



DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

A close look at downtown Los Angeles, the freeway-encircled nexus where a handful of skyscrapers rises from the suburban tundra, reveals a business district on the verge of a swanky metamorphosis, thanks to a cadre of ambitious hoteliers, loft developers, and restaurateurs. And now the area's got an acronym, DTLA—a distinction that usually equates to NBT (next big thing) status.

Forty-eight hours is enough to take it all in. Station yourself at the newest **Ace Hotel** (acehotel.com/losangeles), located in the landmark United Artists Theatre building. The 1927 marquee is still in place, but inside you'll find the Ace's usual roster of amenities: hipster-approved

rooms with Stumptown Coffee, turntables and vinyl, plus a rooftop bar and pool built around the original Beaux Arts facade. The attached **UA Theatre**, a Spanish Gothic showpiece, hosts concerts (Lykke Li on May 19) and serves as home base for star choreographer Benjamin Millepied and his LA Dance Project.

Right across Broadway, **Alma** (alma-la.com) occupies a small, nondescript storefront. But from the kitchen, chef Ari Taymor, who honed his chops at SF's Flour + Water and Bar Tartine, is delivering prix fixe tasting menus that have the national food guard abuzz. You don't know what you'll get on any given night—sunchokes, smoked cod, celery root, pigeon—only that

it will be super fresh and structured into innovative combinations that have earned Alma the title of 2013's Best New Restaurant from *Bon Appetit*.

For breakfast or lunch, head to **Grand Central Market** (grandcentralmarket.com), the kind of old-school neon food mart usually found back East. The newest stall comes courtesy of Marin County's **Belcampo Meat Co.**, where the queue is due to the mouthwatering cheesesteak made with goat leg.

DTLA has taken drinking to new heights—or rather, depths. It seems that every other alley leads to a speakeasy owned by bar magnate Cedd Moses. His latest, leather-clad **Honeycut** (honeycutla.com), is located below the O Hotel. Actually, Moses has a downtown bar for any craving: **Seven Grand** for whiskey, **Golden Gopher** for beer and basics, and **The Varnish** for high mixology.

For cultural enrichment, take a short hop over to the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art** (lacma.org) to see the *Calder and Abstraction* exhibit, a mesmerizing homage to the metal sculptures of Alexander Calder (through July 27). Then you might as well stop into the new **Line Hotel** (thelinehotel.com) in Koreatown, about a 10 minute drive from LACMA. Pass through the raw-cement lobby, where T-shirts act as wallpaper, and head into Pot, the just-opened Korean hot pot restaurant by Roy Choi, who gained fame with his Korean taco truck **Kogi** (follow @kogibbq on Twitter for information).

Plan your visit for the second week of June to catch the **Los Angeles Film Festival** (lafilmfest.com), which features top-notch flicks and convos with A-list directors. Screenings take place at numerous downtown venues, including the REDCAT Theater. Make sure to walk through the adjacent **Walt Disney Concert Hall** (laphil.com/visit), a postmodern monolith of steel designed by Frank Gehry. Between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., you can take an hour-long self-guided audio tour of the complex. —ROBIN RINALDI



GETTING THERE: Fly from SFO to LAX on **Virgin America** (virginamerica.com), or a half dozen other major airlines, in an hour for around \$160 round-trip. For the same price, you can fly **Southwest** (southwest.com) nonstop from Oakland to Burbank—you'll land and depart from LA's smallest, least-crowded airport, which is as close to downtown as LAX is.