

# Travel & Outdoors

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The Griffith Observatory stands sentinel over Los Angeles

## LA extras

*Even on a business trip you can have a relaxing time in Los Angeles*

**ROGER NORUM**

California's largest city has never been known as the world's most accessible destination for business travel. Its airport, LAX, has become largely outmoded, and the city itself is more renowned for its superficial, disconnected social life than for efficient business dealings. Furthermore, public transport in this mammoth conurbation

– ten times the area of Manhattan, at the last survey – is effectively non-existent. Having your own GPS-powered vehicle is essential, and even then it can take eons to get from A to B.

But for those who persevere, Los Angeles boasts ample rewards. For one thing, it is one of the greenest cities in the US. The city has more than 214,000 acres of natural open space, including the nation's largest municipal park – the 4,014-acre Griffith Park – as well as 22 miles of beaches. And it leads the nation in green and sustainable initiatives, receiving nearly 14 per cent of all municipal energy from renewable resources, including solar and wind power. LA also recently transformed its fleet of vehicles – street sweepers, refuse trucks and buses – to alternative-fuel vehicles systems. And the city tops the list of US metropolitan areas with the greatest number of energy-efficient buildings.

What's more, city infrastructure is changing for the better. This autumn the new £930 million Bradley West

project at LAX will dramatically expand and modernise the airport with an international terminal fit for the space age.

And LA's population of 4.1 million represents 140 countries and 224 languages, making it a fascinating place to spend time if you have an eye for culture. Surprisingly, only 5 per cent of people work in the entertainment industry; 20 per cent work in trade, transportation and utilities, while another 10 per cent or so labour in manufacturing. Less glam than Hollywood and Beverly Hills, downtown LA is home to the majority of banking, law and financial services firms, as well as real estate developers, fashion and accessories companies.

Still, adjusting to North American business culture isn't always easy for European visitors. Olivia Crossey, a hotel industry transplant to the US from County Clare, Ireland, found she had to make a few adjustments to working in America. "You definitely need to be on time," Olivia explains. "You need to dress more conservatively and speak more slowly."

While Americans tend to be less formal than Europeans in manners and dress – West Coast business culture allows short sleeves in the summer months, for example – standard business courtesies are on the whole still adhered to.

## Pop over to Santa Monica for a beachside lunch

Punctuality, to take one example, is highly valued in LA, as it shows you've planned ahead for traffic. And if you're going for the professional look, wear a tie – even if the executive producer you're negotiating with is ten years younger and wearing an unpressed T-shirt. Regular business hours are 8:30am-5pm, but working late into the night – or at the weekend – tends to be



High-class shopping on Rodeo Drive; early morning surfing in Malibu, below



much more common than in Europe. And remember, while everyone has a BlackBerry, nobody leaves it on the table during a meeting. This is laidback America, after all: it's not all business.

On the surface at least, people generally tend to be friendlier than in other parts of the world, especially if you speak anything other than American English. As Olivia Crossey puts it: "Having an Irish accent works wonders if you are selling things. Open your mouth and people just smile."

If your meetings go well enough that you can afford to spend some leisure time in the city, delay your flight to take in some of LA's must-see outdoor sites. Pop over to Santa Monica for a beachside lunch, go for an early morning surf in Malibu or spend an afternoon shopping on Rodeo Drive. Alternatively, stop in at the now-legendary Getty Center, or stroll down the starred Hollywood Walk of Fame or the lounge-filled Sunset Boulevard. You could head out on any number of hikes, to such locations as the Escondido Canyon and Falls, the Griffith Observatory West Trail Loop or the Runyon Canyon Loop, the latter of which boasts priceless views of million dollar mansions, the Hollywood sign and the Sunset Strip.

If you have epicurean interests, you'll find plenty to keep you here, too. *Saveur* magazine editor James Oseland recently called LA "the food city of the moment", devoting an issue to what he termed the ultimate gourmand's destination. Some of this uniqueness stems from the city's varied, multi-ethnic food traditions. Because LA has been diffi-

cult to define in terms of cuisine, it is easier for its chefs to get experimental in the kitchen.

Angelinos have fallen in love with Danny Elmaleh's recently opened Mercato di Vetro, a two-storey nouveau Italian spot serving unique antipasti such as kale and pecorino pizza, and branzino with curried cauliflower, yogurt and cilantro. There are plenty of eco-conscious restaurants too, such as Fresheast, a casual new pan-Asian spot that does yummy organic dishes inside a swathe of glass, tile and wood designed by a feng shui specialist.

The kitchen of the wild, wild west has given many of the city's non-native chefs, such as Ludo Lefebvre and Wolfgang Puck, the opportunity to develop some spectacular, innovative spots to eat. While other US cities such as Chicago and New York have worked hard on defining a specific culinary identity, the closest thing LA has to its own cuisine is its lunch trucks, known as loncheros. Be sure to try one of LA's pop-up restaurants such as Lefebvre's LudoBites. These ephemeral dining experiences can be some of the most thrilling places to get chow. Just be sure you know it's actually still around before you head there with a limo full of clients.

**THE FACTS** United Airlines (0845 8444 777, [www.united.com](http://www.united.com)) fly direct to LAX from London Heathrow from

£903.29 return. Connecting flights from Edinburgh start from £104 return with BA ([www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)). The landmark, 238-room Andaz West Hollywood (+1 323 656 1234, [westhollywood.andaz.hyatt.com](http://westhollywood.andaz.hyatt.com); doubles £187) has chic

rooms with marble bathrooms and panoramic balconies. The hip Redbury's (+1 323 962 1717, [theredbury.com](http://theredbury.com); doubles £154) large kitchenette rooms have four-poster beds, Paisley wallpaper and record players. Thompson's glamorous, regenerated Hollywood Roosevelt (+1 323 466 7000, [thompsonhotels.com](http://thompsonhotels.com), doubles £208) has vintage photography, Kiehl's bath products and iPod docks throughout.



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# Stately procession

*Scenery, comfort, luxury – passengers on Northern Belle enjoy a moving tribute to a bygone era of indulgence*

JONATHAN TREW

If you regularly have to travel on overcrowded commuter trains you may wish to avoid ever taking a trip on the Northern Belle, part of the Orient-Express collection. It will ruin you. After a few hours of spacious, deep seating; silver service meals and courteous, smartly turned out staff, you will vow to never again set foot on the bog standard 7:45am shuttle service to Glasgow. Haymarket appears in a different light when seen with bone china in your hand, rather than a cardboard cup of something pretending to be coffee.

We took the Northern Belle from Edinburgh Waverley to Oban. Admittedly, probably not the most busy of

commuter lines but, with a route that includes a healthy section of the West Highland Line, it was suitably scenic for the launch of the Northern Belle's seventh and latest carriage – the Duart.

Like the other six carriages, Duart is named after a British castle or stately home. In this case, it is named after Duart Castle on Mull, the seat of the Macleans. The clan's ancestral base is depicted in detailed marquetry panels at each end of the 24-seat carriage while six other panels along the walls show pink heather and white flowers found on Mull set against a dark walnut burr.

The marquetry was crafted by Dunn & Son, a British family owned business, which also had a hand in the artwork for the Titanic, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth cruise liners. The nearest loo had perhaps taken the stately home theme a little too far and featured a mosaic of Chatsworth House immortalised on the spotless floor.

The Duart carriage started life as part of the Royal Household train but the Orient-Express group acquired it in 1999 and spent more than a decade fitting it out to join the Northern Belle. Apparently, the house style is like that of the Belle trains of the 1930s. I'm not going to pretend to be an expert on bygone British rolling stock but, for those who know their MK SO1 from their TSO, these things matter, and many of them enjoy riding the Northern Belle.



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## HOURS IN

## Ljubljana

■ **Friday, 2pm** Check into the sexy new Vander Urbani Resort (Krojaska ulica 6-8, rooms from £120, [www.vanderhotel.com](http://www.vanderhotel.com)), with its chic bedrooms and roof plunge pool.

■ **3pm** Wander along the old town cobbles to Krekov Trg, to take the funicular to Ljubljana Castle for views of the city skyline and the Slovenian capital's stunning mountain setting.

■ **8pm** Dine within the castle ramparts at Gostilna na Gradu (Grajaska planota 1, tel: 08-205 1930) sampling traditional Slovenian fare.

■ **10pm** Get a taste of the youthful city nightlife at legendary Café Macek (Krojaska ulica 5, tel: 01-425 3791), by the



Clockwise from main: the Northern Belle; Duart Castle on a marquetry panel in the new Duart carriage; the recent addition to the rolling stock seats 24



Those enthusiasts who weren't on this trip could often be spotted taking pictures at the side of the line as the train passed. Snaps done, they would jump into their cars and race to the next vantage point. I imagine that crossing train spotting with car rallies can only improve the adrenaline potential of the spotters' hobby. For those of us who appreciated the broad sweep of the Northern Belle's luxury more than the authenticity of the details, a trip is akin to being on a cruise ship. The main point in common is that the destination plays second fiddle to getting there. It is said that Oban has its charms but so does sitting back and watching Loch Lomond and Ben Vorlich swing by. It helps that the train proceeds at a regal pace - all the better to see the swirls of mist on Loch Lomond; sun patches on mountain flanks and the occasional waterfall on nearby slopes. If you were a first-time visitor to Scotland's west coast then



this would be an elegant introduction. The second similarity with a cruise ship is that on board the Belle you are never far from a multi-course meal. Even our breakfast started with a Bellini and featured three courses. Those brief interludes are punctuated by a glass of something fortifying, or perhaps a pot of tea and plate of cakes. During the return leg dinner, the table lamps glowed and the crockery gleamed on the pristine white linen tablecloths as the gloaming beyond the window faded away. By this point, the stewards had changed uniforms in preparation for performing the ballet of the evening meal. The aisles are not pinched, but neither are they Parisian boulevards and the poise needed to serve food and pour wine while not jostling one another, all the while compensating for the train rattle, is impressive. With its stately home-themed carriages, liveried staff and repro Arts & Craft interiors, the Northern Belle appeals to

the heritage market. National Trust for Scotland members and train passengers probably have quite a crossover. It's not a yearning for a more genteel, possibly imaginary, past that makes a Northern Belle journey attractive. If you want it to be then it is also a very romantic experience. The 7.45am shuttle to work may not kindle many sparks, but a trip up the West Highland Line in a train carriage from another era is a pleasant bubble to be in for a day.

**THE FACTS** The Northern Belle departs from several Scottish cities throughout the year for trips throughout the UK. Trips start from around £200. See [www.orient-express.com/uktrains](http://www.orient-express.com/uktrains) Jonathan travelled as a guest of Venice Simplon-Orient-Express Limited.

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# Bargain Breaks

COMPILED BY ALICE WYLLIE



## DANISH DELIGHT

Prices for three nights in Copenhagen start from £373pp, a saving of 35 per cent. This includes accommodation at the four-star Phoenix Hotel on a room-only basis and return flights from Glasgow departing on 17 October. Call 0203 320 3320 or visit [www.ebookers.com](http://www.ebookers.com)

## HUNGARY FOR MORE

Depart Edinburgh on 8 November for a trip to Budapest. Prices for a three-night break start from £429pp, including accommodation at the five-star Hotel Corinthia Royal on a bed-and-breakfast basis and a sightseeing tour. Call 020 7099 9665 or visit [www.thetraveldepartment.co.uk](http://www.thetraveldepartment.co.uk)

## BIG APPEAL

An 11-night "Manhattan Miracle" cruise costs from £1,189pp. Stay for two nights in a three-star Manhattan hotel followed by an eight-night cruise from New York to Port Canaveral. The price is based on a balcony cabin and includes return flights from Edinburgh departing on 20 November. Call 0800 916 6070 or visit [www.cruisethomascook.com](http://www.cruisethomascook.com)

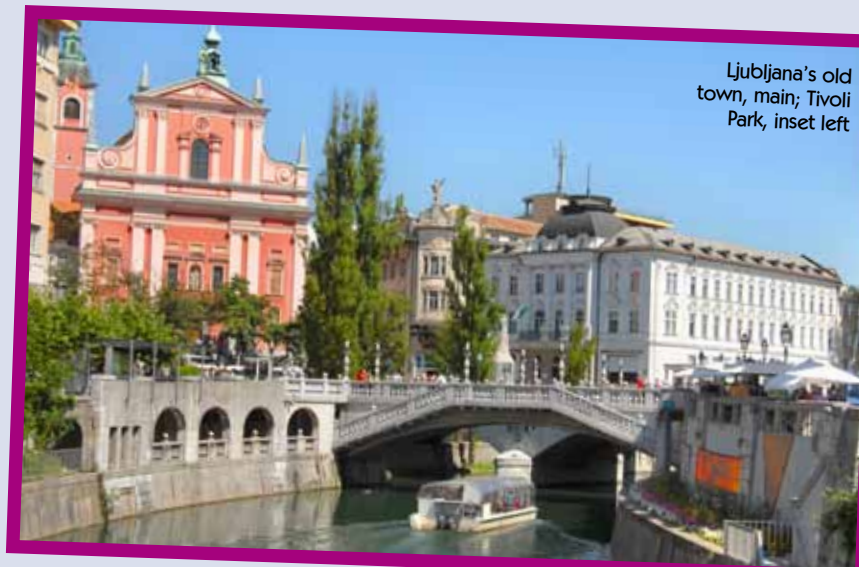
Ljubljana River.

■ **Saturday, 9am** Explore the colourful Central Market. As well as fruit and veg grown within sight of the castle it has lots of souvenirs and gifts. ■ **1pm** Sit out on the old town cobbles at Valvas'or (Stari trg 7, tel: 01-425 0455), a superb dining treat. The zlikrofi homemade pasta is divine, as is the roasted sea bass laced with black truffle. ■ **3pm** Whatever your artistic tastes Ljubljana has it covered with the National Gallery (Puharjeva Ulica 9, tel: 01-241 5400) opposite the Modern Art Gallery, both metres from the city's great green lung of Tivoli Park. ■ **9pm** Settle in for a multi-course feast with TV chef Janez Bratovž at his JB

(Miklosiceva cesta 17, tel: 01-433 1358). Culinary creation meets local ingredients and Slovenia's underrated wines. ■ **11pm** Ljubljana is a party city so join the local cognoscenti at current fave Pri Zelenem Zajcu bar (Rozna 3) over an absinthe cocktail. ■ **Sunday, 10am** A fleamarket takes over the banks of the Ljubljana. You can flit through the stands before a farewell bela kava (milky coffee) at one of the pavement cafes.

ROBIN MCKELVIE

**THE FACTS** Return flights to Ljubljana from Stansted with easyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) start from £150, with connections from Edinburgh and Glasgow from £50; [www.visitljubljana.com](http://www.visitljubljana.com)



Ljubljana's old town, main; Tivoli Park, inset left