollywood (323) 656-1234; andaz.com

THE STORY: Rock stars such as the Rolling Stones' Keith Richards, who partied at the 14-story Hyatt on Sunset Strip in the 1970s, wouldn't recognize the sleek, minimalist hotel the building has become. Distressed leather chairs, standing candelabras, and *Stray*, a giant fabric dog by Robb Putnam, decorate the lobby, and soft gray and peat tones in the 238 guest rooms create a calm that complements the vibrant Sunset Strip scene outside. In the hotel's restaurant, RH, chef Sebastien Archambault offers regional specialties from Périgord. —Elizabeth Harryman

WHAT'S SPECIAL: The hotel has no desk clerk, bellman, or concierge. And no front desk. Friendly hosts—young men and women in casual gray and black outfits—check you in on laptops at a big square table. The same host escorts you to your room and can make restaurant reservations or book theater tickets. The only question is, do you tip them? (You do.)

COOLEST THING: The rooms overlooking The Strip have glassed-in alcoves, separated by a curtain, where you can sit in a comfy chair and watch a mini-TV while looking at the city's most spectacular view of the L.A. basin.

UNCOOL: Breakfast in RH didn't equal dinner's excellence; a man at a neighboring table sent his \$14 Belgian waffle back, deeming it underdone.

RATES: \$275–\$410, AAA discount available; valet parking \$28 per night.

SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills

465 S. La Cienega Boulevard
Los Angeles
(310) 247-0400; slshotels.com

THE STORY: Step inside the SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills, which reopened in 2008 after a massive remodel, and you get the feeling you've walked into a surrealist painting. A mix of elegant and avant-garde, the 297 guest rooms and suites designed by Philippe Starck showcase eclectic elements, such as hanging tubular lamps, illuminated glassware, and mirrors galore. Monkey portraits and black animal sculptures topped with green apples appear throughout the hotel and pool deck. —Robin Rockey

WHAT'S SPECIAL: In The Bazaar restaurant, chef José Andrés' carefully crafted menu offers diners a delectable dichotomy of molecular gastronomy and traditional Spanish tapas. Try the olives prepared two ways: the first filled with anchovy and *piquillo* pepper, the second, a delicate ball of olive essence that bursts on your tongue.

COOLEST THING: The whimsical Patisserie, decorated in icy lavender, pink, and silver hues, is a dessert bar fit for Willy Wonka. Drop in for a Nitro Coconut Floating Island—a playful concoction made with liquid nitrogen that resembles a snowball.

UNCOOL: Less-than-stellar soundproofing—we could hear the conversations in the next room.

RATES: \$369–\$5,000 (for the Presidential Suite), AAA discount available; valet parking \$35.20 per night.

The Hotel at the Los Angeles Athletic Club

431 W. Seventh Street
Downtown Los Angeles
(213) 625-2211; laac.com

THE STORY: The Los Angeles Athletic Club has the sort of moneyed, exclusive feel you'd expect of a downtown L.A. members-only club established more than a century ago. But a recent remodel of its guest rooms by Kelly Wearstler disciple Tracy Beckmann has injected some much-needed modernity into the place and seems to have inspired an even more revolutionary concept: opening up the hotel to nonmembers.

—K.E.

WHAT'S SPECIAL: Force yourself to leave your stylish cocoon to make use of the 80,000-square-foot fitness center, where many an Olympian has trained. (Historic sepia-toned photographs of many of them line the halls.)

COOLEST THING: In addition to the usual gym amenities of machines, weights, and excellent classes, the fitness center also features a 25-yard indoor pool, complete with skylight and art deco chandelier, a sky-lit indoor basketball court, four squash courts, and an indoor track.

UNCOOL: Revamps have not been made to the main restaurant, the Game Room, where the food was lackluster on my visit.

RATES: \$169–\$399 (includes a breakfast buffet for two that's much better than the dinner offerings), standing AAA rate of \$145.95 available; self-parking \$8.80 per night.

LEFT TO RIGHT: ANDAZ WEST HOLLYWOOD; JAMES MERRELL; DAVID GUETTLER



Avia rooftop pool



Hotel Erwin ocean view suite



Shorebreak guest room

Avia Long Beach

285 Bay Street, Long Beach
(562) 436-1047
aviahotels.com/hotels/longbeach

THE STORY: Okay, so the corridors at this 138-room hotel look a bit like Star Trek's *Starship Enterprise*, given that they're illuminated by soft blue lights hidden behind angular glass and chrome fixtures. But the resemblance doesn't extend to the spacious, sunny rooms, which feature clean, modern design and comfortable beds. Intimate gathering spaces—a cozy wine bar just inside the front door, and a patio at the back of the lobby—beckon you to get a cup of coffee or glass of wine and relax. If you must wander, you're within easy walking distance of the city's convention center, the Aquarium of the Pacific, and the beach. —R.J.

WHAT'S SPECIAL: Avia Kitchen offers a daily breakfast buffet with fresh fruit, breads, cheeses, and meats. It reopens at night for dinner, when it serves small plates, desserts, and boutique wines.

COOLEST THING: The rooftop pool, which offers panoramic views of downtown Long Beach. It's best at night, when the bar opens and moody blue lighting and the twinkling city lights all around give it an outdoor-nightclub feel.

UNCOOL: The breakfast buffet is beautiful but, at \$16.95, a little pricey.

RATES: \$189–\$499, AAA discount available; self-parking \$7 per night.

Hotel Erwin

1697 Pacific Avenue, Venice Beach
(310) 452-1111; hotelerwin.com

THE STORY: Need a tattoo? A piercing? No? How about a nice slice of pizza? All that and more are nearby at the Hotel Erwin, a 119-room Joie de Vivre property that received a renovation in June 2009. Photos of graffiti, '60s rock icons, and the Venice scene—including Governor Schwarzenegger as a younger man—line the hallways. Austin Powers would feel at home in comfortable, retro rooms that are as subtly decorated as tones of orange and green will allow. The neighborhood is bohemian, and the beach, a playground, and a new skateboard park are a few hundred feet away. —A.B.

WHAT'S SPECIAL: Hash is the hotel's restaurant. It serves four varieties of hash and other breakfast fare. Comfort food is what's for dinner.

COOLEST THING: The "High" rooftop lounge provides an unfettered view of the Los Angeles Basin and Santa Monica Mountains. It's a great place to watch the surf, the sunset, or planes taking off from LAX in the distance.

UNCOOL: I'm retro about having a newspaper, and I had to cross the street to get one.

RATES: \$189–\$777, AAA discount available; valet parking \$28 per night.

Shorebreak Hotel

500 Pacific Coast Highway
Huntington Beach
(714) 861-4470; shorebreakhotel.com

THE STORY: Opened in May 2009, this 157-room waterfront Joie de Vivre hotel is located across the street from Surf City USA's popular beach and just a block from trendy shops, restaurants, and nightlife. Contemporary furnishings and surf-inspired decor give rooms a relaxed feel, while oversize bathrooms with separate shower and large soaking tub are quite luxurious. With its spectacular ocean view, open-air courtyard with fire pits, and helpful "beach butler," this is a choice hotel for surf lovers. —A.D.B.

WHAT'S SPECIAL: Zimzala Restaurant & Bar offers fresh takes on traditional American favorites, such as Yankee pot roast. Choices include braised lamb shank with polenta and cider-brined pork chop with mustard spaetzle.

COOLEST THING: Sunset views of the iconic Huntington Beach Pier are gorgeous; the hotel welcomes pets, levying no charge for furry friends; and the honor bar features surfboard wax and designer sunglasses.

UNCOOL: The \$9.95-per-24-hour Wi-Fi surcharge (although members of Joie de Vivre's Joy of Life frequent-stay club get free Internet access).

RATES: \$179–\$259, AAA discount available; valet parking \$24 per night. **W**

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