

Ventura has a deep treasure-trove of historical places & distinct eras which mirror the diversely rich history of California itself. We invite you to follow this trail and uncover the secrets of our famous downtown: layer by layer & culture by culture.

# VENTURA California

## Discover Vintage California Historical Downtown Walking Tour

- **A. CITY HALL**...Originally built as the Ventura County Courthouse, the beautiful Beaux Arts building features arched windows, & a terra cotta façade with 24 fanciful faces of the Franciscan padres who founded the City. A marble entry & a sweeping stairway will take you to the Municipal Art Gallery on the second floor. The Council Chambers are decorated with wood paneling & a stained glass ceiling. 501 Poli St
- **B. FATHER SERRA STATUE**...Gracing downtown below, the famous statue of our founding father stands in front of City Hall. Today the statue is a bronze replica (1989) of the original cement work (1936) by John Palo-Kangas for the Federal Arts Project. Note the authentic El Camino Real bell.
- **C. EL JARDIN PATIO**...Built as one the very first shopping centers in So. California (1920s), historians & shoppers alike marvel at the Spanish Colonial architecture & welcoming courtyard that provide a romantic ambience in the middle of our bustling downtown. 451 E. Main St.
- **D. FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF VENTURA**...Now restored to its original condition, this building is an example of the city's early banking institutions. Built in 1904 by H.A. Giddings & designed by J.H. Bradbeer, it was later remodeled in 1948 & 1952 by the Ventura architect Kenneth Hess. It is now home to stores Ciao Bella & Plum. 16 N. Oak St.
- **E. GOODWILL**...Retrofitted by Warner Brothers Studios to its current glory for the movie *Swordfish*, this original furniture & dry goods store had one of two freight elevators operated by water distribution in all of the state. It later became a Woolworth's. 140 E. Main St.
- **F. BANK OF ITALY BUILDING**...Influenced by the famous Lagomarsino family, the rare terra cotta cladding of this beautiful 1904 Beaux-Arts structure was created to resemble granite. The movie *Swordfish* used the building as a crash site within the film. Afterwards the interior was sub-divided into office and retail space. 394 E Main St.
- **G. MISSION SAN BUENAVENTURA**...The serene sanctuary of the 9th of the famous California Missions. Father Junipero Serra founded the Mission Easter Sunday in 1782, the last in his career. Although officially named after St. Bonaventure, the Mission is known as "the Mission by the Sea" because of its close proximity to the mighty Pacific. The basketry, artwork, bell tower, olive press, Norfolk pines, fountain & gardens on-site make history come to life. It is an active parish at 211 E. Main St.
- **H. FIGUEROA STREET PLAZA**...Adjacent to Mission Park is the historic outdoor plaza hallmarked by: Ventura's first brick building, Peirano's Market (now Jonathan's Restaurant) &

murals, a tiled fountain/aqueduct, Chinatown/China Alley Memorial mural, the Mission Theater (now Knights of Columbus Hall), & the Hahn House (now Candlelight Restaurant). The A.J. Comstock Fire Museum & Clocktower Inn are other notable places of interest.

- **I. MISSION PARK**...Experience the echo of yesteryear within this block formerly fortified by adobe walls as the Old Mission Lavanderia & Gardens.
- **J. MISSION PLAZA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE**... Exciting excavations have taken place in recent years at this fertile locale for adventuring academics who have unearthed priceless treasures of the land's native people & early settlers. The Albinger Archaeological Museum, Valdez Alley, a replica of a Chumash tomol canoe, & an old aqueduct building known as El Caballo are all worth the stop. 113 E. Main St
- **K. MUSEUM OF VENTURA COUNTY**...Discover the legacy of our entire region at this exciting facility showcasing artifacts & displays focusing on Native Americans, as well as Spanish, Mexican, European & Yankee pioneers and settlers. Contemporary exhibits rotate in the facility as well.
- **L. SAN MIGUEL CHAPEL**...Located on the corner of Thompson Blvd & Palm St., sits the historic site of the first structure built by a non-Aboriginal man in the Mission quadrangle. For centuries it was a favored place of the Chumash tribe to honor their creator, the goddess Hutash.
- **M. PLAZA PARK & MITCHELL BLOCK**...The old Moreton Bay Fig Tree planted in 1874 & modern peace pole compliment each other at this historic hub on Santa Clara & Chestnut. Directly south of the park along Thompson Blvd is a row of 8 historic homes known as the Mitchell Block.
- **N. VENTURA THEATER**...Designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style in 1928, it is the only remaining theater in the county built in the tradition of the great movie palaces. The elaborate interior showcases a carved & stenciled ceiling, ornate fixtures & a magnificent chandelier. It currently is used for live concerts. 26 S. Chestnut
- **O. GROENE BUILDING**...Built in 1907 by Ventura County Power Co., this architectural wonder has evolved in grandeur over the decades. Serving as a home to the Ventura Guarantee Building & Loan Association, the interior murals were added by Norman Kennedy during the late 1920s along with Spanish Revival & Art Deco accents. Mr. Theodore Groene acquired the building in 1938 adding plate glass windows to create the Bahn Jewelry Store. These fine details can now be seen inside Watermark Restaurant which showcases a new rooftop bar. 598 E Main St.
- **P. ERLE STANLEY GARDNER BUILDING**...Formerly known as the First National Bank, this 4-story Renaissance Revival building was once the most impressive structure in town & was made famous by one of its tenants: Erle Stanley Gardner. His Law Office (Suite 360) was where he wrote the Perry Mason novels including *The Case of the Velvet Claws* & *The Case of the Sulky Girl*. The once best selling literature was inspired from trying cases at the County Courthouse (now City Hall) up the street. 494 E. Main St

Distance: 1 mile, Time: 3 Hours