

Watts Towers in Los Angeles

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[Watts Towers](#) is a place in Los Angeles that I've heard about for years but was never quite sure exactly what it was. And then one day I made it my mission to visit — fortunately it's metro accessible! — and now I'm here to tell you about it... with some help from [Wikipedia](#).

IMG_7270.jpg

IMG_7272.jpg

Watts Towers is a collection of 17 structures on a plot of land located south of Los Angeles, sort of mid-way between LA and Long Beach. These towers were built by an Italian-American artist named Simon Rodia over a period of 33 years, from 1921 to 1954. He was an immigrant construction worker and tile mason, and built these towers in his spare time.

The towers were constructed out of steel rebar and concrete, and decorated with found objects like glass bottles and ceramic plates. Simon Rodia built them alone, with his own hands and no special equipment. The largest tower is 100 feet tall.

IMG_7276.jpg

IMG_7190.jpg

IMG_7196.jpg

Watts Tower offers tours on Thursdays & Fridays from 11a-3p, and on Saturdays & Sundays from 12noon-3p. Tours are \$7 for adults. I arrived shortly before 3pm and a very kind docent showed me around for about 30 minutes, explaining the history of Simon Rodia and what a feat it was that he assembled these massive towers with his two bare hands.

Worth noting: if you are in the area after hours, you can still see the Watts Towers since they are outside — you just won't be able to see the detail up close since there is a gate surrounding them. Personally, I found it necessary to be inside and hear the stories they tell on the tour to better appreciate and contextualize this artwork. Without the backstory it's less impressive.

IMG_7200.jpg

IMG_7203.jpg

A gazebo-like structure:

IMG_7204.jpg

IMG_7207.jpg

In the photo below you can see a captain's wheel, and the rebar connecting these two towers looks like a ship's sail. Rodia envisioned part of this as a ship pointing towards his homeland.

IMG_7232.jpg

On the far east of the property, the 'ship' of these towers is pointing towards a heart (below) — which, my

guide suggests, is meant to represent Italy.

IMG_7226.jpg

IMG_7221.jpg

IMG_7230.jpg

IMG_7234.jpg

IMG_7235.jpg

I asked the guide if he is still discovering little details for the first time, even though he's been leading tours here for decades. He pointed to this figuring of a woman in the photo below, saying he worked here for years before noticing it for the first time:

IMG_7236.jpg

IMG_7238.jpg

IMG_7242.jpg

The artist's initials "S.R." are carved here, as well as 1921, the year he began creating these towers.

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IMG_7244.jpg

IMG_7245.jpg

IMG_7251.jpg

IMG_7256.jpg

IMG_7265.jpg

IMG_7267.jpg

IMG_7277.jpg

If you go — Watts Towers is located within a 5 minute walk of the metro stop on the Blue Line (metro stop is called "103rd Street / Watts Towers").

So glad to have finally witness this for myself, and to understand more about its history.