

A COMPLETE TRAVEL GUIDE TO

MAGIC
The Gathering®
GRAND PRIX
LOS ANGELES

May 20-22, 2016

Los Angeles Convention Center – www.gpla2016.com



Contents of this guide

First Part: The city

Traveling to Los Angeles, California	3
Ideas/Places to stay in LA	6
Parking/Transportation in LA	8
Food and Drinks in LA	10
Places to visit in LA	13
Stay Safe – Tips	15

Second Part: The game

Tournament Venue	16
Local Game Stores	18

Extras

Driving to the Convention Center	19
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A few words:

Hello fellow judges; With Grand Prix Los Angeles coming relatively soon, we have prepared this travel guide to make your trip easier and more enjoyable. This guide is based mostly on what Danny Batterman wrote back in 2014, with a few updates to adapt it to the current metagame of L.A.

We hope you enjoy your trip to LA and that we can have another successful Grand Prix in the ever-growing MTG community.

Victor Pinto
Danny Batterman
Angela Chandler

Traveling to Los Angeles, California



Los Angeles is the largest city in Southern California and the third largest metropolitan area in the world (behind Tokyo and NY). If truth be told, the Greater Los Angeles, or Los Angeles metropolitan area is a huge region that comprises more than 150 small cities grouped together in what looks a huge and flat large city. Before even starting to plan your trip be cautious or you might end up more than 50 miles away from the venue and still be within the city limits.

LA weather is probably the most emblematic aspect of the city (that and the traffic, but we'll get there). We live in spring during the year, except during spring when it gets colder and cloudier than in the other seasons, ironically. For that reason, May is a month that can surprise us with a thick layer of clouds for the whole month,, the so-called June Gloom, or with the splendid and characteristic sunshine that is so typical of SoCal. Regardless of sunlight availability, you should expect temperatures ranging from the 70 to 80 F (20 to 28 C). Pack light clothes and if you are a fan of the beach, don't forget to bring a swimsuit. It is very likely that the colder temperatures during your trip will be experienced in the LA convention center.

One of the first questions a person typically asks when traveling to Los Angeles is "how do I avoid the traffic?" Paraphrasing Marc Ruffalo in The Avengers can sum up the answer: **"The secret is there's always traffic."** What is worse, LA public transportation system isn't particularly efficient, so having a car, or renting a car if you plan to visit the city or stay far from the venue, is a must. If you can live with this, LA has plenty of options to make your trip a memorable experience.

The best times to drive in LA are 10:30 am - 2:30 pm and 9pm onward while the worst times are from 7 am - 9 am and 3:30 pm - 8:30 pm (the worst of the worst being from 5 pm - 7 pm). That means you should ideally plan your arrival into the city around these times. With that out of the way, here are some more specifics to hopefully ease your travels.

In the previous version of this guide there were specific instructions on how to get to the convention center from different locations. You can still find those instructions at the end of the guide, but due to the extensive availability of GPS devices, it is better that you just use it, as it will save you time if you can get real time traffic.

Landing at LAX

The LA area has many airports, but you may want to fly to LAX mostly because of flight availability, and also because it offers the larger variety of transportation alternatives (and yes, the traffic at LAX is horrendous, so plan to arrive early). Once in the airport, there are a few options to get out of there.

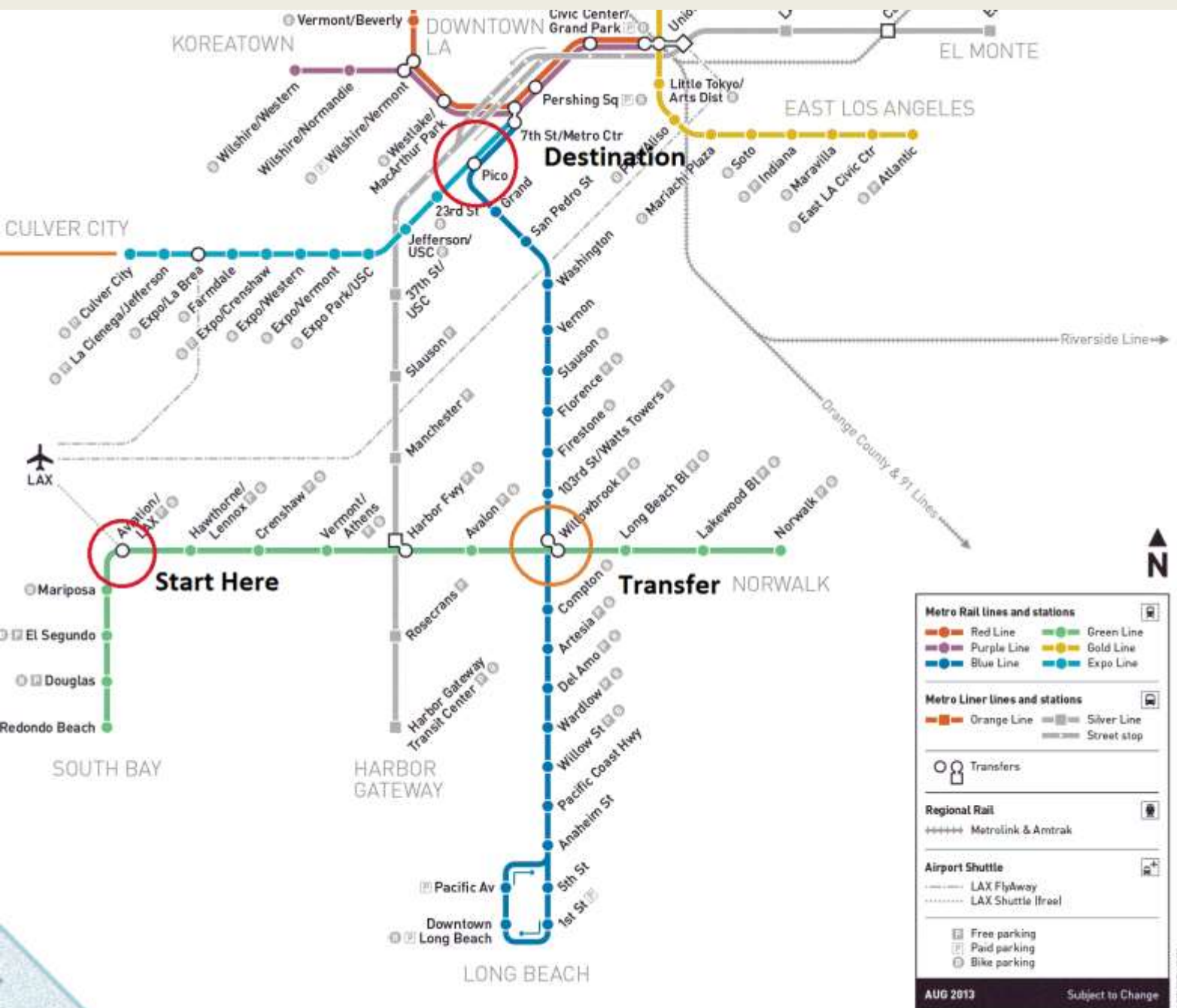
- **Rent a Car:** It may not seem like the most affordable alternative, but you'd be surprised on how cheap a car rental can be in LA. If you are lucky enough to have your liability covered by your car insurance and the regular insurance covered by your credit card, renting a car can cost you as low as \$20 - \$30 daily. To get to the car rentals you will have to take a bus in the lower level of LAX. Once you are out of the airport, you should trust your life to the GPS! If you are renting a car, I'll recommend not staying in downtown, because parking will be complicated and probably expensive.
- **Book a Shuttle:** Depending on your destination, a [Super Shuttle](#) or [Prime Time Shuttle](#) can cost you between \$20 and \$50. Although expensive, it is the most reasonable way to get to downtown fast if you don't want to deal with driving and parking. You will probably have to wait between 15 to 30 minutes and since it is a shared ride, it may be not so direct, but you'll get to your destination safe! Shuttles can be boarded in the lower level of LAX right outside every gate.
- **Take the subway:** Believe it or not, Los Angeles actually has a fairly decent subway and light rail system! A free shuttle at LAX will drop you off at the Aviation/LAX Metro station, and for just \$4 total (\$2 per line) you can get to the Convention Center and the surrounding hotels. Just get on the Green Line at Aviation/LAX going east, transfer at Willowbrook to the Blue Line going north and get off at Pico. It's that easy. The Convention Center is in sight from the Pico station (right next to the Staples Center), and from there you should be able to figure out where your hotel is. There is one thing you have to keep in mind if you decide to go with this as your method of transportation: **DO NOT**, and I repeat, **DO NOT** do this at night. The lines pass through a few parts of LA that you don't want to be in after dark, so for your own safety please plan accordingly.
- **Uber/Lyft:** You probably know how this works, you just have to be aware that shared ride services such as Lyft and Uber are allowed to pick up passengers on LAX but they do it in the upper level (departures) in designated areas. Depending on the time of the day this option may or may not be cheaper than a Shuttle, although it is very likely that it will be faster.

If you choose to fly to a different airport, renting a car might be the only affordable option for you, except if someone pick you up.

Getting to the Convention Center by Subway

If this will be your first time in L.A. and you currently live in any part of the civilized world, changes are you have access to a reasonable decent Subway. To be fair the Subway in L.A. is decent, but the city was not constructed thinking in a Metro system. Still, if you go for it, follow the instructions of the previous page and use the map. The trip should be around 1:30 hrs. Find more information at the Metro website <https://www.metro.net/riding/maps/>

The trip is: Aviation/LAX – Willowbrook (transfer) and destination is Pico.



Ideas/Places to stay in Los Angeles



Although not mandatory, having a bed while traveling is something very appealing to most people and some might even say it is a good idea. Depending on your needs (economical restrictions and/or comfort requirements) there are a few options to stay in LA. Something to consider is that if you are not staying in the Convention Center area, you might want to choose the Westside over the Eastside of the city, mostly based on the fact that it is considered a safer area.

Hotels: Not telling you something new? Check below for a few picks we have made, although it is very likely that websites such as booking.com or kayak.com will serve you better than this guide considering the variability on prices.

Hostels: Like to party and hate to sleep? At least most of the time you get free breakfast. To be realistic, LA is not *the* city of hostels, but there are still some options if you are on a budget. Unfortunately, not many options are available close to the venue. Check website hostels.com or hostelworld.com for more information

Couchsurfing: The website. You can find some really good deals in there. I guess crashing on another fellow judge couch can also be an option, and can help you connect with the locals! Ask around.

Airbnb: Coming with some friends? Maybe you can get a whole house/apartment for your people. It will probably be cheaper and most likely give you access to parking. Considering that LA is mostly a residential city, it is not a bad idea to check.

ChannelFireball has partnered with Sheraton Los Angeles Downtown Hotel to offer lower prices. If you book before April 29, you can get rooms for \$179/night. Check for extra information in the GP website or directly at [Sheraton](#)

List of Hotels

Figaro Suites

Cost: \$190 per night – kayak.com
Address: 1360 South Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015
Phone: +1 213 985 0890
Distance from CC: 0.2 miles
Stars/Rating (max 5/10): 3 stars/ 7.8 average
Notes: Higher than average price, but the closest hotel to the CC



Rodeway Inn Convention Center

Cost: \$100 per night – hotels.com
Address: 1904 W Olympic Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90006
Phone: +1 213 380 9393
Distance from Site: 1.2 Miles
Stars/Rating (max 5/10): 2 stars/ 6.9 Average
Notes: Free Breakfast



Ramada Los Angeles

Cost: \$118 per night – kayak.com
Address: 1901 W Olympic Blvd, Los Angeles, CA, 90006
Phone: +1 213 385 7141
Distance from Site: 1.2 Miles
Stars/Rating (max 5/10): 3 Stars/ 6.8 Average



America's Best Value Inn

Cost: \$110 per night – booking.com
Address: 906 S Alvarado St, Los Angeles, CA, 90006
Phone: +1 213 388 3137
Distance from Site: 1.4 Miles
Stars/Rating (max 5/10): 2 Stars/ 6.0 Average



Transportation and Parking



Public Transportation

Public transportation in LA is bad, for real. Even if you want to move in a small area of the city. Public transportation of course exist. You have buses that go towards and away from downtown, a decent subway/train that cover a small part of the city, and many local buses that move around certain cities inside the LA area (such as the Santa Monica BBB or the Culver City bus), however frequency is never high, and most local buses are unavailable during nights. In short, if you plan to travel around and don't want to waste half a day in transportation, we advise you get a car.

Parking in LA

If you get a car, however, your transportation problems will decrease but no go away completely. Parking in LA is not particularly expensive, but it can be hard to find good availability. Hotels will probably charge you around \$30 per night in downtown. If you have a car, there are probably better places to stay. Whatever you choose, if you drive, you'll need to park nearby the convention center, and you can probably find daily parking for as low as \$5 and on average for \$20. Most parking is spread in several blocks around the Convention Center and they are really easy to find. Beware of parking on the street. Although it is relatively safe, chances that you get towed or fined for not understanding the parking restrictions are high. There a few established parking lots to use nearby the convention center, but outside downtown you are parking on the street.

Traffic

As mentioned before, traffic is really bad. As a general rule, the freeways are the fastest way to get everywhere, except if they happen to be closed because of an accident. Be aware however that accidents in the freeway occur every day, so always look for alternative routes. This is why a GPS with real time traffic is so relevant.



Food and Drinks in LA



In case you are one of those rare beings that don't think the food at venues is all the body needs, L.A. has (luckily) thousands of good options to eat and drink. In fact, there are so many good places to go that regardless of the time you spend in the city (days or years) you'll never visit them all. Since you will probably be around downtown and tourist areas, we are providing you with a list of some local favorites that you should seriously consider visiting.

In case you are not yet familiar with it, you should start using Yelp to find the best places around. Sure, you are going to miss a couple of good places, but in general you'll end up in the most popular restaurants.

List of Restaurants:

Original Pantry Café

Address: 877 S Figueroa St, Los Angeles, CA, 90017

Distance from Site: 0.4 Miles

Style: Coffee Shop/Diner

Hours: Open 24 Hours

Price: \$\$

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/original-pantry-cafe-los-angeles>

Founded in 1924, the Pantry (as it's known to locals) is a Los Angeles institution. Legend has it in its 90 years of operation it only has been closed for one day. If you're in the mood for traditional breakfast food and large portions, this is the place for you.



Blossom Restaurant

Address: 426 S Main St, Los Angeles, CA, 90013

Distance from Site: 1.6 Miles

Style: Vietnamese

Price: \$\$

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/blossom-restaurant-los-angeles-2>

Classic Vietnamese food served in a trendy sidewalk café. They are very fast when you order take out and have fantastic Spring Rolls and Rare Steak Pho. The one downside is that it is a bit of a walk, so getting a group order is probably the way to go.

Mercado La Paloma

Address: 3655 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90007

Distance from Site: 1.8 Miles

Style: Mexican

Price: \$

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/mercado-la-paloma-los-angeles>

There is hardly a State in the US that makes better Mexican food than California, and places like this make that clear. El Mercado la Paloma offers authentic Mexican food with a variety of restaurants inside.



Takami Sushi & Robata

Address: 811 Wilshire Blvd Ste 2100, Los Angeles, CA, 90017

Distance from Site: 0.8 Miles

Style: Japanese

Price: \$\$

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/takami-sushi-and-robata-restaurant-los-angeles>

Ever want to eat sushi 21 floors in the air? Now you can! The only thing better than the view you get with your meal is the happy hour which takes place on 5pm-7pm (4pm-7pm on weekdays). The drinks are cheap and food is only \$5. It gets pretty crowded though, so leave early.

Lawry's Carvery

Address: 1011 S Figueora St Ste 201, Los Angeles, CA, 90015

Distance from Site: 0.2 Miles

Style: American

Price: \$\$

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/lawrys-carvery-los-angeles>

You may all know of Lawry's Steakhouse. This is the same company, but they take their world-famous Prime Rib and put it onto a sandwich. They also offer pretty much any other meat you can think of along with tons of side dishes. It may not be as good as the actual Lawry's, but it's pretty darn close.

Umami Burger

Address: 852 S Broadway, Los Angeles, CA, 90015

Distance from Site: 0.9 Miles

Style: Burgers

Price: \$\$

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/umami-burger-los-angeles-14>

Custom built burgers that are made to order. There are also other things on the extended menu, like pastrami, that are unique to this location. It also has a good selection of beer to go along with whatever you order.

Morton's the Steakhouse

Address: 735 S Figueroa St Ste 207, Los Angeles, CA, 90017

Distance from Site: 0.8 Miles

Style: Steakhouse

Price: \$\$\$\$

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/mortons-the-steakhouse-los-angeles-2>

While it may not be unique to Los Angeles, Morton's is definitely the place to go if you're feeling fancy. Fantastic steaks, huge martinis, and impeccable service. What more can you really ask for? Also, expensive.

Places to visit in LA



When we say L.A. is a big city, we mean it. If you plan to travel around, you should definitely plan for it. There are many places worth visiting (among many other not so worthy but popular enough that you'll want to know anyways) but they are fairly spread. By car, it is not reasonable to expect to visit more than two or three landmarks in a day and by public transportation, I'll not recommend to plan for more than one. Still, if you find yourself with free time and this is your first time visiting the city, we recommend you visit the following places.



Places to visit

The Grammy Museum

Address: 800 W Olympic Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90015

Distance from Site: 0.2 Miles

Best Method of Travel: Walking

If you're a fan of music then you have to stop by the Grammy Museum. It's packed full of artifacts and exhibits that are designed to help you learn about and connect with your favorite artists.

Hollywood & Vine

Address: N/A

Distance from Site: 7.4 Miles

Best Method of Travel: Subway or Car

Hours: N/A



The Hollywood Sign? The Walk of Fame? Chinese Theater? This is where it all is. Take the subway from Pico to 7th/Metro Center, transfer over to the Red Line, and then just get off at the conveniently located Hollywood/Vine station. Pretty much everything traditionally



touristy about Los Angeles can be found here. It's also not that far off from the Sunset Strip if you are so inclined.

Universal Studios/Universal City Walk

Address: 100 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, CA, 91608

Distance from Site: 10.1 Miles

Best Method of Travel: Subway or Car



While this isn't quite Disneyland (which isn't actually in the city of Los Angeles), it's still pretty fun. In addition to regular rides, you have the Studio tour which allows you to see what it's like on an actual movie studio. Next to it is Universal City Walk, which is full of restaurants and shops. Getting there is simple too, just take the Red Line down to the Universal City station and go up. As a bonus, one of the pillars of the Los Angeles Eternal scene, Knight-Ware Inc., is right across the street.

The 3rd Street Promenade/Santa Monica Pier

Address: Santa Monica Pier, Santa Monica, CA, 90401

Distance from Site: 14.4 Miles

Best Method of Travel: Car



While technically not part of the city of Los Angeles, the Santa Monica Pier and 3rd Street Promenade are LA institutions. The pier features shops and attractions all overlooking the Pacific Ocean, while the 3rd Street Promenade is one of the best shopping areas in all of LA County. The local restaurants are also fantastic. If you have a day to spare, but sure to check this out.

The Space Shuttle

Address: 700 Exposition Park Dr. Los Angeles, CA 90037

Distance from Site: 1.5 Miles

Best Method of Travel: Bus/Subway/Car

Yeah, not exactly like in the picture, but Space Shuttle Endeavor has become one of L.A. greatest attractions in recent years. Plus, besides the Shuttle you have the whole California Science Center museum and the Natural History Museum is located in the same park.

So there's a brief summary of Los Angeles. Of course there are plenty of things here that aren't on this guide, but hopefully this gives you a good starting point. LA really is a wonderful city, and we hope you enjoy your stay.

Safety - Tips

Safety rules are very general and we know they apply for most places. As in any big city, there is some thievery in L.A., which is most likely to happen in some sectors that are considered dangerous. As a general rule, and being probably unfair, you want to avoid downtown by night unless you stay in the very touristic places and you want to avoid East L.A. as is known for having a higher crime rate. Other than that, just remember some safety tips and don't go around flashing \$100 bills.

- Have the contact number of a local person/judge, if something happens a local is more likely to come and pick you up.
- Try to go out in large groups, especially at night or when you don't know the place you are going
- Travel light, and keep your personal items on sight whenever possible
- Ask the locals if you are not sure

Tips for the travel

Just a couple of tips for your travel, and as a summary of the content of the guide.

- L.A. is a warm city. Pack light clothes especially if you want to travel around, and drink plenty of water, as dehydration is real here. Remember that the venue will be probably the colder place during your visit.
- Rent a car/get in a car, as L.A. is not the most pedestrian friendly city.
- Use GPS to move anywhere. It is particularly important that you have a device with real time traffic so you won't always be late.

Traveling from a different country

If you plan to sail the seas in order to attend the Grand Prix, have in mind the following

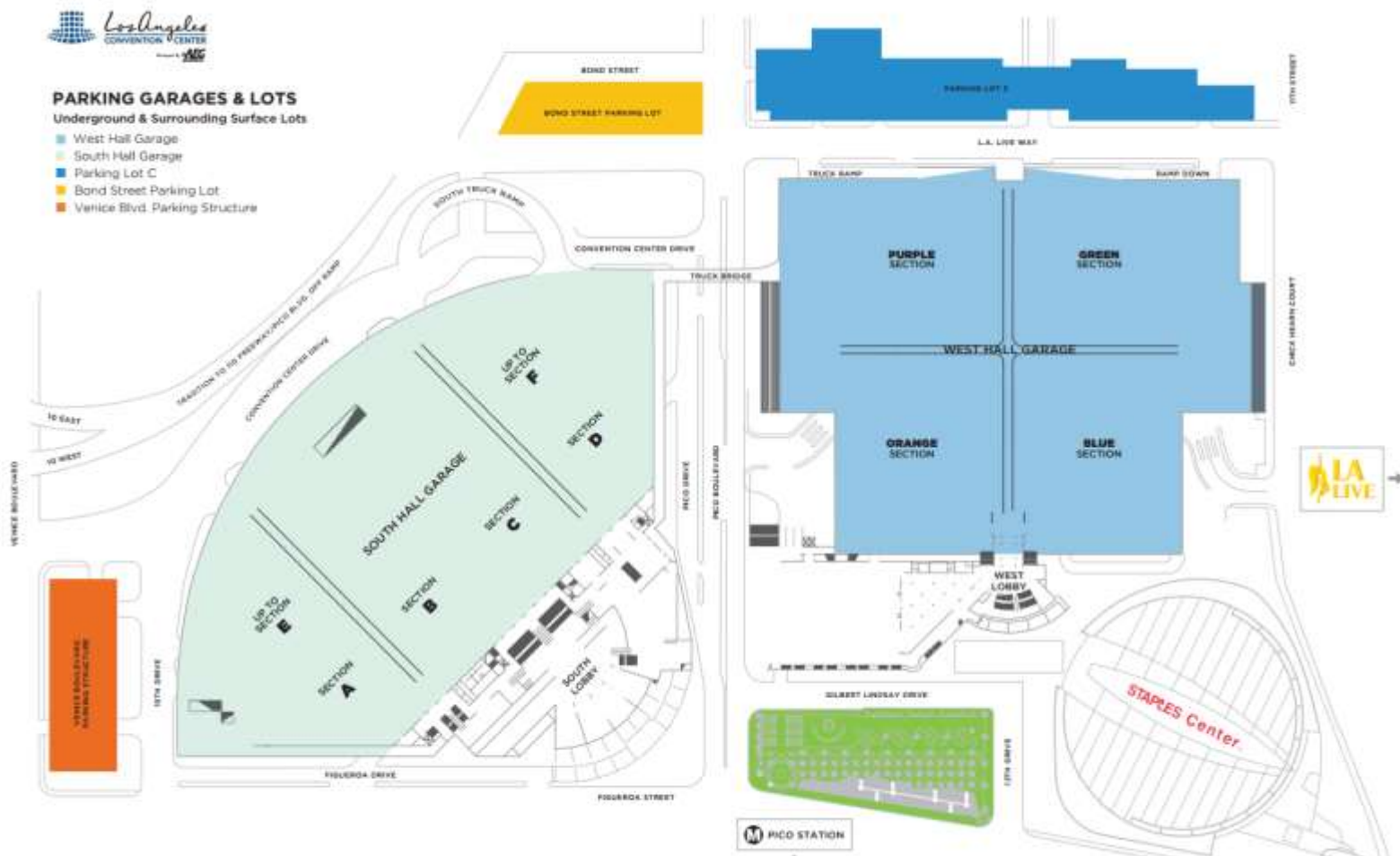
- Check if you need any travel documents like visa to travel to the U.S. This is particularly important because if you need, you should be doing the paperwork yesterday.
- Check the website of the airline or airport for a list of the things you are and aren't allowed to bring in both your checked and cabin baggage. You will find, for instance, that there is a volume limit to containers of liquids in your hand luggage. TSA agents are nice in general, but very strict.
- Stick to the rules to avoid having your stuff confiscated. Follow the instructions of airport officials.

Tournament Venue



L.A. convention center is no different than many other convention centers in metropolitan areas: huge, with a very powerful air conditioning system, and with no good food options. Other than that, there should be plenty of room so wearing comfortable shoes should be a priority for you. If you are staying within walking distance, just locate the closer entrance, if you are driving, you should try to park in the correct section.

Parking in the convention center varies from event to event but it is \$15 a day regularly. Remember that you can park around for \$5 - \$10 but that will be subject to availability and a longer walk. If you use the Convention Center Parking, you can use this map to don't get lost.



Directions to the Convention Center (and parking instructions)

The streets around the Convention Center are slightly complicated to navigate and it is easy to get lost while driving there. If you are driving, set your GPS to:

Los Angeles Convention Center
1201 S Figueroa St, Los Angeles, CA 90015

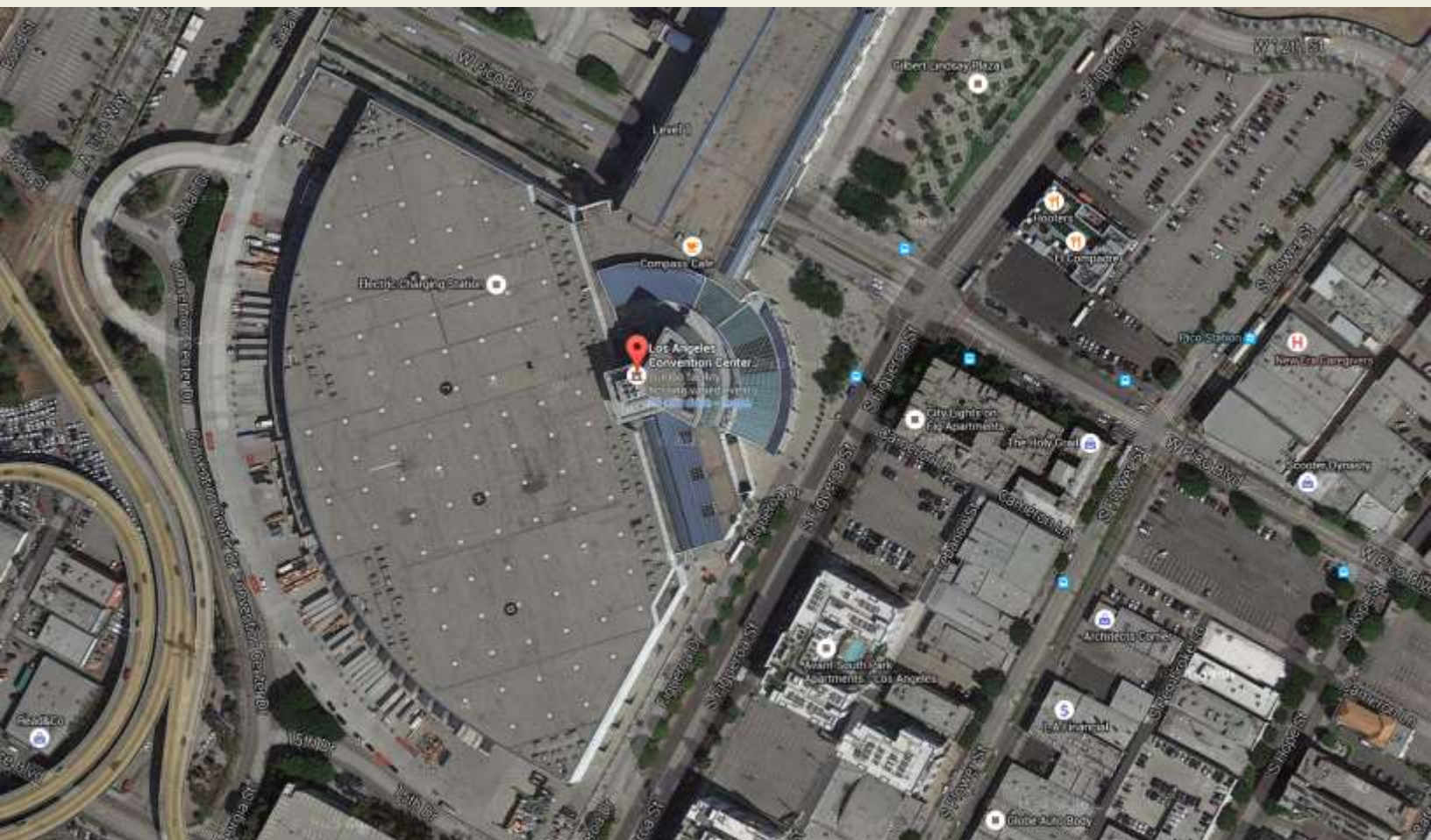
South Hall Parking

- Turn right on Pico Boulevard
- Turn right on Figueroa Boulevard
- Turn right on Venice Boulevard
- Turn right on Convention Center Drive and proceed to the parking entrance.

West Hall Parking

- Cross Pico Boulevard
- Make a right turn at the intersection of L.A. Live Way and 12th Street into the parking garage entrance

If you are getting there by Metro, you'll end up in the Pico Station. If you go by Bus, there is plenty of bus stops around, so you will never end up further than 2 or 3 blocks away



Local Game Stores

If you find yourself with extra days and start craving for some Magic, there are plenty of stores to satisfy you. We are listing a couple of stores that are relatively close to L.A. downtown, but if you feel bold, you can always find more in the locator's website (and yes, there are many stores in L.A.)

Turn 0 Games

3959 Wilshire Blvd., Suite A-9
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(213) 384-3466

Turn 0 Games feature draft, standard, modern and commander events 7 days a week. For details, check the calendar for details

<http://turnzerogames.tumblr.com/calendar>

Next-Gen Video Games

5360 Wilshire Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90036
(323)-938-3400

At Next-Gen you can play Standard, Modern, Legacy, Commander, Draft and Sealed from Tuesday to Sunday. Check the store website for details.

<http://blog.nextgenvideogames.com/events>

MTG Deals

136 S San Gabriel Blvd
San Gabriel, CA 91776
(626)-427-1261

MTG Deals is one of the largest store in the LA area and they feature tournaments Monday to Saturday. Formats are Draft, Standard and Modern. Check the store calendar for details <http://blog.mtgdeals.com/full-event-calendar>

Emerald Knights

4116 W Burbank Blvd
Burbank, CA 91505
(818)-588-3631

Located in the valley, Emerald Knights has Magic the whole week. Modern, Standard, and plenty of Draft. Check the calendar <http://www.ekcomicsandgames.com>

Driving to the Convention Center

Coming from NorCal

If your goal is just to get to LA as soon as humanly possible, the way you want to go is taking the I-5 all the way down. If your plan is to use a GPS and/or Google Maps, this will probably be the way it will take you. The thing that these devices won't tell you however is the fact that the I-5 is going to be full of 18-Wheelers traveling up and down the state, so expect to be going 55mph for a portion of your trip. The other big thing the map won't tell you is that just outside of LA there is something called The Grapevine; a 6% grade drive over a mountain with some pretty harsh winds. Finally, I would recommend keeping your air circulation internal because you'll be passing some cattle farms along the way and the smell from them could stun a yak.

The alternate options are taking either the US-101 or the CA-1. The US-101 takes around an hour and a half longer than the I-5, but in exchange you have less traffic, less trucks, and a bit more scenery. The CA-1 is the most scenic route out of the three (it's honestly beautiful), but the total driving time is 9-10 hours. If you've never taken this drive I would recommend it, but only if you're well rested. My family always took the 101 going up to the Bay whenever we visited family, so between the three options that is the one I would personally recommend.

Using San Francisco as a reference point, the best time to leave is **6am**, with **6:30am** being the absolute latest. If you want to take the CA-1, I would probably leave at **4am**. Adjust these times accordingly for where you start from.

Coming from SoCal

If your journey starts south of Los Angeles, there really is only one way to go. Take the I-5 until it turns into the I-405, and then transfer over to the I-110 around Carson. That takes you right to Downtown LA. The further north you live the less transferring you have to do, so just ignore parts that don't apply to you. I've made this drive countless times, so trust me when I say this is the best way to go

Using San Diego as a reference point, the best time to leave is between **10am-10:30am**. **11am** isn't the worst, but it's not ideal. Adjust these times accordingly for where you start from.

Coming from Vegas

There is really only one way to get between the two cities. Take the I-15 to the I-210 to the CA-134 to the US-101 to the I-110. If you leave at around **7am** you should be able to cruise the entire way. You can make the trip in four hours in ideal conditions, but that's probably being a bit optimistic. Plan for 5 hours at least.