

NOW SHOWING

Hollywood, the place where movies were born, is home to iconic, luxury and boutique theaters that provide endless ways for movie lovers to enjoy the timeless art of film.

BY ASHLEY RYAN

Just mentioning Hollywood evokes the glitz and glamour associated with the movie industry. After World War I, Americans turned their attention to entertainment, and the popularity of movies dramatically increased. Hundreds of films were produced by new studios like Paramount, Warner Bros. and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and the term “movie star” was born. Technology allowed directors to gain popularity as well, with new and innovative ways to showcase their filmmaking style.

Since then, further advancements in motion pictures—from new genres, like westerns and horror films, to stunt doubles and special effects—have captivated worldwide audiences. Through all this, Los Angeles remains the ultimate movie-making and movie-watching locale, as evidenced by the city’s many theaters.

Visitors can view films in iconic theaters rich with history, luxury theaters that offer an upscale experience or unique theaters at art houses, in cemeteries or on rooftops with views overlooking the city. Just as film has been a large part of LA’s heritage, it remains a major part of the area’s culture and a favorite pastime for locals and visitors alike.

ICONIC LANDMARKS

Three of the most renowned and historic theaters in Los Angeles sit along the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Hollywood Boulevard and were built by the same man, Sid Grauman.

TCL Chinese Theatre, formerly known as Grauman’s Chinese Theatre, opened in 1927 just as Hollywood was gaining popularity. The intriguing exterior is part of the draw—housed in a Chinese pagoda, the TCL Chinese Theatre is decorated with carvings and statues of dragons and guardian lions. The building’s most well-known and recognizable element is the front courtyard, which features nearly 200 handprints, footprints and autographs encased in cement from celebrities who have attended movie premieres or special ceremonies. These range from Marilyn Monroe and Bette Davis to Morgan Freeman and Johnny Depp. The ornate auditorium was the home of the Academy Awards from 1944 to 1946, and movie premieres are still held there today.

El Capitan Theatre, located across the street from TCL Chinese Theatre, was opened by Grauman in 1926 for live performances, then began showing films in the 1940s as the Hollywood Paramount Theater before being acquired by Disney in the 1980 s. Now, it hosts most of Disney’s film premieres. The theater—designated by the city as a Historic-Cultural Monument—is set in a six-story Spanish-style building, and the lavish auditorium is home to the “Mighty Wurlitzer,” a magnificent organ built in the 1920s. An exhibit space below the theater is used during special events to showcase props or set pieces.

Grauman’s Egyptian Theatre is another iconic movie house in Los Angeles that opened in 1922 and was the home of Hollywood’s first premiere of a film, a silent version of “Robin Hood.” Its Egyptian style is evident not only in the hieroglyphics and pyramid-style bricks, but also in the Egyptian paintings hanging inside. The two auditoriums still show films today.

A more recent icon among the region’s movie theaters is the Cinerama Dome, another Historic-Cultural Monument in Los Angeles. The dome-shaped theater opened in 1963 and, for many years, only showed films using a three-projector process. After 2005, however, it began screening digital films. The dome shape provides a unique experience along with the natural acoustics of the building. It was the site of many premieres and events until the 1990s, and is now part of Pacific Theatres’ ArcLight Hollywood complex.

Another venue from Hollywood’s golden age is the Vista Theatre on Sunset Boulevard. It opened in 1923 and, just like El Capitan, was originally home to stage shows. Stars from various cult films have left handprints and footprints in the front courtyard, much like those to be found in front of the TCL Chinese Theatre.



TCL Chinese Theatre

TCL CHINESE THEATRE EXTERIOR PHOTO: F11PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK; INSET PHOTO: COURTESY OF TCL CHINESE THEATRES



TCL Chinese Theatre



LUXURIOUS EXPERIENCES

A crowd favorite, ArcLight Hollywood is a grandiose 14-screen movie theater that sits next to the Cinerama Dome. Each auditorium has reserved stadium seating to enhance the experience and, although it shows most films in digital format, the ArcLight hosts special events that feature traditional, 35 mm films. The theater also serves sandwiches, soups, salads and desserts; alcohol can be purchased at special screenings for guests age 21 and older. Theatergoers can also attend Q-and-A panels as well as screenings of classic films. Although the Hollywood location was the first, the chain has expanded to Pasadena, Culver City, El Segundo, Santa Monica and Sherman Oaks.

Also in the luxury category, iPic Theater in Westwood offers six screens and plush armchairs. Outside the auditoriums, this venue offers guests the opportunity to dine in sit-down restaurants with innovative cuisine, grab food to take



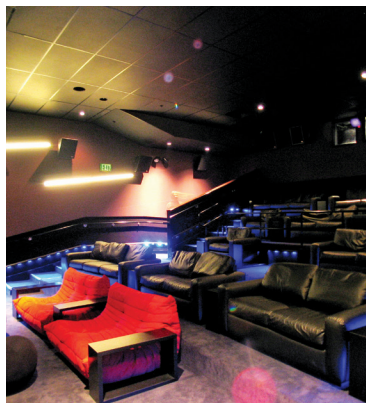
Clockwise from top: iPic Theater in Westwood; The Landmark in the Westside Pavilion Mall; Cinépolis in Westlake Village

to their seat or lounge in one of the theater's bars before or after watching a film. The iPic chain has another theater in Pasadena and locations spread across the country.

A luxury theater that also shows independent and foreign films, The Landmark in the Westside Pavilion Mall is a popular stop for cinephiles. Ushers welcome you with a quick synopsis of the film, and you can choose to sit in recliners, couches or

love seats instead of regular theater seats. The snack bar offers more than just popcorn and hot dogs, although the popcorn does come in eco-friendly bags; you also can order fruit smoothies, pretzels from La Brea Bakery and dried fruit. Another unique aspect of The Landmark is that guests can purchase DVDs and books on-site.

Another luxury theater, Cinépolis in Westlake Village, offers comfortable leather



recliners and delicious fare that includes quesadillas, grilled chicken tacos, paninis, pizzas and more. Many showings also include at least beer and wine, if not a full bar. With a button to call for service, guests can stay and enjoy the movie while ordering snacks and drinks. Cinépolis has other locations in Orange County and San Diego, and its Mexico-based parent company is one of the largest theater operators in the world.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF IPIC THEATER; COURTESY OF THE LANDMARK; COURTESY OF CINEPOLIS



Top: Rooftop Cinema Club on the Montalbán Theatre; bottom: the Nuart Theatre lobby

BOUTIQUE AND ART HOUSE VENUES

Los Angeles is full of boutique theaters, art houses and other innovative viewing spots. One such movie house is the Nuart Theatre, known for its weekly showings of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," which often attracts guests in costume to experience the cult classic. Located on Santa Monica Boulevard, the Nuart is also famous for its range of independent and foreign films, restored classics and documentaries. Besides screenings, guests can enjoy periodic

panels and events with stars from the films. Although the theater was built in 1929, it was renovated 10 years ago; the exterior features vintage signs and colorful neon lights.

For another taste of less mainstream cinema, visit the Downtown Independent on Main Street. There is only one screen, but the theater hosts other events like musical performances and fashion shows on its rooftop. Though it once featured stage shows as the Linda Lea Theater, it was renovated in 2007 and started showing mainly indie films.

The architecture includes sleek glass designs in a cube shape, making it one of the more contemporary-looking theaters in town.

The nonprofit Cinefamily, located at the historic Silent Movie Theatre in West Hollywood, showcases a range of films as well as other hosted events. While silent films are occasionally played there, Cinefamily also shows contemporary titles. The group aims to make movies more social by adding things like live music, celebrity guests and even potlucks to the showings—as well as unique events like women-only pajama parties.

Another small theater, Arena Cinema, has only 92 seats but offers HD projection. In the 1980s, it was considered an extension of Grauman's Egyptian Theatre, which is located next door. Now, Arena Cinema screens independent films and hosts industry-related special events. An adjacent speak-easy sometimes helps out with after-parties for

the screenings as well.

One of Hollywood's favorite film spots is Cinespia, which hosts outdoor screenings in the Hollywood Forever Cemetery. In addition to a pre-show disc jockey and a shop that sells silk-screen shirts and posters, these events encourage viewers to picnic on the lawn during the showing, making it a great way to watch a film in summer. Cinespia also features photo booths that incorporate the movie being screened that night.

Another innovative use of outdoor film presentations is the Rooftop Cinema Club. Guests can watch movies from the rooftop of the Montalbán Theatre on Vine Street with views of the city. Comfortable chairs are set up and no audio is played on speakers; instead, visitors are provided with wireless headphones that allow them to really immerse themselves in the film. This standout setting provides cinephiles with a new way to watch movies in the city that essentially started it all. **C**