



West Coast Architecture

A century of building in Arizona and California

19–29 September 2025 (ML 790)

11 days • £7,270

International flights not included

Lecturer: Professor Harry Charrington

The whole gamut of architecture, 1908 onwards, some of it usually closed to the public.

Highlights include Wright's Taliesin West & Hollyhock House, Greene & Greene's Gamble House, Kahn's Salk Institute, the Schindler House and Eames House.

Wide range of works by contemporary architects: Frank Gehry, Richard Meier, Renzo Piano, Rafael Moneo, Mario Botta and practices Herzog & de Meuron, Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Snøhetta.

Time to visit the excellent art collections at the Getty Center, Norton Simon, the Broad, de Young, Legion of Honor, SFMOMA.

Sprawling desert, boundless ocean and dynamic cities.

Modernism was made for California. Just as it was on the West Coast that the 20th century's dominant art form, the movie, was to flourish, so Modernist architecture blossomed unencumbered by the concerns and limitations of the Old World.

Here was a climate that adored flat roofs and a hilly topography of brilliant views that called for structural daring, a place with a self-conscious lack of history in which displaced Europeans – and Americans freed from the waspish East Coast – could create whole new lifestyles facing the freedom of the seemingly infinite desert and the Pacific.

Superlatives abound: the 'cast stone' of Louis Kahn's Salk Institute is perhaps the most sublimely generous construction of postwar architecture; while at the beginning of the century, Greene & Greene and Bernard Maybeck's Japanese-inspired California Arts & Crafts is as vivid a reimagining of William Morris as you could conceive. Equally remarkable are the cities, from the captivating milieu of San Francisco to its unfathomable cousin Los Angeles, the city of Reyner Banham's 4 Ecologies: Surfurbia, Foothills, the Plains of Id and Autopia.

The chutzpah of patron and architect has not let up in recent years, with Richard Meier's hilltop Getty Center, Raphael Moneo's Cathedral of Our Lady of Our Angels – both



Salk Institute, La Jolla, photo ©Harry Charrington.

in Los Angeles – and Herzog & de Meuron's de Young Museum in San Francisco.

If one looks for a beginning to all this, beyond the fragments of the Pueblo and the Spanish Mission architecture, it is found in Frank Lloyd Wright. His commission for the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo brought him to California where, while moving back and forth across the Pacific, he built some of his most original and regionally specific architecture.

In Los Angeles, beginning with the extraordinary Hollyhock House, he demonstrated a virtuosity on California's slopes equal to that he'd achieved on the flat expanse of the Midwest. Wright's approach was extended by his ex-pupils Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra who threw away the cloak of their native Vienna to create a series of exquisite, ecologically responsive dwellings that would lead, after the Second World War, to the internationally significant 'Case Study Houses'.

Wright built his combined home and fellowship at Taliesin West in the desert outside Phoenix. Gradually shaped over 30 years, this complement to his earlier Taliesin in Wisconsin, is Wright at his most successful – and moving. A blurring of building and landscape formed from desert rocks and sand, its inspiration lies in the light touch of the native Sinagua Indians.

Arcosanti conceived by Wright's disciple Paolo Soleri, lies far out in the Arizona desert. It pays homage to Taliesin and is either a suggestion of an ecologically viable future, or the American Dream at its most indulgent and eccentric.

Itinerary

Flights from London are not included. The tour begins at the Arizona Biltmore Hotel and your room is available from 4.00pm on 19 September. The tour leaders fly from London on a British Airways flight departing Heathrow at 2.40pm on this day should you wish to join them. There is an airport transfer to meet this flight. See 'Practicalities'.

Day 1: Phoenix (Arizona). Located in salubrious, suburban Scottsdale just outside Phoenix, our hotel was built in 1929 under the supervision of Frank Lloyd Wright, a luxurious low-lying complex with lawns, pools and landscaping. The tour begins here with dinner. First of two nights in Phoenix.

Day 2: Phoenix, Taliesin West. The morning is dedicated to Taliesin West, Wright's desert camp and means of escape from Wisconsin winters. The tour includes desert shelters,

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performance spaces and offices. The afternoon is free back at the hotel.

Day 3: Arcosanti, La Jolla (California).

Deep in the Arizona desert, Arcosanti, Paolo Soleri's dream city, is built around objectives of self-sufficiency and a resistance to urban sprawl. Begun in the 1970s, it remains a work in progress. Fly in the afternoon to San Diego and drive north to the seafront town of La Jolla. Overnight La Jolla.

Day 4: La Jolla, Los Angeles. In La Jolla, visit Louis Kahn's magisterial Salk Institute (1958), designed to create an inspiring space in which to carry out scientific research: pozzolan concrete, travertine marble, oak, and, above all, natural light. In the afternoon, track the coast north to Los Angeles, stopping at San Juan Capistrano to see Michael Graves' library (1983; visit pending completion of restoration works). First of four nights in Los Angeles.

Day 5: Downtown Los Angeles. Downtown is spread over an extensive, hilly grid, nevertheless today provides a rare opportunity to walk. Among the buildings seen are the Bradbury Building (1893), Central Library (1925) and Izoaki's Museum of Contemporary Art (1983). Close by are the Walt Disney Concert Hall (Gehry, 2003), and The Broad (Diller Scofidio + Renfro, 2015). Free time here to see the excellent collection of postwar and contemporary art. Time also to see Moneo's Cathedral (2002); gargantuan and flooded with warm light.

Day 6: Los Angeles: Brentwood, West Hollywood. In Brentwood, Richard Meier's hilltop Getty Center (1997) is an astonishing sequence of multi-level travertine, glass and steel structures interspersed with courtyards and gardens; modernist objectives of space and light dictate but the effect is overwhelmingly contemporary. Meeting with a curator here to see works not usually on show followed by free time. The Schindler House (1922) in West Hollywood is one of the finest examples of environmentally conscious architecture anywhere and was designed as an experiment in co-operative living. Option to continue to the LACMA campus where Peter Zumthor is creating a new home for the permanent collection (opening 2025), alongside Piano's expansion of 2010. We will confirm nearer the time what can be visited.

Day 7: Los Angeles: Silver Lake, Hollywood, Pasadena. On the shores of the Silver Lake reservoir, Richard Neutra's VDL (Van der Leeuw) Research House was designed in 1932 as his own experimental live-work residence and rebuilt, with his son Dion, following a fire in 1963. In nearby Hollywood, the recently restored Hollyhock House, built by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1922, departed radically from his previous prairie-style houses, resembling instead a Mayan temple. In Pasadena, visit the brilliant collection of the Norton Simon Museum (Ladd & Kelsey, 1969; Gehry, 1995) and tour the Gamble House (Greene & Greene, 1908), a perfect California Arts and Crafts house.

Day 8: Los Angeles: Pacific Palisades, Venice; San Francisco. Drive out to the hills of Pacific Palisades to visit the house-cum-studio of Charles & Ray Eames (Case Study 8, 1949); lightweight steel frame, coloured panels, glass, in a meadow with ocean views. Walk the promenade at Venice Beach to Frank Gehry's Norton House (exterior) before continuing to the airport for an afternoon flight to San Francisco. First of three nights in San Francisco.

Day 9: San Francisco, Berkeley. A morning walk includes the Hallidie Building, almost the world's first glass-curtain-walled structure (Willis Polk, 1918), Frank Lloyd Wright's Morris Gift Shop (1948), a prototype for the New York Guggenheim and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (Mario Botta, 1995; Snohetta, 2016). Time to visit the collection independently. Cross the Bay to university town of Berkeley. Bernard Maybeck's First Church of Christ the Scientist (1910) is a fairy tale construction using industrial materials, incongruously tucked between the modern halls of residence, among them Greene & Greene's Thorsen House (1908).

Day 10: San Francisco. Sunday morning in Golden Gate Park, home to Herzog & de Meuron's landmark De Young Museum (2005), built from recycled redwood, eucalyptus and copper, where the oxidising exterior is progressively blending with its environment. Opposite is Renzo Piano's 'green museum', his extension to the California Academy of Sciences (2009). Option to continue to the Legion of Honor, a pristine colonnaded building amid Monterey pines and cypresses, renowned for its French art, particularly Rodin sculpture.

Day 11: San Francisco, Marin County. Drive across the Golden Gate Bridge to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's final commission, the Marin County Civic Center (completed after his death in 1962). Return to the hotel where the tour ends c. 1.00pm. The tour manager accompanies a transfer to the airport leaving the hotel at 3.30pm, timed for the BA flight to London, departing 7.25pm.

A number of these buildings are not usually open to the public and it is possible we will not be able to include everything listed.

Lecturer

Professor Harry Charrington. Architect and Head of the School of Architecture & Cities at the University of Westminster. He read Architecture at Cambridge, where he was the founding editor of *Scroope: Cambridge Architectural Journal*, and subsequently combined academia and practice in both England and Finland. He has a particular interest in the history of modernism and obtained his PhD from the LSE on Alvar Aalto. His books include the award-winning *Alvar Aalto: the Mark of the Hand* and contributions to *Artek and the Aaltos: Creating a Modern World* (Yale University Press).

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £7,270. **Single occupancy:** £8,510. *International flights are not included.*

Included: domestic flights (Economy Class) from Phoenix to San Diego with American Airlines (Airbus 321), and from Los Angeles to San Francisco with Delta (Airbus 320); private coach throughout; hotel accommodation as described below; all breakfasts, 7 dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admission charges and donations; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager and guides on site.

Flights: international flights between London and Phoenix, San Francisco and London are not included in the price of the tour. This is both because they can only be booked 355 days before travelling and, more significantly, upgrades from World Traveller (economy) are now rarely granted on a group booking. We therefore recommend you book your own flight at ba.com. We can help you with this. Our tour manager is on the flight detailed in the

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itinerary. At the time of going to press (April 2024) the cost of a World Traveller (economy) seat with British Airways at a similar time in September 2024 is £740. This is likely to increase for 2025.

Visas: British, Australian or New Zealand citizens can enter the USA without a visa by applying for a visa waiver online. We will advise on this. *If you have travelled to Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, or Yemen since March 2011 you are not eligible for the waiver and will need to apply for a visa.*

Additional arrangements. We can request extra nights in the hotel at the beginning or end of the tour. Please contact us for a quote. An amendment fee will apply.

Accommodation: **Arizona Biltmore**, Scottsdale (arizonabiltmore.com): an attractive hotel complex in beautiful grounds with numerous swimming pools, a good restaurant and comfortable rooms. **La Valencia**, La Jolla (lavalencia.com): colourful hotel with eclectically furnished rooms, gardens and pool overlooking the Pacific. **Omni Los Angeles**, Downtown (omnihotels.com/hotels/los-angeles-california-plaza): well-equipped, functional hotel with spacious bedrooms. **Palace Hotel**, San Francisco (sfpalace.com): built in 1909, classic, opulent and comfortable. a short walk from SFMOMA.

How strenuous? There is a lot of walking and standing around and getting on and off coaches. Some visits are on rough ground (desert) and require sure-footedness. With a significant time difference, four hotels and two domestic flights, the tour is tiring and a good level of fitness is essential. Average distance by coach per day: 55 miles.

Music tickets. There may be performances in Los Angeles or San Francisco. Programmes will be available nearer the time.

Group size: between 12 and 22 participants.