



WALKING TOUR OF THE DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2019

THEATER DISTRICT

BY PAUL
WHITNEY

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES IS UNDERGOING A MAJOR RENAISSANCE EVIDENCED BY THE NUMEROUS HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS UNDER CONSTRUCTION. THESE STRUCTURES ARE BEING BUILT FOR OFFICE SPACE, RESIDENTIAL LIVING, COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES AND HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS, RESTORING THE GRANDEUR THE DOWNTOWN AREA OFFERED MORE THAN 100 YEARS AGO. HAVING WORKED DOWNTOWN DURING MY CAREER AND WITNESSING THE CHANGES TO THE AREA, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO TOUR SOME OF THE HISTORIC SITES STILL STANDING. AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY, DOWNTOWN HOUSED A NUMBER OF PALATIAL THEATERS, PRIMARILY LOCATED ALONG BROADWAY. >>>



THE WALKING TOUR

LOS ANGELES THEATRES

- > **The Million Dollar Theatre**
307 S. Broadway
- > **The Roxie Theatre**
518 S. Broadway
- > **The Cameo Theatre**
(originally Clune's Broadway)
528 S. Broadway
- > **The Arcade Theatre**
(originally Pantages Theatre)
534 S. Broadway
- > **The Los Angeles Theatre**
615 S. Broadway
- > **The Palace Theatre**
(originally Orpheum Theatre)
630 S. Broadway
- > **The State Theatre**
(originally Loew's State Theatre)
703 S. Broadway
- > **The Globe Theatre**
(originally Morosco Theatre)
744 S. Broadway
- > **The Tower Theatre**
802 S. Broadway
- > **The Rialto Theatre**
812 S. Broadway
- > **The Orpheum Theatre**
842 S. Broadway
- > **The Theatre at Ace Hotel**
(originally United Artists Theatre)
933 S. Broadway

Photo This Page:
Exterior of the Los Angeles Theatre

Photo Opposite Page:
Interior of the Los Angeles Theatre

 WALKING TOUR OF THE
DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES
THEATER DISTRICT

Southern California endured significant rainfall during all of February and the first week of March (March 6 set a new precipitation record for Los Angeles that day), so I was quite happy to have clear skies and no rain on Saturday, March 9, our tour date. We assembled at Pershing Square and embarked on a two-hour tour led by a knowledgeable LA Conservancy docent.

The Los Angeles Conservancy “works through education and advocacy to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resource of Los Angeles County.” One of its outreach programs is introducing the public to historic structures throughout the County and I arranged participation in one of the most popular tours: “Broadway Theatre and Commercial District.”

There are 12 theaters on Broadway, all located between the 300 and 900 blocks with nine of them designated as Los Angeles Cultural-Historic Monuments. Most were built between the 1920s and 1930s, incorporating Art Deco and Beaux Arts design. See sidebar on page 17 for the 12 theaters making up this tour.



Most impressive among them is the Los Angeles Theatre, built in 1931 and designed by S. Charles Lee with Tilden Norton. While many of these theaters have fallen into disrepair or have been repurposed to a new use, the LA Conservancy has a good working relationship with the current owner of the Los Angeles Theatre and tours are allowed inside this palatial structure. The Conservancy also conducts fundraisers here, showing period movies on its large screen. This building is Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #225 and its interior is as impressive as its exterior. Lower levels include lavish restrooms and parlors, a dining area and a playroom for children. In its day, it incorporated an innovative prism system that enabled the film to be seen in its downstairs lounge.

Following the tour, we explored some of the dining options in downtown, including lunch at the stately Biltmore Hotel. The day’s tour provided a glimpse into the entertainment options Los Angeles offered during the Classic Era. The LA Conservancy has a variety of other tours and you can learn more about these or become a member of this historic organization at its website: laconservancy.org.

Photos This Page > FROM TOP:

1. *The Cameo Theatre*
2. *The Roxie Theatre*
3. *The Palace Theatre*

Photos Opposite Page > FROM L to R:

1. *The sidewalk in front of Clifton’s Cafeteria*
2. *The Arcade Theatre*

