



BERKELEY

Superb dining and performing arts thrive in this celebrated university city

BY DAVID ARMSTRONG

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SUNRISE OVER SATHER TOWER, UC Berkeley above; Triple Rock brewery, below.



WORLD-FAMOUS as a historic center of free speech and 1960s counter-culture, Berkeley, on the eastern shores of San Francisco Bay, has morphed into a foodie destination and unique shopping mecca. But it's still Berkeley, proudly offbeat, quirky and fun to visit, especially now. The Downtown Arts District on Addison Street showcases the Aurora Theatre Company and the nationally known Berkeley Repertory Theatre. The Freight and Salvage Coffeehouse—which is both a performance venue and folk-music learning center—has recently upped its already robust game, presenting the likes of Ricki Lee Jones, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Richard Thompson on stage.

Two more major venues opened downtown in 2016: the 83,000-square-foot Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), at 2155 Center Street near the Berkeley BART station. Running through mid July on BAMPFA's art wall is a large-format mural by South African artist Karabo Poppy Moletsane. Another downtown draw, at 2036 University Avenue just west of Shattuck Avenue, is the 101-year-old UC Theatre, a cinema-turned-music space, with its superb, made-in-Berkeley Meyer Sound system. North Berkeley along and near Shattuck is the city's Gourmet Ghetto, with its jewel in the crown, Chez Panisse, founded by the doyenne of fresh, local, seasonal California cuisine, Alice Waters. The 1966 original Peet's Coffee and Tea shop is right nearby, as are excellent

food markets, the Cheese Board cheese shop/bakery and inviting casual restaurants.

One-of-a-kind shopping abounds on Fourth Street, north of University Avenue in West Berkeley; standouts include Miki's Paper, which features hand-made Japanese stationery and wrapping paper. Also on Fourth, long-time favorite Bette's Ocean View Diner serves high-quality American comfort food, whipped up by some of the most skilled and speedy short-order cooks in the land.

Gorgeous brown-shingle wooden homes and public buildings by celebrated architects Bernard Maybeck and Julia Morgan—who adapted Arts and Crafts design to form the Bay Region style in the early 20th century—enrich the city. Maybeck's serene 1910 First Church of Christ, Scientist, just east of Telegraph Avenue and south of the UC Berkeley campus, is an architectural hymn to silence.

Near campus on Durant Avenue, the venerable Hotel Durant is reborn as the Graduate Berkeley hotel. On campus, the circa 1903 Greek Theatre presents headliners in its outdoor amphitheater, while Cal Performances brings international acts to Zellerbach Hall. You can toast the artists and debate the true meaning of art in a plentitude of craft micro-breweries near campus and beyond. The new Gilman Brewing Company pours excellent, often creative riffs on beer. Downtown favorite Triple Rock, dating to 1986, has expanded its space by 50 percent for the in-house production of quaffable brews. 

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