

Southern California Confidential

Smart Meetings cracks the mysteries of SoCal

By Nikki Gloudeman

To many, Southern California is a place of sunshine, flip-flops and endless sand. It's where you can ride a Ferris wheel along the Santa Monica Pier, run beside the crashing waves of La Jolla or shop in perfect weather at a downtown farmer's market.

But beneath this exterior, another SoCal lurks—and it is just as enticing as what meets the eye. Here, there are shades of gray and wafts of smoke. You can uncover the history of film noir, eat at the restaurant where a classic mystery came to life or explore the dark stories of Old Hollywood. For meeting planners, this SoCal promises an experience like no other, if you just know how to dig it up. Luckily, *Smart Meetings* is on the case

For more throwback glamour, there's the [Beverly Garland Holiday Inn](#) in Hollywood. Its namesake is a starlet whose debut movie in 1950 was—you guessed it—the noir film *D.O.A.*

Nancy Uber-Rose, spokesperson for the venue, says the Garland family still owns the property, and staff has taken steps to “ensure her legacy is carried on, with old photos in the lobby, old films and things of that nature.” It's very much an Old Hollywood, glamorous feel, she says.

The Garland recently completed a \$2-million renovation to spruce up its meeting space, which includes 12,000 sq. ft. of indoor meeting rooms, 2,500 sq. ft. of landscaped outdoor area and a 132-seat theater. The property is also nearby the magical offerings of [Universal Studios Hollywood](#)—itself a popular event spot that offers meeting areas and can even be entirely rented out. Attractions at the theme park include a backlot tour and top-notch performances at the [Gibson Amphitheatre](#), situated in the park's entertainment center, CityWalk. To further mix business with pleasure, there's [NBC Universal Studio Special Events](#), which organizes group functions on sound stages and backlots.