



Travel Editor
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5 great things to do in BEVERLY HILLS

As a tribute to Elizabeth, I gave myself the star treatment



In Beverly Hills, it's obvious all roads lead to those designer shops!

On a recent trip to LA, I decided I'd channel the late great Elizabeth Taylor and head for some of her favourite haunts.

1 ARRIVE IN STYLE

For those of us who like to travel in comfort but want to save our money for shopping, Air New Zealand's Skycouch is *the* way to travel to LA on the new Boeing 777-300s. Two of you pay extra and get three seats, the footrests of which fold out to make a flat lie-down space. Giants like the Ginger and I would struggle to stretch out at the same time (the passion police need not worry about us), but oh the luxury of lying down at all! I arrived fresh as a daisy after eight hours' sleep and the mum travelling behind me raved about the new "cuddle class", saying her munchkins got loads of kip and she got some peace and quiet.

2 STAY IN STYLE

Elizabeth Taylor would never stay in a blah hotel, so neither, I decided, would I. I wanted something that really screamed old world Beverly Hills and I found it at the Avalon – a gorgeous boutique hotel hidden on a leafy corner just a few blocks from

Rodeo Drive. With its kidney-shaped pool, vast rooms, quirky vintage décor, free valet parking and WiFi, I could not have been happier. Marilyn Monroe actually stayed here, which gave me an extra swagger in my stride. (The polenta cake at Oliverio's in-house restaurant helped too!)



I love the Avalon's retro vibe ... Did I mention Marilyn Monroe stayed here?

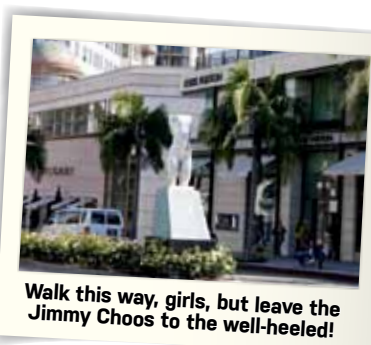
3 LUNCH LIKE A LADY

A very supportive fan of my books lives near LA but we'd never met, so I arranged to meet her for lunch at the Polo Lounge at the famous pink Beverly Hills Hotel – one of Liz's favourites. Elderly dames in Chanel were dotted at tables between other visitors from out of town like us, and a sprinkling of what I imagine were hopeful starlets. A salad and an iced tea did not break the bank, so this is a very reasonable way to get some glamour. I also met

old friends for dinner one night at Spago – a still-popular haunt made famous by late agent Swifty Lazar's Oscar night parties – and I saw Eric Bana at AOC wine bar.

4 SHOP LIKE A STAR

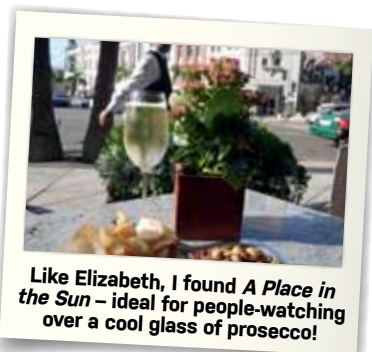
Rodeo Drive is the obvious spot to hit for shopping or, just as much fun, window shopping. An LA local told me the drive has changed in recent years to reflect the fact that these days the Elizabeth Taylors of the world are outnumbered by the Elizabeth Hurleys, so it's now more appealing to the younger folk. I wandered up and down two days in a row, sampling fragrances in the beautiful Tom Ford store, trying handbags at Louis Vuitton, and having a laugh with the five gorgeous men selling shoes in Jimmy Choo, one of whom tried to get me into 10cm glittery heels!



Walk this way, girls, but leave the Jimmy Choos to the well-heeled!

5 TAKE A LOAD OFF

Everyone says you need a car in LA, and guess what? They're sort of right. However, walking everywhere meant I got to have a nosey at the houses near my hotel. They're nowhere near as grand as the McMansions



Like Elizabeth, I found *A Place in the Sun* – ideal for people-watching over a cool glass of prosecco!

on the hill, but still worth millions and fascinating. When my feet gave out, I stopped at the bottom of Rodeo Drive and had a glass of prosecco sitting outside the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. For \$14 (with free chippies and nuts), I got to spend a couple of hours watching this particular piece of the world go by. Elizabeth would have been proud.

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