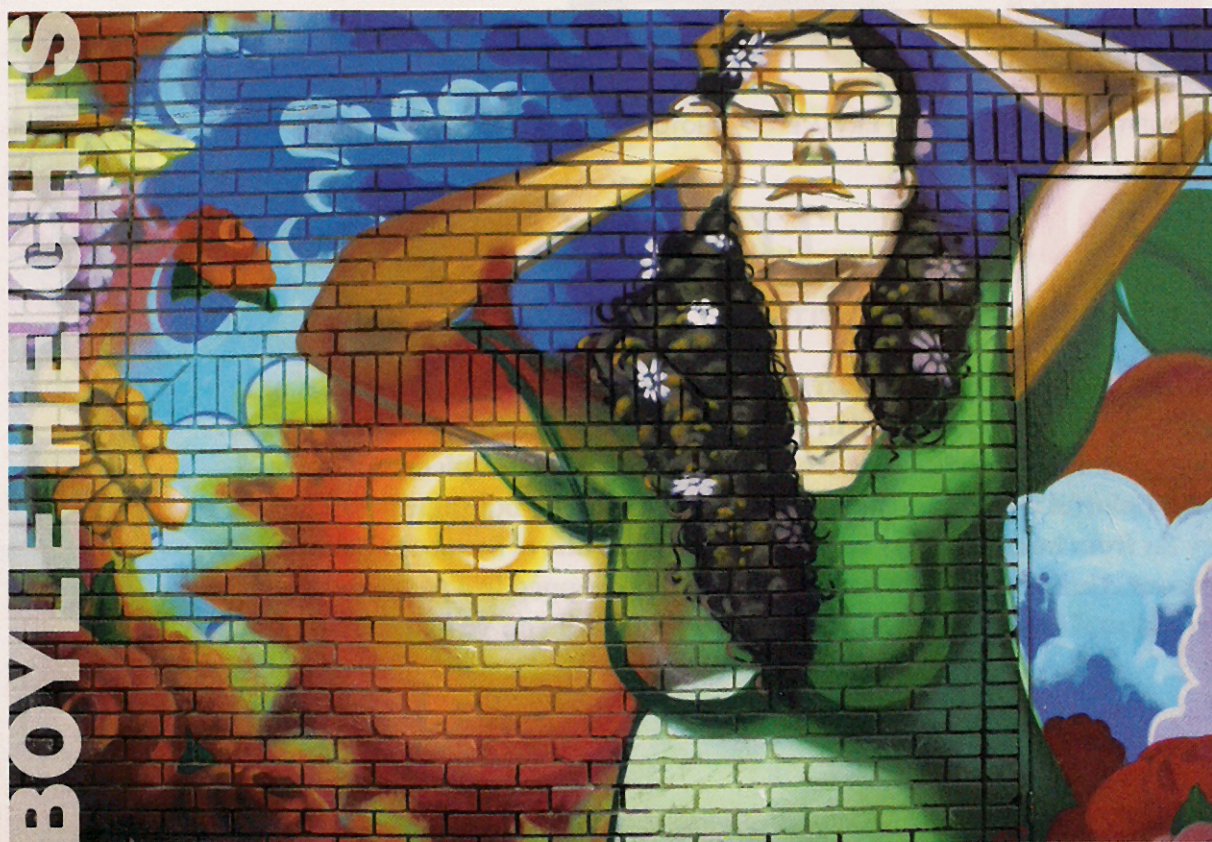


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AT HOME *in the* WORLD

TRAVEL THE GLOBE WITHOUT LEAVING LOS ANGELES.

YOU'RE IN A PLACE WHERE EXOTIC SMELLS WALT FROM SIDEWALK CAFÉS. ALL around you, signs are scrawled in foreign scripts and people speak in unfamiliar languages. Food-market bins are crammed with piquant spices and unusual produce. Colorful curios line the shelves of neighborhood boutiques. Surely, you're very far from home. Or you've just stumbled into one of Southern California's numerous ethnic enclaves, where a few quarters dropped in a parking meter will buy cultural immersion so complete, you'll feel as if you've fled the country.



PERCHED ON THE BLUFFS OF THE LOS ANGELES

River east of downtown, Boyle Heights has long cradled immigrants to the city. The neighborhood was named after Irish settler Andrew Boyle, but today, it's like a town in Mexico. Beckoning are the smells of freshly baked tortillas and spicy Oaxacan mole sauce, the sound of mariachi guitars and the sight of colorful murals. The main thoroughfare bears the name of Mexican labor leader Cesar E. Chavez and buzzes with activity. Toy emporiums



decorated with colorful piñatas share the avenue with beauty salons and *zapaterias* (shoe stores), and boutiques hawking fashions for women are nestled alongside suppliers of *vaquero* (cowboy) apparel. The Catholic faith finds its way into all the commerce here, with tiny botanica shops crammed with herbs, *santos* (saint figurines) and *veladores* (colorful prayer candles).

Farther east, between Ford Boulevard and Dangler Avenue, Mexican culinary treasures await. Produce markets sell mangoes, chiles and nopals (cactus paddles). La Fortaleza, a tortilla factory, offers both corn and flour varieties. Restaurants serve up classic dishes with a twist, like Oaxacan sauces in a rainbow of unconventional flavors — from passion fruit to tequila lime — and tamales stuffed with savory chicken or sweet raisins and pineapple. The *panaderias* (bakeries) turn out golden *pan dulce* in a kaleidoscope of shapes and tastes.

With its distinctive gazebo, Mariachi Plaza is the site of an annual celebration of Mexican music, food and culture typically held each fall. On almost any evening, musicians for hire, outfitted in traditional embroidered bolero jackets, gather in the plaza to strum sonorous ballads.

LANDMARKS

Our Lady of Solitude Catholic Church

4561 E. Cesar E. Chavez Ave.

Mariachi Plaza ▶

Boyle Avenue and First Street

FOOD/DINING

La Fortaleza

Freshly baked tortillas and party chips.

525 N. Ford Blvd.

Moles La Tia

Oaxacan cuisine, specializing in multi-flavored moles.

4619 E. Cesar E. Chavez Ave.

Tamales Liliana's

A wide selection of authentic tamales.

4629 E. Cesar E. Chavez Ave.

El Gallo Bakery

Baking *pan dulce* since 1949.

4546 E. Cesar E. Chavez Ave.

La Serenata de Garibaldi

Specializing in seafood dishes and mariachi serenades.

1842 E. First St.

Eastside Luv

New "cholo chic" wine bar showcasing Latin rock.

1835 E. First St.

SHOPPING

El Norteño

Clothing for urban cowboys.

2036 E. Cesar E. Chavez Ave.

Botanica La Santa Cruz

Herbs, *santos* and *veladores*.

2137 E. Cesar E. Chavez Ave.

La Casa Del Mariachi

Charro suits and sombreros for mariachi enthusiasts.

1836 E. First St.

FOOD/DINING

Saffron Spot

Exotic ice creams and other frozen desserts.
18744 S. Pioneer Blvd.

Rasraj Sweets & Farsan

Indian snacks and sweets.
18511 S. Pioneer Blvd.

Bombay Spices

Grains, spices and kitchenware.
18626 S. Pioneer Blvd.

Udupi Palace

Southern Indian vegetarian cuisine.
18635 S. Pioneer Blvd.

SHOPPING

Sona Sari Palace

Saris, silk suits and bangle bracelets.
18425 S. Pioneer Blvd.

Mansha ▶

High-fashion saris and chandelier earrings.
18618 S. Pioneer Blvd.

◀ Cottage Art

Silk pillows, ornate tapestries and Hindu sculptures.
18619 S. Pioneer Blvd.

Ziba Music & Gift

Imported music, DVDs, movie posters and instruments.
11808 186th St.

SERVICES

Sona Chaandi Beauty Center

Eyebrow threading, henna and bindi.
18307 Pioneer Blvd.



PIONEER BOULEVARD IN ARTESIA — THE MAIN artery of “Little India” — is redolent with saffron, pistachio and rose water. These fragrant flavors sweeten made-from-scratch ice cream and multihued, cheesecake-like treats known as *barfi*, available at sweets shops along this commercial street. Resplendent in equally vibrant colors, the bejeweled saris that line the store windows.

The Indian community in Artesia, in southeast L.A. County, traces its beginnings to the '70s, when a large number of immigrants from the Asian subcontinent made its way to

California. Along with their colorful attire and aromatic sweets, these newcomers also brought their spirituality. The Hindu practice of yoga has had an enduring impact on legions of Southern Californians. Vegetarianism is common among Hindus, so cafés offering flavorful meatless specialties such as *masala dosa* (rice-and-lentil

crepes stuffed with spiced potatoes) and *palak paneer* (spinach-and-cheese curry) are plentiful. Many of the stores stock Hindu altar pieces with likenesses of deities such as the elephant-headed Ganesh.

On Diwali, or the Festival of Lights, held every fall, Hindus light lamps to signify the victory of good over evil. Pioneer Boulevard closes to accommodate live entertainment, food booths and a light show. It's also the site of the annual Indian Independence Day celebration every Aug. 15.

Though many Indian families have moved away, they return for festivals and on weekends to shop, eat and stock up on staples like curry powder and garam masala. Men look for silk suits and imported music, while women spring for eyebrow threading, henna and bindi (forehead jewelry). Bolts of ornate fabric, sets of dazzling bangles and sacks of basmati rice change hands. The bustle and riot of color make for a street scene straight out of Mumbai. For the full experience, take in a Bollywood movie. This popular cinema genre features outlandish dance numbers and uplifting endings. Watch one of the fanciful flicks and you'll leave Little India with a smile on your face.



KOREATOWN



IT'S EASY TO BE OVERWHELMED BY THE SHEER size of Koreatown, a highly dense 20-block-by-20-block area between Hancock Park and downtown that is home to the largest Korean population outside of Asia. Korean businesses began taking root in this district in the wake of the 1965 Watts Riots, when Korean immigration revitalized an area that had fallen into disrepair. Today, the neighborhood seems defined by the totems of fashion, technology and commerce: sleek high-rises tattooed in neon, gleaming malls and exclusive late-night clubs filled with well-heeled hipsters.

But if you look more closely, you'll find another Koreatown, one of quiet retreat, serenity and a little more "Seoul." Tea ceremonies offer an ancient path to relaxation and harmony. Duck into a teahouse, find a nook behind a bamboo screen and you'll be transported far from the frenetic traffic. The numerous Korean bathhouses in the area are also popular destinations for rejuvenation. Soak in steaming mineral water, then enjoy an invigorating seaweed scrub or massage.

After nourishing your spirit, you'll probably be ready to nourish your body. Korean markets are packed with fresh seafood, beef (a staple

of the Korean diet), and kimchi (spicy pickled vegetables) in umpteen varieties. Noodle and tofu houses dominate the street scene, but you haven't fully experienced Koreatown until you've cooked your own dinner at one of the many Korean barbecue houses filled with the smoky scent of short ribs. Just remember to save room for dessert — dessert cafés are popular hangout spots for both sweets and socializing.

Koreatown residents take their favorite pastimes — golf and karaoke — seriously. Tee up at one of the neighborhood's many driving and putting ranges, some wedged between high-rises. Or reserve your own private "music studio" at a karaoke parlor to unleash your inner pop star in the company of friends. Learn more about the cultural significance of these pursuits at the Korean American Museum, where exhibitions illuminate the fortitude and ingenuity of the people who developed this dynamic neighborhood.

FOOD/DINING

Galleria Market ▶

Massive Korean supermarket located in the basement of the Koreatown Galleria. 3250 W. Olympic Blvd.

Hwa Sun Ji

Traditional Korean teahouse. 3960 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 100

◀ ChoSun Galbee

Korean barbecue. 3330 W. Olympic Blvd.

Haus

A dessert boutique. 3826 W. Sixth St.

SHOPPING

Koreatown Plaza

Designer fashion mall. 928 S. Western Ave.

ACTIVITIES/ENTERTAINMENT

Bliss

Fusion café/bar with karaoke music studios. 3465 W. Sixth St., No. 200

Beverly Hot Springs Spa

The only natural hot-spring well in Los Angeles. 308 N. Oxford Ave.

Korean American Museum

3727 W. Sixth St., Suite 400





FOOD/DINING

▲ Merkato Ethiopian

Coffee bar, market and full-service restaurant/bar.
1036 ½ S. Fairfax Ave.

Rosalind's

Tibbs, coffee ceremonies and fresh *injera* baked in-house.
1044 S. Fairfax Ave.

Rahel

Vegan cuisine.
1047 S. Fairfax Ave.

Messob

Traditional meat and vegetarian dishes.
1041 S. Fairfax Ave.

SHOPPING

Jah Lambs & Lions

T-shirts, scarves and accessories in the Rasta spirit.
1030 S. Fairfax Ave.

Safari Ethiopian Store

Handwoven Ethiopian cotton garments.
1049 S. Fairfax Ave.

THOUGH IT OCCUPIES ONLY A SHORT STRETCH ON Fairfax Avenue between Olympic Boulevard and Whitworth Drive, the neighborhood dubbed “Little Ethiopia” offers an authentic slice of Addis Ababa.

Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee, and many of the restaurants host traditional coffee ceremonies complete with burning incense. The aromas are potent up and down the block. At any given hour of the day, you might find a cluster of men at a sidewalk café sipping the ebony brew, absorbed in a conversation. Merkato Ethiopian, a hybrid coffee bar/restaurant and market/gift shop, is a notable landmark. Pull up a stool at the thatched coffee counter and shoot the breeze with a local, then pick up a bag of imported roasted beans to take home.

Ethiopia's diversity of spiritual beliefs is evident along the avenue. Restaurant offerings reflect religious dietary customs. Islam, Judaism and Orthodox Christianity — Ethiopia's main religions — all prohibit the consumption of pork and shellfish. But meat eaters and vegans alike can feast richly in this African community.

Some restaurants specialize in beef dishes such as *tibbs* (cubes of beef with onions and chiles), while others serve vegetarian or vegan dishes only. The religious significance of certain foods makes dining in Little Ethiopia a thoughtful affair, but there is also the sheer fun of eating with your hands: The ubiquitous *injera*, a pancake-like bread, is the tool you use to scoop up your food.

Rastafarians, who claim Ethiopia as their spiritual homeland, also have a presence here. Practitioners of the religion, which included Bob Marley, regard the late Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie as their spiritual leader. In specialty boutiques, you can find clothing and adornments in the faith's signature red, green and yellow colors. You'll also find handwoven cotton garments commonly worn in Ethiopia. They're so feather-light, they'll make you feel ethereal.

Each fall the Little Ethiopia Cultural Street Festival, a carnival of music, food and dance, turns this block of Fairfax Avenue into a corner of Africa. You'll depart with the driving beat of the kebero drum resonating into the night. ●