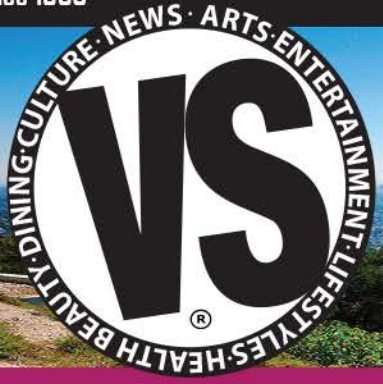


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LOCAL EVENTS

VOPA PRESENTS RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S OKLAHOMA! AT THE HISTORIC EL PORTAL THEATRE

By Karen Johnson

Valley Opera & Performing Arts (VOPA) has a new home! For the first time in its 19 year history, VOPA will present Rodgers & Hammerstein's beloved musical, Oklahoma!, at the historic El Portal Theatre in the heart of the North Hollywood Arts District.

Directed by former Yale University guest faculty Dylan F. Thomas, this production

boasts a stellar cast of over 40 actors, with 2 incredible casts alternating between 8 performances over 2 weekends. Choreographer Gary

Sharing the role of Laurey Williams



Katie McTyre



Jennifer Kersey

Roberts lends his expertise to the production by creating complex dance segments that will excite and astonish viewers. Marina Wagner's costume design will transport audiences to the prairies of the Oklahoma territory at the turn of the century, with petticoats and cowboy boots dancing across the stage.

Adding to the grandeur of the production is the accompaniment of a live 23-piece

orchestra, conducted by Dr. Noreen Green, Founding Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony. This full orchestral arrangement ensures that every note of Rodgers & Hammerstein's iconic score—featuring classics like Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin', People Will Say We're in Love, and The Surrey with the Fringe on Top—is brought to life with breathtaking richness and authenticity.

Director Dylan F. Thomas explains, "Oklahoma! revolutionized the format of

Sharing the role of Curly McLain



Corydon Melgoza



Dylan F. Thomas

the modern musical. For the first time, the songs were written to further the storyline and evoke genuine emotion from the audience." He added, "With a fun balance

of side-splitting humor and heart-stopping conflict, Oklahoma! remains one of the most beloved musicals of all time, and I'm excited to be able to bring it to our valley community."

"We are proud to bring this cherished musical to the stage with a level of production value rarely seen in regional theater," said VOPA General and Artistic Director Shira Renee Thomas. "With an exceptional cast, full orchestra, and a stunning creative vision, we are giving our community the Oklahoma! experience they truly deserve."

Don't miss this chance to experience one of Broadway's most beloved musicals in a way you've never seen before. Bring the whole family and enjoy the sweeping romance, exhilarating dance numbers, and unforgettable music that have made Oklahoma! a favorite for generations.

Performance Details:

When: February 15-16, 22-23 at 1pm and 6pm (all dates)

Where: El Portal Theatre - 5269 Lankershim Blvd, North Hollywood, CA 91601

Tickets: Available now at www.VOPArts.org or by calling (818) 508-4200

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TAKE TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS FOR ISLAND PACKERS WINTER WHALE WATCHING AND EXCURSIONS TO THE CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK AND NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY!

By Dillan Marsden

A winter whale watch excursion is the perfect way to gather with family and friends to witness the inspiring migration of Pacific Gray whales as they travel through the Santa Barbara Channel near Anacapa and Santa Cruz Island.

“This mammoth migration of more than 20,000 whales and 6,000 miles continues to remain a major attraction in Southern California,” said President Cheryl Connally of Island Packers. “Located in scenic Ventura Harbor Village, we invite visitors to plan on booking this “must-see” experience soon as part of their fun for the entire family Spring Break activities.”

Winter whale watch excursions are available thru mid-April from Ventura Harbor Village and/or Channel Islands Harbor departing at 9:30 a.m. and/or 1:30 p.m. Rates for half-day trips are \$47 for adults, \$43 for seniors, and \$34 for children 3-12. Children 2 years old and younger ride free.

Island Packers

Pacific Gray Whales are traversing the newly-designated Santa Barbara Channel Whale Heritage Area, one of only eleven whale heritage areas around the world. This prestigious designation is a testament to the region’s commitment to marine conservation and ocean education through whale watching.

Pacific Gray Whale

Sightings of the migration start with the Pacific Gray Whales and include occasional sightings of Humpback Whales, Fin Whales, and even orcas. Dolphins are enjoyed year-round, delighting passengers as they surf with the boat, and ride the bow and stern waves. The half-day Winter Whale Watch Cruise with Island Packers provides stunning views of the Ventura coastline or the Channel Islands.

Island Packers is excited to share their daily marine mammal sightings with

mainlanders on the Marine Mammal Sightings website. Guests can see in real time what Island Packers crew and captains view in the Santa Barbara Channel Whale Heritage Area.

In addition to an excursion, travelers can immerse themselves in Ventura Harbor Village’s idyllic sun-kissed playground, pairing their time at sea with some “dine and drink” options at some of the best waterfront eateries as well as coastal-inspired boutiques. www.venturaharborvillage.com

What Makes Whale Watching A Great Activity

Affordable family fun – half day excursions start at \$47 for adults; \$34 for kids.



Flexible – winter trips depart twice a day, almost daily until mid-April.

Educational – crew and volunteers have many years of experience sighting whales on the waters of the Santa Barbara Channel and will narrate and inform guests about all the varieties of marine mammals seen.

Get in touch with nature – it is not just whales; visitors may also see sea birds, sea lions, and the coastline of the offshore islands.

Channel Island National Park all-day trips to Anacapa Island, Prisoners Harbor (Mid-Santa Cruz Island), and Scorpion Anchorage (East Santa Cruz Island) are also available year-round. The trips range from \$70 to \$96 per adult. Remote camping facilities are available on the islands for an additional fee. Interested in more wildlife? Island Packers recently added popular all day birding trips.

About Island Packers

Island Packers is the authorized concessioner, serving the Channel Island National Park and has been family owned since 1968. For information, reservations or to purchase gift certificates, visit www.islandpackers.com, call (805) 6421393, or visit Island Packers at 1691 Spinnaker Dr., Suite 105B, in Ventura Harbor Village.

About Ventura Harbor

Ventura Harbor is a vibrant seaside marine destination just minutes from US Highway 101. It features wide-open spaces for boating, recreation, beach access, Ventura Harbor Village shops and restaurants, and the nearby Channel Island National Park Visitors Center.

For more information call (805) 477-0470 or visit www.venturaharborvillage.com

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The Beauty And Majesty Of Los Angeles

Los Angeles, known for its glamorous entertainment industry and sprawling urban landscape, is also home to a wealth of natural beauty and wildlife. Though the city is often associated with busy streets and iconic landmarks, it's surprisingly close to some exceptional animal experiences, where visitors can get up close and personal with both local and exotic species. Whether you're hiking through mountains to track wild animals, exploring nature reserves, or visiting unique sanctuaries and interactive animal exhibits, the Los Angeles

area offers a variety of opportunities for animal lovers to engage with wildlife in ways that are educational, thrilling, and impactful.

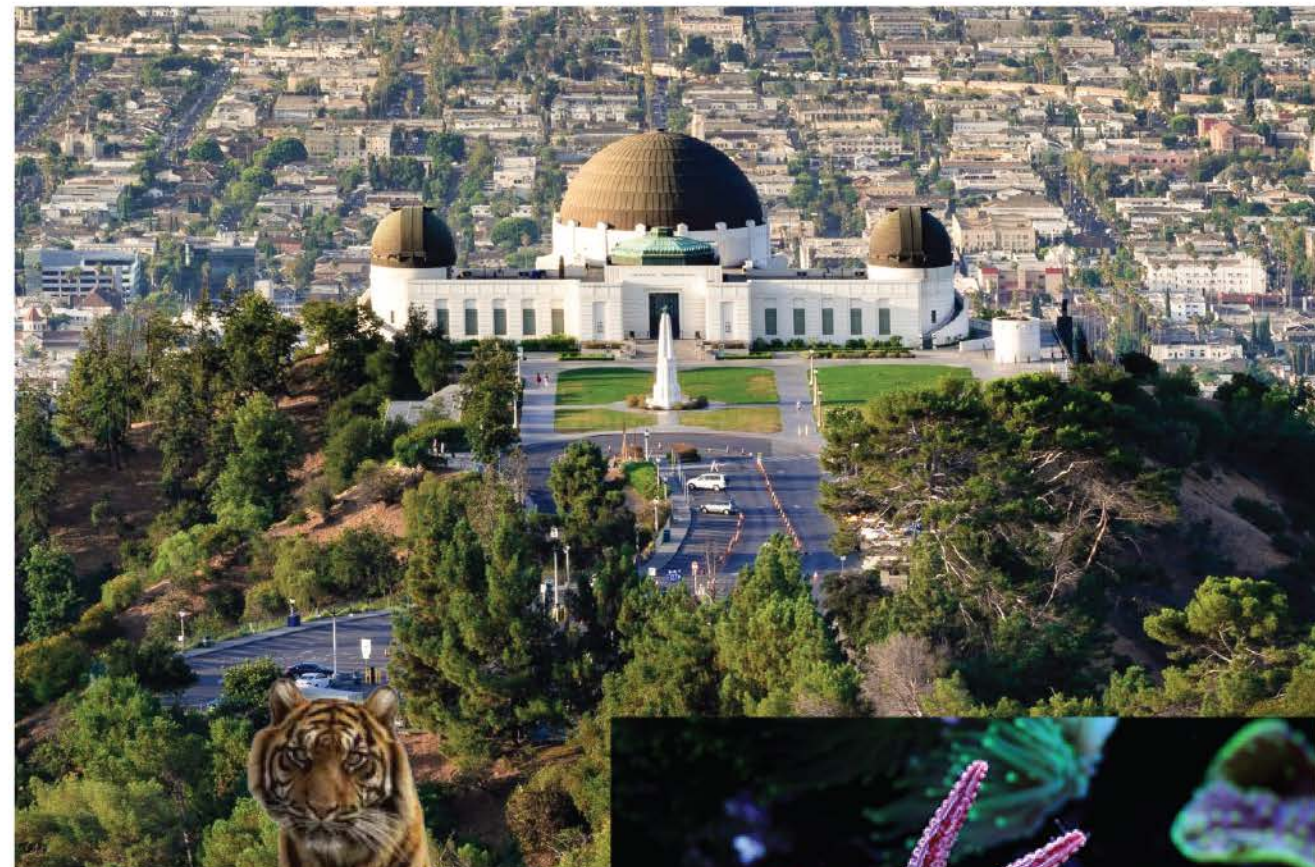
In this article, we will explore some of the top unique animal experiences and places where you can connect with nature, learn about animal behavior, and even track and identify wildlife tracks, all in and around Los Angeles.

Griffith Park: A Wildlife Haven in the Heart of Los Angeles

Griffith Park, one of the largest urban parks in North America, is not only home to the Griffith Observatory and the Los Angeles Zoo but also serves as a sanctuary for native wildlife. Located just a short distance from downtown L.A., Griffith Park's vast landscape of chaparral, oak woodlands, and grasslands is ideal for wildlife encounters.

Wildlife and Tracking: Griffith Park provides an ideal backdrop for animal tracking. Its diverse ecosystems attract a wide range of wildlife, including coyotes, raccoons, skunks, foxes, squirrels, and even deer. These creatures leave their tracks in the soft dirt along the park's trails, especially after rain, when animal prints are most visible. Early morning or late evening hikes are perfect for spotting these tracks before the park becomes crowded with visitors.

For those interested in tracking animals, the Los Angeles River trail that cuts through the park is a prime location for observing coyote tracks. Look for prints with pointed claws, an oval shape, and a



characteristic lack of claw marks—key identifiers of coyotes. If you're lucky, you might even spot the elusive tracks of mountain lions, which roam parts of the park, though they are much rarer to see up close.

Up Close and Personal: While Griffith Park itself offers opportunities for tracking and observing wildlife, the nearby Los Angeles Zoo allows visitors to get up close to exotic animals from all over the world. The zoo is home to over 1,000 animals, including endangered species like the Sumatran tiger and California condor. The zoo's educational programs offer behind-the-scenes tours where visitors can interact with zookeepers and observe animal behavior up close.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area: A Wildlife Paradise

Just outside of Los Angeles, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area offers more than 150 miles of trails and

a diverse landscape, making it a prime location for animal encounters and tracking. This area is home to a wide range of species, including mountain lions, bobcats, deer, wild turkeys, foxes, and coyotes.

Tracking and Observing Wildlife: The rugged terrain of the Santa Monica Mountains creates an ideal habitat for mountain lions, which are often difficult to spot. However, you can look for their tracks along the trails, especially in areas with soft soil or sandy paths. Mountain lion tracks are large, round, and leave visible toe pads and claw marks. Bobcats are smaller and often leave tracks that are harder to distinguish, but they too frequent the area.

Hiking the Solstice Canyon Trail or the Malibu Creek State Park trail is a great way to explore the park and track animals. These areas are especially known for sightings of deer and wild turkeys, both of which leave easy-to-identify tracks. Coyotes, too, roam these mountains, and their tracks often appear in the dust or mud on less-traveled paths.

Up Close and Personal: For those seeking a more interactive experience, Malibu Wine Safari offers a unique blend of animal encounters and vineyard tours. Situated in the Malibu hills, the safari allows guests to meet exotic animals such as zebras, camels, and alpacas, all while enjoying a scenic wine-tasting experience. Visitors can get up close with these animals, feeding and interacting with them in an intimate setting.

The Wildlife Learning Center (Sylmar): An Intimate Wildlife Sanctuary

For those who want to get up close with animals while also learning about conservation, the Wildlife Learning Center in Sylmar offers an interactive and educational experience. This nonprofit wildlife sanctuary is home to rescued and rehabilitated animals, including reptiles, birds of prey, big cats, and primates. The center focuses on animal education and provides an opportunity to connect with animals that have been saved from mistreatment or neglect.

Hands-On Animal Experiences: At the Wildlife Learning Center, visitors can participate in hands-on animal encounters, where they can feed and interact with various species. One of the highlights of the center is the opportunity to meet owls, hawks, and eagles up close. The center also



offers private tours where visitors can learn about the behavior and natural history of the animals housed there. For a truly personal experience, guests can hold a boa constrictor or meet African servals and caracals—both of which are wild cat species that are not commonly seen outside of zoos.

Tracking and Observation: While the center primarily focuses on educational interactions, there are nearby natural areas like Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park where you can go hiking and track wildlife. Look for the tracks of coyotes, rabbits, and foxes, as the park is known for its diverse wildlife. Early morning and evening hikes are best for tracking, as animals are most active during these hours.

Los Angeles River: Urban Wildlife Tracking

The Los Angeles River, although often associated with concrete and urbanization, provides a surprising wildlife experience. Along its edges,

especially in the wildlife corridors, you can find signs of animals like raccoons, coyotes, and beavers. The area is particularly known for being a migratory route for birds, and bird watchers can observe a wide range of species, including herons, egrets, and ducks.

Tracking Wildlife in the City: The muddy riverbanks are excellent places for animal tracking, and the wet conditions can reveal the tracks of various species. Raccoons are often seen near the river, leaving distinctive paw prints. Coyotes also frequent the area, and their tracks can be found in the soft earth. The river offers a unique opportunity to track urban-adapted wildlife while remaining close to the heart of the city.

The Santa Monica Pier Aquarium: A Coastal Wildlife Adventure

For a more marine-focused experience, the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium offers an intimate look at local ocean life, including species like sea stars, sea urchins, otters, and seals. While the aquarium itself provides hands-on exhibits and touch tanks, the surrounding coastal area is teeming with wildlife that can be tracked in the sand.



Up Close with Marine Life: The Santa Monica Pier is home to a colony of sea lions, and you can often spot them lounging on the pier or swimming near the rocks. Visitors can watch these animals up close, learning about their behaviors and interactions. The aquarium also offers special educational programs where guests can meet otters and learn about their vital role in marine ecosystems.

Tracking Coastal Wildlife: If you're interested in tracking, head down to the beach near the pier. You can find the tracks of seals and sea lions in the wet sand, as they haul themselves out of the water to rest. Birdwatchers can also observe seabirds like pelicans and gulls, whose footprints leave an impression in the sand.

The Channel Islands National Park: A Remote Wildlife Paradise

For those willing to venture a little farther from the city, the Channel Islands National Park is a true wildlife haven. Located about 25 miles off the coast of Ventura, the islands are home to a variety of animals, including the Channel Island fox, which is found nowhere else in the world. The park's remote location makes it an ideal spot for observing wildlife in its natural, undisturbed habitat.

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The Los Angeles Arboretum and Botanic Garden: Wildlife and Tracking in a Botanical Wonderland

The Los Angeles Arboretum and Botanic Garden, located in Arcadia, offers a serene environment where wildlife thrives among the diverse plant species. The 127-acre



garden is home to a variety of birds, including peacocks and quail, as well as small mammals like squirrels and rabbits.

Up Close with Wildlife: Visitors can wander the beautiful gardens and encounter animals like peacocks, which roam freely around the grounds. The Arboretum's gardens also attract a variety of butterflies and insects, creating a vibrant ecosystem.

Tracking and Observation: For tracking enthusiasts, the Arboretum provides ample opportunities to observe animal behavior and spot tracks. Look for squirrel and raccoon tracks in the dirt trails, or keep an eye out for the tracks of wild rabbits in the underbrush. The Arboretum's combination of botanical beauty and wildlife makes it an ideal destination for those interested in both nature and animal tracking.

Connecting with Nature in Los Angeles

Los Angeles, often associated with urban sprawl, offers some of the best opportunities for animal lovers to connect with nature. Whether you're tracking wildlife through rugged mountains, getting up close with rescued animals in sanctuaries, or exploring urban wildlife in unexpected places like the Los Angeles River, there's no shortage of unique animal experiences to be had.

From intimate encounters at wildlife sanctuaries like the Wildlife Learning Center to tracking elusive creatures like mountain lions and bobcats in the Santa Monica Mountains, Los Angeles provides a diverse range of options for animal enthusiasts. These experiences allow visitors to not only witness animal behavior firsthand but also learn the art of animal tracking—an invaluable skill for those eager to understand the natural world around them. So, whether you're seeking adventure, education, or simply a chance to get closer to nature, Los Angeles has a wealth of wildlife experiences waiting for you.

coyotes, and deer. As the fires ravaged through Malibu's coastal mountains, many animals were forced to flee, often heading into urbanized areas like Agoura Hills in search of food, water, and shelter.

When natural habitats are destroyed or altered by such catastrophic events, wildlife loses its safe haven, forcing them to move to new areas. These displaced animals often find themselves crossing roads, navigating unfamiliar terrain, and interacting with human settlements. This behavior can lead to dangerous encounters, especially in areas where wildlife corridors—pathways that connect natural habitats—are not in place.

The Importance of Wildlife Crossings

Wildlife crossings are critical in preserving the health and safety of both animals and humans. In Agoura Hills, these crossings are vital because they help animals navigate through busy roads and highways, reducing the likelihood of vehicle collisions. California's Highway 101, which runs through Agoura Hills, is one such example of a roadway where wildlife crossings are crucial. Without these safe passageways, wildlife would have to cross high-speed roads, often resulting in tragic accidents.

The installation of wildlife bridges, tunnels, and fencing along key roads has been a focus of local conservation efforts. These measures allow animals to move safely between fragmented habitats, ensuring they can access necessary resources such as food, water, and mates without endangering their lives or the lives of drivers. A key example of this in the Agoura Hills area is the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Bridge, an ambitious project currently under construction to connect the Santa Monica Mountains with the Simi Hills. Once completed, it will be the largest wildlife bridge in the world, offering a much-needed pathway for animals that have been displaced by fire or development.

Human Impact and Community Involvement

While wildlife corridors are essential, it is also important for local residents of Agoura Hills to be aware of the challenges animals face. Community involvement plays a crucial role in helping displaced animals. People can help by reporting sightings of wildlife, especially after natural disasters like fires, and by avoiding areas where animals are likely to be crossing. Encouraging responsible pet ownership, such as keeping pets indoors during peak wildlife activity hours, can also reduce potential conflicts with animals.

Additionally, the Agoura Hills community has seen the establishment of wildlife rehabilitation centers and volunteer organizations that provide care for injured or displaced animals. These centers work closely with local authorities and animal control to rescue and treat wildlife in need, ensuring they are rehabilitated and eventually returned to their natural habitats. They also educate the public about ways to coexist peacefully with wildlife and how to help in the aftermath of natural disasters.

A Path Forward

The displacement of animals due to the Malibu fires has highlighted the importance of integrating wildlife protection into urban planning. As more fires and natural disasters threaten wildlife habitats, the need for thoughtful, sustainable solutions grows. Communities like Agoura Hills, in collaboration with state and federal agencies, are stepping up their efforts to protect local wildlife by enhancing wildlife crossings and promoting greater public awareness.

In the end, the goal is to strike a balance between human development and wildlife conservation. By implementing effective wildlife corridors, supporting rehabilitation efforts, and fostering a culture of coexistence, Agoura Hills can become a model for how urban areas can thrive alongside the rich wildlife that calls California home.

Tracking Wildlife on the Islands: Hiking the trails on islands like Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa offers excellent opportunities for animal tracking. The Channel Island fox leaves small, round tracks that resemble those of a domestic dog but are more compact. The islands are also home to seals and sea lions, whose tracks can often be found near the beaches. Look for the distinctive webbed footprints of sea lions and the larger, rounded prints of harbor seals.

Up Close with Wildlife: The Channel Islands are a great place to experience wildlife up close, as visitors can observe sea lions lounging on the beaches or watch the Island Scrub-Jay, an endangered bird species that is only found on these islands. For a more intimate experience, guided tours offer the chance to see wildlife through the eyes of experienced naturalists who can help identify animal tracks and behaviors.

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County: Tracking and Education

For those interested in learning more about the science of animal tracking, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County offers exhibits that explore the biology, behavior, and footprints of animals. The museum's Dinosaur Hall and Nature Lab offer exhibits that showcase how animals evolved and how their footprints have been preserved in fossils.

Tracking through Time: In addition to its permanent exhibits, the museum hosts special events and educational programs focused on animal behavior and tracking. The museum's scientists often offer lectures and workshops on how to identify animal tracks and interpret signs of wildlife. It's a perfect place to gain a deeper understanding of animal tracking from a scientific perspective.

WILDLIFE AND ANIMAL CROSSING IN AGOURA HILLS

Addressing The Impact Of The Malibu Fires

By Sherry Davidson

Agoura Hills, a city nestled in the Santa Monica Mountains of California, is known for its picturesque landscapes and abundant wildlife. The region is a sanctuary for many animals, offering a mix of urban and natural environments where wildlife and human populations coexist. However, recent disasters, including the devastating Malibu fires, have had a profound impact on the local wildlife. The fires displaced many animals, leading to a surge in wildlife crossings in Agoura Hills as they search for shelter and food. This article explores the challenges wildlife face in the area and how local communities are working to mitigate the effects of fire damage and promote safe animal crossings.

The Malibu Fires and Displaced Wildlife

The Malibu fires of 2018 and 2020 were some of the most destructive wildfires California has seen in recent years. Thousands of acres of land were scorched, including large portions of wildlife habitats that are home to various species such as mountain lions, bobcats,

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THE SKYLINE FESTIVAL

Bringing Together _____
The Los Angeles Art Scene

By Elle Brike

The Skyline Fest in Downtown Los Angeles is an exciting and immersive event that promises to blend creativity, innovation, and artistic expression. Set against the backdrop of LA's iconic skyline, the festival brings together artists, performers, designers, and technologists to showcase their work in an environment that encourages collaboration, discovery, and connection. The Skyline Fest serves as a celebration of the diverse and ever-evolving arts scene in Los Angeles, offering a platform for creators to push boundaries and engage with the public in dynamic ways. Whether you're an art lover, a tech enthusiast, or simply someone looking for a fun and unique experience, Skyline Fest is an event that captivates all attendees.

A Unique Festival Experience

At its core, Skyline Fest is about exploring the intersection of art, technology, and culture. One of the most striking features of the event is its use of



the city's urban landscape to inspire and showcase artwork. With the sun setting over the sprawling city below, the festival's location amplifies the sense of wonder and inspiration that accompanies this celebration of creativity. The outdoor spaces and architectural landmarks in Downtown LA are transformed into stunning canvases for multimedia art installations, live performances, interactive exhibits, and cutting-edge projections.

SkylineFest embraces the fusion of digital and physical spaces, offering a varied program that appeals to a wide range of interests. Attendees can expect to witness immersive light installations that play with perception, innovative virtual reality exhibits that push the boundaries of digital interaction, and art displays that respond to environmental factors. This makes the festival an inclusive experience where technology and traditional art forms coexist and evolve, allowing the festival to captivate a global audience and create a lasting impression on anyone who steps into its magical world.

Celebrating Innovation and Sustainability

Skyline Fest is not only an event that celebrates art but also one that promotes sustainability and innovative design. Many of the installations and exhibits highlight the intersection of art and environmental consciousness, with creators incorporating recycled materials, energy-efficient technologies, and eco-friendly practices into their works. The festival promotes discussions around sustainability within the art world and encourages both creators and audiences to think more critically about the impact of their work on the planet.

At Skyline Fest, sustainability extends beyond the art itself to the festival's operations. Organizers are committed to reducing waste, minimizing the carbon footprint, and ensuring that the event remains accessible to people from all walks of life. The event's sustainable approach serves as an example of how cultural festivals can be both artistic and socially responsible.

A Platform for Emerging Artists

One of the highlights of Skyline Fest is its commitment to showcasing emerging artists and providing them with a platform to share their work with a wider audience. This aspect of the festival has made it a critical fixture for up-and-coming talent in the art and technology communities. Whether it's a digital art piece created by a young designer or a performance piece that pushes the boundaries of conventional theater, Skyline Fest is an incubator for new ideas and artistic experimentation.

The festival fosters a sense of community, encouraging collaboration among different disciplines and providing a space where artists can experiment with new ideas and technologies. This has made Skyline Fest a beacon for both established and emerging creators looking to connect with like-minded individuals and further their careers.

A Global Event in the Heart of LA

Los Angeles has long been a hub for the arts, and Skyline Fest taps into the city's rich cultural diversity by attracting a wide array of international artists and attendees. The festival serves as a gathering point for people from all over the world, making it an ideal destination for anyone interested in experiencing the latest trends in art, technology, and design. As one of LA's premier cultural events, Skyline Fest continues to build upon the city's legacy as a global center for innovation and artistic expression.

The festival's reach extends beyond just the local community, as it draws visitors from various countries who are eager to experience the unique atmosphere of Skyline Fest. With a range of activities and installations that cater to all ages, Skyline Fest offers a truly inclusive experience for both tourists and locals alike.

Skyline Fest 2025 Dates

For those looking to attend Skyline

Fest in 2025, the event will take place from February

15 - 16, 2025, in

Gloria Molina Grand

Park, 200 N Grand

Ave., Los Angeles.

During these two

days, attendees will have

the opportunity to explore

the vast array of exhibits, attend

performances, participate in workshops, and network with artists and creators. This year's edition promises to be one of the most exciting yet, with new interactive features and collaborative spaces designed to enhance the festival experience.

Skyline Fest has gained a reputation for its vibrant and high-energy atmosphere, so mark your calendars to ensure that you don't miss out on this one-of-a-kind event. Whether you are an art enthusiast, a technology lover, or simply someone looking to explore the creative side of LA, Skyline Fest 2025 is sure to be an unforgettable experience.

Skyline Fest represents the spirit of creativity, innovation, and community that defines Los Angeles. Through its celebration of art and technology, the festival offers an immersive and forward-thinking experience that resonates with a broad audience. With its emphasis on sustainability, inclusivity, and artistic experimentation, Skyline Fest is a must-attend event for anyone looking to explore the cutting edge of culture in the heart of Downtown Los Angeles.

www.skylinefest.com



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The Ultimate Journey Show Celebrating Steve Perry's Journey In Concert

By Crystal Teton

West Coast Performing Arts and Cruisin Oldies Concerts Proudly Present...The

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Journey

Vocalist Paulie Z channels the soaring vocal power of Steve Perry, commanding the stage. Hailing from Brooklyn, NY, he led his own band ZO2 through a tour with rock heavyweights KISS and Poison, a band which was also chronicled in the IFC comedy series "Z Rock." Upon moving to Los Angeles, Paulie was also recruited to sing another legendary catalog with UK glam rockers Sweet.

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Zukowsky, Drummer Glenn Jost, Keyboardist Victor Bender and bassist Aaron Samson, Paulie Z's Steve Perry completes the full cast of this acclaimed concert presentation celebrating the music of one of the most iconic rock groups of our time.

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YOU'RE CORDIALLY INVITED

By Edward Ward



Are you with the bride or the groom? Hold on, scratch that. Are you with Reese Witherspoon or Will Ferrell? “You’re Cordially Invited,” a comedy directed by Nicholas Stoller, brings together two stars whose movie worlds are nearly as divided as wedding guests on separate sides of the aisle. Ferrell is associated with broad comedies and Witherspoon the romantic variety. And while



both have expanded beyond their wheelhouses, they are each A-list refugees from movie genres that have faded from theaters in recent years. “You’re Cordially Invited” unites these two once-ubiquitous box-office forces in a streaming-only wedding comedy that cross-pollinates “Father of the Bride” with “Wedding Crashers.” The combination works, though it’d be fairer to deem “You’re Cordially Invited” a funnier-than-average wedding movie than a top-grade Ferrell comedy.

It’s been two decades since Ferrell called to his mother, “Hey, Mom! Can we get some meatloaf?” “You’re Cordially Invited” is an attempt to rekindle some of the spirit of those early ‘00s comedies while growing it up a little, and roping in a new generation. Ferrell plays the doting father to Jenni (Geraldine Viswanathan). He’s a widower whose happiness rests on his daughter. Jim steams her clothes and styles her hair. He’s not crashing the wedding; he’s baking the cake.

When Jenni returns home with a ring and her now-fiancé (Stony Blyden) in tow, Jim experiences the happy news like a nightmare.

Still, he gathers himself together and books a destination wedding on the small Georgia island where he and his wife were married.

Meanwhile, we’re introduced to Margot (Witherspoon) a high-powered TV executive whose younger sister (Meredith Hagner) is getting married to her boyfriend (Jimmy Tatro). Her abiding issue is a disconnect with her Atlanta-era family and their disapproving mother (Celia Weston), a fissure that the wedding, which Margot opts to plan herself, quickly exacerbates.

When, a year later, these groups arrive on the island, Jim and Margot eye each other suspiciously. Thanks to the death of the inn’s longtime owner, the place has been double-booked for the weekend — an awkward situation given the island can only accommodate one wedding at a time. The supporting roles are well cast, including the inn’s new, very apologetic manager, (Jack McBrayer).

After hesitation, Margot and Jim resolve to share the venue. This, of course, is the not particularly subtle concept of “You’re Cordially Invited.” The arrangement is momentarily copacetic but gradually devolves into an all-out war between Margot and Jim, while the two wedding parties — one a multicultural DJ-ing crew, the other longtime Southerners — mingle congenially.

The main deficiency of “You’re Cordially Invited,” is that everything proceeds from its concept.

That said, there’s a wide array of comic talent. That includes Keyla Monterroso Mejia, Rory Scovel, Leanne Morgan and even Peyton Manning. This should be a showcase for Viswanathan, but her character, while primary, doesn’t give her much to work with. The highlight of the cast, really, is Weston, who is so good as a hard-to-impress matriarch.

Ferrell finds ways to make Jim a compelling comic character. “You’re Cordially Invited” puts much of its energy into talking through Jim and Margot’s hang-ups. There’s a clever, self-aware theme. However, all of this hangs together.

COMPANION

By Edward Ward



Early in “Companion,” Iris and her nerdy-nice boyfriend Josh are driving to a secluded lake house for a stay with friends. Iris wakes from a nap and lovingly tells Josh she was dreaming about him. They reminisce about how they first met at the supermarket. All those oranges tumbling onto the floor! Ha ha.

In 20 minutes, absolutely everything about this sweet scene will be turned on its head. You will be surprised and shocked.

“Companion,” a clever and entertaining sci-fi-horror-thriller-comedy by Drew Hancock in his feature debut, has more twists and turns than a corkscrew. But it’s utterly impossible to write about the film without revealing the first of those twists.

So if you like coming in totally cold to a movie, then we’re sorry to see you go, but stop reading! Otherwise, stay with us.

Moving on: Iris (Sophie Thatcher) and Josh (Jack Quaid) arrive at the estate. A nervous Iris stops at the door, worried that Josh’s friends won’t like her. He urges her to act happy.

Kat (Megan Suri), Josh’s ex, greets them. She is gorgeous, and frosty to Iris. Eli (Harvey Guillén) and his handsome boyfriend Patrick (Lukas Gage) are nicer. Then there’s Sergey (Rupert Friend), Kat’s aloof Russian boyfriend — sugar daddy, really — and owner of the house. The password to his devices is Stalin’s birthday, which tells you something.

Things get dark, quickly. The next morning, someone dies. They will not be the first — this is a horror movie. And suddenly Iris, caked in blood, finds out what everyone else knows about her, but she did not: She’s a robot. Well, a sex bot. A custom “companion” programmed by Josh to be as docile as he wants. He can even control the level of her intelligence.

Iris doesn’t understand. “I feel things,” she protests. Just the programming, Josh replies. Her tears? They come from a refillable reservoir in her body. But she has memories, she says — like when they met! Oh, that scenario was chosen from a drop-down menu, she’s told.

But now that we’re all on the same page,

the action can really begin. For reasons we won’t detail here, Iris ends up on the run. What are the odds of a sex bot escaping her pre-programmed limitations? Suffice it to say that whatever you expect to happen, does not.

The supporting cast is excellent — especially Gage, as a Patrick chock full of surprises — but the leads are especially well cast. Thatcher manages to be, while, like, not actually human, way more relatable than the actual humans. And she’s able to convey subtle changes in programming, too — like becoming 60% more intelligent, a neat trick.

And Quaid, with his full-cheeked Quaid-ian good looks, is an ideal choice for a “nice guy” who grows more odious by the minute. One of his lower points comes when he explains to Iris how the world seems to be “rigged against people like me.”



“I don’t even own you,” he rails — “you’re a (expletive) rental! I deserve so much more than this.”

Hancock is obviously exploring the fertile area of artificial intelligence — the movie is set in a “not-too-distant future” where bots are an acceptable relationship choice and cars drive themselves, but most everything else looks the same. Like it could be us, just a few years from now. Yikes.

The irony, though, is that it’s not the cool futuristic flourishes but good old-fashioned human intelligence that makes the movie work. The humor and tone could have gone so wrong, but they didn’t. Kudos to Hancock for making the film crackle along wittily, drawing in even those of us prone to shudder at movies with a fast-rising body count.

MUSIC TAKES CENTER STAGE AT THE 2025 COACHELLA FESTIVAL

By Amy Slatt

The 2025 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival is a highly anticipated event, with an exciting lineup. This year's festival showcases seasoned headliners and up-and-coming talent, offering something for every music lover.

Bad Bunny

A true force in Latin music, Bad Bunny is set to return to Coachella for a headline performance. The Puerto Rican superstar dominates the charts, blending reggaeton with trap, rock, and pop. His performances, along with a global following, make him one of the most exciting acts of the festival. Fans can expect an electrifying set, complete with stunning visuals and an atmosphere of pure celebration.

Kendrick Lamar

Kendrick Lamar's return to Coachella is a moment that hip-hop fans have been eagerly



awaiting. Having been a pivotal figure in the genre for over a decade, Lamar has cemented his place as one of the most socially conscious and musically innovative artists of his generation. His performances are known for depth, energy, and ability to captivate large audiences. Expect Kendrick to not only deliver classics like "HUMBLE" and "Alright" but also to debut new material, bringing a unique fusion of intricate lyricism, jazz influences, and soulful beats.

Lizzo

Lizzo has skyrocketed to global stardom, and her presence at Coachella 2025 is a major highlight for festival-goers. Known for her powerful voice, body positivity, and charisma, Lizzo's performances are a blend of pop, soul, and funk. Her on-stage energy is contagious, with

audiences singing and dancing along to her hits like "Truth Hurts," "Good as Hell," and "About Damn Time." Lizzo brings an element of self-love and joy to the stage that resonates deeply with fans. Expect an empowering, feel-good performance.

Frank Ocean

Frank Ocean's long-awaited return will be one of the most anticipated moments at Coachella 2025. The R&B singer-songwriter has cultivated a loyal following with his genre-defying sound and introspective lyricism. His 2016 Coachella set was a defining moment for the festival, and fans are eager to see how he'll evolve his performances. Ocean's ability to blend melancholic yet beautiful melodies with lush production will provide a captivating atmosphere for anyone lucky enough to witness his return.

Rosalía

The Spanish sensation Rosalía has taken the world by storm with her unique blend of flamenco, reggaeton, and experimental pop. Her bold artistic vision and genre-defying approach to music have made her one of the most exciting and innovative acts of the moment. Rosalía's Coachella performance will undoubtedly showcase her impressive vocal range, her dynamic stage presence, and her ability to seamlessly blend traditional sounds with modern beats. With chart-topping hits like "Malamente" and "Saoko," she is poised to deliver an unforgettable set that will keep Coachella buzzing with excitement.

The 1975

Known for their eclectic sound that blends indie pop, rock, and electronic elements, The 1975 has become one of the most beloved bands of the past decade. Their performances are an immersive experience that combines emotional vulnerability with an atmospheric live show. With their distinct visual aesthetic and their ability to craft infectious yet introspective tunes, the band is likely to deliver one of Coachella's standout sets. Songs like "If You're Too Shy (Let Me Know)" and "Love It If We Made It" have become anthems for many, and their live performances never fail to ignite a crowd. The 1975's blend of musical innovation and theatricality makes them a must-see act at this year's festival.

Tyler, The Creator

Tyler, The Creator's performances have always been a celebration of his artistic growth, as well as his ability to challenge and redefine genres. As a producer, rapper, and designer, Tyler's influence on hip-hop and pop culture is undeniable. His shows are filled with playful theatrics, stunning visuals, and a high level of musicality, as he blends rap, jazz, and alternative rock elements. His performances of tracks from his critically acclaimed album "Call Me If You Get Lost" and older classics like "Yonkers" will likely be highlights of the festival, bringing both nostalgia and excitement to his fans.

Lana Del Rey

Lana Del Rey's sultry, cinematic pop is an ideal fit for the desert landscape of Coachella. Known for her nostalgic, haunting vocals and melancholic songs, Del Rey's performance will provide a more introspective moment at the festival. Her ability to transport listeners into her dreamy, tragic world has made her an icon of modern pop music. Whether she's performing fan favorites like "Summertime Sadness" or debuting new tracks from her latest work, Lana's ethereal performance is set to leave a lasting impression on the Coachella crowd.

Burna Boy

The Nigerian superstar Burna Boy is set to bring a unique African flair to Coachella in 2025. Blending Afrobeats, dancehall, and pop,



Burna Boy's global popularity has skyrocketed in recent years, and his energetic performances are a testament to his musical prowess. His set is likely to be an explosive mix of rhythm and energy, with songs like "Last Last" and "Anybody" getting the crowd moving. Burna Boy's presence at Coachella highlights the festival's embrace of global sounds, making it one of the most exciting and diverse musical events in the world.

With a lineup that spans genres from Latin trap to indie rock, hip-hop, and world music, Coachella 2025 is set to be a festival for the ages. From the performances by Bad Bunny and Kendrick Lamar to intimate sets by Frank Ocean and Lana Del Rey, the festival promises to deliver something for every taste. Whether you're there for the crowd-shaking beats or the soul-stirring ballads, Coachella 2025 will be a musical journey that you'll remember for years to come.

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The Newest Tech In Studio Photography: Drones!

By Contributing Writer

Studio photography has been defined by controlled environments, meticulous lighting, and well-planned compositions. But, as technology advances, new tools are emerging to push the boundaries. One of the most exciting innovations is the use of drones. They are making waves in studio settings, offering photographers new creative possibilities. **Drones in Studio Photography: A New Frontier**

Drones are typically thought of as tools for capturing aerial views and landscapes. However, their integration into studio photography is opening up new

ways to approach the craft. Drones can offer dynamic angles, precise movements, and the ability to capture images from otherwise inaccessible perspectives. **Creative Freedom and Unconventional Angles**

One of the main advantages drones bring to studio photography is their ability to shoot from a variety of angles. Aerial perspectives, for



example, allow photographers to capture images from above the subject. Whether it's a fashion shoot, a product photography session, or an artistic portrait, drones can provide high angles, unique framing, and unconventional shots.

These angles are especially useful for brands and photographers who want to create visually striking content. In the fashion industry capturing a full-body shot from above, or photographing a model in a dramatic overhead pose, is a great way to make a statement. The ability to move freely around the

studio while maintaining a steady shot helps eliminate the need for scaffolding or expensive rig setups.

Dynamic Camera Movement and Cinematic Shots

Drones offer dynamic movement in a controlled space. Traditional studio cameras are often fixed, leaving photographers reliant on zoom lenses or physically moving around. In contrast, drones can fly seamlessly around the subject, allowing for smooth, cinematic shots. By hovering, tilting, or gliding around a subject, drones introduce an element of fluidity. **Lighting Effects and Precision**

In studio photography, lighting is paramount. Traditional lighting techniques involve placing light sources in specific positions and adjusting them. Drones are now being used as a tool to manipulate light sources from above or at varying angles.

With the rise of drone-mounted lights and small LED panels, photographers can experiment with placing light sources in mid-air to highlight or shadow specific parts of the subject. The ability to fine-tune lighting adds a layer of precision that was previously difficult to achieve.

In addition, drones can be moved in sync with the subject or camera, ensuring consistent and precise lighting. This is especially beneficial in high-paced shoots or when working with moving models. **Increased Efficiency and Versatility**

In a fast-paced studio setting, time is often critical. Drones provide photographers

with an efficient way to capture images from multiple angles without needing to reposition heavy equipment or reposition the subject.

Moreover, drones can reduce the need for additional crew members. With drones handling overhead shots or capturing wide-angle compositions, photographers can operate the equipment themselves, streamlining the shoot and cutting down on setup time. **Overcoming Studio Space Limitations**

Traditional studio spaces can present challenges when it comes to achieving perspectives. A drone can navigate through tighter spaces and maneuver around obstacles to capture the shot from hard-to-reach areas.

Furthermore, drones are small and lightweight, allowing photographers to quickly set up and break down their equipment. This flexibility is ideal for those working in multiple studios or traveling to different locations. **A Transformative Tool for the Future**

Drones are becoming an invaluable tool in the world of studio photography. By offering dynamic perspectives, creative possibilities, and unprecedented control over lighting and camera movement, they allow photographers to push the boundaries. Whether it's capturing dramatic overhead shots, introducing motion into still images, or experimenting with new lighting techniques, drones are reshaping the landscape.



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THE HISTORY AND FLAVOR OF THE MAI TAI

By Ariana Sever

The Mai Tai is one of the most iconic cocktails, beloved for its tropical flavors and vibrant history. While the precise origin story is a subject of debate, the drink has become a symbol of tiki culture, a 20th-century phenomenon that brought a taste of the South Pacific to America. Known for its colorful presentation and refreshing taste, the Mai Tai holds an essential place in cocktail history.

Origins of the Mai Tai

The exact origins of the Mai Tai remain a mystery, with two primary claims to the drink's creation. One story traces its roots back to the 1940s at Trader Vic's, a famous tiki bar chain founded by Victor J. "Trader Vic" Bergeron in Oakland, California. Trader Vic is said to have invented the Mai Tai after perfecting a recipe that combined rum, lime juice, and other tropical ingredients. According to Trader Vic, the cocktail was named "Mai Tai" after a customer exclaimed, "Mai Tai-Roa Ae," a Tahitian phrase meaning "out of this world" or "the best."

Another version of the Mai Tai's origin comes from Don the Beachcomber (born as Ernest Raymond Beaumont-Gantt), an influential figure in the creation of tiki bars and Polynesian-inspired drinks in the 1930s. Don is credited with concocting an early version of the Mai Tai at his Los Angeles-based restaurant, "Don the Beachcomber." This version involved a mix of rum, lime, fruit juices, and syrups, which was an innovative combina-

tion at the time. Don's influence on tiki drinks and culture is undeniable, and some believe the Mai Tai emerged from his bar even before Trader Vic's.

Despite the conflicting claims, the Mai Tai's rise to popularity is tied to the broader tiki cocktail movement in the mid-20th century. In the post-World War II era, the United States was



fascinated by Polynesian-themed bars and restaurants, which offered an exotic escape from the everyday. The Mai Tai became a staple of this scene, and its presence continues to dominate tiki menus today.

Ingredients of the Traditional Mai Tai

A classic Mai Tai recipe focuses on a balance of rum, citrus, and tropical flavors. While modern variations of the drink exist, the traditional version follows a few essential principles. Here's what you'll typically find in a traditional Mai Tai:

Rum: The heart of any Mai Tai is the Rum. Traditionally, two types of rum are used: an aged rum (usually Jamaican or Martinique rum) for depth and complexity, and a lighter rum (often white or silver rum) for brightness. The combination of these rums contributes to the

cocktail's smooth yet bold flavor.

Lime Juice: Fresh lime juice is crucial to balancing the sweetness of the other ingredients. The tartness and acidity of lime give the Mai Tai its signature zest, cutting through the richness of the rum and the sweetness of the syrups. It is important to use fresh lime juice rather than bottled lime concentrate for the best flavor.

Orange Curacao: This orange-flavored liqueur adds a subtle citrus note to the drink. Orange Curacao is made from the dried peel of the bitter Seville orange, giving it a more complex, less sweet flavor compared to triple sec or other orange liqueurs. It's an essential ingredient that ties the drink together.

Orgeat Syrup: This is the element that differentiates the Mai Tai from other rum cocktails. Orgeat is a sweet almond syrup, often flavored with orange flower water, which provides a delicate nutty flavor and richness. The use of orgeat syrup is what gives the Mai Tai its signature taste, contributing both sweetness and an aromatic complexity.

Simple Syrup: Depending on personal preferences and the sweetness of the orgeat syrup, some recipes may include simple syrup. However, it's essential not to overdo it, as the orgeat itself already provides a fair amount of sweetness. Simple syrup can be used sparingly to round out the flavors, but it should not overwhelm the drink.

Crushed Ice: To complete the cocktail, a traditional Mai Tai is served over crushed ice in a highball or rocks glass. The crushed ice helps dilute the strong flavors just enough while keeping the drink cool and refreshing.

Garnishes: The classic Mai Tai is often garnished with a mint sprig and a cherry or a slice of lime. Some variations also add a small piece of pineapple or a skewer of tropical fruit. These garnishes enhance the drink's visual appeal, evoking the festive, tropical atmosphere of tiki bars.

Preparation Method

To prepare a traditional Mai Tai, start by adding ice to a shaker. Then, pour in the rum, lime juice, orange curacao, orgeat syrup, and, if desired, simple syrup. Shake vigorously to combine and chill the mixture. Strain the drink into a glass filled with crushed ice. Finally, carefully float a small amount of dark rum on top of the drink for added depth and visual appeal. This layer of dark rum not only adds to the drink's look but also contributes a rich flavor when mixed in while drinking.

The Mai Tai Today

The Mai Tai continues to be a popular cocktail worldwide, though over time, the drink has evolved and inspired many

variations. In many bars today, a Mai Tai may be overly sweet or include fruit juices like pineapple, grenadine, or even artificial flavors, departing from the traditional recipe. Nevertheless, the classic Mai Tai remains a quintessential example of tiki culture, and its original ingredients have inspired bartenders to return to its roots.

The Mai Tai stands as a cocktail emblematic of both the global fascination with Polynesian culture and the creativity of 20th-century bartenders. Whether you're sipping one at a tropical resort or preparing it in your own home bar, the traditional Mai Tai is a refreshing, balanced drink that combines history, flavor, and fun.

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THE BEST FOOD TRUCK POP-UPS IN THE VALLEY: A FLAVORFUL JOURNEY!



By Harold Larsen

The San Fernando Valley has witnessed an explosion of vibrant, creative, and mouth-watering food trucks serving up everything from gourmet tacos to fusion delights.

Mariscos Jalisco

Mariscos Jalisco has become an iconic name, especially for seafood lovers. Their signature dish, the taco de camarón (fried shrimp taco), is a crispy, golden delight that's brimming with flavor.

The truck pops up in different parts of the Valley, drawing crowds with unforgettable

shrimp tacos and other offerings like ceviche and fish tostadas.

www.mariscos-jalisco.net

The Grilled Cheese Truck

For those who love comfort food, The Grilled

Cheese Truck is a standout. While grilled cheese sandwiches seem simple, this truck elevates them with artisanal bread and gourmet fillings.

From classic options like the Cheesy Mac & Rib to more adventurous offerings like the Lobster Melt, this truck has something for everyone.

www.thegrilledcheesetruck.com

Tacos 1986

Tacos 1986 has become a fan favorite, and their pop-ups have left taco lovers craving more. Specializing in tacos de asada, adobada, and bario-style tacos, this truck has earned a reputation for delivering authentic flavors with a modern touch.

What makes Tacos 1986 stand out is its dedication to taco-making, with soft tortillas, perfectly charred meat, and a refreshing selection of salsas. Their adobada

taco is a must-try. www.tacos1986.com

Wolf's Mouth BBQ

For those who love smoked meats, Wolf's Mouth BBQ brings a taste of Texas-style barbecue. This food truck serves up slow-cooked, perfectly smoked meats like brisket, pulled pork, and ribs, along with sides that will make you feel like you've stepped into a backyard cookout.

The Lobos Truck

Lobos Truck is a standout, offering a unique take on Mexican comfort food with a modern twist. Their menu features a delicious array of options, from tacos de lengua (beef tongue) to tacos de al pastor, all cooked with fresh, high-quality ingredients.

One of the highlights is their signature birria taco, where slow-cooked beef is marinated in a flavorful broth and served

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www.thelobotruck.com

Kogi BBQ

Kogi BBQ,

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Roy Choi, is one of the food trucks that sparked the food truck craze. Known for fusing Korean flavors with traditional Mexican dishes, Kogi's signature offerings like the Korean short rib taco and spicy pork burrito have become a sensation.

The kimchi quesadilla and short rib sliders are worth trying, and the truck's ever-changing menu adds an element of surprise. www.kogibbq.com

Richeeze

For an unforgettable twist on classic comfort food, look no further than Richeeze. Specializing in gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches, Richeeze takes the classic comfort dish to a new level with fillings like brisket, fried chicken, and truffle aioli.

The menu features both sweet and savory options, with fan favorites like the Fried Mac N' Cheese Sandwich and the

Cheddar & Apple Bacon Sandwich. Each sandwich is crafted with high-quality ingredients and served with a side of crispy fries. www.richeeze.net

Belly BombZ

Belly BombZ specializes in creative Asian fusion with an emphasis on bold flavors and rich textures.

Known for their bao buns, crispy chicken sandwiches, and fried rice bowls, Belly BombZ brings a contemporary twist to traditional Asian comfort food.

The Korean fried chicken bao and Pork Belly Bao are must-tries. Additionally, their Fried Rice BombZ



offers a flavorful and filling option. www.instagram.com/bellybombz

Son of a Bun

For a gourmet burger experience,

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HEALTH & BEAUTY

A BETTER WAY IN HOME CARE COMPASSION, CONNECTION, AND CARE

By Pam Froman

For over two decades, A Better Way in Home Care has been a trusted lifeline for families seeking quality, compassionate caregiving for their loved ones. Founded by Steffi Gaines in 1998, the agency was built on a simple yet profound mission: to ensure that both clients and their families feel supported and at ease with a caregiver in their home.

A Journey Rooted in Care and Connection

The inspiration for A Better Way in Home Care came at a pivotal moment in Steffi Gaines' life. Facing personal and career transitions,

she turned to her innate passion for helping others. With the encouragement and resources from her twin sister, who had previously owned a caregiving business, Steffi took the leap. She immediately connected with experienced caregivers, forming a team she deeply respected and admired.

"I met them, I liked them so much, I had to start getting clients for them immediately," she recalls.

Steffi's dedication to helping others stems from a long career of working with people. She started out as a PBX receptionist for her father before working at a business college through a CEDA program, which helped provide jobs for refugees new to the country. In this role, she assisted individuals given six months of free education and job interview training. When the program was at risk of losing its contract due to poor job placement rates, Steffi stepped in. Though she had no formal experience, she was determined to help.

"I loved the students, and I was able to place them," she says. "One culture I loved was the Vietnamese. I would tell the company, 'You may not understand the person clearly, but you will be happy you hired them.' I would get calls letting me know how great they were."

Steffi's passion for caregiving deepened when she faced her own health struggles. As a cancer survivor, she understands firsthand the importance of compassionate care during recovery. Her experience gives her a unique ability to empathize with clients who are facing medical challenges, reinforcing her commitment to providing high-quality, personalized care.

This early experience cemented her passion for helping people find meaningful opportunities and a sense of belonging, which later translated into her work in caregiving.

A Family-Driven Business

As the President of A Better Way in Home Care, Steffi has dedicated herself to building an agency that prioritizes trust and integrity. One of the most rewarding aspects has been sharing this journey with her daughter, Devyn Reggio, who joined the business in 2000 and now serves as Vice President of Operations. Their partnership has strengthened the company's foundation, ensuring that its core values continue to thrive.

Comprehensive, Non-Medical Home Care Services

A Better Way in Home Care specializes in non-medical services, allowing clients to recover and maintain their independence in the comfort of their homes or care facilities. The agency provides:

- Assistance with daily activities: bathing, dressing, toileting, and mobility support
- Meal preparation and medication reminders
- Grocery shopping and transportation to appointments
- Light housekeeping and home organization
- Emotional support and companionship
- Post-surgical and recovery care for clients of all ages



Steffi Gaines

Caregivers are carefully selected based on experience, ensuring they provide not just assistance but a meaningful connection. Each caregiver must have a minimum of six years of provable experience in private homes, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, or assisted living facilities.

Personalized Care for Every Client

A Better Way in Home Care takes a hands-on approach to matching clients with caregivers. Beyond medical needs, the agency considers personalities, lifestyles, and family dynamics to ensure the right fit.

"There's no such thing as a typical client," Steffi explains. "Many initially resist having a caregiver, but once we find the right match—someone who truly understands them—they form an incredible bond."

This approach extends to the entire household, ensuring harmony and comfort for everyone involved. Whether a client is aging in place, recovering from surgery, or in need of companionship, the right caregiver makes all the difference.

The Importance of Caregiving

Remaining in a familiar environment is vital—especially for those with dementia or

other cognitive challenges. Having a caregiver allows them to retain independence while receiving the support they need.

"A great caregiver doesn't take away independence; they empower clients," says Steffi. "They do things the client's way, making sure they still feel in control of their lives."

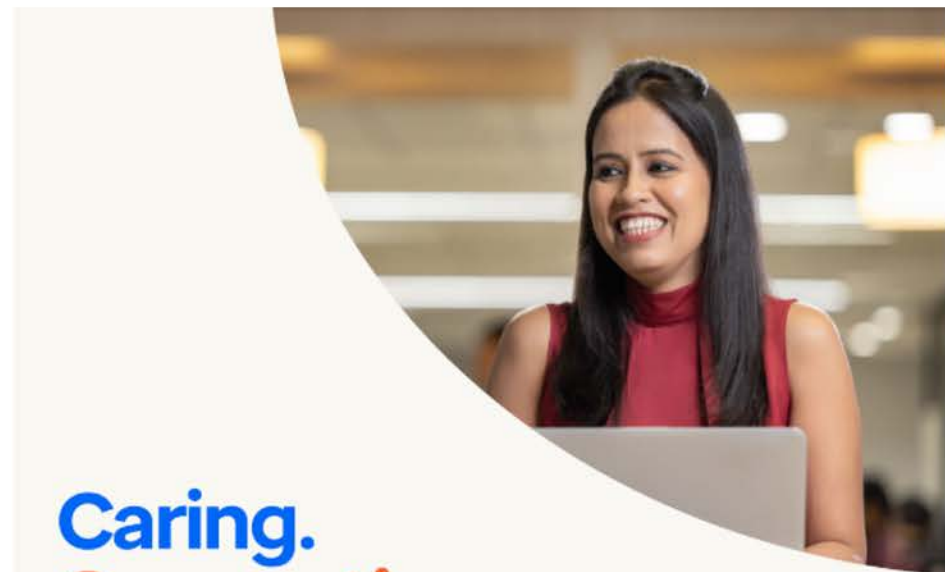
Looking Toward the Future

As A Better Way in Home Care continues to grow, Steffi envisions a future where the agency's mission endures. With her dedicated assistant of 20 years and Devyn Reggio by her side, she is confident the agency will thrive for years to come.

"My hope is that my business remains a trusted source of care for as long as possible. With the amazing team we have, I know we'll continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of families."

A Legacy of Compassion

A Better Way in Home Care isn't just about providing caregivers—it's about creating meaningful relationships that enrich lives. Through personalized care, deep connections, and an unwavering commitment to quality, Steffi Gaines has built more than a business; she has built a community of care that truly makes a difference. www.abetterwayinhomecare.com



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JASON MORAN

Plays Duke Ellington at The Soraya in Northridge

By Sara Renolds

Jazz pianist, composer, and artist Jason Moran hails from Houston, TX. Moran's fourth Soraya appearance celebrates the Duke's enduring legacy and his 125th birthday, a year-long tour that started at the Kennedy Center. He has invited CSUN Jazz "A" band to join him on Thursday, February 13 at 8pm at the The Soraya - Great Hall in Northridge. He's an alumnus of the Manhattan School of Music where he studied with Jaki Byard. Upon graduation, he studied with Andrew Hill and Muhal Richard Abrams. Moran's 18-year relationship with Blue Note Records produced 9 highly acclaimed recordings. His groundbreaking trio, The Bandwagon (with bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Nasheet Waits) is currently celebrating their 20th anniversary.

Moran's performances with Cassandra Wilson, Charles Lloyd, and the late Sam Rivers reveal the scope of Moran's partnerships and music making. He's also worked with visual artists Adrian Piper, Joan Jonas, Glenn Ligon, Adam Pendleton, Lorna Simpson, and Kara Walker, Stan Douglas and others. Recent awards and fellowships include the MacArthur Foundation, US Artists, Doris Duke Foundation and Ford Foundation.

Moran collaborated with his wife, the mezzo-soprano/composer Alicia Hall Moran, as named artists in the 2012 Whitney Biennial, constructing BLEED, a five-day series of live performances spanning Motown to acupuncture to dance.



They also created WORK SONGS for the 2015 Venice Biennial and continue to produce albums for their record label, YES RECORDS.

of Between the World and Me. History is a recurring theme for Moran, who has mounted monumental touring works for Thelonious Monk (IN MY MIND: Monk at Town Hall 1959), Fats Waller (Fats Waller Dance Party, plus a Grammy-nominated album All Rise: An Elegy for Fats Waller) and James Reese Europe (James Reese Europe and the Absence of Ruin).

In 2018, Moran's first solo museum exhibition opened at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, and traveled to ICA/Boston. The exhibition opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art in September 2019. Moran is currently the Artistic Director for Jazz at The Kennedy Center, teaches at New England Conservatory and Jazz Ahead, and curates the Artist's Studio series for Park Avenue Armory in New York City.

Since his first album, he has produced fourteen additional albums, created scores for Ava DuVernay's films Selma and 13th, and author Ta-Nehisi Coates' staged version

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Charm On The California Coast: What to Do In Carmel-by-the-Sea

By Carl Dolli

Carmel-by-the-Sea is a town where beauty, artistry, and splendor meet. Famous for its fairy-tale cottages, beaches, and vibrant arts scene, this village offers visitors a relaxing retreat filled with diverse activities and experiences. **Stroll Through Enchanting Streets**

Carmel's allure is evident as you wander through its fairy-tale streets. The town's distinctive, storybook-style cottages, many designed by architect Hugh Comstock, makes the area feel like a whimsical village plucked from a children's book. You'll encounter cobblestone streets lined with art galleries,



boutiques, and charming cafes. The town itself has a no-street-address policy. For a unique experience, head to the Carmel Plaza. Here, you'll find upscale shops nestled among landscaped courtyards.

Visit the Beach

Carmel Beach is one of the most scenic stretches of coastline, offering views of the Pacific Ocean and coastline. The beach is perfect for a leisurely walk, a picnic, or just relaxing.

Explore the Arts Scene

Carmel-by-the-Sea has a rich heritage in the arts. The town is home to an artistic community, reflected in its galleries and events. One of the best ways to dive into Carmel's artistic spirit is by visiting the Carmel Art Association. Founded in 1927, this non-profit organization showcases the work of local artists.

For a deeper understanding of the town's history and its connection to the arts, a visit to the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History or the nearby Monterey Museum of Art is a great way to explore.

Take a Scenic Drive Along 17-Mile Drive

For one of the most scenic drives, take a trip along the 17-Mile Drive. This route

winds its way through the Del Monte Forest and offers stunning views of the coastline.

Along the drive, you'll pass landmarks like the Lone Cypress, a 250-year-old tree perched on a rocky outcrop, as well as numerous other breathtaking vistas. There are plenty of spots to pull over and take photographs or simply take in the view. **Visit Point Lobos State Natural Reserve**

Just south of Carmel-by-the-Sea lies Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, a must-see destination for nature lovers. Often referred to as "the crown jewel of the state park system," Point Lobos offers rugged coastal cliffs, ancient cypress trees, and dramatic ocean views.

Discover Local History

Carmel-by-the-Sea has a rich history, and exploring this adds another layer of charm. Start with the historic Carmel Mission, also known as the Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Río Carmelo. Founded in 1771 by Father Junipero Serra, the mission is one of the most beautifully preserved in California. The mission's museum offers fascinating insights into California's colonial past.

Another historical gem is the Tor House, home of poet Robinson Jeffers. Jeffers built the house by hand from the local stone, and it overlooks the stunning cliffs of Carmel Bay.

Dine in Style

Carmel is home to a variety of excellent dining. Whether you're in the mood for fresh seafood,



farm-to-table dishes, or international cuisine, the culinary scene won't disappoint.

Casanova restaurant is a local favorite, offering Italian-inspired cuisine. For an upscale experience, try Aubergine, which has earned Michelin stars. For a laid-back vibe, head to the Forge in the Forest for a delicious meal.

Experience the Spirit

Above all, the charm of Carmel-by-the-Sea lies in its warm and welcoming spirit. This town invites visitors to slow down, savor the beauty, and immerse themselves in the artistic and historical traditions.

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Celebrities Making A Difference in Palisades Recovery Efforts

By Robert Marlette

The 2025 Pacific Palisades and Malibu fires were among the most devastating wildfires in California's history, ravaging thousands of acres of land and causing widespread destruction in some of the state's most affluent communities. As the fires tore through these coastal cities, many celebrities, many of whom reside in the affected areas, stepped up to lead recovery efforts. From financial donations to hands-on volunteering, these public figures used their influence and resources to provide relief and help rebuild communities. Here's a look at some of the celebrities who have led the charge in the recovery efforts following the Pacific Palisades and Malibu fires.

1. Oprah Winfrey – Mental Health Support and Recovery

Oprah Winfrey, one of the most influential philanthropists in the world, immediately took action after the 2025 fires devastated Malibu, a place she has called home for years. Beyond her generous financial contributions to fire relief organizations, Oprah focused heavily on mental health support. Recognizing the profound psychological impact the disaster had on affected residents, she partnered with several mental health charities to provide counseling and trauma recovery services. Oprah's foundation also pledged millions of dollars to rebuild homes and infrastructure, prioritizing those most in need, including low-income families who were disproportionately impacted. Oprah's commitment to long-term recovery, beyond the immediate crisis, helped the community regain a sense of hope and resilience.



2. Leonardo DiCaprio – Environmental Restoration and Advocacy

Leonardo DiCaprio, known for his environmental activism, has been a vocal advocate for addressing climate change and its role in increasing the severity of wildfires. After the 2025 Pacific Palisades and Malibu fires, DiCaprio's foundation, the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, immediately allocated funds for environmental restoration efforts. The fires had destroyed critical wildlife habitats, and the ecological damage was severe. DiCaprio helped fund reforestation initiatives and wildlife rehabilitation programs, aimed at restoring the natural environment and preventing future fires.

3. Ellen DeGeneres – Rebuilding Homes and Providing Shelter
Ellen DeGeneres, a beloved television personality and Malibu resident, was one of the first to

mobilize relief efforts for those affected by the fires. Ellen and her wife, Portia de Rossi, both personally affected by the fire, contributed millions of dollars to relief organizations that were providing immediate aid to fire survivors. Ellen also launched a fundraiser to assist with the long-term rebuilding of homes and businesses in the area. In addition to her financial contributions, Ellen personally worked with local charities to provide temporary shelter for displaced families and helped secure resources for displaced animals. Her efforts were instrumental in ensuring that survivors had access to the essential resources they needed during the initial stages of recovery.

4. Matthew McConaughey – Volunteer Leadership and Community Support

Matthew McConaughey, known for his laid-back style and commu-

nity spirit, took an active role in supporting fire recovery efforts in Malibu and Pacific Palisades. Rather than just offering financial donations, McConaughey focused on community engagement and mobilizing volunteers. Through his just keep livin Foundation, McConaughey helped organize volunteer groups to assist with cleanup efforts and deliver essential supplies to affected residents. He also worked closely



with local organizations to provide resources for rebuilding homes and businesses, ensuring that recovery efforts were community-driven and sustainable. McConaughey's personal involvement sent a strong message of hope and solidarity to residents who had lost everything in the blaze.

5. Rihanna – The Clara Lionel Foundation's Recovery Efforts

Rihanna's Clara Lionel Foundation has long been committed to providing relief in the wake of natural disasters, and the 2025 Malibu and Pacific Palisades fires were no exception. Rihanna's foundation quickly mobilized resources to assist in both immediate relief and long-term recovery. Rihanna's team provided financial support to fire relief organizations, while also working with local leaders to coordinate rebuilding efforts. In addition, the Clara Lionel Foundation funded initiatives that helped restore vital community infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, which were heavily damaged by the fires.

Rihanna's active participation in recovery efforts reinforced her commitment to helping those in need, particularly in the areas where she has deep ties.

6. Shonda Rhimes – Supporting Displaced Families and Rebuilding Homes

Shonda Rhimes, the powerhouse behind Grey's Anatomy and Scandal, lent her considerable influence to aid in the recovery efforts in Malibu. Rhimes focused her efforts on providing safe housing for displaced families and supporting rebuilding initiatives. She teamed up with local nonprofits to provide financial support for low-income families who had lost their homes and were at risk of being left out of the recovery process. Rhimes also worked with city officials to ensure that the recovery

plan prioritized diversity and inclusivity, making sure that the most vulnerable members of the community, including senior citizens and people with disabilities, were not forgotten in the rebuilding process.

7. Tyler Perry – Rebuilding Communities and Offering Shelter

Tyler Perry, known for his charitable work through his Tyler Perry Foundation, was quick to offer help to those displaced by the fires in Pacific Palisades and Malibu. Perry provided temporary housing solutions and financial assistance for families who had lost everything. His foundation also worked with local contractors to expedite the rebuilding of homes and businesses, ensuring that the community could return to a sense of normalcy as quickly as possible. Perry's efforts were not only focused on providing material resources but also on offering emotional support to fire victims, helping them navigate the long-term effects of the disaster.

TAKE A RIDE ON AN E-BIKE

By Andrea Brooke

Electric bikes, or e-bikes, have become increasingly popular. With their built-in electric motor, they offer riders a way to travel longer distances, tackle hilly terrain, and navigate through traffic. However, a question that arises is whether riding an electric bike provides exercise. The short answer is yes—riding an e-bike can involve exercise, though the intensity depends on several factors. While e-bikes assist with pedaling, they still require the rider to engage in physical activity.

How Electric Bikes Work

An electric bike operates like a regular bicycle, with the addition of an electric motor. The motor is powered by

a rechargeable battery, which provides assistance to the rider by boosting pedaling power. E-bikes have different levels of assistance, which can be adjusted. These levels allow the rider to control how much help they get from the motor, ranging from minimal assistance to maximum support for climbing steep hills or covering long distances.



The key distinction between traditional bicycles and e-bikes is that the motor can reduce or eliminate the effort required to pedal. Riders can choose to rely more on the motor for

convenience, or they can opt to exert more effort by using less assistance.

Types of Exercise Involved in Riding E-Bikes

Though electric bikes offer assistance, they still require physical



effort from the rider, especially if the motor is not used at full power.

Pedal Assist Mode: In pedal assist mode, the electric motor helps amplify the rider's pedaling effort, but the rider still has to pedal. The level of exercise involved depends on how much assistance the motor provides. For instance, if the rider chooses a low level, they will still have to put in significant effort, similar to a regular bike. Conversely, if they opt for a high level of assistance,

the exercise intensity is reduced, but some effort is still required.

Manual Mode: Some e-bikes allow riders to turn off the motor, requiring them to pedal. The rider will get the same cardiovascular and muscular benefits as they would from on a conventional bike.

Hill Climbing and Challenging Terrain: Even with motor assistance, climbing hills or riding on rough terrain demands exertion. The motor provides extra power, but they still have to engage their leg muscles to maintain a steady cadence. This can strengthen the quadriceps, calves, and glutes. When riding on uneven surfaces, balance and coordination are required.

Speed and Duration: Intensity of exercise can depend on speed and duration of the ride. If a rider uses the e-bike for short trips on flat terrain, exercise will be minimal. If the ride involves longer distances or a faster pace the rider engages in physical activity.

Health Benefits of E-Bikes

While riding an e-bike may not provide the level of exercise as traditional cycling, it still offers health benefits.

Cardiovascular Health: Cycling is an excellent form of aerobic exercise. Riding an e-bike helps elevate the heart rate. Regular cycling can improve heart health, reduce the risk of heart disease, and lower blood pressure. With e-bikes, individuals who may not be able to ride a traditional bike can still enjoy the benefits of cycling.

Muscle Toning: Pedaling an e-bike works muscle groups including the quadriceps, hamstrings, calves, and glutes. The added assistance from the motor means that these muscles are engaged for longer periods, helping with endurance and toning.

Improved Joint Health: Cycling, including riding an e-bike, is a low-impact activity, making it gentle on the joints. For individuals with joint problems or those recovering from injury, e-bikes can be a great way to get back into exercise without putting excessive strain on the knees, hips, or ankles. The motor provides support, allowing riders to enjoy the benefits of cycling without risking joint pain or injury.

Mental Well-Being: As with traditional cycling, riding an e-bike outdoors can have positive effects on mental health. Exercise releases endorphins, which help improve mood and reduce stress. Additionally, spending time in nature and exploring new areas can provide a sense of accomplishment, reduce anxiety, and improve overall well-being.

While electric bikes provide varying levels of assistance, they still involve physical activity and can offer many health benefits. The exercise involved in riding an e-bike is influenced by factors such as the level of motor assistance, the rider's effort, the terrain, and the duration of the ride. Although e-bikes may not provide the same intensity of exercise as traditional bikes, they still engage several muscle groups, improve cardiovascular health, and contribute to mental well-being. For many individuals, especially those with mobility issues or those looking to ease into cycling, e-bikes offer a great way to stay active and enjoy the outdoors. Ultimately, whether you're looking for a leisurely ride or a more vigorous workout, an e-bike can provide a combination of convenience, enjoyment, and exercise.

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ALL ABOUT YOUR FUZZY FELINE FRIEND

By Vivian Lewis

Cats are creatures of comfort, and where they sleep often reveals more about their personality. Cats are highly sensitive to their environment, and their sleeping habits reflect their mood, level of trust, and even their need for control. Whether they curl up in a cozy nook, sleep at your feet, or claim the top of the couch, each spot is an indicator of their character traits.

The Trust Factor: Where You Sleep

One of the most significant ways a cat's choice of sleeping spot reveals its personality is through its relationship with you. Cats are naturally independent, and they often sleep in places where they feel safe, secure, and protected. If your cat likes to sleep next to you or in close proximity, it's a sign of trust. Cats are more vulnerable while they sleep, so when they choose to rest near you, they are showing affection and a sense of security in your presence. This is particularly true if your cat sleeps on your bed, or nestled against you.

If your cat gravitates towards the bed, it suggests a strong bond and a desire to be close to you. On the other hand, some cats are more solitary and prefer a personal space. They may choose a remote spot in your home or even hide away in a closet or under a piece of furniture. This doesn't mean they don't trust you—it could simply be a sign that your cat values its independence.

The Confidence Factor: High Ground vs. Low Ground

Cats are hunters, and this instinct influences where they sleep. Some cats prefer sleeping on high ground, such as bookshelves, top shelves, or the highest point of your furniture. This behavior signals a confident cat that likes to observe its surroundings. High ground gives them a sense of security and dominance, as it provides a vantage point where they can assess potential threats or opportunities.

A cat that seeks out high places is assertive and curious. It's the personality of a cat that wants to be in control of its

environment and feels confident enough to survey from above. If your cat prefers lower spaces, such as under the bed or in a cat bed, it could indicate a more cautious or shy personality. These cats may feel more comfortable staying closer to the ground where they can hide or escape from potential dangers.

The Personality of the Bed Cat

If your cat sleeps on your bed, particularly near your pillow, it is a



clear sign that they feel bonded to you. Cats that sleep on your pillow or beside you are often seen as affectionate and social. They enjoy your company and like being around you. This behavior is especially common with kittens and younger cats that still look for a sense of security from their mother or caretaker.

However, some cats who sleep on the bed might do so for practical reasons—warmth or a comfortable surface. Cats have a keen sense of temperature regulation, and the warmth from your body or the coziness of your bed might be the deciding factor. Regardless, the bed cat usually has a personality that is open to companionship.

The Solitary Cat

Some cats are known for solitary sleeping habits. These cats may choose spots that are isolated, such as under a couch, inside a closet, or behind a



piece of furniture. A cat that seeks out solitude may have a more independent or introverted personality. These cats might not enjoy being constantly doted on and may prefer peace and quiet.

ANIMALS

The Hidden Corners

Cats who sleep in corners or secluded areas of your home may be more sensitive or introverted. These cats could be exhibiting anxiety, stress, or shyness, preferring to hide away from the hustle and bustle. It's not necessarily a negative sign; some cats just enjoy having their own quiet space. However, if this behavior is accompanied by other signs of stress, such as excessive grooming, loss of appetite, or hiding for extended periods, it may indicate that the cat is feeling anxious.

Where a cat sleeps is not just a practical decision; it is an intimate reflection of their personality, preferences, and level of comfort. Whether they seek out high places for a view, curl up next to you for companionship, or retreat to a quiet corner for solitude, your cat's choice of sleeping spot reveals important clues about who they are. By paying attention, you can better understand your cat's personality and nurture a more harmonious relationship based on trust, comfort, and mutual respect.

While this behavior might suggest a more aloof personality, it is important to remember that solitary cats are not necessarily antisocial. They may simply enjoy their alone time. A solitary cat might approach you for affection but is more likely to retreat to their personal space when they've had enough.

The Lap Cat

Cats that like to curl up in your lap or on your chest can often be described as affectionate and attention-loving. These cats enjoy being close to you. The lap cat is likely to be friendly, outgoing, and social, with a tendency to form close attachments to its human companions. If you're lucky enough to be chosen as their preferred resting spot, it's a sign that your cat feels comfortable and safe.

Lap cats thrive on human interaction and may follow you around the house, looking for affection. They are more likely to engage in play sessions and often seek out opportunities for bonding. Your cat is essentially saying, "I trust you, and I enjoy your company," with its choice of where to sleep.



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The First C8 Corvette ZR1 Just Sold For \$3.7 Million

A Historic Milestone In American Muscle

By Peter White

The Corvette has long been a symbol of American automotive excellence, and the recent sale of the first-ever C8 Corvette ZR1 for a staggering \$3.7 million has cemented its legacy even further. This historic moment not only marks a new chapter in the Corvette lineage but also highlights the immense desirability and collector's value of the ZR1 model, especially as the first of its kind.

The C8 Corvette, which debuted in 2020, was a monumental shift for the iconic sports car. For the first time in its history, the Corvette adopted a mid-engine layout, breaking away from its traditional front-engine design. The arrival of the C8 marked a new era, bringing with it a level of sophistication, performance, and design that surpassed even the lofty standards of the Corvette's past. The ZR1, known for its enhanced performance and aggressive styling, has always been the pinnacle of the Corvette lineup, and the first C8 ZR1 now represents a combination of cutting-edge technology, exclusivity, and the enduring appeal of the Corvette brand.

The Auction and the Record-Breaking Sale

The sale of the first C8 Corvette ZR1 took place at a high-profile charity auction hosted by Barrett-Jackson, one of the most prestigious names in the auction world. Auctioned off for a jaw-dropping \$3.7 million, this particular model is not just another Corvette—it is an automotive milestone, embodying the next step in the evolution of Chevrolet's high-performance sports car.



What makes this specific car even more unique is its significance as the first C8 ZR1 ever built. While production of the C8 ZR1 had been eagerly anticipated, this one-off model holds a special place in history, being the very first unit produced. The car's exclusivity undoubtedly played a major role in driving its astronomical price.

Adding to the appeal, the proceeds from the sale went to charity, further enhancing the significance of the moment.

The auction was a thrilling event for

Corvette enthusiasts and collectors alike. The bidding war saw rapid escalation, with the price climbing higher than many could have predicted. In the end, the \$3.7 million price tag was a clear reflection of the car's rarity, significance, and the massive demand for anything related to the legendary Corvette.

What Makes the C8 Corvette ZR1 So Special?

The C8 ZR1 is more than just a high-performance sports car; it is the culmination of years of engineering and innovation. As with previous ZR1 models, the C8 version takes everything the standard Corvette offers and cranks it up to an entirely new level. With its mid-engine configuration, the C8 ZR1 delivers exceptional handling, balance, and cornering capabilities—traits that make it a serious contender among supercars from the world's most prestigious manufacturers.

Under the hood, the C8 ZR1 is powered by a 5.5-liter supercharged V8 engine, making it the most powerful Corvette ever produced (at least until the Zora variant, which may surpass it). The engine is mated to an 8-speed dual-clutch transmission, ensuring lightning-fast shifts and seamless acceleration. With over 800 horsepower, the ZR1 offers blistering speed and the kind of performance that can take on any road, whether it's a winding mountain pass or a straight-line drag race.

Beyond raw power, the C8 ZR1 is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including an advanced suspension system, aerodynamic enhancements, and cutting-edge driver assistance features. Every inch of the car has been designed to optimize performance, making it not only an incredibly fast machine but also a vehicle that can be enjoyed on everyday drives. The ZR1 is designed for enthusiasts who demand the highest level of precision, whether on the track or the street.

In terms of looks, the C8 ZR1 exudes an aggressive yet refined design. The car features an array of carbon fiber elements, including a large front splitter, rear spoiler, and other aerodynamic enhancements, all of which help maximize downforce and stability at high speeds. Its wide stance, bold lines, and muscular rear end make it an instant head-turner, while the interior is luxurious, featuring premium materials and the latest in tech interfaces.

Why the ZR1 Commands Such a High Price

The sale of the first C8 Corvette ZR1 for \$3.7 million isn't just a reflection of the car's technical brilliance; it's also an indicator of the brand's strong following and the increasing value of limited-edition, first-production models. Collectors of high-end cars are often willing to pay a premium for the first or last car produced in a particular generation, and the C8 ZR1 is no exception.

Moreover, the Corvette brand holds a special place in American automotive culture. Since its inception in 1953, the Corvette has been an iconic symbol of American engineering, performance, and style. As the first mid-engine Corvette in history, the C8 marked a monumental shift for the brand, making the ZR1 even more significant as it represents the future of Corvette performance. The added bonus of the car being auctioned for charity made it even more of a prized asset for the winning bidder, who undoubtedly knew they were adding a truly historic piece to their collection.

Another key factor in the ZR1's high auction price is the Corvette's longstanding rivalry with European sports cars, particularly from manufacturers like Ferrari, Lamborghini, and Porsche. As the ZR1 pushes the limits of what the Corvette can achieve, it competes with the world's finest performance cars, offering incredible value for those looking to own a car that can stand toe-to-toe with international supercars, yet with the distinctive American flair that Corvette lovers cherish.

The Legacy Continues

The sale of the first C8 Corvette ZR1 for \$3.7 million is more than just a high-priced auction result; it is a testament to the enduring appeal of the Corvette and the continuing innovation of the Chevrolet brand. The C8 ZR1 represents the future of American performance cars, and its record-breaking sale cements its place in Corvette history.

For car enthusiasts, collectors, and automotive historians alike, the first C8 Corvette ZR1 is a symbol of American craftsmanship and the relentless pursuit of automotive perfection. Whether on the road or in a private collection, this exceptional car will remain an icon for years to come.

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Match Your Floors With Your Home's Decor

The Best Plan for Every Room

By Rosemarie Shanon

When it comes to designing a home, the floor is often overlooked. However, the flooring you choose plays a significant role in setting the tone. It impacts not only the aesthetics but also the functionality of your home. Matching your floors with your home's decor isn't just about picking something that looks good—it's about creating a cohesive and harmonious flow between your floors, furniture, and overall design. **Consider the Overall Style of Your Home**

Before you dive into specific floor options, consider the style of your home.

Modern/Contemporary: If your home features sleek, clean lines with neutral tones and minimalist furniture, options like polished concrete, dark wood, or wide-plank light oak can add to the chic and understated vibe.

Traditional: For homes with a classic, elegant style, hardwood floors in medium to dark tones often work best. The richness of these woods complements traditional furniture, such as vintage or antique pieces, and ornate detailing.

Farmhouse/Rustic: For those who love a cozy, earthy aesthetic, reclaimed wood, wide-plank flooring, or even distressed finishes can elevate your space.

By determining your home's style, you'll be able to narrow down flooring options.

Understand the Room's Purpose

Each room in your house serves a unique purpose, and that should be reflected in the type of flooring you select.

High-Traffic Areas (Living Rooms, Hallways, Kitchens): These rooms demand durable, easy-to-maintain flooring that can withstand constant foot traffic. Hardwood, engineered wood, or luxury vinyl plank are all excellent choices.

Bathrooms: Bathrooms are exposed to moisture, so you'll need flooring that's resistant to water and humidity. Ceramic or porcelain tiles, stone, or luxury vinyl tiles are ideal because they come in a variety of finishes and can be paired with sleek modern fixtures or traditional bathroom decor.

Bedrooms: Bedrooms are about comfort and warmth. Carpet is a popular choice because it's soft and provides a cozy feel,

but hardwood or engineered wood also works. If you're going for a sleek, contemporary bedroom, light hardwood or bamboo flooring



could complement modern furniture and simple color schemes. A plush carpet can pair well with a traditional or romantic aesthetic.

Home Offices: Floors in home offices should balance style and practicality. Hardwood, cork, and bamboo are environmentally friendly, durable, and add warmth to the space.

Choose the Right Color and Finish

Once you've selected a material, the next step is to choose the right color and finish. The color of your floors can either complement or contrast with the existing color scheme.

Light Floors: Lighter-colored floors, like pale oak, ash, or whitewashed wood, work well in spaces where you want to create an airy, open feel. They can brighten up small spaces and make rooms look more spacious. Light floors pair with minimalist or Scandinavian interiors, where furniture and decor are neutral or monochromatic.

Dark Floors: Dark floors add a touch of sophistication and luxury. They can ground a room with light-colored walls and furniture, creating a beautiful contrast.

Medium-Toned Floors: Medium brown or natural wood floors are versatile and timeless, fitting almost any decor style, from traditional to modern. They can add warmth and elegance. If you're looking for something more rustic but still refined, rich honey-toned floors can be a great choice.

Finishes: The finish of the floor is as important as its color. Matte finishes are popular because they offer a subtle, understated look. Glossy finishes are traditional and can give your space a polished, luxurious feel. Consider how much maintenance you're willing to do.

Create a Consistent Flow Between Rooms

When matching your floors it's crucial to think about how the flooring in one room flows into the next. Maintaining a consistent flooring type throughout open spaces can help create a seamless transition. This is especially important in modern homes with open floor plans.

Unified Flooring: In areas that connect with each other, such as living room and dining room,

you might opt for the same flooring throughout. Hardwood floors, laminate, or LVP in a neutral tone work well across multiple areas.

Strategic Transitions: If you prefer different flooring in each room, think about how transitions



will look. For example, a bold tile in the kitchen can give way to a more subdued wood or carpet in the living area, with a transition strip to seamlessly connect them. This can add character and visual interest.

Don't Forget About Rugs and Accents

Once your floors are selected, enhance the look with rugs and decor accents. A well-chosen rug can tie together the entire room, adding texture, color, and warmth. Consider your

theme when choosing rugs: geometric patterns work well in modern spaces, while floral or traditional rugs complement classic interiors.

Your Flooring and Decor, Perfectly Matched

Matching your floors with your home's decor involves finding the right balance between aesthetics, function, and flow.



Whether you choose wood, tile, carpet, or vinyl, make sure your flooring works with your overall style, enhances the functionality of each room, and creates a harmonious look that ties your entire home together. Your floors will be the perfect foundation for your home's design.

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By Andrews McMeel Syndication

Top Stories

Nigerian gospel singer Timileyin Ajayi, 30, was arrested on Jan. 12 as he carried a bag that contained the severed head of his reported girlfriend, the BBC reported. The bag drew the attention of other people, who held him until police arrived. "The suspect was found with a fresh human head," Nasarawa police said, "and when we got to the scene, we rescued him from being mobbed." Other parts of the deceased's body were found later at his home. Abby Simon, a friend of the 24-year-old victim, said Ajayi was not her boyfriend. "Even if she was his girlfriend, she didn't deserve to die this way," Simon said.

Brigantine (New Jersey) police were called to a home on the Jersey Shore on Jan. 13 after a neighbor found a toddler wandering around outdoors, NBC Philadelphia reported. The neighbor recognized the child and returned them to their home, where she found babysitter Jena Davidson, 35, passed out on the floor. First responders took Davidson to the hospital, where it turned out she had "consumed a significant amount of the homeowner's alcohol to the point that she became unconscious and unresponsive," police reported. She was charged with endangering the welfare of a child.

Toilet paper shoppers in Kagoshima Prefecture in southern Japan have a new option, GoodNewsNetwork.org reported on Jan. 14: rolls made from used diapers and other hygiene products. The cities of Shibushi and Osaki worked together to recycle disposable diapers starting in April 2024. The used items are sanitized, bleached and shredded into a pulp to be mixed with recycled paper, to the tune of 30,000 rolls in the first two months of production. They're sold at \$2.70 for a dozen rolls. "Please support this eco-friendly product, which aims to promote a sustainable society by reusing local resources," said Takumi Obo, spokesperson for the Osaki Municipal Government's SDGs Promotion Council.

In 2023, friends Boone Hogg and Logan Jugler found a nice stick on the side of a trail in Utah -- it had "some excellent grain on it" and a "nice grip," they said. They liked it so much, they shared a review of it with their friends, National Public Radio

reported on Jan. 23. Two years later, Stick Nation has about 3 million Instagram followers from all over the world who post pictures and reviews of their favorite sticks. Some are "modded," or altered by humans; others are "natty," left in their natural state. One poster from Antarctica wondered: "There are no sticks here. ... I found an ice stick. Does this count?" Stick Nation allowed the submission. "This is an Antarctica stick," Jugler decreed.

In November, high above Riedering, Germany, Friedi Kuhne and Lukas Irmeler walked across a slackline strung between two hot-air balloons flying at more than 8,000 feet, United Press International reported. The two were awarded the Guinness World Record for highest slackline walk on Jan. 27. Irmeler went first, calling the successful walk "a glorious moment." Kuhne admitted, "Watching Lukas struggle on the slackline was also very intimidating for me," noting that the balloons went up and down while they were mid-walk. "At one point we were walking kind of downhill -- the next minute uphill. The tension of the line was going up and down." He celebrated by parachuting off the line.

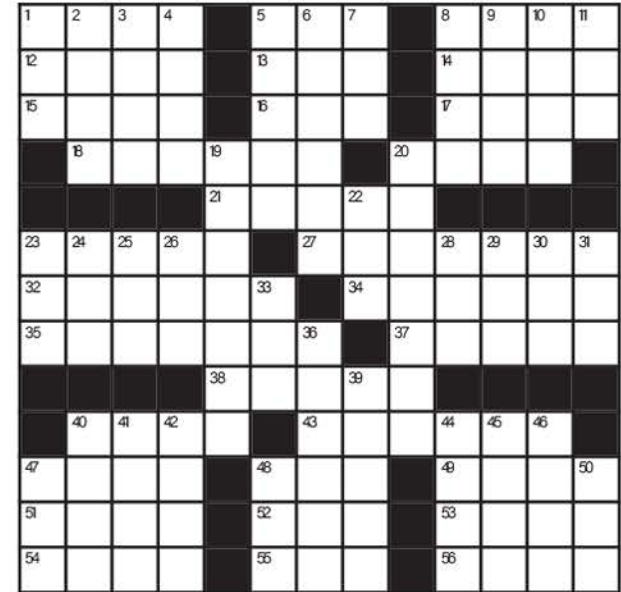
The Los Angeles Times reported on Jan. 27 that police were called to a property along the Los Angeles River where Google Earth images had captured multiple HELP signs scratched into the dirt. The land is owned by the Union Pacific Railroad, and it turns out the satellite images were captured in 2023. But a KTLA-TV news helicopter flew over the property on Jan. 27 and saw that the words were still there. Jill Micek, a spokesperson for Union Pacific, said the railroad is aware of a man who has trespassed on the company's property repeatedly and who is responsible for the alarming messages. While she stressed that no one is in danger, the conspiracy theory community lit up with tales of underground tunnels: "The truth is in the tunnels," one wrote on X. But LAPD is also familiar with the individual who frequents the area, and they said he "has refused housing or a mental health evaluation. He has been at the location for a few years."

Crossword by Myles Mellor

Print this Page! Ctrl + P

Across

- 1 Birthstone after sapphire
- 5 Mil. rank
- 8 Killer whale
- 12 Sandwich shop
- 13 Imitate
- 14 Cancel
- 15 To have a opinion
- 16 Part of RPM
- 17 Consumes
- 18 Top QB, Manning
- 20 Military corps
- 21 Edit
- 23 Primp
- 27 Send out again
- 32 Except
- 34 Sleep inducer
- 35 Three -masted sailing ship
- 37 Court call
- 38 Military groups
- 40 Field ____
- 43 Razz
- 47 Hopper
- 48 Pronoun
- 49 Republic of China coin
- 51 Seed cover
- 52 And all that jazz
- 53 Taj Mahal site
- 54 Nothing but
- 55 Golf course builder Pete ____
- 56 Say no to



- 19 Get nervous
- 20 Relating to fat
- 22 Opposite of paleo -
- 23 Dog
- 24 Cell constituent
- 25 Home extension
- 26 Wiggler
- 28 "To ___ with Love" LuLu song
- 29 Dispirited
- 30 Service vehicle, for short
- 31 Always poetic
- 33 Royal wish
- 36 One before ten, times ten
- 39 9:00 am prayer time
- 40 Severed
- 41 Track
- 42 Futilely
- 44 Group of two
- 45 Olympic sport
- 46 Bring in
- 47 Philosophy of human conduct
- 48 Contraction
- 50 Roll - call call

Down

- 1 Bizarre
- 2 Slight sound
- 3 Away from wind
- 4 Type of soil
- 5 Ricochet
- 6 First act
- 7 Bulgarian coin
- 8 Done with
- 9 Gallivant around
- 10 Metropolis
- 11 Infomercials for example

Bad Dad Jokes

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Previous Puzzle





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The Leonis Adobe Museum is announcing its annual summer program, Lil Ranchers, Tuesdays from 7/11 - 8/8 between 9:30 am - 11:30 am. Enjoy a different theme and activities each week! Leonis Adobe Museum 23537 Calabasas Road Calabasas, California 91302 Phone: (818) 222-6511 Members are free or \$8 for non-members.

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TEEN DRIVING STATISTICS: A DEEP DIVE INTO THE RISKS AND REALITIES

By Samuel Deanno

Teenagers are more likely to engage in risky behavior due to the overactive limbic system—the part of the brain responsible for emotions and reward processing—while the prefrontal cortex is still maturing.



Factors Contributing to Teen Driving Accidents

Several factors contribute to higher incidence of accidents among teen drivers, including distractions, alcohol and drug use, and a lack of seat belt use.

Distractions: Distracted driving is a leading cause of accidents, but it is particularly dangerous for teens. According to the CDC, in one year, 39% of high school students reported texting or emailing while driving. Distractions like texting, talking on the phone, or using in-car entertainment systems take a teen's attention away from the road.

Alcohol and Drugs: Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is a significant factor in teen crashes. In 2021, nearly one in five teen drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Furthermore, the use of marijuana and other substances is rising among teens, and impaired driving increases the likelihood of accidents by slowing reaction times, impairing judgment, and reducing coordination.

Seat Belt Use: Despite the proven safety benefits of seat belts, teens are less likely to wear them consistently. In one year, around 43% of teen drivers and passengers who were killed in car crashes were not wearing seat belts. Seat belt use is particularly low in areas where teens are driving with passengers, especially other young passengers, which increases the risk of fatal crashes due to distracted driving or poor decision-making.

The Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) System: A Lifesaver for Teens

To address the risks associated with teen driving, many states have implemented a Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) system. The GDL system phases in driving privileges, starting with a learner's permit, followed by a restricted intermediate license, and eventually an unrestricted full license. The goal of GDL is to limit high-risk situations,



such as driving at night or with passengers, during the early years of a teen's driving experience.

Research indicates that the GDL system has been effective in reducing teen fatalities. According to the IIHS, states with strong GDL laws have seen a 20% reduction in teen crashes compared to states without such laws. For example, many GDL programs impose curfews or limit the number of passengers a teen can carry, both of which significantly reduce the likelihood of a fatal crash.

How Parents Can Help: Education and Supervision

Parents play a critical role in shaping safe driving habits for their teens. Research shows that teens whose parents are actively involved in their driving experience are less likely to engage

in risky behaviors behind the wheel. Here are a few steps parents can take to reduce the risks:

Set Clear Expectations: Talk to teens about the dangers of distracted driving, alcohol and drug use, and speeding. Establish rules for when and how they can drive, such as curfews, limitations on passengers, and no use of phones while driving.

Model Safe Driving: Set a good example by always wearing a seat belt, obeying traffic laws, and driving without distractions. Teens are more likely to follow safety guidelines when they see their parents practicing them.

Practice Supervised Driving: Provide plenty of opportunities for supervised practice, especially during high-risk driving situations like night driving, rainy weather, or driving on highways. The more experience teens gain under safe conditions, the more confident and competent they will become as drivers.

Teen driving presents significant risks, but with the right education, supervision, and adherence to safety measures, many of these risks can be minimized. The statistics are sobering, but they also highlight the importance of focused intervention at home, in schools, and at the policy level. As we continue to educate young drivers and implement laws to curb risky driving behavior, there's hope that we can reduce the number of teen driving fatalities and ensure that the road to independence is a safe one.

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THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY: HOW CELEBRITIES INFLUENCE KIDS

By Jack Taylor

The influence of celebrities on teenagers is a subject of debate, as it plays a significant role in shaping the way young people view themselves and the world. In the age of social media, where celebrities are more accessible than ever, the impact on teenagers has grown exponentially. While many believe celebrities serve as positive role models, others argue that their influence can be harmful, perpetuating unrealistic standards and values. Ultimately, the influence of celebrities on teenagers is a double-edged sword—capable of greatness while also leading to negative consequences.

Positive Influence: Inspiration and Empowerment

On the positive side, celebrities can serve as sources of inspiration. Many young people look up to celebrities who have overcome challenges and achieved success through hard work and perseverance. Celebrities who promote positive messages about self-esteem, mental health, and social change can have a profound impact. Actors like Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and Oprah Winfrey often speak about overcoming obstacles and the importance of self-belief. Their messages encourage teenagers to pursue dreams, work hard, and stay resilient.

In addition, celebrities who advocate for social justice and important causes inspire teenagers to get involved. The activism of figures like Emma Watson (a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador) or Greta Thunberg (a climate change activist) has empowered young people to become more socially conscious and engaged with issues such as gender equality and climate change. This encourages teenagers to think critically, develop responsibility, and take action.

Celebrities who are open about personal struggles with mental health, such as Lady

Gaga or Kendall Jenner, can also offer a sense of solidarity and validation to teenagers who are facing similar challenges. By breaking stigma surrounding mental health, these public figures give fans the courage to seek help and talk openly. **Negative Influence: Unrealistic Standards and Pressure**

On the flip side, celebrity culture can have a damaging effect on teenagers. Many celebrities, especially those in fashion, music, and entertainment industries, are often portrayed as flawless. With Instagram, TikTok, and other social media platforms, teenagers are constantly exposed to highly curated images of celebrity lives. These images often showcase unattainable beauty standards, extravagant lifestyles, and seemingly perfect relationships.

Teenagers are particularly vulnerable to these influences as they are developing their identities and are likely to compare themselves to others. The pressure to look a certain way, dress in the latest trends, or live up to the glamorous lifestyles of their favorite celebrities can lead to body image issues, low self-esteem, and anxiety. The rise of "influencers" and celebrities promoting cosmetic procedures or weight loss products can also perpetuate unhealthy beauty ideals.

Moreover, the culture of fame can have a negative effect on teenagers' values and aspirations. When young people idolize celebrities who gain fame for their looks or controversial actions, it can skew priorities. Teenagers may bequeat success with wealth and superficial beauty rather than intelligence, kindness, or integrity. This can lead to a generation of teens who prioritize appearance and materialism over meaningful values.

The Role of Social Media

Social media has amplified the influence of celebrities, making it easier for teenagers to follow their favorite stars 24/7. While this has allowed celebrities to connect with their fans in exciting ways, it has also intensified pressure

on young people to measure up to the lives they see online. Celebrities post images that are heavily edited or filtered, which creates a false sense of reality that teenagers may internalize as the "norm." This phenomenon, known as social comparison, can lead to feelings of inadequacy, especially when teens feel they fall short of the idealized images.

In addition, constant exposure to celebrity culture can contribute to a sense of celebrity worship, where teenagers develop unhealthy obsessions with famous figures. This can cause young people to lose sight of their own goals and values, as they place importance on the lives of

celebrities than on their own well-being. For some, this obsession can lead to the development of unrealistic expectations for their own lives. **Finding a Balance: Positive Role Models and Critical Thinking**

The key to navigating the influence of celebrities is to strike a balance. Celebrities are multifaceted individuals with both strengths and weaknesses. Teenagers should be encouraged to recognize positive qualities in celebrities they admire, while also understanding that they, too, are human. Teenagers should be taught to filter messages they receive, distinguishing between what is empowering and what is harmful.

Parents, educators, and mentors play a vital role. Encouraging open dialogue about the media they consume and promoting self-awareness can help teenagers navigate the challenges of celebrity influence. Parents should also model healthy behaviors and self-esteem, showing their teens that worth comes from within and not from external validation.

Additionally, teenagers should be encouraged to seek out role models who exemplify positive

traits, such as kindness, resilience, and intellectual curiosity, rather than just superficial traits like fame or wealth. There are many celebrities who use their platforms for good—promoting education, mental health, and equality—and these figures can offer a more well-rounded, positive influence on teenagers.

The influence of celebrities on teenagers is undeniably powerful, offering both positive and negative effects. On one hand, celebrities can inspire young people to dream big, embrace social causes, and overcome personal struggles. On the other hand, the pressures of celebrity culture—unrealistic beauty standards, materialism, and the idolization of fame—can have detrimental effects on teenagers' mental health and self-worth.

Ultimately, it is crucial for teenagers to approach celebrity culture with a critical eye, recognizing both the positive and negative aspects of what they see. With proper guidance, a strong sense of self, and an understanding of the complexities of fame, teenagers can navigate the double-edged sword of celebrity influence and use it to fuel their personal growth, rather than allowing it to diminish their self-esteem and values.



FASHION

2025 Fashion Trends

Sailor Clothing & Platform Boots For Women

By Brooke Andrew

The fashion landscape for 2025 is ushering in a resurgence of iconic trends, with a nostalgic nod to past styles that are being reinvented. Two standout trends for women are sailor clothing and platform boots. These trends are being updated and modernized to blend classic silhouettes with contemporary elements.

Sailor Clothing: A Modern Maritime Twist

Sailor-inspired clothing has always had a place in fashion, associated with nautical themes, clean lines, and a sense of adventure. However, in 2025, sailor clothing is taking on new dimensions, offering a sophisticated yet playful twist.

Nautical Stripes with a Contemporary Spin: The classic sailor stripe — navy, white, and sometimes red — is making a comeback. But it's no longer confined to the traditional sailor shirt. In 2025, expect to see these stripes on oversized blazers, flared trousers, midi skirts, and even swim-

suits. Designers are experimenting with vertical, diagonal, and even asymmetric striped patterns to give the look a more dynamic and modern feel.

Sailor Collars and Button Details: The iconic sailor collar is making its return, but with a twist. In 2025, this collar is being adapted into structured silhouettes such as tailored jackets and elegant coats. Big, statement buttons, often gold or brass, are incorporated into the designs, evoking a sense of regality while maintaining that nautical influence.

Tailored and Masculine Cuts: Traditional sailor-inspired clothing has always leaned toward an androgynous aesthetic. In 2025, this masculine influence is more pronounced, with tailored blazers, wide-legged trousers, and even jumpsuits. These pieces combine the practical elegance of sailors' uniforms with the fashion-forward sensibilities of modern women. Loose, fluid fits are key, while structured elements like strong shoulders and tailored waistlines add to the sophistication.



Sailor Dresses: The sailor dress has evolved, transitioning from a simple uniform to a statement piece. Now made from luxurious fabrics, these dresses offer a romantic and whimsical vibe while staying true to their nautical roots. Feminine accents like puffed sleeves, empire waistlines, and gathered skirts give these dresses a more playful, youthful aesthetic.

Sustainability and Eco-Conscious

Materials: As sustainability continues to be key, many designers are taking a more eco-conscious approach to sailor clothing. Natural fibers like organic cotton, hemp, and linen are being favored over synthetic fabrics.

Platform Boots: Bold Footwear

Platform boots are another dominant trend. Platform boots are a throwback to the '70s and early '90s, but in 2025, they're reinvented with futuristic and avant-garde designs.

Exaggerated Heights:

Platform boots are reaching new heights. Designers are pushing the boundaries of sole thickness, creating footwear with platforms that reach over 2-3 inches. This gives the boots a distinct look, adding drama and power to any outfit. The elevated

heel creates a striking silhouette that elongates the legs, making these boots an essential statement piece.

Chunky, Sculptural Soles: In 2025, soles are becoming more sculptural and avant-garde. Designers are experimenting with exaggerated shapes, creating footwear with geometric designs, asymmetrical platforms, and bold ridged patterns.

Materials and Textures: Platform boots are available in a wide array of materials, from classic leather and suede to newer, innovative fabrics such as vegan leather, patent finishes, and even reflective metallics. Boots are often adorned with textured detailing like quilting, studs, and even fringe.

Customizable Styles Many platform boots feature detachable elements or interchangeable accessories. Think ankle straps, removable buckles, or even platforms that can be adjusted.

Merging Practicality with Style: Designers are prioritizing wearability. These boots are being crafted with more ergonomic soles and cushioned footbed.

A Perfect Fusion of Sailor Chic and Platform Power

Sailor-inspired clothing and platform boots offer women the best of both worlds. Sailor clothing brings timeless elegance and adventure, while platform boots add rebelliousness. These trends embrace a spirit of individuality, blending old-world charm with modern innovation.

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