

Elena Bockshecker Young Pastry Chef of The Year

Los Angeles Trip Royal Academy of Culinary Arts 2018

We arrived Wednesday 2nd May in Los Angeles. For me it was the first time in the United States of America, one more reason to be excited. Even we had some problems to arrive at the same time as a group, we made it happen!

Day 1:

On our first day we had a brief tour through both hotels, The Beverly Hills Hotel as well as the Hotel Bel Air. We got introduced to Executive Chefs, Headchefs, Directors and Managers. We also enjoyed our first meal at Wolfgang Puck's restaurant at the Hotel Bel Air, before we went to dine at Spago in the evening.

In the afternoon we had the opportunity to go to the Santa Monica Pier, which is an amusement park on a pier, really vivid and popular and great views over the ocean.

Day 2:

On Friday we volunteered at the Los Angeles Mission. The organisation cares for the homeless in Downtown LA. They provide food, accommodation and sanitary facilities. We had a talk with one of the staff members, who showed us around and we learned a great deal about their work, after we were able to help out in the kitchen and prepare lunch. It was a great experience to see how they produce food with such a limited budget.

After arriving back at the hotel we joined the teams in the kitchen and helped with the service in the evening.



Day 3:

On Saturday the Kentucky Derby took place, which is a big horse race in America. Therefore the Polo Lounge at The Beverly Hills Hotel offered a special brunch menu. Once again it was great to join the teams in the kitchen and to support them during the busy service. I was taught to make two desserts and it was a lot of fun learning the chef's plating up style.



In the evening we went to a rooftop restaurant, which served a mix of Mexican and Asian seafood cuisine.

Day 4:

On Sunday we visited our first farmer's market in Hollywood. It was amazing to see the fresh produce and to talk to the venders about their products. A lot of the stands offered an opportunity to taste their food, which was great.



Later we went up to the Griffith Observatory, which is a museum of astronomy and allows a great view over Los Angeles.

In the evening we went to April Bloomfield's 'The Hearth and Hound', a beautiful restaurant in a little courtyard, which offered a rustic but very fresh menu, with cabbage, lamb, kampachi and chicken cooked over fire. This meal was definitely one of my highlights.



Day 5:

On Monday we moved to the Hotel Bel Air. Unfortunately the wine tasting was cancelled, due to a misunderstanding with the booking, but we still enjoyed to view of Malibu and the vineyards, before we enjoyed lunch at Malibu Café.

For dinner we went to Nobu Malibu, a restaurant by Nobu Matsuhisa, which serves Japanese cuisine. It was very delicious and we enjoyed the really engaged service, the waiter chose the dishes for us and led us through the tasting menu.



Day 6:

On Tuesday we went for a hike at the Runyon Canyon, which offers a great view on the famous Hollywood sign.

Subsequently we went to the Westfield Shopping Centre for lunch at 'Eataly'. It is an Italian market with a broad variety of products from Italy, with a large selection of burrata and olive oils as well as cantuccini and kitchen equipment. They produced their own pasta, which was then served in their pasta restaurant.

The late afternoon and evening we spent in the kitchen. They had a guest chef menu set with Jean Francois Piège from Paris, we were able to see amazing dishes and it was an honour to help the team in the kitchen, which was a great experience.

Day 7:

On Wednesday we went early to the Santa Monica Farmer's market. I saw and tasted products that I had never seen before and got to taste mulberries and finger limes for the first time. Again, I was surprised by the freshness of the products such as the peaches we were offered, which were already really sweet and juicy. Having visited two markets it showed the impact of fresh produce from local farmer's markets had on the LA restaurant trade.

Since we had some spare time we went to Venice beach, which is a wide beach, colourful painted shops and a promenade to walk, or as it seems more popular ride, along.

In the evening we went to the former 2- Michelin- Star restaurant Providence, serving mainly seafood. The food was outstanding. I really enjoyed the sea urchin emulsion with sesame seeds and hokkaido and raw vegetables on the side, and the A5 Wagyu beef was fantastic.



Day 8:

On Thursday morning we supported the kitchen teams for the last time. It was good to see a breakfast- as well as a dinner service, which showed us a bigger range of dishes, breakfast was also I and we got to meet more team members.

The afternoon we spend on our own and had the chance to visit two of the chef's equipment shops, which were recommended by the chefs we met in the hotels. This was really interesting and had high quality goods and a really big selection of professional cooking books.

In the evening we went to Nancy Silverton's Osteria Mozza, where we had a lovely dinner with fresh pasta and burrata. For dessert I had the 'Torta de nonna' (grandmother's tart), a more savoury goat cheese, mascarpone and ricotta tarte with roasted pine nuts and honey. It was delicious and great to see a cheese course served a little differently.

Day 9:

On Friday we went to Disney Land. It was very interesting to see, since I have never been to such a big amusement park. It is amazing to see and on a completely different scale compared to a UK Theme Park. We enjoyed a few rides and sweet treats before we went back to the hotel for dinner.

Day 10:

On Saturday we left Los Angeles. But since we had some spare time I decided to visit the Farmer's market in the heart of Santa Monica one last time.

Huge thanks to the Academy, The Dorchester Collection and to the Savoy Education Trust, it really was the trip of a lifetime!

I really enjoyed the whole trip. We had amazing dinner menus, saw a lot of Los Angeles and its surrounding areas. We had the opportunity to see the variety of products grown in California and I also really liked to see the chef's equipment stores, which I so far couldn't find around London. We met extremely friendly people, who helped us with recommendations and experience. The hotels we stayed in offered an outstanding service and are absolutely beautiful venues.

I learnt about the use of local products, which were mainly the use of local fruits, vegetables and seafood in both hotels. Besides it was great to see, how flexible both kitchen teams need to work due to changing menus, guest chef menus like the one with Jean- Francois Piège or a brunch functions like for the Kentucky Derby and also how to organize such big events. They also need to maintain a high level of standard and quality at all times since they are having a lot of guests, who are coming on regular basis.

Looking at the pastries, I saw very classic American cakes and desserts, like simple buttercream and sponge cakes, garnished with fresh fruits, peach upside-down cakes or chocolate soufflé for dessert, served with whipped cream or ice cream.

The group was great to travel with and we all got along very well and I guess we were all very happy to make that experience together.

- Elena Bockschecker, Young Pastry Chef of the Year 2017