

Inspect Watts Towers, and keep an eye out for the Phillips' Milk of Magnesia

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Christopher Reynolds



(Christina House / For The Times)

Why: This "outsider" landmark, built by compulsion by an unschooled Italian American and surrounded by a blue-collar community that's mostly Latino and African American, has become one of the most emblematic artworks in the state.

What: Simon Rodia, an immigrant from Italy, spent 33 years putting up these 99-foot-tall towers in his backyard, using rebar, concrete, cast-off tiles, bottle caps and bits of colored glass (including the old blue Phillips' Milk of Magnesia bottles). Then, in 1954, he walked away. Yet he built so well, and with such conviction, that his work survived and now anchors an arts center. For the gritty details — such as the work's maritime influences or the day somebody broke a crane trying to pull down the towers — take a tour. And don't miss the contemporary works in the neighboring gallery space. Tours are offered every half-hour, 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursdays through Saturday, 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Sundays.

For maximum sensory impact, visit on [Day of the Drum](#), Sept. 30, 2017, when percussionists from multiple cultures gather. Or come the day after, when the [Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival](#) takes place.

Where: 1727 East 107th St., Los Angeles, 9 miles south of downtown L.A.

How much: General admission is \$7 for adults, \$3 for visitors ages 13-17. No credit cards. Closed on Mondays and Tuesdays. No tours on Wednesdays.

Info: [Watts Towers Arts Center](#)

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