

Southern California weekend

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O.C. day trip Santa Ana Artists Village

Why go now: A secret artsy pocket of *Santa Ana*? You've got to see it for yourself. **Don't miss the festivities:** This Latino neighborhood is at its most colorful as it gears up for Día de los Muertos (Nov 1–2). **The mix:** Artists started moving into the landmark Santora Building about 15 years ago, and the Village has since grown into a funky fusion of galleries, live/work artist studios, folk art shops, and some seriously good (and cheap) eats. **The look:** Rehabbed brick buildings alongside ornate Spanish architecture lined with fountains, palm trees, and sidewalk cafes. **Forget the freeway:** The Village is compact, so ditch the car and stroll. **Main hub:** The Second Street Promenade is the Village's central courtyard. **Get crafty:** Decorate a sugar skull at Calacas folk art shop's classes (\$3; closed Sun; 324 W. Fourth St.; 714/662-2002). **Come back for:** Noche de Altares—Night of the Altars—(1–10 Nov 6; E. Fourth St. at N. Bush St.; nochedealtares.org), for street tacos, roasted corn, Mexican Coke, and a candle-light procession at dusk.

1. An artsy block party

The Artists Village's 40-plus galleries throw open their doors for the **First Saturday Art Walk**. As the sun sets, the neighborhood springs to life, with twinkling trees and musicians playing along the Second Street Promenade (pictured) while you peek inside studios and design workshops. *Free; 6–10 Oct 2 and first Sat of each month; aplaceforart.org/artwalk*

BY CHANTAL LAMERS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GINA SABATELLA

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Day trip

2. A mod gallery

At **Orange County Center for Contemporary Art**, stop by to ogle avant-garde pieces (think installations made of doilies). OCCCA's 30th anniversary show, with works by alums, starts midmonth. *Free*; 117 N. Sycamore St.; occca.org



3. The best dinner for starving artists

At the **Crosby**, speakeasy style melds with shelves of '80s boomboxes. The menu is a mashup of simple and delicious: spicy Creole shrimp pie (pictured), sweet-potato fries, and the Starving Artist—a grilled gruyère sandwich with sautéed mushrooms and a creamy tomato-soup shooter for \$5. \$\$; *closed Sun*; 400 N. Broadway; 714/543-3543.



4. Where it all started

CSUF Grand Central Art Center was the first arts organization to arrive here, about a decade ago. And while other studios aren't always open to the public, you can pop in to the center's three galleries, with edgy works by local and international artists on the verge of making it. *Free*; 125 N. Broadway; grandcentralartcenter.com



Hope you saved room ... 3 more must-eats in the Village

Mismatched tables and chairs, vintage tapestries, funky paintings, and Moroccan lanterns give bohemian **Gypsy Den** its character. Recently discovered: the (real) banana mocha, and the monstrous (and surprisingly vegan) chocolate chip-coconut cookies. \$; 125 N. Broadway; 714/835-8840.

The best spot for happy hour is **Lola Gaspar**, where fresh fruit- and herb-infused cocktails are dictated by the season. Pair one with a trio of gourmet street tacos filled with barbecued pork belly, chorizo bilbao, or marinated carne asada. \$; 211 W. Second St.; 714/972-1172.

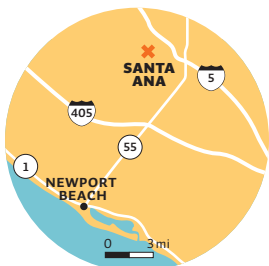
Get your fix of Southern fare at **Memphis at the Santora**. We're all about the pulled-pork sliders, fried catfish, and a round of gumbo. \$\$; 201 N. Broadway; 714/564-1064.

5. Channel your inner Frida Kahlo

The **ARTbar** is a must-stop for hard-to-find art supplies and instant DIY gratification on the cheap (classes cost as little as \$5). Projects vary, but we loved the découpage papier-mâché sculptures and, get this, graffiti class (totally legal—on canvas). 12–6 Sat (till 11 on First Saturdays); 207 N. Broadway; theartbar.net

6. Make your house a work of art

Cantera is a fantastical bazaar brimming with fine Latino art, furniture, and decor, like hacienda doors converted into tables, chairs made from Guadalajara tequila-aging barrels, vintage Mexican frocks, and elaborate crosses. *Closed Sun*; 211 N. Broadway; artecantera.com



Getting to the Artists Village

From I-5 north, exit at Fourth St.; from I-5 south, exit Santa Ana Blvd. **INFO** down-town-santaana.com



SHARE YOUR WEEKEND FINDS. Got a favorite artsy neighborhood? Email your suggestions to the weekend guide editor at wgeditor@sunset.com