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Urban Studies: The best of city travel

L.A.'s Silver city



From great lattes to Mexican food and modernist architecture, artsy Silver Lake (or is it Silverlake?) is the place to sample L.A.'s hippest flavours

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Alissa Walker

Los Angeles — From Wednesday's Globe and Mail  
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Silver Lake – a cluster of sunny cafés, well-curated boutiques and sleek modern houses nestled between palm-studded hills – is one of Los Angeles's most creative and most coherent areas. The walkable, compact neighbourhood sparkles with personality and bohemian quirkiness. (There's a free-wheeling agree-to-disagreement on how to spell the name of the 'hood – both Silver Lake and Silverlake are acceptable.) And the weekend, when local writers, filmmakers and artists fully embrace its lazy-day environs, is the best time to see it all.

**9 a.m.: Perk up** Beat the long lines at Intelligentsia (3922 W. Sunset Blvd.; 323-663-6173; [www.intelligentsiacoffee.com](http://www.intelligentsiacoffee.com)) by heading to this coffee institution before its bed-headed regulars rise. Although the elegant ribboning of the latte foam could pass as high art, ask your barista (likely a world champion; check out the trophies) for a recommendation from one of the coffees scrawled on the chalk menu on the counter. You'll get a fair-trade cup of coffee, custom-brewed for the bean using the Lamborghini of coffee makers, the Clover.

**10 a.m.: To market** Fully caffeinated, march up to the Silverlake Farmers Market (Saturday, 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; 3700 Sunset Blvd.; [www.sunsetjunction.org/farmersmarket.html](http://www.sunsetjunction.org/farmersmarket.html)) for a breakfast of crisp local Fuyu persimmons and made-to-order Nutella crepes, enjoyed in a grassy triangle crawling with toddlers and their parents. A few blocks farther down Sunset, the Silverlake Art Craft and Vintage Flea Market (Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; 1511 Micheltorena St.; [silverlakeartcraftvintage.com](http://silverlakeartcraftvintage.com)) transforms a school parking lot into a colourful bazaar. Curated by nearby gallery GhettoGloss, the vendors offer everything from vintage Diane Von

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Furstenberg dresses to kitschy plastic earrings crafted by local residents.

**11 a.m.: Work it** Pop in for an hour-long class at the svelte neighbourhood's best-kept secret, Pop Physique (3501 W. Sunset Blvd.; 323-665-7777; [www.popp physique.com](http://www.popp physique.com)). This studio teaches the barre method – a booty-busting combo of yoga, Pilates and ballet to a bumpin' soundtrack – that will leave you limber, toned and pleasurable sore. If it's your first time, no worries: The instructors will cheerfully guide you through the reps, and they'll even remember your name.

**1 p.m.: Vinyl and pulled pork** Hoof it over the hill to the off-the-beaten-path Territory Records (534 N. Hoover St.; 323-662-4200; [www.territorybbq.com](http://www.territorybbq.com)), a tiny but mighty record store, where the walls of old album covers are just as entertaining as the bins of vintage vinyl. If you start to drool while perusing the tunes, it's due to the smoke wafting out of sister establishment Territory BBQ, where the owners serve pulled pork and brisket smothered in vinegary North Carolina-style sauce.

**2 p.m.: Get crafty** Shop Silver Lake's strip of handmade delights, starting with ReForm School (3902 Sunset Blvd.; 323-906-8660; [www.reformschoolrules.com](http://www.reformschoolrules.com)) – a celebration of the handmade, featuring silkscreened posters by local artists as well as linens from Finnish company Marimekko. Or take a class at their DIY lab across the street, Home Ec (3815 W. Sunset Blvd.; 323-906-8826; [www.homeecshop.com](http://www.homeecshop.com)), where proud makers complete verdant terrariums and sock monkeys.

**Nearby, Matrushka Construction (3822 W. Sunset Blvd.; 323-665-4513; [www.matrushka.com](http://www.matrushka.com)) sells prim sundresses and sexy gowns designed and made on premises by Laura Howe, who is happy to make small alterations on the spot to better suit your figure.** Then snack your way through the Cheese Store of Silverlake (323-644-7511; [www.cheesestoresl.com](http://www.cheesestoresl.com)), which offers jamon shipped from Spain and homemade marshmallows from local sweets shop Little FlowerCandy Company.

**4 p.m.: The water is wide** Head to Silver Lake Reservoir (1850 Silver Lake Blvd.; [silverlakereservoirs.org](http://silverlakereservoirs.org)), which is actually two reservoirs, Silver Lake and Ivanhoe. A 3.5-kilometre path that loops around them is a good place to practise sprints or a slow saunter. On the east side, look for Neutra Place, named for Modernist architect Richard Neutra, who designed dozens of homes in the area. At the south end of the reservoir, step inside the gate to Materials and Applications (1619 Silver Lake Blvd.; 323-913-0915; [www.emanate.org](http://www.emanate.org)), where architects Jenna Didier and Oliver Hess have turned their front yard into an exhibition space for cutting-edge creations by local designers and artists.

**7 p.m.: Fine Mexican and truck-stop beers** Residing in an unassuming strip mall, Alegria (3510 Sunset Blvd. W.; 323-913-1422; [www.alegriaonsunset.com](http://www.alegriaonsunset.com)) offers possibly the best Mexican food in the city. Try the tamale pie, a creamy, cheesy, lasagna-like dish made with layered tortillas, or anything with the deep, dark mole, which is made with too many ingredients to list. It's BYOB, though, so for the alcoholic portion of the evening, head a few blocks to Stinkers (2939 W. Sunset Blvd.; 323-661-6007; [www.stinkerstruckstop.com](http://www.stinkerstruckstop.com)), a truck-stop-themed bar that is hilariously over-the-top. Five thousand vintage beer cans are stacked fraternity-style around the ceiling, which you can toast with your own 12-ounce can of Schlitz. Tip well and your efforts will be appreciated by the blasting of an airhorn behind the bar.

**10 p.m.: Get the scoop** Before last call, hurry over to Pazzo Gelato (3827 Sunset Blvd.; 323-662-1410; [www.pazzogelato.net](http://www.pazzogelato.net)) for a double scoop before they close (Saturday at midnight, Sunday at 11 p.m.). The fresh, airy gelato is made on the premises, using seasonal ingredients in delectable mash-ups like honey fig and strawberry chocolate chip. Join your fellow Silver Lakers (or is it Silverlakers?), and indulge in the taste of your new favourite neighbourhood.

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wildbell

11/14/2009 4:25:31 PM

Very nice round-up, but please go easy generalizing the seeming acceptability of "Silverlake." Certainly there are area businesses who spell it that way in their names, and a large number of people who refer to it as such. But there are plenty such as myself who would no sooner run Silver Lake's name together as we would spell our city "Losangeles."

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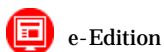
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