



## LA's no Angel: New ROUGH GUIDE reveals Bush's gang- banger roots, paints complex portrait

The new *Rough Guide to Los Angeles & Southern California*, out this July in time for the seasonal heyday of surf and sand, presents the city as not such an angelic place, calling LA “**a city that’s loved and scorned in equal measure.**”

Though described as “**far too complex to describe or dismiss in a few words,**” the new guidebook notes how some feel that the city’s “**freeways, smog, and Hollywood drivel pollute countless bodies and minds.**”

Harsh words, or harsh reality? There’s more opinions—and issues—than dreadlocked patchouli oil vendors lining **Venice Beach.**

CASE IN POINT: The issue of **gang violence** in particular shows the city to embody more than a simple Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde scenario:

- THE SET-UP:

“**South Central LA** is the heartland of the city’s infamous gangs, said to number upwards of 26,000 members responsible for up to 800 murders in the last year.”

- THE SURPRISE:

“**Compton**, between Watts and the LA harbor, is among the most notoriously unsafe of neighborhoods, from where many famous rappers have come.” Its *most* famous resident, though? “None other than former **President Bush** (Sr.), who lived here when LA was still known for its oil wells, and whites constituted the majority of area residents.”

- THE REAL DEAL:

The old stereotype of LA gangs (Bloods/Crips) is increasingly outdated: “Gang life used to be largely contained within the city. Nowadays, local gangs are more international, with chapters not only reaching other cities throughout the western US, but also strongly linked to Mexican gangs and organized-crime syndicates. With gangs employing sophisticated schemes involving protection rackets, money laundering, and expansion into businesses from small retail operations to the music industry—all tactics reminiscent not of common street thugs but old-style mobsters.”

SPEAKING OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY: The City of Angels’ “well-worn patina of grime” can also sparkle like **Ice T’s** ice (or **Perry Farrell’s** eye shadow) in the always-edgy LA music scene. Check out the color insert in *The Rough Guide to Los Angeles & Southern California* for all the history and the hype, plus **Famous LA Music Venues.**

**NOTES FOR EDITORS:**

- The Rough Guide to Los Angeles and Southern California* (9781858283784, \$19.99) published July 2008
- It’s a first edition guidebook, and also covers **Santa Barbara, Palm Springs, San Diego**
- Rough Guides publishes over 250 travel titles to destinations all over the

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**Rough Guides’ verdict on...**

• **Silver Lake**

“Silver Lake is something of a transitional zone between the creative grunge of Echo Park and the upscale comfort of Los Feliz, **its lower section having a decidedly funky, grimy feel and its upper-slope denizens looking down with well-heeled wariness.**”

• **Civic Center**

“...this hive of bureaucracy offers only a few interesting cultural and architectural sights. There is, to be sure, much activity during weekday office hours, but apart from **that it’s a rather strange scene of desperate homeless people wandering in an often-deserted landscape of spartan modern architecture and ugly public artworks.**”

• **Santa Barbara**

“Once home to Ronald Reagan, and a weekend escape for much of the old money of Los Angeles and assorted celebrities, Santa Barbara has both a traditional conservative side, as well as a more relaxed libertarian character among the younger set.”

• **Palm Springs**

“Amid lush farmland replete with golf courses, condos, and millionaires, **Palm Springs embodies a strange mix of Spanish colonial and mid-twentieth-century modernism.**”

• **San Diego**

“Ultimately, with its long white beaches, sunny weather, and bronzed bodies—which haven given rise to the city’s nickname, ‘Sandy Ego’—**San Diego is like LA in miniature**, though with a more manageable size and transportation system, and a tamer and more family-oriented vibe.”

• **Malibu**

“...the very name conjures up images of beautiful people sunbathing on palm-fringed beaches and lazily consuming cocktails.”

• **Venice**

“Venice was laid out in the marshes of Ballona Creek in 1905 by Developer Abbot Kinney as a fantasy replica of the northern Italian city. While most of the architecture and canals have long since disappeared, **the lingering pseudo-European atmosphere has since proved just right for pulling in the artsy crowd** he was aiming at, making Venice a nice spot to check out what remains of its underground arts scene and bohemian charm.”

• **Beverly Hills**

“The world over, Beverly Hills is synonymous with suntanned Mercedes-drivers, fur-clad poodle-walkers, and outrageously priced designer clothes, illustrating how successful this city has been in marketing itself to the rest of the world. Inevitably, this self-promotion is more booster hype than reality, but if you’ve come here to fawn over celebrities and press your nose against the display windows, you won’t leave disappointed.”

• **Pasadena**

“...Pasadena is a mix of old fashioned charm and contemporary appeal, no longer just the domain of the blue-haired mavens clichéd in *Little Old Lady from Pasadena*, the famous surf-pop song by Jan & Dean.”

• **La Jolla**

“A more pretentious air prevails in La Jolla (pronounced “La Hoya”), an elegant beach community just to the north.”

• **Hollywood Boulevard**

“The place still has its grungy side after dark away from the main tourist zones, when the assorted scenesters, drunks, drug addicts, and prostitutes create a lively, if not entirely savory, mix.”

• **Burbank**

“Many of the big studios moved out of Tinseltown long ago, and much of the business of making films (and TV shows) is located west of Glendale in otherwise boring Burbank. **Hot, smoggy, and ugly, Burbank nonetheless has an official ‘Media District’ bustling with activity.**”

• **The San Fernando Valley**

“Home to acres of asphalt, countless minimalls, and nonstop tract housing, the San Fernando Valley is **often derided by LA Westsiders as the epitome of dull, faceless suburbia.**”

• **Culver City**

“Several miles south of Beverly Hills and Westwood, triangular Culver City is **one of the Westside’s lesser-known points of interest**, its past rich with movie lore and its current face shaped by groundbreaking architectural experiments.”