

20 interesting and fun facts about Los Angeles

Everyone knows that Los Angeles is the entertainment capital of the world. It also boasts a list of stellar sights as long as a line of L.A. rush hour traffic. Hollywood Boulevard. Santa Monica Pier. The Walk of Fame. Beverly Hills. Venice Boardwalk. But scratch this southern city's surface a little, and you'll find L.A. has even *more* going on than movie stars, attractions and palm trees. Eager to find out more? Read on for our **top 20 fun facts about Los Angeles!**

1. L.A.'s original name will surprise you

Los Angeles is one of the most famous cities in the US. But did you know it was originally called something else? The first of our fun facts about Los Angeles is that it was previously called "**El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles del Río de Porciúncula**". This never-ending name translates as "The Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels on the River Porciúncula." And, yes, it's quite a mouthful! You can understand why they eventually settled on Los Angeles!

2. Los Angeles has many, many nicknames

Now we know this famous city's birth name, but Los Angeles seems to have more pseudonyms than any other in the US. Here are some of our favourites:

- L.A. – one of its most common namesakes, the use of this abbreviation is said to go as far back as 1883
- La La Land – this one is commonly associated with the L.A. movie industry
- City of Angels – an English translation of the city's previously-mentioned original name
- The Big Orange – the East Coast has its Big Apple, and **the West Coast has its Big Orange**. This is also a reference to the fruit that is commonly grown in the area

3. The Hollywood sign used to say something else

It's hard to believe, but the iconic Hollywood sign originally spelled out a different word. From its construction in 1923 until 1949, it was the **Hollywoodland** sign. Hollywoodland was a housing development in the Hollywood Hills. The now-world-famous sign was nothing more than an advertisement! It was planned to last only 18 months, but the locals got attached to it. The "land" was eventually removed to reflect the area, not just the housing development. And so was born the starry sign that we all know today.

4. Thomas Edison accidentally founded Hollywood

In the early 20th century, the film industry was in its infancy. It might surprise you to know that the hub of the industry was on **America's East Coast**, centred around New York. Thomas Edison, one of the US's most prolific inventors, was also a famous collector of patents. By the time he died, he had **well over 1000** in his name! Many of these relate to motion picture production. Edison and his team got into the habit of suing movie makers and seizing their equipment. So, **the movie industry upped sticks and left** for the other side of the country. In Los Angeles, they could work independently of Edison's control. We imagine the fantastic West Coast weather played a part in that decision too!

5. Griffith Observatory has been used as a film location for countless famous films

There are many movie-themed facts about Los Angeles, and countless films were shot there. Griffith Observatory is one of L.A.'s most splendid buildings, and it has **played a central role in many a Hollywood blockbuster**. Some of the most famous are: Rebel Without a Cause, Jurassic Park, The Terminator, Transformers, La La Land

6. The Hollywood Walk of Fame has a whopping 2700 stars

Another of L.A.'s iconic places, the famed Hollywood Walk of Fame, honours celebrities with stars embedded in the sidewalk. The very first permanent star was installed in 1960. It belonged to the director, Stanley Kramer. Since then, the **number of stars** has increased to **an incredible 2754** (as of May 4, 2023)!

7. L.A. has the largest and most diverse collection of Ice Age fossils in the world.

Visit the extraordinary La Brea Tar Pits to find out the ending to a story that began 50,000 years ago. Sticky asphalt started to bubble up from the ground, and animals, plants and insects got trapped. At today's tar pits, you'll find **more than 3.5 million Ice Age fossils** of more than 600 species. You'll see oddities such as **fossilised sabre-toothed cats and giant sloth skeletons**. There's even a mummified baby mammoth! You don't come across those every day.

8. There are 91 abandoned tunnels under L.A.'s streets.

Our next fun fact about Los Angeles is another L.A. curiosity: its abandoned underground tunnel network. These spooky tunnels, if put together, would stretch out **an incredible 17 kilometres!** And where did they come from? Prohibition. When alcohol was banned in L.A. in early 1920, 35,000 gallons of wine were poured into its sewers. But, far from eradicating booze, prohibition simply pushed its use underground. In L.A.'s case, literally! The tunnels became the secret entranceway to speakeasies and underground parties, and a select group of Angelenos were able to carry on the party during prohibition.

9. Los Angeles has not one, not two, but FIVE mountain ranges within easy reach.

The Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains are within easy reach of L.A. (1 hour's drive). They are home to some beautiful hiking trails. You'll also find the beloved Mount San Antonio (affectionately known as Mount Baldy) nearby. This behemoth towers over the city at **3000 metres tall**. The other mountain ranges nearby are the Verdugo Mountains, the Santa Susana Mountains and Griffith Park. So, grab your trainers and take a hike in the hills – no excuses!

10. Temperatures can vary by as much as 20°C within the Los Angeles area

Now, you might feel the need to escape into the mountains, as things can get heated in this steamy city! In LA, **extreme variations in temperature can occur** in areas that are very close to each other. This is because of **L.A.'s microclimate**. For example, at the Santa Monica Pier, the average maximum temperature in July is 21 °C. Just 24 km away, in Canoga Park, it is 35 °C!

11. Los Angeles is home to the third-largest Chinatown in the US

Chinatown, in downtown L.A., spans nearly **a square mile**. It has been around since the 1850s, when Chinese immigrants first came to work on railroad lines. Today, it's one of the largest Chinatowns in the US.

12. L.A. is the second-largest city in the United States

Data geeks will like this one. One of the most surprising facts about Los Angeles is that it is **the second-largest metropolis in the US**. In 2023, it had a population of 12,534,000. Number 1? The mammoth city of NYC, of course, has a staggering 18,937,000.

13. Santa Monica Pier started life as a loading dock for moving human waste into the ocean

The famous pier is now one of LA's most well-loved and glamorous locations. But did you know it had more humble beginnings? It was **built way back in 1909**. And it was originally constructed to carry sewer pipes containing human waste out into the sea. Icky!

14. L.A. has the world's first and only solar-powered Ferris Wheel

At the very same Santa Monica Pier, you'll find Pacific Park, an oceanfront amusement park. Its most famous ride is the Pacific Wheel. This titan **soars 26 metres** into the air. And it offers spectacular views of Southern California's coastline. The **Pacific Wheel** embodies California's environmentally friendly vibe, as **it's entirely powered by solar power**.

15. L.A. is the birthplace of the Internet

Back in 1969, the Internet was but a twinkle in some professor's eye. That professor was called Leonard Kleinrock, and he worked at UCLA. He sent the **first ever electronic message**. Wondering what the monumental message read? LO. Cryptic? Yes. The message was meant to read LOGIN. But the primitive system crashed, and LO was the only message that reached its recipients. Still, this seemingly banal moment is widely hailed as **the birth of the Internet** as we know it today. Now, that really is one of the most interesting techno-facts about Los Angeles.

16. Los Angeles was a part of Mexico for 27 years

After the Mexican War of Independence in 1821, L.A. became part of Mexico. And **it remained Mexican until 1848**, when the Mexican-American War ended. Los Angeles, along with California, was bought as part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. That's how it joined the good old US of A.

17. L.A.'s famous palm trees were imported

Picture yourself in L.A. What do you see? Are you rollerblading down Venice Beach, surrounded by palm trees? Well, another of our interesting facts about Los Angeles is that those iconic palms are not native to the area. It's hard to believe, but the symbols of L.A. actually come from all over the place, such as **the Colorado Desert, Mexico and the Canary Islands!**

18. L.A. county boasts a wooden lighthouse that dates back to Victorian times

This fascinating structure doesn't look like a typical lighthouse. Its **picket fence and quaint garden** give it a homely feel. But it was the first lighthouse to serve the Port of San Pedro back in 1874.

19. L.A. County has the largest Thai population outside of Thailand

We all know that L.A. is one of the most diverse cities in the U.S. A lesser-known but interesting fact about Los Angeles is that it has the highest Thai population outside of Thailand. That's **over 80,000 Thai residents!**

20. By 2028, L.A. will have hosted the Olympics three times.

Los Angeles is a **prolific Olympic Games host**. The first time was in 1932, then again in 1984, and now it is set to host the famous games once again in 2028. Only London has achieved this feat, and in 2024, Paris will join that exclusive list.