

# Nixon birthplace joins Frank Lloyd Wright house and 5 other landmark homes with public tours

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By Kathie Bozanich | PUBLISHED: July 25, 2019 at 7:57 am | UPDATED: July 25, 2019 at 10:08 am

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When you think of places that include significant world history sites, Southern California isn't exactly top of mind. However, the area now boasts a claim to that fame after Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House in East Hollywood earned Southern California its first UNESCO World Heritage Site designation this month.

The home, built from 1919 to 1921, was one of eight buildings honored collectively by the world organization as "The 20th-Century Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright." Hollyhock House and some of Wright's more famous creations like the Guggenheim Museum in New York and Fallingwater in Pennsylvania were honored for "reflecting the 'organic architecture' developed by Wright, which includes an open plan, a blurring of the boundaries between exterior and interior and the unprecedented use of materials such as steel and concrete."

It was the first time modern American architecture was recognized by the United Nations cultural organization. And while almost two dozen sites in the U.S. are now on the list, many are national parks and historical points of interest like the Statue of Liberty and Independence Hall. Monticello in Virginia had been the only U.S. home included on the UNESCO list until the addition of Wright's works.

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Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House in East Hollywood earned Southern California its first UNESCO World Heritage Site designation in July 2019. Photos by Joshua White.

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Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti tweeted of the honor:

Hollyhock House is one of L.A.'s greatest cultural treasures. This home will inspire Angelenos for generations to come, and its well-deserved place on @UNESCO's #WorldHeritage List is a fitting tribute. [pic.twitter.com/1KLIe7tPEd](https://pic.twitter.com/1KLIe7tPEd)

— Mayor Eric Garcetti (@MayorOfLA) July 7, 2019

Hollyhock House was Wright's first commission in the Los Angeles area. Built for oil heiress Aline Barnsdall and named after her favorite flower, it was a harbinger of California modernism, and served as an introduction to the Southland for other architects that went on to win acclaim like Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra. The 17-room residence is done in a Mayan-reminiscent style that came to be known as California Romanza. Outside, there are rooftop terraces, pergolas and colonnades, and the home's exterior features ornamental bands of cast concrete. Art glass windows and a stunning bas-relief mural above the fireplace are just two of the interior standouts.

The home was saved from almost certain demolition in the 1940s and underwent major renovations to help restore it from 2010 to 2014 before reopening in 2015. The city of Los Angeles now owns Hollyhock House and it and the surrounding Barnsdall Arts Park are operated by the Department of Cultural Affairs.

“[T]he property is an important historical revelation for first-time visitors and regulars alike,” Ed Avila, president of Project Restore, which managed Hollyhock House’s restoration, said in a news release. “Visitors experience the house in much of its original splendor. Floors, windows, doors, decorative molding and long-forgotten paint colors were recreated with utmost attention to detail.”

Along with its UNESCO honors, Hollyhock House is one of just 10 Southern California residences designated as U.S. National Historic Landmarks, which are sites recognized for their outstanding historical significance. Only about 3% of all sites on the National Register of Historic Places make the landmarks list. Hollyhock House and several other of the local historic homes offer public tours for those interested in architecture, history and community; these tours are especially popular in the summer as informative and affordable activities.

Self-guided interior tours of Hollyhock House, 4800 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, are offered 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Thursdays–Sundays, with the last entry at 3:30 p.m. (\$7 adults, \$3 seniors and students, children under 12 free). Exterior and interior docent-led tours are held at 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays (\$7 per person).

Here are the other Southland homes on the national landmarks list that offer public tours (two, the Edwin Hubble House in San Marino and the Upton Sinclair House in Monrovia, are still private residences and do not have public availability; work is being done on another, the Harada House in Riverside, to stabilize it in hopes of opening it as a cultural and educational site):

**Eames House (Case Study House No. 8)**, 203 Chautauqua Blvd., Pacific Palisades. With the house and its furnishings designed and constructed in 1949 by Charles and Ray Eames, this thoroughly mid-century modern consists of two glass and steel rectangular boxes – one a residence, the other a working studio – built into a hillside. Exterior tours are offered 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Mondays-Tuesdays and Thursdays–Saturdays, \$10 a person, reservations required; interior tours are fundraisers and start at \$275 a person, reservations required.

**Neutra Studio and Residences (VDL Research House)**, 2300 Silver Lake Blvd., Los Angeles. Famed modern architect Neutra began his work on the property in 1932, building a radical “glass house” with rooftop and balcony gardens that held his family residence and his office. A second garden home was built as his family expanded and the main house was redone with two floors and a penthouse solarium after a 1963 fire. The “VDL” stands for Neutra’s original benefactor, Dutch philanthropist Dr. C.H. Van Der Leeuw. Today, the property is

under the stewardship of Cal Poly Pomona's College of Environment Design and architecture department. The Neutra VDL House II is open for half-hour tours led by Cal Poly Pomona architecture students on Saturdays from 11 a.m. –3 p.m., \$10–\$15. Reservations are not necessary.

**The Gamble House**, 4 Westmoreland Place, Pasadena. This prime example of Arts and Crafts style architecture was designed by Charles and Henry Greene in 1908 for David and Mary Gamble of the Procter & Gamble Co. It is owned by the city of Pasadena and operated by USC. One-hour, docent-led public tours are available at 10:30 a.m. Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m. Thursday–Saturdays and noon Sundays, \$12.50–\$15, reservations recommended.

**Los Cerritos Ranch House**, 4600 Virginia Road, Long Beach. The adobe, built in 1844, is full of furnishings that represent the owners and workers on a 19th century ranch. Situated on a site that has been found to be rich with archeological materials, some of these materials also are on view, along with historic photos, property records and other significant documents. Tours of the adobe are offered during public hours, 1–5 p.m. Wednesdays–Sundays, and are free.

**Modjeska House (Arden)**, 29042 Modjeska Canyon Road, Silverado. The former home of famous Polish actress Madame Helena Modjeska is tucked into a live oak grove along Santiago Creek. It earned the nickname “Arden” for the grounds’ resemblance to the Forest of Arden in Shakespeare’s “As You Like It.” Built in 1888, the Victorian was designed by Stanford White, who also designed New York City’s Washington Square Arch and Madison Square Garden. Docent-led tours of the house and gardens are offered at 10 a.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays, by advance reservation, \$5.

**Richard M. Nixon Birthplace**, 18001 Yorba Linda Blvd., Yorba Linda. Situated on the grounds of the Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, the former president lived in this small house built by his citrus-farming father from his birth in 1913 to 1922, when the family moved to Whittier. It houses artifacts from the Nixon family and the time period. The museum and grounds, including the birthplace, are open for touring 10 a.m. –5 p.m. Mondays–Saturdays, 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Sundays, \$15–\$21.