

Holidays



CELEBRITY FAVOURITE: The Beverly Hills Hotel – still the place to be seen in Hollywood

Glitz and glamour of Marilyn's Hollywood home from home

By Nicole Trivilivas

MARILYN Monroe's burial crypt is covered in lipstick kisses. Some have faded to a ballerina pink, while others have the same bright, fleshy red of her favourite shade, the discontinued Rouge Diabolique by Guerlain.

The posy of sweetheart roses in the memorial vase has begun to wilt under the Californian sun, but no matter, they will be replaced.

Besides Monroe, the Pierce Brothers Memorial Park in Los Angeles is also the final resting place of Bettie Page, Dean Martin and, in the crypt adjacent to Monroe's, Hugh Hefner, who used her image on the inaugural 1953 issue of Playboy.

Friday marked the 61st anniversary of the death of the American actress and archetypal blonde bombshell, but her star has still not faded – beyond the cemetery's borders, Marilyn still looms large.

With a red-carpet entrance, pink facade and often-copied banana-leaf wallpaper, the 111-year-old Beverly Hills Hotel is the place to start. Its legendary Polo

Lounge is still the hottest dining spot in town, so step inside for a bite to get a taste of silver-screen prestige.

With a 20-year tenure (plus ten at sister property Hotel Bel-Air), director of guest relations Steven Boggs acts as the hotel's unofficial historical guide – the 23 secluded bungalows (with a private side entrance on Crescent Drive) are the backdrop for the juiciest stories.

Bungalow 1 was where Monroe spent most of her time, and it was recently revamped in her honour, including a library of her films; amenities by Chanel No5 (the only thing she wore to bed), and opulent gold-leaf ceiling.

It's now become one of the hotel's most requested bungalows.

It's said that The Beverly Hills Hotel is the place to be seen and Hotel Bel-Air the place to hide: Monroe followed suit, so a drink in the latter is in order.

Secreted away in the mansion-bedecked canyon, it hosted an intimate Vogue photoshoot with Monroe in Suite 177, six weeks before her death.

Prior to this, she was a frequent guest. The Bar & Lounge – famed for its fireplace and live piano music – offers a nod with Monroe's Passion, a twist on a passion fruit martini.

These hotels acted as home-

away-from-homes, but as a self-described 'waif' the born-and-bred Angeleno would live in more than 40 addresses in her 36 years.

To see the best of them, enlist a local guide from Tours By Locals (toursbylocals.com), which includes the Max Factor Building (now The Hollywood Museum), where Monroe was transformed into a blonde, and Hollywood's oldest restaurant, The Musso & Frank Grill, where she favoured booth three.

You'll also see her star on Hollywood Boulevard (in front of McDonald's) and can marvel at the diminutive size of her feet and handprints at Grauman's Chinese Theatre, where Gentlemen Prefer Blondes ran 70 years ago.

Of all the places Monroe lived, some stand apart: 718 North Palm Drive in Beverly Hills – where she lived in the guest house of her big-time agent Johnny Hyde – is a fever dream of Americana, all manicured lawns and pristine aluminium siding. Surely an all-American house like this meant something to a child raised in foster homes and orphanages.

And hidden from the street, 12305 Fifth Helena Drive in the quiet, affluent enclave of Brentwood, was where Monroe died, but perhaps more importantly, this was the only home she ever owned.

Despite her rootlessness and the capriciousness of fame, in the end it was Marilyn Monroe who found a home for herself in Hollywood.

● Virgin Atlantic flights to Los Angeles from Heathrow from £443 (virginatlantic.com). The Beverly Hills Hotel and Hotel Bel-Air have rooms from £675 and £605 per night respectively (dorchester-collection.com).

STAR QUALITY:

The actress in her Hollywood heyday

