Seeking Out the Hidden Gems of the Valley

The San Fernando Valley is a hotbed of exciting things to see and do. Of course there’s the world famous network and movie studios, parks, art galleries, shopping centers, sushi restaurants, theme parks and much more. But for your next staycation, try exploring some of the hidden gems beyond the stereotypes and visit a few lesser-known attractions to get a more intimate picture of the region where we work and play.

The Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board offers up the following recommendations:

ASANEBO
Like most sushi restaurants in Studio City, Asanebo is located in a nondescript strip mall on Ventura Boulevard. Of course, a humble location is not indicative of the amount of money you’ll pay for high-end sushi. Indeed, quality fish requires a financial commitment from the diner, but it’s well worth it at Asanebo. Inside the warm, comforting dining room, you’ll find both traditional and innovative, fusion-style Japanese cuisine, where the omakase, or chef’s choice, is recommended. Thankfully, there are three different tiers so there’s some flexibility. Named the 2014 Zagat Guide’s top food pick in Los Angeles, Asanebo is a dining gem that’s not to be missed.

THE BRADY BUNCH HOUSE
One of the most famous houses in television history can be found at 11217 Dilling Street in Studio City - with civilians living inside. The Brady Bunch began shooting in 1969, and exterior shots of the house were used for 115 episodes. A newly widowed Louise Weddington Carson lived in the house at the time, and set designers attached a phony window to make it look like the two-story structure to match the interior set design. The house was revisited for a couple sequel projects, such as A Very Brady Christmas and The Bradys, a dramatic series on CBS. A fence and new shrubbery somewhat masks its immortalized TV image, but the house will forever live on in reruns of The Brady Bunch.

CELLA GALLERY
Located in the North Hollywood Arts District, Cella Gallery is a small art space showcasing contemporary art by new and emerging artists. Events are held regularly at the gallery and at its adjacent satellite locations, including Artists’ Salons and Music Nights. Exhibits change approximately every six weeks, so there is continually new art to appreciate. It might be a little hard to find at first, but once you do, the art makes the discovery more than worthwhile.

ECLECTICA VINTAGE
There are some great vintage shops in the San Fernando Valley, but Eclectica Vintage is your go-to whether you’re looking for a bike, furniture, clothing, camera or other classic decorative items. With past experience at local studios as set designers, owners Mike Lis and Ron Lis will help you find anything you might need. Just be sure to bring cash for your purchases. Also be sure to check the Eclectica Vintage calendar for any special events, such as their monthly bike swap.

THE GREAT WALL OF LOS ANGELES
At 2,754 feet, The Great Wall of Los Angeles is one of the longest murals in the world, located on Coldwater Canyon between Burbank Boulevard and Oxnard Street. The half-mile-long mural is regarded as one of the city’s most successful depictions and examples of ethnic and cultural cooperation, conceived by Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) founder, Judith Baca as part of a beautification project in the area. The Great Wall of Los Angeles was begun in 1974 and completed five summers later, involving over 400 employed youth and their families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as artists, oral historians, ethnologists, scholars and community members. Each year was dedicated to depicting a different decade in California history from the viewpoint of different ethnic minorities. Ongoing

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Discovery Cube Los Angeles Finds a Home in the Valley

2.5-acre campus near Sylmar is the Valley’s first major museum and part of DSF’s mission to expand science-based learning in Southern California

I n case you hadn’t heard, San Fernando Valley recently became home to one of the most technically advanced destinations for science-based learning and hands-on discovery in the world — the Discovery Cube Los Angeles (DCLA), the long-anticipated sister campus to the popular Discovery Cube Orange County (DCOC) in Santa Ana, opened late last year on the site of the former Children’s Museum of Los Angeles in the Hansen Dam Recreation Area. Offering 71,000 square feet of hands-on exhibits, displays, programs and learning spaces, DCLA becomes LA’s latest must-see family entertainment/educational destination and the first major museum in the history of the Valley.

DCLA is part of an ongoing commitment by the nonprofit Discovery Science Foundation (DSF) to expand STEM education by the nonprofit Discovery Science Foundation (DSF) to expand STEM education and admission prices are subject to change without notice. For information about the day you plan to visit, including exhibits, programs, events, operating hours, admission prices and driving and parking information, go to the DCLA website at http://www.discoverycube.org/la/.

Save Money and Take a Break with Nine Tips to Supercharge Staycation

V acation budgets may be tight for many, but it is still possible to dine out or take a mental health break. This year, 30 percent of Americans will save money by taking only one vacation, and 30 percent will spend $1,000 or less total, according to a recent poll. Another 35 percent don’t plan to take a vacation at all.

“Last year, when gas prices were sky-high and many were still struggling financially, more people took a ‘staycation,’ or vacation at home. You can make a staycation memorable and frugal with a few money-saving ideas,” said Ethw Ewing, president of free online consumer portal Bills.com.

Ewing suggested these ways to supercharge a staycation:

1. Make a budget. “Even for a staycation, it is important to keep spending in check,” said Ewing. “Divide the total available funds for vacation by the number of days and the number of people to establish an approximate daily budget. For the future, make vacation costs part of an annual budget and save a little each month. Even daily pocket change can make a difference,” Ewing said.

2. Be a tourist. Think about desirable activities at a tourist destination: Amusement parks? Historical areas? Thrills, from mountain biking to bungee jumping? “Contact a local visitor center and read brochures or ask questions as if you were new to your area,” suggested Ewing. Use savings from not paying for airfare, a rental car and lodging to fund an adventure.

3. Order in. If part of vacation’s appeal is the chance to cook, try a kit based on a food that would cost in the kitchen. Ethnic restaurants can offer cheaper eats and introduce new favorites. Place orders for restaurants or a hot dog stand for a bargain lunch for the whole family. Order takeout or make ahead frozen family-size meals and salad mix for easy meals that keep costs in check.

4. Unplug. Vow to shun e-mail, just as you would when on vacation. A true addict might even leave the computer with a friend when on vacation. A true addict might even leave the computer with a friend. Avoid the hassle of packing up the car, and enjoy sleeping under the stars with the benefit of the open sky.

5. Camp out at home. For families, camp out in the backyard is a great way to please the kids, save money, avoid the hassle of packing up the car, and enjoy nights under the stars with the benefits of the open sky.

6. Challenge yourself. Make a week — or a summer — more exciting with a personal challenge. Try for a personal best score on bowling, tennis, basketball or golf. Learn a new sport, discover a craft, read a book, or master a new gourmet dish.

7. Entertain. During a staycation, individuals might finally be relaxed enough to enjoy entertaining without the stress. Whether a popsicle party at a local public pool, a casual barbecue or an elaborate dessert buffet to show off baking prowess, entertaining can make a week off more memorable.

8. Foodie culture. If getting away is a must, but an exotic vacation is not in the cards, expand the idea of a staycation to include locations within road-trip distance. “Even with gas prices creeping up again, a family of four can travel within an eight-hour radius for about $120. That’s far more affordable than plane tickets, which could cost $1,000 or more for a family of four,” Ewing said.

9. Take a ‘maxi-staycation.’ If getting away is a must, but an exotic vacation is not in the cards, expand the idea of a staycation to include locations within road-trip distance. “Even with gas prices creeping up again, a family of four can travel within an eight-hour radius for about $120. That’s far more affordable than plane tickets, which could cost $1,000 or more for a family of four,” Ewing said.

“Wherever a vacation takes you, taking a break from your daily routine provides a chance to center yourself and remember the things you love,” Ewing said. “This year, commit to finding a way to refresh — on any budget.” Information for this article was provided by Bills.com (www.bills.com), a free one-stop shop where consumers can educate themselves about comparison shopping for products and services.
The San Fernando Valley Business Journal is proud to announce the 8th Annual CFO of the Year Awards. This event honors finance professionals in the San Fernando Valley for their ongoing efforts as outstanding financial stewards. Given the economic times and ever-changing climate, CFOs serve as essential members of a company’s core leadership team. Together with their CEOs, their decisions affect all aspects of the business.

For more information, please visit www.sfvbj.com/bizevents or contact Breanne Kamai at 323.549.5225 ext. 203 or bkamai@socalbusinessjournals.com

Awards Luncheon:
Tuesday, June 23, 2015
11:00am to 1:30pm • Warner Center Marriott
21850 Oxnard Street, Woodland Hills, CA 91367
Individual tickets: $75 / Corporate Table of 10: $650

Congratulations to our 2015 CFO of the Year Finalists:

Sari Afriat  
Fiona Hutton & Associates

Lou Franzini  
Landmark Network

Brett Novak  
IXIA

Glenn Baker  
The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation

Alex Goretsky  
USAsPay

Matthew J. Pfeffer  
MannKind Corporation

Ray Barber  
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ORLY International

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maintenance efforts are made through donations and grant funding.

ILIADE BOOKSHOP

So-named because the original location was next to Odyssey Video, the Iliaed Bookshop offers over 125,000 titles at its home on Cahuenga Boulevard in North Hollywood, where the 20-year-old bookstore has been located since 2006. Specializing in used books, Iliaed Bookshop buys and sells hundreds of books daily and even has a table of bargain books for less than $2 each. There are also rare books for sale, and autographed first editions can run for hundreds - sometimes thousands - of dollars. Regulars are often found scouring its shelves for hidden treasures. The handiest part of a visit to the Iliaed is leaving without spending several hours there.

JAPANESE GARDEN

Constructed over a three-year period and dedicated in 1984, the Japanese Garden at Woodley Park in Van Nuys is an oasis of serenity designed by Dr. Koichi Kawana. Ranked tenth out of 300 public Japanese gardens by the Journal of Japanese Gardening, it’s a treasure of the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board. For more information, contact Vitello’s.

SAKU’S MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

You don’t visit Saku’s Mediterranean Cuisine in Reseda for the decor, but for their outstanding Armenian dishes. Open since 2002, Saku’s has the same name as it did upon opening, although its current owners, John and Ani Panosian, have owned the restaurant since about 2006. The kebabs are quite spectacular and luscious, and if you go with Saku’s Special, the Iskender Kebab, you’ll be treated to a wonderfully seasoned ground beef sirkon sliced straight from the spit. Thick yogurt, browned butter and fresh tomato sauce accent the dish beautifully. Of course, you’ll also find standbys like hummus, baba ghanouj and tabouleh on the menu - all served with warm pitas - but adventurers will love the Mediterranean space treasure hunt all the way down the menu.

TONGA HUT

Part of the unmatched charm of this Tiki Bar is that this little hideaway - and adventurers will love the Maritime-themed Universally Accessible Playground, interactive drum play area, and more. Lifeguards are on-site at Lake Balboa, which is located in the park, making it an attractive place to swim, as well as boat and fish. There are also barbecue pits and picnic tables, ensuring your entire family a whole day of activities. And if you’re visiting at the right time of year, you’ll get to enjoy a stroll around the lake with cherry blossom trees in full bloom. But at all times, don’t forget to enjoy the miles of trails that line the park, which branch off from the trail around the lake. Keep an eye out for nearby bike rentals.

SAKU’S MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

Construct a table of bar prices, and the best way to get there. In Los Angeles, there are hundreds of thousands of dollars. Sometimes thousands - of dollars. Regulars are often found scouring its shelves for hidden treasures. The handiest part of a visit to the Iliaed is leaving without spending several hours there.

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