



## Guide to Highland Park: The Hottest 'Hood in Eastside LA

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WORDS BY DANA CAPE

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It may not have been in the limelight as long as Echo Park and Silver Lake, but if you haven't heard of Highland Park yet, you'll want to get your ears checked. In the past decade, Highland Park has returned to its early 20th century roots as a progressive and laidback residential community. Young creative-types and even new families have flocked here, drawn by its quiet, historic charm amid its proximity to major commercial hubs like DTLA, Glendale, and Pasadena.

Two main drags carve through the beautiful, craftsman-home-lined Avenues: York Boulevard and North Figueroa Street. Each contains an ever-increasing spill of cafes, restaurants, bars, and shops. Take it from a local though—some stops deserve your dime more than others. Here are my top picks.

*(Featured courtesy of Rudy's Barbershop.)*

### CAFES

**Donut Friend** (<http://donutfriend.com/wp3/>)

I was never a donut person until I discovered Donut Friend. This place is like a Willy Wonka factory. They offer a ridiculous array of proprietary donuts with punny names like Jets to Basil (glazed donut with basil, strawberry jam, and vegan cream cheese) and Angry Samoa (cake donut version of the beloved Girl Scout cookie). They also provide a huge supply of glazes, creams, nuts, fruit, and other toppings with which you can customize your own high-quality masterpiece. And they have the best cake donuts I have ever tried. EVER.

5107 York Boulevard \ Los Angeles, CA 90065

*(Image courtesy of Petite Insanities.)*



**The Highland Café** (<https://www.thehighlandcafela.com/>)

This is one of the most straightforward cafes in the neighborhood. Good coffee, good food, and friendly service. The interior is a bit dim, but comfortably furnished with couches and comfy chairs for laidback studying. Sidewalk dining offers a breezier atmosphere for brunch patrons. I have a soft spot for the buttery James Brown, a latte with brown sugar, vanilla, and spice.

5010 York Boulevard \ Los Angeles, CA 90042

*(Image courtesy of Yelp.)*

## RESTAURANTS

**Kitchen Mouse** (<https://www.kitchenmousela.com/>)

Not only is this an adorable brunch spot, their entire menu is vegetarian/vegan-friendly. The bright, kitschy interior provides the perfect atmosphere for a light-hearted and healthy meal. I especially enjoy the ABLT, made with the most flavorful, home-style tempeh bacon.

5904 N Figueroa Street \ Los Angeles, CA 90042

(Pictured. Image courtesy of Kitchen Mouse.)

**Otoño** (<https://www.otonorestaurant.com/>)

This Spanish bar and tapas spot popped up in the last few months, and it's already a favorite of mine. They open an hour earlier than any other bar on the street for "Siesta Hour" at 4pm. Smoked Heirloom Tomato Gazpacho, Jamon Serrano with Melon, and Vermut Bianco take me back to summer travels abroad and make for a sophisticated afternoon out with friends.

5715 N Figueroa Street \ Los Angeles, CA 90042



**SONOMAMA** (<https://shopsonomama.com/>)

This *wabi-sabi* boutique feels like a cocoon of serenity that screams with Japanese influence. Tidily arranged on shelves throughout the airy, white interior are ayurvedic apothecary goods, geometric 3D candles, and ceramic Buddha statues that look like they're pleasantly melting into the earth. The shop also carries home goods like shaggy sheep skins, heavenly dried flower wreaths, and crystal singing bowls nearly 2 feet in diameter!

5711 N Figueroa Street \ Los Angeles, CA 90042

(Image courtesy of Sonomama.)



## SHOPS

**Mindfulnest** (<https://www.mindfulnest.com/>)

This eclectic Co-op offers handmade and unique treasures, all made by local designers at a variety of price points. It's my go-to for gift shopping whenever I'm stumped for ideas. Offerings include whimsical home décor, clever graphic tees, attitudinal socks, colorful wall art inspired by LA scenery, and some of the best subtle statement jewelry.

5050 York Boulevard \ Los Angeles, CA 90042

(Pictured. Image courtesy of Mindfulnest.)

**The Bearded Beagle** (<https://www.thebeardedbeagle.com/>)

A well-curated vintage shop with quality clothing organized by style and decade. And none too over-priced, at that! I once bought a wine-red Dolce & Gabbana blouse off the sale rack for \$15! But they also have a breadth of your classic ugly sweaters, denim jackets, and print dresses.

5926 N Figueroa Street \ Los Angeles, CA 90042



**Cookbook** (<http://www.cookbookla.com/>)

The neighborhood may not be commercial enough to support a Whole Foods, but this bougie mini market can cover you for an entire meal, no sweat. In addition to a wall of "ugly produce", a mouth-watering butcher case, and a fridge-full of funky cheese, they've got basics like artisanal pasta and olive oils, a gourmet spice rack, and even some cookbooks for inspiration. They also offer a rotating selection of elaborate deli goods and prepared meals for those lazy nights in.

5611 N Figueroa Street \ Los Angeles, CA 90042

(Image by Andre Karimloo.)



## BARS

**The Greyhound Bar & Grill** (<https://www.the-greyhound.com/>)

Dodger fans drive from all over town to watch games at this quintessential LA bar, which is bursting at the seams on game days. The owners fashioned the interior in the homey dark-wood Victorian fashion of an English pub, but the walls scream with American sports culture and HD television. Food and drinks are all excellent at this welcoming joint.

5570 N Figueroa Street \ Los Angeles, CA 90042

**La Cueva** (<https://www.facebook.com/LittleCaveLA/>)

Formerly a neighborhood dive called “The Little Cave”, this “Old World Mexican Grotto” is the coziest place to sip a selection of craft cocktails and spirits, curated by 1933 Group. They have a very reasonable Happy Hour menu served from 5-8pm and regularly offer live music or a DJ to accentuate the atmosphere. Personally, I prefer showing up later in the evening when I can skulk with friends in a candlelit corner over our Tequila Old-Fashioneds and Smokey Margaritas.

5922 N Figueroa Street \ Los Angeles, CA 90042

(Image courtesy of 1933 Group.)



## ABOUT DANA CAPE

Raised in rural Southern Illinois, Dana Cape always knew she was meant for city life. After attending high school in Chicago and graduating with her BA from NYU, she finally settled on the sunny shores of California and currently resides in Eastside L.A. A craft bartender by night, she currently assists with social media at Almanac of Style and is enrolled in the Certificate in Creative Nonfiction Writing program at UCLA.

(Image by Jermaine Saunders.)

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