

# Myths of Los Angeles

True? or False?

There are many pre-conceived notions floating around about Los Angeles. Are your ideas of LA based more on Hollywood than on reality? Here are some top myths and misconceptions about the City of Angels.



(Photo: Calvin Fleming/Flickr)

## 1. The weather is always sunny and warm.

While it is mainly sunny in LA throughout the year, contrary to popular belief, LA does get chilly. Chilly meaning it dips into the low 50s and 40s, especially in the winter months of December – January. In fact, a layer of marine clouds that hangs over the city throughout the summer, known as June gloom, makes most mornings overcast until around noon. Even more: it rains. So you won't need to retire your winter jacket or umbrella just yet!

## 2. It's overcrowded!

With about 4 million people in 468 square miles, LA is crowded. It is the second most populous area in the U.S., besides New York City. However, there are over 80 neighborhoods spread out throughout the city. There are always places like Malibu, scenic hiking trails, and other quieter, more-removed areas to go to if you feel overwhelmed. And you don't have to go very far because right here on campus, UCLA has expansive green lawns, a 7-acre botanical garden, and a 5-acre sculpture garden where you can relax and take in the greenery.



(Photo: waltarrrrr/Flickr)

### 3. People are rich, fake, spoiled, stuck-up, and everyone is rude!

And what city doesn't have people that are like this? In LA, there are very rich people, very poor people, and people in-between. Just like anywhere else, there are giant mansions, tiny apartments, and regular homes. The median household income in 2009 was \$48,617. In Hollywood, there are struggling and successful actors alike. LA brings in diverse people from all over the country, which can be seen here on campus.



(Photo: UCLA Fund/Flickr)

Over 30% of the student body are international students and UCLA esteems itself as a melting pot of ethnicities, culture, and diversity.

### 4. Driving in LA is the WORST: There is traffic ALL the time. EVERYWHERE.

Although it is much worse during morning and afternoon rush hours, there are ways around and "through" LA traffic. Others who have lived in big cities may not find the traffic to be surprising. Backstreets are often a quick solution around traffic and can be very scenic. The trick is knowing what areas are congested and when to avoid them, and thankfully, there are several ways to avoid the gridlock. UCLA is conveniently situated with a turnaround servicing all major bus lines and UCLA students can purchase an unlimited bus pass for only \$33 per quarter. Additionally, many students take to biking, walking, or utilizing the campus shuttle to get to and from campus. Especially when most students live less than 5 miles from campus, these options are quick and easy.

### 5. LA drivers are terrible.

They are definitely impatient, but that's understandable given the traffic! Even though there is a blog about how LA can't drive, there are cities with worse drivers according to [Forbes](#) (2012). Just be sure to drive defensively and minimize distractions.



(Photo: Selbe B/Flickr)

## 6. The air is always smoggy.

Usually, yes. But not always. It's no secret that ozone pollution in LA is a problem and has been for some time. However, thanks in part to California's clean air laws—which lead the nation's green industry—LA has seen dramatic decreases in air pollutants over the previous 40 years. Additionally, the increase in hybrid/electric vehicles, electric vehicle charging stations, bus commuters, car pool lanes and bicycle lanes are helping to reduce pollution and inspire major cities across the world!



(Photo: Eric Norris/Flickr)

## 7. Violent gangs and crime are everywhere.



(Photo: waltarrrrr/Flickr)

Just like any metropolitan city, LA has its share of crimes. Gangs do exist, but gang-related activity has been decreasing in recent years. Also, keep in mind that UCLA is surrounded by some of the most elite neighborhoods in Southern California: Bel-Air, Beverly Hills, Brentwood, and Santa Monica. The most common crimes are thefts from vehicles, so take caution in leaving things exposed in your car. And as always, use common sense while walking alone or at night.

**8. Almost everything is expensive or over-priced.**

Like most big cities, prices and rent are higher than suburban or rural areas. The cost of living index for LA is 134, compared to the US average of 100. However, Los Angeles has the least expensive utilities costs of 21 major American cities. The amazing weather helps out tremendously with the monthly utilities costs. There are also plenty of free or inexpensive activities in LA, such as going to the beach or attending



(Photo: Alissa Walker/Flickr)

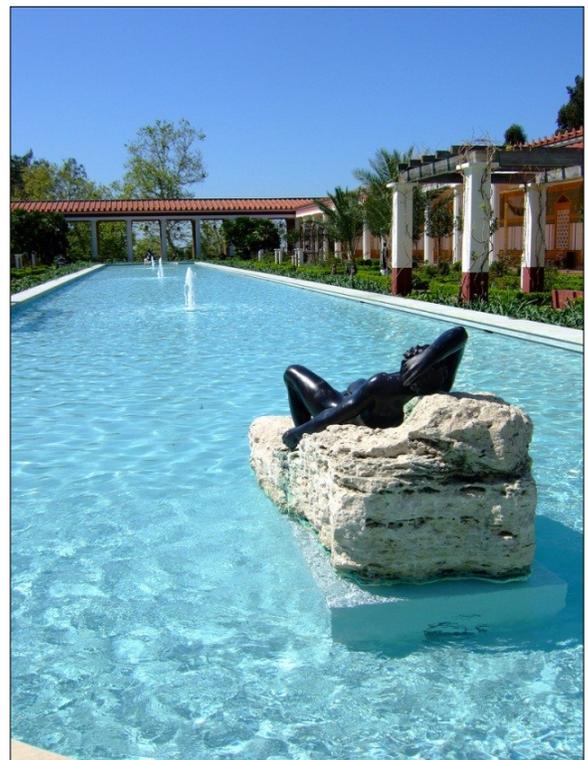
any one of the numerous free and amazing events at UCLA. From dance, to theatre, to athletics, there are always events [happening](#) on campus.

**9. LA people don't even really eat.**

In LA, it is possible to feel like you spend most of your paycheck on restaurants and bars in the city, especially if you're a foodie. The diverse population leads to incredible food choices. Whether you want Mexican, Indian, American, Mediterranean, French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or a plethora of other cuisines, LA has it – and it probably tastes amazing.

**10. Los Angeles has no culture.**

Seriously not true. In the last 10-15 years, the theatre scene exploded with many top-notch performances and LA continues to attract talent from all over the country. The LA Music Center is home to the LA Opera, Center Theatre Group, American Ballet Theatre, and the LA Philharmonic. There are more lively, fun, and cultural activities in downtown LA than ever before, thanks to LA Live, Downtown LA Art walk, and the Walt Disney Concert Hall. There are also a number of great art museums including the renowned Getty Center and Getty Villa, the LA County Museum of Art (LACMA), and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA).



(Photo: Mary Harrsch/Flickr)

## 11. The only place to work is in the entertainment industry.

Though many people move to Los Angeles to “make it big” in the entertainment industry, there are a number of other lucrative industries too! Not only is LA the nation’s largest manufacturing center, but it also has the nation’s largest port in Long Beach. Finance and banking are other huge industries, along with construction, healthcare, and technology services. UCLA is home to the Ronald Regan Medical Center, the top rated



(Photo: Francis Orante/Flickr)

hospital in the western United States. So yes, film and television are two of the well-known industries here in tinsel-town, but it is by no means all this eclectic city has to offer.

## 12. Things to do in Los Angeles: movie theaters, night clubs, Hollywood, and celebrity sightings – that’s it.

There are a ton of things to do in Los Angeles beyond the nightclub and entertainment scene. Summer is especially the time that LA shines. From beachside concerts and neighborhood-wide events, like First Fridays in Venice and Downtown Artwalk, to exploring the LA food truck scene and hiking to the Hollywood sign – LA is an exciting place to explore. And if you can’t do it in LA, you can easily travel to some place close by where you can. Whether it’s hitting the snow slopes at Big Bear Mountain or surfing in Malibu or Manhattan Beaches, Los Angeles offers something exciting for everyone!



(Photo: Eric G./Flickr)



(Photo: Rachel Kramer/Flickr)

### 13. LA is ALL concrete.

This may be surprising, but LA does have beautiful natural elements incorporated into its urban design including tree-lined streets, parks, and green patches spread out throughout the city. Griffith Park is over 4,000 acres of greenery within the city limits while the Hollywood Hills and Santa Monica Mountains provide a green backdrop for the city all the way to the beach. Moreover, LA is bordered by many distinct and beautiful beaches including Malibu, Santa Monica, Venice, and Hermosa Beaches.



(Photo: Kansas Sebastian/Flickr)

## Final Thoughts

So, your friend who doesn't like LA has probably never been here or never gave it much of a chance. Los Angeles is full of creative, entrepreneurial-minded spirits. It has the ocean, the mountains, the incredible weather, amazing food, and a never-ending list of things to do. There have to be some trade-offs as nowhere is perfect. But in our minds, it will always be the **embodiment of the California dream.**

- Graduate Division Student Ambassadors and Work-Study Students, 2013