

48 Things To Do In 48 Hours In L.A.

Here's the challenge: You have two days to visit Los Angeles and, aspiring screenwriter that you are, you know those 48 hours have to count. Aside from doing the obvious, i.e., setting up as many meetings with interested agents, producers, managers, and other industry professionals in advance, what else can you do to meet and greet the locals? Armed with a stack of business cards and a positive attitude toward everyone you see, here are some ways to be in places where you can possibly meet new "friends of friends":

1) Visit the WGA, west headquarters at 7000 W. Third St. (LA 90048) and pay homage to the dispensers of the fabled "green envelope."

The phone number is 800-548-4532. Their website is www.wga.org.

2) Have the experience of registering a script or treatment in person. (\$20 per script for non-Guild members, \$10 for Guild members) **3)**

Visit the script library where screenwriter and guru John August (www.johnaugust.com) likes to hang out, or request a favorite script and read it there in the library. **4)** Also, call in advance to see if the Guild is offering any special panels or events open to the public.

5) Visit The Writers Store on 2040 Westwood Blvd. (LA 90025).

They're open Monday-Saturday from 10:00 am-7:00 pm. Phone is 866-229-7483; website (loaded with information):

www.writersstore.com. They too sponsor many evening events. Ask for Natasha or Mike and say that Blake sent ya. Heck, buy a few copies of *Save the Cat!* for friends.

6) Contact the Directors Guild of America (DGA) at 7920 Sunset Blvd (LA 90046). Phone is 310-289-2034. The DGA sponsors talks, special events, and screenings with cast and creators in attendance — some open to the public.

7) Check out the Museum of Television and Radio at 465 N. Beverly Dr. (Beverly Hills 90210). Phone is 310-786-1025. Special Events include panel discussions from the creators of great television shows past and present.

8) And as long as you're in the neighborhood, visit "Agency Row" in Beverly Hills. Also known as "Wilshire Canyon," this is the mile-square spot where William Morris, ICM, Endeavor, CAA, Gersh, and United Talent are found. This is especially good around lunchtime (1:00-2:00 pm) when the men in black spill out into the street and go to swanky (read pricey) restaurants like **9)** The Grill, a true agent's lunchtime spot if there ever was one at 9560 Dayton Way (310) 276-0615 and **10)** La Scala, 434 N Canon Dr. (310) 275-0579. You can even **11)** shop along Rodeo Drive and hum *Pretty Woman* to yourself. Agents are easy to spot: Nice suits, cell phone in hand, making a lot of noise.

12) Check with your college alumni organization branch in Los Angeles and see if they are sponsoring any entertainment industry nights. This goes for any group or organization you belong to in your hometown that might have a sister office in L.A. Any way to feel more

at home, or to make an industry-related connection, is a real plus. And maybe a great way in!

Visit a studio! No, don't take the Universal tour, that's for fans. But if you want a taste of how a backlot looks and works, call ahead to arrange a tour. Writer Sarah Beach researched this and found several studios including **13)** Warner Brothers in Burbank offer private tours. Here is a typical blurb for the former MGM lot, now **14)** Sony Pictures in Culver City:

Sony Pictures Studios - Studio Tour -- Step back to a legendary time during Sony Pictures Studios - Studio Tour. Located on one of the most famous studio lots, our tour gives you a rare glimpse at Hollywood's glory days...a sneak peek at current movie and television making in action...and a first-hand preview of high-tech movie innovations on the horizon. This is the studio where movie history was made, in Culver City...the original "Heart of Screenland". For more information on our two-hour walking tour and reservations, call 310-244-3695. • Tours depart daily, Monday – Friday at 9:30 am, 10:30 am, 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm • Tours begin at Sony Pictures Plaza • Children must be over 12 Tour prices for the general public are \$25 per person. Tours for employees and their guests are \$15. Call for reservations.

Further info: www.guideofhollywood.com/main/studiotours.htm

15) Go to a taping of a sitcom. No, it's not the movies, but it's a great excuse to be on the lot at Paramount, **16)** CBS Studios at Fairfax and Beverly Blvd., and **17)** CBS Radford in Studio City, just over the hill. Call ahead for tickets, you never know who you'll meet.

18) Be an extra in the movies. You may need a few days to get the call, but here's a way to be paid to be in L.A. and really be on a set. Call Central Casting at 818-562-2755 for more info.

19) Hungry? Try the Newsroom Café on Robertson Ave. right next to where the offices of New Line are located and home to many a lunchtime deal over a nice shot of wheat grass juice (eeewww!) **20)** After lunch take a stroll down Robertson and see more of the famous and near famous at **21)** The Ivy at 113 N. Robertson Blvd. 310-274-8303. If you go early in the a.m. try **22)** the Farmers Market on Fairfax and catch sight of writer/director Paul Mazursky (*An Unmarried Woman*), who breakfasts there daily.

23) Sponsor your own event. Host a party, lunch, or coffee-clatch starring you! Other writers in the area are available; get all the ones you know together and MC an information swap — perhaps at one of the coffee shops listed below. For access to names try posting in the comments section on www.blakesnyder.com and see if you get some response from locals who can meet. We're a friendly bunch!

24) Visit the coffee shops with screenwriters who are working at it in public, such famed three-hole-punchy places as **25)** Insomnia at 7286 Beverly Blvd, **26)** Stir Crazy, 6917 Melrose Ave, **27)** Psychobabble, 1866 N Vermont Ave, **28)** Bourgeois Pig, 5931 North Franklin Avenue, **29)** The Coffee Table, 2930 Rowena Ave, **30)** Sabor & Cultura Café (formely Espresso Mi Cultura) 5625 Hollywood Blvd

are best (see handout) where Quentin Tarrantino, Jon Favreau and Charlie Kaufman bring their laptops and type.

31.) Sunset Plaza, that little chunk of Sunset Blvd between Fairfax and Doheny, is home to many sidewalk cafes of the Eurotrash kind. Visit **32)** Le Petit Four at 8654 Sunset Blvd. in the hope of bumping into that German producer of your dreams, and rub elbows at the cramped tables with someone who looks like Andy Garcia but is actually a TV star in Uruguay. Just a few blocks east is **33)** the Chateau Marmont, at 8221 Sunset. Get a brochure there and put it on your wall so that when your script sells and the studio flies you out, you'll know what bungalow to stay in (but not Bungalow 3)!

34) And as long as you're in the neighborhood, further down the street you can visit the spot where screenwriter (and sometime novelist) F. Scott Fitzgerald died at 1443 North Hayworth Ave. Recount the famous scene in *The Last Tycoon* when the Irving Thalberg-inspired Monroe Starr gives a screenwriting lesson to a novelist. See a photo of this landmark at [www.seeing-stars.com / ImagePages/FitzgeraldHousePhoto.shtml](http://www.seeing-stars.com/ImagePages/FitzgeraldHousePhoto.shtml). It may not forward your career, but it *will* inspire you to type faster.

35) Visit the Lantana production facilities at 3000 Olympic Blvd. in Santa Monica, on the premise of having lunch at L.A. Farm there. This is the restaurant where you might catch sight of any number of producers, writers, and directors who have offices at the complex,

and the site of Larry David's interaction with a restaurant "captain" on his HBO cable comedy series, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

36) The Friar's Club at 9900 S. Santa Monica Blvd., (310) 553-0850 is the show business eatery that's now open to the public, and the place where you'll catch sight of many non-retiring figures.

37) The Academy Of Television Arts and Sciences at 5220 Lankershim Blvd. (North Hollywood 9160) is located in the San Fernando Valley, but worth the trip if there is a special event night that's open to the public. Call 818-754-2800 for details of panels and presentations.

38) The UCLA Film Department offers its own special events in the heart of Westwood where lots of movie premieres are rolled out. For event information, contact the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, 102 East Melnitz Hall, Box 951622, Los Angeles 90095-1622. Phone is 310-825-5761.

39) The USC Film Department offers its own special programs. For information, contact University of Southern California, University Park Campus, Los Angeles 90089. Phone is 213-740-1111.

40) Book Soup, located at 8818 Sunset Blvd. in West Hollywood (310-659-3110) has one of the best collection of film-related books and hosts frequent book signings and special events of its own.

41) The Motion Picture Academy Library is another booky kind of place and a great site for researching the movie biz. It's at 333 S. La Cienega Blvd. in Beverly Hills. Check out www.oscars.org/mhl/usingthelibrary.html.

42) The Scriptwriters Network has a number of special programs for screenwriters, sponsored by this great and enthusiastic group of L.A. scripters. Contact Bill Lundy at www.scriptwritersnetwork.com.

43) Gary Shusett is another friend of the screenwriter who has had his photo taken and/or interviewed with every famous Hollywood player in the last 20 years. His Sherman Oaks Experimental College's mailing address is 7095 Hollywood Boulevard, #876, Los Angeles 90028. The phone is 323-851-1769; email address is SHERWOODOAK@aol.com.

44) Ken Rotcop has conducted his famous Pitch Mart for years and is the author of one of the best source books on how to pitch, *The Perfect Pitch*. If you want to find out how to contact Ken and/or participate, check out www.pitchmart.com.

45) The American Cinematheque honors achievement in film and television and sponsors great panel events at the Egyptian Theater (6712 Hollywood Blvd. near Las Palmas Ave) in Hollywood. Check out www.americancinematheque.com or call 323-461-2020.

46) Larry Edmonds Bookstore offers the best and biggest collection of hard-to-find film scripts and film books. It's located in the center of Hollywood at 6644 Hollywood Blvd. Call 323-463-3273.

47) Don't miss the Samuel French Theatre & Film Book Shop at 7623 Sunset Boulevard (Los Angeles 90046). That's where you'll find actors, directors, and writers looking for the tools to their trade – and yours! Phone is 213-876-0570.

And finally, what trip to L.A. would be complete without an envisioning stop at the site of the annual Academy Awards: **48)** the Kodak Theater. Picture yourself on the red carpet or telling off friends from the podium as you win the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay. For more information, check out www.kodaktheatre.com/events.htm.

SHELDON BULL (Creator of *Coach* and *Newhart*) suggests:

“UCLA has an ‘entertainment industry night’ once a year in the spring. They ask alums who have made it to come and sit at a table in the student union and answer questions. There's usually twenty or thirty of us alums at different tables. I don't know if it's open to the public but it may be. You could check it out. Students aren't supposed to come with resumes or scripts, but they all do. It is a way to meet people. Events at the Museum of Television & Radio are also a way to meet people. They have special events in the evening all the time saluting different TV shows. It ain't the movies, but industry people show up to these things. The DGA also has events in the evening sometimes that the public can attend. LACMA does salutes to movies and stars and stuff in the evenings. I've been a couple of these. USC may do something similar.”

TRACEY JACKSON (*The Guru*) lives in NYC, but visits L.A. frequently to build acquaintances and keep up to date on happenings. She writes:

“Ideally, you will make some connections, have some meetings, meet some assistants...my feeling is what you do when you get home is as important as what you do while you are there. Since everyone is going to have a different level of meeting and contacts, my advice is obviously meet as many people as possible. I live NYC, and granted I have a full-blown career, manager and agent, but I come out at least once a month. I cram up to seven meetings, a lunch, breakfast and drinks meeting in each day. If I'm pitching it can be more... But, what is important is keeping the contacts you make...These guys meet hundreds of us a year....your material will not always distinguish you and out of sight out of mind unless u are an A list player is the name of the game there.”

TRACEY'S WAY OF STAYING IN TOUCH

- 1) Have personal cards made up. You don't have to spend a lot, but they should include your name, e-mail and maybe mobile...This will allow a more personal connection to be formed than just your agent. You give it to them, they then have to give you theirs, if they don't offer it, ask for it.
- 2) When you get home, send a personal note or email saying how much you enjoyed the meeting, appreciate they're taking the time out of their busy schedule...whatever further the connection. Don't bombard them with emails. But say when next in town, maybe be can grab a coffee....Now, this may take years to come to pass, but it will keep you in touch...then next time you are around, drop them a note saying I'll be in town...would love to take you to coffee whatever. They probably won't - I've been doing this with one exec at who has moved studios twice for four years...we finally got together and I may get a job out of it...persevere...

- 3) In the room, learn something personal about them, not that they have sex with goats, but if they love the RED SOX, surfing....find some common shared interest or pretend, but that way you can be something other than a writer looking for a job. It also allows you the chance to send them an interesting article on WINDSURFING...an funny blog about YOGA....make the relationship personal....that way you make a friend not just a business connection. And can follow thru without just being needy. Take it outside the biz if you can.
- 4) Especially if you are starting out, and even if not, befriend the assistants...Today's assistant could be tomorrow's Studio President...I kid you not. My first agents' assistant when I started, ended up being a Prez at a major studio... They are people too. They will rise...They can help you. They have more info than the editor of VARIETY. They hear and know all that is happening and what they don't hear, their assistant friends do and they share it at night with each other. So, get their name...talk to them...do the same thing you would the boss...take them out for a beer...new in town...they can be your access to the bigger cheese and they can/will help you more easily and honestly you don't know where they will be in a year.
 - a. Don't waste your time hanging out a hip expensive hotspots unless you like it and can afford it.... nothing will come of it.
 - b. Be on time.
 - c. Be gracious.
 - d. Look nice, but laid back, if you look like a banker you will stick out like a nerd.
 - e. Have fun.
 - f. Take a map.
 - g. Good luck!

JAMIE NASH (*Altered*) lives in Baltimore, cracked his first sale and got his movie in production thanks to hard work. The self-effacing Jamie writes:

"I haven't been able to crack Hollywood, myself...I've done well on the independent fringes...but LA is still a forbidden fortress.

What I've learned is all the rules/laws/etiquette are ignored for a good script. Many years ago, I created a program (I'm a programmer) that sent emails, tracked who opened them, who clicked on my bio link, etc, etc.

Most of the top Studios/Agents would send me dire legal warnings that said things like 'We burned your email then fed the ashes to our dog and sent the dog to a Chinese restaurant...if you send any unsolicited submissions again we'll do the same to you newbie writer.'

Truth was, these SAME agencies were clicking on my script, clicking on my bio...i.e. -- the legal stuff was complete 'cya'...some of these same places were requesting scripts, or calling me on the phone.

I think that proves that if you have a good story you can crack Hollywood remotely.

I think we all know that the work of a screenwriter CAN be done remotely in this day of cheap VOIP, email, pdf files, etc.

I think where our long-distance relationship fails is in landing the day-to-day work that is the bread and butter of the working screenwriter. That seems to require the daily immersion of LA life. The meetings, the lunches, the parties...that's how most of my friends land those jobs. 50 face-to-faces for 1 measly straight-to-video rewrite. I haven't figured out how to get into that world, except make a movie that puts you on the map so you land those jobs based on your work not your schmooze.

An agent/manager can help, and I find them essential to becoming a working screenwriter.

You need LA friends. They can be actors, producers, agents...or co-screenwriters.

Lastly, since this is getting long as hell, I found trips to LA always paid off. In my early days, I went to those Pitch Festivals. On the surface they are a joke. But I think people miss the REAL KEY to those is not to sell a script but to make a contact (mainly with dev. execs and such). I made some contacts that stuck with me for years. I could call them on the phone. Ask questions. Send them congrats emails. They'd read all my stuff.

I found the same true at Austin...those most of those folks were writers...so not quite as useful...but if your a real schmoozer you can make friends with big names...I have friends who made personal friends with the likes of Shane Black, Terry Rossio, John Lee Hancock, etc.

What doesn't work? Following the rules -- Or at least following all the rules. I think rules are made to make everyone fall into the same game. But if you break the rules you can hopefully separate yourself from the pack.