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Palisades Park shines as Santa Monica's urban gem

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Palisades Park sign

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It's probably a safe bet that everyone who travels to **Santa Monica**, Calif., will eventually make their way to the world-renowned **Palisades Park**, the lush, slender strip of land situated at the city's western-most edge and overlooking the **Pacific Ocean**.

The linear, 26-acre Palisades Park begins at Colorado Ave. at the entrance to **Santa Monica Pier** and extends north about 14 blocks to



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Adelaide Dr. The park sits atop coastal sandstone bluffs, and the setting is undeniably dramatic. On one side of Palisades Park lie [Ocean Avenue](#) and the gleaming high-rise hotels, office buildings, residences and restaurants of this upscale beachfront city. On the opposite side are sweeping, unobstructed vistas of the broad [Santa Monica](#) beach, made famous in the “Baywatch” TV series, Santa Monica Bay and the rugged Santa Monica Mountains hugging the shoreline in the distance.

The land was a gift to the city in **1892** by its founders – Colonel Robert S. Baker, his wife, Arcadia Bandini di Baker, and Senator John P. Jones. They intended the land to be a public space in perpetuity. A commemorative bust of Bandini di Baker stands in the park’s rose garden.

A meandering series of dirt and paved paths runs the entire length of the park. More than 30 types of trees inhabit the property, including the twisted Australian tea, pink melaleucas, eucalyptus and palm. Certainly the long rows of towering palm trees lay claim as Palisades Park’s most distinctive feature. The diverse vegetation has a practical function as well, for it helps to

protect the bluffs from erosion.

Palisades Park also boasts an array of outdoor art, including: a wood sculpture titled Gestation III; a Native American totem pole; the beacon overlook, which evokes a wooden sailing ship and mast; and a concrete sculpture of Santa Monica, for whom the city was named. There's also a camera obscura.

It's a peaceful scene, with people engaged in both sedentary and active pursuits – running, walking, picnicking, playing chess, checkers and pétanque, conversing, and simply enjoying the breathtaking views. Fitness instructors train their clients on the perfectly manicured grass, and parents and nannies tend to children in strollers.

There are 26 other parks in Santa Monica, but Palisades Park reigns as the most significant natural open space for the public...the ideal spot to gaze at the ocean, feel the gentle caress of the breeze and simply to be.

When You Go

Palisades Park lies along Ocean Ave. in Santa Monica between Colorado Ave. and Adelaide Dr. Check the [website](#) for more information.

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