



## SHANGRI-LA

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"Here's my hope that we all find our Shangri-La." – Lord Gainsford in *Lost Horizon*

Sleek. Curvilinear. Horizontal lines. Cool, clean design. Streamlined Moderne mood indigo sky kissing a timeless blue ocean. The inescapable, floaty feeling from every room that you are on a 1930's luxury liner when in reality you're sipping an absinthe cocktail at the Hotel Shangri-La in Santa Monica.

Seated at the jazzy bar are such a diverse group of artists, tourists, business people, girly girls, and casual hipsters that it would be ludicrous to suggest that the recently renovated Shangri-La attracted any one type of customer. Très appropriate for the all-inclusive city of Santa Monica, n'est-ce pas?

The hotel was the first upscale building constructed in L.A. County after the 1926 collapse of the stock market. As America struggled out of the stupor of The Depression, a fascination began with futuristic-looking modern design in cars, fashion, and architecture. The art direction of the 1937 film *Lost Horizon* presented a fantastic vision of a modern Shangri-La and inspired Tulsa rancher and cattleman Frank Gillespie, who spent his summers in Santa Monica, along with his architect William Foster to create the same fabulous mood for Gillespie's new architectural project. The Streamlined Moderne style, with its curves and bands of windows and nautically influenced railings, was perfect for a seaside town at the end of Route 66. Originally built at a cost of \$360,000, the hotel was used to house troops returning from WWII and was designated as a fallout shelter during the 1960's Cold War paranoia. And who can forget Woody Harrelson and Rosie Perez at the Shangri-La in scenes from *White Men Can't Jump*?

Although the hotel has played host to many celebrities and VIPs through the decades, there was no restaurant or bar in the original building. Now, after a \$30 million renovation and upgrade by owner Tamie Adaya, guests are treated to one very classy and comfortable destination. The dining room, named The Dining Room, is an intimate dark but airy space with a medium-sized bar and deco-flavored furniture - a modern homage to an earlier time. Executive Chef Dakota Weiss has created an evolving small plates menu with offerings like the scrumptious squash blossom ravioli with baby zucchini salsa and lobster and Brie sliders. The full dinner menu features local farmers' market produce as well.

Rooms at the Shangri-La are crisp and modern with retro deco lighting and furniture. Unique curved rooms, including the party-ready Rock 'N Roll Suite, offer a special departure from typical square and rectangle hotel rooms – perfect for jaded Angelenos.

Now through September, the Shangri-La will feature The Summer of Shangri-La promotion featuring Ditch Day Fridays from 1:00PM – 7:00PM weekdays at the lovely spacious pool area, including \$5 cocktails and live entertainment along with tantalizing menu items like the Deviled Eggs Platter featuring three different kinds: Curry, Chipotle, and Black Truffle. Dinner can also be had poolside at The Courtyard which features lovely cabanas. The spectacular Suite 700, an outdoor/indoor rooftop bar and lounge designed by Marc Smith (The Edison, Three Clubs) is now open, featuring fire pits, plush retro seating, and etched mirrors. Classic cocktails such as Pimms After Dark and the Ward 8 are served accompanied by sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean from either the outdoor terraces or huge port viewing windows inside.

There may be no more appropriately named hotel in the world as the Shangri-La. ■