

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Top 5 Orlando Neighborhoods for Brand-New Homes

Our Friends · Friday, May 16th, 2025

Did you know that buying a brand new home is not just for living? The neighborhoods also play an important role. The surrounding environment directly impacts your daily activities. Therefore, buying a home at the best location where you can easily access the market makes you comfortable, and you don't need to spend too much time to reach the market.

If you are looking for a home in Orlando, then you are at the right place. In this blog, we will discuss the top 5 neighborhoods that you can choose to buy a home and provide a healthy environment for your family.

1. Audubon Park

It is one of the most important locations that you can choose to buy a home and provide a healthy environment to your family. This is an artsy and eco-friendly location that not only creates a great impact on your health but also makes your lifestyle classy. Further, accessing the market will make you comfortable in carrying out your daily activities with peace of mind.

2. Winter Park

It is one of the best locations where you can buy a home because it provides the greenery and healthy environment to you. To buy a home in this specific neighborhood, you need to get help from the real estate market experts. They have a strong connection and can help you find the best home that you can imagine. You can also find [new construction in Orlando](#) through Dream Finders Homes and select the home that best suits your needs and budget.

3. Baldwin Park

Baldwin Park is also one of the best locations where you can live a healthy life. The palm trees in the streets increase the beauty of the town and provide you and your family with a [healthy environment](#). Further, you can easily access restaurants, cafes, and other shops to fulfill your daily activities. So, buying a home in Orlando will be the best option for you.

4. South Eola

Choosing the South Eola will be the best option for home buyers because you can easily access the market to fulfill the daily requirements. To buy a home in this charming space will be the best decision of your life. Further, with the great location, you can create a long lasting impression on

your guests.

There are many schools and you have an opportunity in choosing the best school for your children.

5. East Park

It is one of the best neighborhoods in Orlando, which creates a great impression on your guests when you buy a home there. There are different service providers in the town that can help you in finding new construction in Orlando.

To find real estate experts, you can do a search on the internet. By doing this, you will get a list of companies or service providers in the SERPs. After careful consideration, you can choose one of them. So, in this way, you can easily get the best home at the best location in Orlando.

Image at top: [Jack Delulio via Unsplash](#)

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Arcadia's Kyuramen: Tokyo Flavors, Local Buzz

R. Daniel Foster · Thursday, May 15th, 2025

Ramen's recently been on my radar. [While in Vancouver](#), I wrote about [Maruhachi Ra-men](#) for Cultural Daily, which specializes in *tori-paitan*, a white and creamy chicken soup, a close cousin to *tonkotsu*, created from pork bones and originating in Kyushu, Japan.

Los Angeles has an impressive line-up of ramen shops, including HiroNori Craft Ramen in Pasadena, downtown's Ramen Hood, Iki Ramen in Koreatown, and Rakkan in Little Tokyo. So my tastebuds perked upon hearing the news that [Kyuramen](#) was opening a shop in Arcadia.

Could Kyuramen rival Alhambra's famed Foo Foo Tei, which closed in 2017?



Arcadia's Kyuramen has 40 locations in the U.S. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

I took a trip to Arcadia with a friend to find out. Kyuramen launched its first shop in Flushing, Queens, in 2019. The restaurant quickly gained a devoted following for its meticulous approach to broth-making and noodle craft. About that broth: when asked, our server said it's simmered for 18 hours.

The name "Kyuramen" (?????) translates roughly to "nine soup ramen," referencing the restaurant's nine signature ramen styles that showcase regional influences from across Japan. The chain has 40 outlets and has ambitions to reach 200 locations.

Kyuramen's distinctive aesthetic is in full force at the Arcadia location—a blend of traditional Japanese elements with modern industrial touches tossed in. The look is spread over 3,636 square feet.

First up upon entry: warm wooden accents contrasted against sleek concrete floors and exposed ductwork. Look up and you'll spot a honeycomb drop sectional ceiling. That's mimicked by beehive-like booths set against one wall, the opposite side harboring booths curtained with noren. There's also a Japanese wish tree centerpiece where patrons can write a wish on a small wood plaque and hang it from the spreading branches.



Kyuramen simmers its broth for 18 hours. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The Tasting Menu Experience

We sampled the tasting menu, a good start before branching out (in subsequent visits) to the full menu. I chose Ramen #1, Tokyo Tonkotsu Shouyu Ramen, Kyuramen's signature dish. The menu declared that "500K bowls" had been served.



The entrance to Kyuramen includes warm woods and Japanese calligraphy. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The ramen arrived in an angled deep bowl with a choice of white or black garlic. I chose the latter for the boost of flavor. Ingredients: chashu pork, half-marinated egg, corn, bamboo shoots, wakame, scallion and nori. I spooned up some broth; it was excellent. Rich and savory with a flavor depth brought out by those 18 hours of simmering.



Kyuramen offers nine types of ramen. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

My friend chose Ramen #6, Kyushu Tonkotsu Ramen. It had similar ingredients, but arrived with a spicy kick. He loved it.

You can read about Kyuramen’s multi-step process it employs when creating ramen [here](#).

Next up: The Pork Tonkatsu Omurice Combo. The dish arrives as a pillowy omelet draped over fried rice, topped with a fried pork cutlet that delivers satisfying crunch without greasiness. Diners can choose between a curry sauce or demi-glace to finish the dish—we opted for the curry sauce, which provided a rich and deep counterpoint to the savory elements.

The fried rice itself stood out. It was studded with finely diced vegetables and lightly seasoned. Beef and pork are incorporated into the mix, making it a hearty option for meat lovers.

Yinyang Bowl: A Study in Contrasts

The centerpiece of the tasting menu is the Yinyang Bowl, a visually striking creation that lives up to its “double the flavor” promise. It combines tonkotsu shoyu and miso ramen in a single bowl, divided down the middle to create a striking dual-colored presentation. The tonkotsu side delivers

rich, velvety pork broth with umami, while the miso half offers earthy, complex flavors with a slight sweetness.

We began the meal with Popcorn Chicken—bite-sized pieces of chicken encased in a crisp coating that gives way with each bite, revealing juicy meat. The seasoning blend incorporates traditional Japanese spices with a hint of pepper heat. Fresh basil leaves are fried alongside the chicken.

As a starter, we also had the Yakitori Platter, mini skewers of pork, chicken, scallops, beef, and vegetables. It was grilled just right, even the scallops, which can be hard to pull off.



The restaurant includes a Japanese wishing tree. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Matcha and Jelly for Dessert

The tasting menu concludes with two distinctly Japanese sweets: Cherry Blossom Jelly and Matcha Tiramisu. The mound of Cherry Blossom Jelly looked especially inviting, so I spooned into that first. I caught the floral notes amid the barely sweet jelly. It was a bit like eating air, which was a revelation, and a nice finisher to the heavier mains in the meal.



Desserts include Cherry Blossom Jelly and Matcha Tiramisu. Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The Matcha Tiramisu's aim is to marry the Italian technique with Japanese flavors. It arrived in a square wooden box, a layer of matcha dusting on top with matcha-infused cream further down between the cake layers. I had no complaints.

My friend also wanted to try the Matcha Pudding with Red Bean—served with a little pitcher of fresh milk. We both dug in, but didn't find it to be notable.

Kyuramen is adjacent to the beverage bar, [TBeer](#). All of its drink selections can be ordered with a meal. We ordered the Thai Iced Tea and the Fresh Passion Fruit Tea, the latter arriving with ample chunks of fruit. We later ordered a lemonade. It had an excellent balance of tang and sweetness—it was our favorite.

[Kyuramen](#), 7 Las Tunas Dr, Arcadia, CA 91007.

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What Makes Seaside Architecture Essential to Cultural Identity?

Our Friends · Thursday, May 15th, 2025

A salt-streaked rooftop. A faded balcony. A clapboard cottage that's held its ground through a hundred storms.

Before you even check the map, you know where you are. These structures do more than resist the elements; they define the spirit of a place. Visitors may come for the view, but it's the character in the woodwork and the soul in the shingles that tells the real story.

So what makes seaside architecture more than just style? And why does it keep showing up in paintings, postcards, and memories long after the tide rolls out?

Rooted in Geography, Refined by Tradition

Seaside architecture evolves in direct conversation with the landscape. Salt air, humidity, wind, and proximity to water dictate form as much as fashion. But the response isn't purely functional. It becomes expressive. Raised foundations, wraparound porches, wide eaves, and pastel clapboard siding all tell a story about adaptation, resilience, and regional pride.

Look at Cape Cod's weathered shingles or the Art Deco curves along Miami's South Beach. Each style speaks to local history and taste, not just utility. In Cape May, the iconic Victorian homes aren't only relics. They are active elements of the town's cultural identity.

Painted in whimsical shades of mint, coral, and lavender, with gingerbread trim and turret towers, they reflect the optimism and aesthetic ideals of the late 19th century seaside boom. These homes are photographed, walked past, rented, and lived in with the knowledge that they belong to something enduring.

Architecture as a Cultural Touchstone

When visitors describe a seaside town as "charming," they are usually referring to its architecture. The look and feel of buildings shape emotional and sensory impressions in a way that climate or cuisine alone cannot.

In towns where architectural preservation is prioritized, like Cape May or Charleston, the buildings are more than pretty: they are participatory. They create an immersive experience that links locals and tourists to a shared historical narrative.

This sense of place-building helps communities stand apart. A seaside town with a defined architectural identity is far more likely to inspire return visits, second-home purchases, and grassroots tourism economies.

Art galleries, antique stores, walking tours, and preservation foundations often grow around the magnetism of beautiful buildings. Even informal activities, like photography walks, become more

meaningful in settings where the structures themselves carry a story.

Many photographers exploring Cape May, for example, gravitate toward its detailed cornices, lace-like woodwork, and saturated colors. These streets offer a kind of visual grammar that is rare and rewarding. You can use [photography tips](#) tailored to these environments to improve the quality of your photos.

Shaping Behavior and Community Connection

Architecture does more than create a backdrop. It actively shapes how people move, gather, and connect. Seaside architecture often encourages slower rhythms. Think of:

- Wide walkways
- Public benches
- Covered porches
- Lookout decks

These design choices promote lingering, conversation, and observation.

They also reinforce intergenerational habits, such as evening strolls or storytelling sessions under a pergola. Unlike newer developments that prioritize maximum square footage or parking access, older coastal districts invite residents and guests to engage with both space and each other.

Photography, Storytelling, and Architectural Memory

Capturing the architecture of coastal towns through photography is not just an act of art. It's a form of cultural preservation. The popularity of:

- Photo walks
- Historical home tours
- Visual storytelling workshops
- Pop-up exhibits in town centers
- Seasonal photography contests

points to a growing awareness of how important these buildings are.

Whether you're using a smartphone [or a DSLR](#), photographing seaside architecture often becomes a way of collecting memories that are tied to place. The emotional imprint of architecture lives long past the trip itself.

A Living Legacy at the Water's Edge

Seaside architecture is never static. It is shaped by tides, storms, and shifting cultural tastes. But when communities protect and celebrate their [architectural heritage](#), they invest in more than real estate. They invest in storytelling. They ensure that future generations can walk those same streets, marvel at the same details, and feel tethered to something lasting.

Photo at top: Left and right images via Canva. Center image by [Efrem Efre via Pexels](#).

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Evolution of live casino games

Our Friends · Thursday, May 15th, 2025

The digital age has revolutionized how we experience traditional casino games. With the advent of [live casino](#) platforms, players can enjoy an immersive gaming environment from the comfort of their homes.

live casino games have become a significant part of the online gaming landscape. Their ability to replicate the thrilling atmosphere of physical casinos draws players in. The real-time interaction with dealers and other participants creates an authentic gaming experience without leaving home.

Innovative Features and Environments

Innovation is at the heart of what makes live casino games so captivating. A key feature is the presence of live dealers who facilitate each game with professionalism and flair. This human element bridges the gap between virtual play and real-world interactions, offering players a more personal experience.

Another significant innovation is the real-time interaction capability. Players can communicate with dealers and other participants through chat functions, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie typical of brick-and-mortar casinos. This interaction not only enhances enjoyment but also increases engagement and satisfaction.

The platform also boasts multiple gaming environments that simulate different casino atmospheres. These settings are meticulously crafted using high-definition streaming technology, ensuring seamless gameplay that keeps players immersed in their chosen games.

Player Engagement and Community

The community aspect is integral to the success of live casino games. Players find value not just in competing but also in socializing with others who share similar interests. The interactions facilitated by live dealers and chat functions enhance this communal feel.

As part of this thriving ecosystem, players engage in friendly competition while forming connections that transcend the digital space. This sense of belonging contributes significantly to player retention and satisfaction levels on the platform.

Additionally, interactive features such as leaderboards and tournaments provide opportunities for

players to showcase their skills and achieve recognition within the community. These elements add layers of excitement and motivation for both new and experienced gamers alike.

Future Trends and Developments

Looking forward, technological advancements promise exciting developments for live casino gaming. Innovations such as augmented reality (AR) could further blur the lines between virtual and physical gaming experiences, offering even more immersive environments.

Furthermore, expanding game variety continues as developers explore new ways to engage users with novel formats and gameplay mechanics. This diversification ensures that players always have fresh content to explore.

The evolution of user interfaces will likely enhance accessibility and personalization, allowing players more control over their gaming experiences. As these trends unfold, enthusiasts can anticipate an ever-evolving landscape that keeps pace with their expectations and desires.

Photo at top: AI generated/Bazoom

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Social Play and Crash Games: The Rise of Multiplayer Betting Fun

Our Friends · Thursday, May 15th, 2025

Crash games aren't new anymore — but they still feel fresh. Why? Because they keep evolving. And the latest twist isn't about faster rounds or higher multiplayer action. It's about something deeper: playing together.

We're seeing a shift. Players aren't just logging in to chase wins — they're showing up to be part of the moment. The tension, the crowd energy, the live chat lighting up after a 97x round — it's all part of what makes crash games more than just digital betting. They've become social spaces.

And that's changing the game.

Why Aviator Still Leads the Pack

Let's get this out of the way: when people talk about crash games, the [Aviator betting game](#) is usually the first name that comes up. And that's not just hype. It earned its spot.

The reason? Simplicity, plus just enough suspense to make your palms sweat. Aviator nails that

clean line between control and chaos. The plane takes off, the multiplier climbs, and you decide: pull the parachute or keep flying?

But what really keeps players coming back — beyond the game itself — is the vibe. You're not alone. You see others jumping early. You see the high-risk daredevils holding on. And whether you follow or fold, the feeling that everyone's in this together makes each round hit a little harder.

It's social play, without the pressure. No long-term strategy needed. Just instinct, momentum, and maybe a bit of nerve.

The Rise of Real-Time Betting Culture

Crash games were always fast. But now they're also shared. That's a big part of their appeal — especially for people who want a little community without the commitment.

You're in. You play. You react.

And while the core mechanic is simple, the experience is anything but.

Here's what multiplayer crash games are bringing to the table:

- **Live chat that actually feels alive** — not just emojis and spam, but real reactions to real-time drama.
- **Leaderboards and visible bets** — you can see who's cashing out early and who's going big. It adds an extra layer of hype.
- **Spectator energy** — even if you're not betting every round, watching others play keeps you in the loop.

That kind of energy doesn't just happen. It's designed. Built. Powered by technology that makes milliseconds matter. And the best crash platforms get it right — no lag, no fluff, just crisp gameplay with real social firepower behind it.

Betting That Moves Like You Do

Let's be honest: nobody has time for 45-minute rounds and rulebooks these days. Crash games respect that. You can be in and out in 15 seconds. You can win big. Or crash. And either way, you're back for the next round before your coffee gets cold.

Multiplayer crash games take that rhythm and turn it into a scene. It's fast. It's focused. And if your attention span runs on reels and rapid-fire content, you'll feel right at home.

Here's who this hits hardest with:

- Casual players who want action without all the homework.
- Mobile-first users who want smooth gameplay from their pocket.
- Competitive personalities who don't need long matches to get that rush.

And because rounds are so quick, you can play how you want. A couple rounds on lunch break? Great. A half-hour session while hanging out with friends? Perfect. It fits your life without trying to run it.

Built for the Moment

This is where social crash games really stand out. It's not just that you can watch others play. It's that it feels like a moment. Every second matters. Every decision counts.

It's no surprise that the [business](#) side of betting is leaning into this. Engagement is higher. Retention is stronger. And when a game becomes a hangout spot — not just a gambling interface — people stick around.

Good multiplayer crash games don't overload you with features. They just give you the tools to stay connected:

- Quick reactions
- Live wins and losses
- Smart, minimal interfaces that keep the game front and center

It's a smart design move — and one that turns a solo game into something that feels like a digital sportsbook meet-up.

Strategy Still Counts — Just Not the Kind You're Used To

This isn't poker. You're not playing the table. You're playing the multiplier. And more importantly, you're playing yourself.

Are you someone who panics and cashes early? Do you go bold and get burned? Are you better after a win... or worse?

Multiplayer crash games aren't about memorising strategies — [they're about learning your patterns](#) and adjusting on the fly.

Here are a few smart plays people swear by:

- Auto-cashout at safe levels, then manually hold a second bet for big plays.
- Read the room — if a lot of players just lost, the next round might see more conservative moves. Use that.
- Play in sets — five rounds on, short break, reset. Keeps your head clear.

And remember: the best players don't win every round. They win consistently over time, because they know when to ride momentum and when to step back.

Multiplayer Vibes, Minimal Pressure

You don't need to be the loudest player in chat. You don't need to chase leaderboard glory. The beauty of these games is you choose how social you want to be.

Maybe you're just there to watch, feel the rhythm, and learn. Maybe you're on a heater and ready to show it. Either way, it's your lane.

Crash games like Aviator make room for all of it.

And that's what makes the format so sticky — it's not about being the best. It's about being there,

when that perfect round hits.

Betting That Feels More Like Playing

Multiplayer crash games don't try to be everything. They're not aiming for cinematic storylines or triple-A graphics. What they offer is sharper — and way more fun: real-time decisions with real energy behind them.

For players who want a bit of thrill without a full-scale commitment, who enjoy betting but miss the feel of being part of something — this is it.

Whether it's your first flight with the Aviator betting game or your hundredth round with friends on voice chat, you'll get it the second the multiplier starts climbing.

That little rush? That's the reason you're here.

Just remember: in this game, it's not about how long you hold — it's about when you let go.

Photo at top via Pexels and by fauxels

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Littoral Drift

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, May 14th, 2025

Beatles-inspired dance in Beverly Hills; global dance in Westwood and Santa Monica; contemporary dance in Sierra Madre, Glendale, Frogtown, downtown Arts District, La Crescenta, Pasadena, Irvine, Hollywood, and Santa Monica; storybook ballet in Koreatown, dance fests in Crenshaw and Huntington Beach; more SoCal dance this week, plus a peek at next week.

Live This Week

Seeking connections

The isolating feeling of 'otherness' and the impulse to connect are explored in *In Search of an Exit* by **Steven Atwater & Thomas Ford**. The duo comes to SoCal after performances at Washington DC's Kennedy Center and New York's Joyce Theater, the latest event in this theater's impressive new dance series. Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre; Sat.-Sun., May 17-18, 7:30 pm, \$12-\$35. [Sierra Madre Playhouse](#).



Steven Atwater & Thomas Ford. Photo courtesy of the artists

Alone?

Curated by choreographer/teacher/producer Jamie Nichols, the Brand Associates Dance Series continues its May series with the **Volta Collective** led by Mamie Green. Known for compelling, highly physical contemporary dance, often on dark themes, the company brings *Loneliness Triptych: Excerpt*. The Brand Library & Art Center, 1601 W. Mountain St., Glendale; Sat., May 17, 5 pm, free. [Brand Library](#).



Volta Collective. Photo courtesy of the artists

Dazzled

Choreographer Mark Morris recounts how he was ‘dazzled and confused’ when he was almost 11 and first heard the Beatles’ album *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. At the album’s 50th anniversary in 2017, the Beatles’ home city of Liverpool commissioned Morris to create a dance work to celebrate the groundbreaking nature of that album. The result, *Pepperland*, was, and continues to be a hit for Morris and his **Mark Morris Dance Group**. The work distinguishes itself as more than just a jukebox musical with choreographed steps to a playlist. Some of the dancing is set to composer Ethan Iverson’s arrangements of iconic songs from the album, but Morris and the composer elevate the genre with Beatles-inspired extrapolations. Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Fri., May 16, 7:30 pm, Sat., May 17, 2 & 7:30 pm, Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$64-\$141.90. [The Wallis](#).



Mark Morris Dance Group. Photo by Gareth Jones

Dance fest #1

Curated by Licia Perea, the 12th **BlakTinx Dance Festival** returns. A showcase for Black and LatinX choreographers and dancers, this edition arrives under the banner *Unity Through Movement*. The line up includes new works from Noel Bajandas, Boomer and Boom Squad, Taisha Clark, Shauna Davis, Victor Gonzalez, Luckie, and Diana Toledo. The evening will honor both Raëlle Dorfan, director of the Dance Resource Center of LA and Boomer for work with young dancers. Crenshaw Yoga and Dance, 5426 Crenshaw Blvd., Crenshaw; Sun., May 18, 6:30 pm, \$28.52. [Eventbrite](#).



Shauna Davis. Photo by Chris Emile

Dance Fest #2

Performances, vendors, workshops and more as Akomi Dance presents this year's **Orange County Dance Festival**. HB Art Center, 538 Main St., #98, Huntington Beach; Sat., May 17, 2 to 8 pm, \$10-\$100 (donation). [Akomi Dance](#).



BODYTRAFFIC. Photo courtesy of the artists

Continued reminders

Continuing its SoCal tour of *This Reminds Me of You*, the splendid dancers of **BODYTRAFFIC** head south with a three part program. Trey McIntyre's *Mayday* set to Buddy Holly's songs,

Matthew Neenan's *I Forgot the Start*, and Joan Rodriguez' Cuban infused *Bloquea'o* completes the triptych. Irvine Barclay Theatre, UC Irvine, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine; Thurs., May 15, 8 pm, \$44-\$109. [BODYTRAFFIC](#).

Terpsichorean triptych

A trio of dance theater works take the stage as the **Nancy Evans Dance Theatre** presents *Works 2025: Bound*. The modern dance works include choreographer and artistic director Nancy Evans Doede's *Vigil* considering the ripple effects of a tragic accident, the premiere of Ashleigh Doede's *In-Yun* inspired by the Korean belief that even the briefest encounters are shaped by past lives, and guest artist Cheryl Banks-Smith joins Nancy Evans Doede for *Parallel Universe*, an improvisational collaboration. ARC Pasadena (A Room to Create), 1158 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena; Sat., May 17, 8 pm, Sun., May 18, 4 pm, \$30-\$100, \$25 students/seniors. [Nancy Evans Dance Theatre](#).



Nancy Evans Dance Theatre. Photo courtesy of the artists

A divided diaspora

In the two part evening *Where Are We Going Now?* **Jingqiu Guan** brings ensemble dances to consider the dislocation and chaos experienced by the Chinese diaspora. A faculty member at Duke University, the choreographer's film and performance work often focuses on migration, memory, and resilience in the Asian diaspora. Eileen Chow and Augustus Wendell collaborated in creating this work, performed by Duke MFA and undergraduate students. Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri.-Sat., May 16-17, 8 pm, \$25, \$20. [Highways](#).



Jingqiu Guan. Photo courtesy of the artist

Acquired wisdom

Under the banner *Endurance*, **LA Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE)** fills the stage with re-stagings and new commissions capturing the wisdom, experience, challenges, as well as opportunities that come with age and aging. The announced line up of performance and literary artists includes Gloria Enedina Álvarez, Kamau Daáood, Anna Homler, Jeff Schwartz, and David Javelosa, Ulysses Jenkins and The Dark Bob (“who dat” band), Juanita and Juan (Alice Bag + Kid Congo Powers), Sharon Kagan, Hirokazu Kosaka, Oguri, Sheree Rose, Barbara T. Smith, and Awilda Sterling-Duprey. LA Dance Project, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., Arts District; Fri.-Sat., May 16-17, 7 pm, free w/reservation at [Eventbrite](#).



Psychopomp. Photo courtesy of the artists

They are bend-y

The acrobatic dance company **Psychopomp** provides the performance component of this event exploring Jewish folklore and community. In *Der Golem*, the dancers reconsider the Jewish mythological and culturally ubiquitous creature of the Golem. Fiesta Hall, Plummer Park 1166 N. Vista Street West Hollywood; Thurs., May 15, 7 pm, \$23.02. [Psychopomp](#).

Eight with ten

Eight choreographers offer a ten minute glimpse at a new work as **MashUp Contemporary Dance Company** hosts a new edition of *Choreography Open Mic Night* of 2025. The series continues to showcase choreographers and give audiences an early look at what is coming in dance. Frogtown Studios, 2828 Gilroy St., Frogtown; Sat., May 17, 7 pm, \$15. [MashUp](#).



Okinawa Association of American. Photo courtesy of the artists

Okinawan dance

In the native Okinawan language, *Utayabira*, *Wuduyabira* means “Let’s Sing, Let’s Dance,” and that’s what the **Okinawa Association of American** offers in this concert. The event offers a rare opportunity to see Ry?ky?an performing arts in a theatre setting. James R. Armstrong Theatre, 3330 Civic Center Dr., Torrance; Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$30. [Ticket Form](#).

Encore

The dancers of **Philippine Folk Arts** return to this venue for a second family friendly performance, bringing global dance to this venue’s new dance season. Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre; Sat., May 17, 11 am, \$12-\$35 (sold out, but waitlist at website.) [Sierra Madre Playhouse](#).



Kayamanan Ng Lahi Philippine Folk Arts. Photo courtesy of the artists

A world view

Santa Monica College's **Global Motion** performs dance from around the world under artistic directors Raquel Ramirez and Sri Susilowati. The selections for this year's annual spring concert include West African, flamenco, ballet, Hawaiian, Mexican folklórico, salsa, and Asian dances, as well as some surprises. The Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Sat., May 17, 7:30 pm, \$23, \$20 students. [SMC](#).



Global Motion. Photo courtesy of the artists

Storybook ballet (preview) #1

A preview of its upcoming production of Edwaard Liang's *Cinderella* highlights this year's *Gala 2025* benefiting **Los Angeles Ballet**. Beverly Wilshire Hotel, 9500 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; Sat., May 17, 6:30 pm, \$1,000-\$100,000. [Los Angeles Ballet](#).

Storybook ballet

With 55 members, including some professional dancers with Ukraine connections, **Classical Arts**

Entertainment presents and performs under the name **State Ballet Theatre of Ukraine**. The company is based in Brooklyn, New York and its founder and leaders have Armenian, Moldovan, and Russian backgrounds, but has legitimate claims to producing in Ukraine before the war. Those 55 includes both professional dancers and students, some drawn from CAE's *We Dance* program. The organization tours with full length classics, this visit presenting *Sleeping Beauty* with a live symphony orchestra directed by Aaron Collins. The press material touts lavish, hand painted sets, exquisite costumes, but does not provide any casting information, even in the critical leads. The website lists many dancers, but only biographies of the four principals. E-mail inquiry to the presenter did not elicit a response or more info. Saban Theatre, 8440 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, Sat., May 17, 6 pm, \$65.96-\$105.90. [Tickets](#). Also at Long Beach Performing Arts Center, Terrace Theater, 300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach; Sun., May 18, 2 & 7 pm, \$58-\$160. [Ticketmaster](#).



Life of Pi. Photo courtesy of the artists

Who needs CGI?

Jaw-dropping puppetry anchors **The Life of Pi**, the award-winning theatrical retelling of Yann Martel's best-selling novel about a 16-year old shipwreck survivor adrift in a lifeboat with four animals, notably a Bengal tiger. Nick Barnes and Finn Caldwell created the puppetry for the original, Olivier award-winning British production that went on to Broadway and won several Tony awards. Anyone who sniffs that puppetry isn't dance or choreography should watch the multiple actors' tightly orchestrated manipulations as well as the puppet's choreographed moves, and then just shush up. Everyone else can sit back and marvel. Music Center, Ahmanson Theatre, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Tues.-Fri., 8 pm, Sat., 2 & 8 pm, Sun., 1 & 6 pm, also Thurs., May 29, 2 pm, thru Sun., June 1. \$37.95 -\$166.75 (w/fees). [>Life of Pi](#).

The last move

Choreographer **Marissa Herrera** set the moves for hip hop infused *The Last Play* by Rickérby Hinds. The play, written by Hinds and directed by Daphnie Sicre, was commissioned by the Latino Theater Company. The action follows an Afro-Latino playwright as he conjures characters from previous plays, seeking inspiration for what he believes will be his final play. What could possibly go wrong? The Los Angeles Theatre Center, 514 S. Spring St., downtown; Thurs.-Sat., 8 pm, Sun.,

4 pm, thru Sun., May 25, \$10 (Thursdays), \$48, \$24 students/seniors/veterans/LAUSD teachers w/ ID. [Latino Theater Company at The Los Angeles Theatre Center.](#)



LA Opera's "Ainadamar." Photo by Marty Sohl

Lorca lore

Directed and choreographed by Deborah Colker, **LA Opera's** *Ainadamar* draws on Flamenco and Spanish dance as well as a libretto by David Henry Hwang to recount poet/playwright Federico Garcia Lorca's last days. The opera takes its title from the site where Lorca was executed as part of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's reign of terror after the Spanish civil war to eliminate artists whose work opposed Franco's dictatorship. Music Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$32.50- \$296. [LA Opera.](#)

A Peek at Next Week: (May 23-29)

Ocandeniye Dance Company & Shine Masuwi — *Arts in the Park* at People Street Plaza, Leimert Park, 4337 Degnan Blvd, Leimert Park; Sun., May 25, 1-5 pm, free. [ArtsInThePark.](#)

bodies in play — *Dance is Pleasure* at WeHo Pride Arts Festival, Los Angeles LGBT Center, the Village at Ed Gould Plaza, 1123 N. McCadden Pl., #229, Hollywood; Sun., May 25, 3 pm, free. [bodies in play.](#)

REALM — *Phoenix Rising* at Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave., Venice; Sat., May 24 & Fri., May 30, 7:30 pm, Sun., May 25 & Sat., May 31, 3 pm., \$69.40 (w/fees). [Realm-Phoenix Rising.](#)

Little Women Ballet at Heritage Square Museum, 3800 Homer St., Montecito Heights; Fri., May 23, 6:30 pm, Sat.-Sun., May 24-25, 3 & 6:30 pm, \$66 (w/fees). [Little Women Ballet.](#) Also at Pasadena Playhouse, 39 S. El Molino Ave., Pasadena; Sat., June 22, 2 & 7 pm, Sun., June 23, 2 pm, \$42-\$42. [Little Women-Pasadena Playhouse.](#)



Versa Style Dance Company. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Versa-Style Dance Company — *20th Anniversary Street Dance Festival* at Mihran K Studios Burbank, 135 N. Victory Blvd., Burbank; Battles- Sat., May 24, 2 pm, \$20 (spectators), Street Dance Theater Showcase — Sun., May 25, 5 pm, \$10. [Versa-Style Street Dance Company](#).

Benita Bike's DanceArt at La Crescenta Library, 2809 Foothill Blvd., La Crescenta Sat., May 24, 2 pm. free. [Benita Bike's DanceArt](#).



LA Jazz Dance Company. Photo by Denise Leitner

Jazz Dance Concert at CSU Dominguez Hills, University Theater, 1000 E. Victoria St., Dominguez Hills; Sat., May 24, 7 pm, Sun., May 25, 7:30 pm, \$25. [Jazz Dance Concert](#).

The Wooden Floor — *42nd Annual Concert* at Irvine Barclay Theater, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine;

Thurs.-Fri., May 29-30, 8 pm, Sat., May 31, 2 & 8 pm, \$20-\$50, children half-price. [Tickets](#).

Arts in the Park 2025 at Leimert Park & Peoples Street Plaza, 4337 Degnan Blvd, Leimert Park; Sat., May 25, noon-4 pm, free w/reservation at [Tickets](#).

Lear Redux: A Quantum Fantasia at the Odyssey Theatre, 2055 S. Sepulveda Blvd., WLA; opens Thurs., May 22, 8 pm, then Fri.-Sat., 8 pm, Sun., 2 pm, Wed. June 11 & 25, 8 pm, \$20-\$43. [Odyssey Theatre Ensemble](#).

Note: **Maddie Showonek** schedule for the *Fowler Out Loud* series at UCLA Fowler Museum on May 29, has been postponed until further notice. [Fowler Museum](#).

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Are Kratom Stores Near You Meeting Quality Standards? A 6-Point Evaluation Guide

Tod Hardin · Wednesday, May 14th, 2025

Buying kratom locally can be convenient, but is it safe, consistent, and worth your money? That depends on where you're shopping. So how can you tell if a kratom store near you meets acceptable quality standards? This guide outlines six key criteria you can use to evaluate any local vendor, whether it's a smoke shop, specialty store, gas station, or wellness boutique.

Why Quality Matters in Local Kratom Purchases

If you've ever searched for [kratom stores near me](#), you've likely noticed how wildly product quality can vary.

Since kratom is a natural plant product imported mostly from Southeast Asia, it's vulnerable to contamination, mishandling, and adulteration. Low-quality kratom may contain:

- Harmful bacteria like *salmonella*
- Unlisted additives or synthetic substances
- Heavy metals like lead or arsenic
- Inconsistent alkaloid content (mitragynine, 7-hydroxymitragynine)
- Mold or moisture from improper storage

Even if you're only buying for casual or short-term use, the long-term risk of substandard kratom is real, especially when quality control isn't part of the store's sourcing process.

That's why having a personal checklist is essential.

The 6-Point Evaluation Guide for Local Kratom Stores

Here are the six key factors to help you decide whether a kratom store near you is meeting modern

quality standards—or just cashing in on demand.

1. Do They Provide Third-Party Lab Testing?

Lab testing is the gold standard of quality assurance. If a vendor cannot provide batch-specific third-party test results, it's a red flag.

Look for Certificates of Analysis (COAs) that include:

- Alkaloid content (specifically mitragynine %)
- Tests for heavy metals and microbial contamination
- Date of testing (should be recent—within 6 months)
- Name of the testing lab (it should be independent, not in-house)

Ask directly. Reputable stores will either have the COA printed and on display or accessible via QR code or website. If they can't or won't share test results, walk away.

2. Is the Staff Knowledgeable and Transparent?

You don't need a certified kratom expert behind the counter—but the person selling it should know more than just the price.

Ask:

- Where is this kratom sourced from?
- What strain is this and what's it known for?
- What do you know about this brand's safety testing?
- How should someone new to kratom approach dosage?

If you're met with blank stares or vague promises like “it's the best one” or “everyone loves this one,” it's a sign the store is focused more on margins than on mindful customer care.

3. Is the Kratom Properly Packaged and Stored?

Packaging tells you a lot about how a vendor treats their product, and their customers. [Proper packaging](#) should be:

- Sealed and tamper-evident
- Labeled with a batch number and expiration date
- Displayed away from heat, sunlight, or moisture
- Stored in clean containers if sold in bulk

You should never see kratom stored in open bins, unlabeled bags, or re-sealed containers. These practices dramatically increase the risk of contamination and spoilage.

Some top vendors vacuum-seal or nitrogen-flush their packaging to preserve freshness and prevent microbial growth.

4. Do They Carry Reputable, Recognized Brands?

While there are some decent local or white-label brands, many low-quality kratom products sold in

stores are mass-produced by unknown suppliers with no transparency. Often, they slap on flashy branding without any real sourcing or safety protocols.

Look for names that are well-reviewed and transparent in their operations—brands that offer:

- Published lab results on their website
- Sourcing from GMP-compliant farms
- A history of positive user reviews (on Reddit, Double M Herbals, I Love Kratom, etc.)

If every product on the shelf is an unknown or convenience-store brand with no online presence or customer support, that's a red flag. Search the brand name online before you buy. See what real users are saying.

5. Are Their Prices Too Good to Be True—or Weirdly High?

Kratom isn't free to produce, test, package, and import. If the pricing is suspiciously low, there's a good chance something is being skipped in the supply chain, often, quality control.

That said, outrageously high prices (especially in gas stations or “novelty” stores) are also a warning. Many stores upcharge 2–3x the going rate for common strains like Green Maeng Da or [White Borneo](#)—banking on the idea that the customer has no basis for comparison.

6. Are They Transparent About Legality and Responsible Use?

A quality kratom vendor should not shy away from discussions about safety, legality, or responsible use.

That means:

- They're aware of your state or city's laws regarding kratom
- They don't make illegal medical claims (“this cures pain” or “fixes anxiety”)
- They have some basic educational materials available—posters, pamphlets, QR codes, or verbal guidance

A responsible store won't push kratom as a miracle cure or recommend it recklessly. They'll understand it's a nuanced botanical, and will treat it that way.

Bonus Tip: Check for Membership in Industry Advocacy Groups

Look for stores or brands that are part of organizations like:

- American Kratom Association (AKA)
- GMP Qualified Vendor Program
- Kratom Consumer Protection Act (KCPA) compliance in your state

While not foolproof, these memberships signal a willingness to be held accountable and follow emerging safety standards in the space.

Final Thoughts: Trust Is Earned, Not Packaged

Not all local kratom vendors are careless or shady. Some are genuinely passionate about quality and customer safety. But in a loosely regulated space, you can't afford to assume. Being proactive, asking questions, and inspecting details isn't being "paranoid"—it's being informed. When in doubt, you're always better off sourcing from trusted online vendors who offer full transparency and testing. But if you do buy local, use this guide to protect your health, your wallet, and your experience.

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Stranger Things and Real Women

David Sheward · Sunday, May 11th, 2025

If you've been waiting for the must-see production of the Broadway season to justify plunking down your hard-earned bucks, wait no more. *Stranger Things: The First Shadow*, now at the Marquis after an Olivier-winning run in London, is the most spectacular, fun show on the Main Stem in many years and will scare the crap out of you. A working knowledge of the cult-status Netflix series upon which it is based is not necessary. The plot takes place before the streaming TV show begins and Kate Trefry's intricate script stands on its own. (The original story is credited to Trefry, a writer and co-executive producer for the series; the Duffer Brothers who created the show and directed many of its episodes; and Jack Thorne, author of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, another London and Broadway smash based on a successful fantasy/sci-fi franchise.)



Louis McCartney in *Stranger Things: The First Shadow*.

Credit: Matthew Murphy and Evan Zimmerman

Stephen Daldry and his co-director Justin Martin have staged the complex, absorbing story like a film with smoothly flowing scenes imparting vital information and thrills. But the real stars are the other-worldly special effects and illusions created by Jamie Harrison and Chris Fisher, which rival anything you'll see on Broadway including a horrifying invasion from another dimension. My theatergoing companion called this specific effect the new and better chandelier from *Phantom of the Opera* or the helicopter from *Miss Saigon*. I'm not going to list the more nerve-rattling and spine-shaking moments so as not to spoil your fun, but suffice it to say, look out for crashing battleships, monsters with no faces, and be prepared to scream if you're afraid of spiders.

Loyal viewers of the show will recognize the basic narrative template. (Full disclosure: in preparation for reviewing *Stranger Things*, I attempted to binge the series in a few weeks, but I only got through the first two seasons and half of the third.) The seemingly humdrum little town of Hawkins, Indiana is beset with weird occurrences. In the series, it started with the disappearance of a young boy. In the play, pets turn up dead. Gradually, we discover that a dark, ominous parallel universe is bleeding into the bucolic hamlet and a newly arrived, introverted teen holds the key to the mystery. The series commences in Reagan's 1980s America and, in each season, whatever calamity rises up is defeated by a gang of plucky, outsider adolescents with a few token grown-ups helping out. The play skips back a generation to 1959 and the familiar adults are now the adventurous teens. Both timelines are dominated by the menacing Dr. Brenner who heads a shadowy Deep State lab which is mixed up in every cuckoo conspiracy besetting Hawkins.



Louis McCartney and Gabrielle Nevaeah
in *Stranger Things: The First Shadow*.

Credit: Matthew Murphy and
Evan Zimmerman

The basic appeal of the series is the heroic status of the nerdy kids saving the day. The message is it's okay to be considered weird, love science, and get good grades. The play emphasizes the painful struggles of the alienated youngsters at the center of the story. The amazing Louis McCartney repeats his London role as Henry Creel, the socially awkward loner somehow tied in with all the mysterious happenings. McCartney delivers a viscerally dynamic and shockingly physical performance as dark forces battle for Henry's soul. Gabrielle Nevaeah is sensitive and intense as Patty Newby, the orphaned girl "from nowhere" who befriends Henry.

The major problem I have with Trefry's otherwise clever script is that it ignores the elephant in the room. Patty is cast as an African-American young woman adopted by a white family, headed by the conservative high school principal no less. In 1959 Indiana, this situation would not be glossed over. The only acknowledgment here is when Patty says she bears a resemblance to Ella Fitzgerald. An accurate depiction of the racism of the period might have distracted from the main story, but it would have lent a note of bitter realism and added tension.

Alison Jaye, Burke Swenson, and understudy Patrick Scott McDermott (covering for Juan Carlos at the performance attended) are energetic as the amateur young sleuths who grow up to become the parents in the series. Eric Wiegand is a riot as an obsessed theater kid. Alex Breux is all ice and steel as the dangerous Dr. Brenner. T.R. Knight and Rosie Benton shutter and shatter admirably as Henry's troubled parents. Andrew Hovelson and Ted Koch are pompously proper as other clueless grownups.

Daldry and Martin's fluid and dynamic direction is abetted by the magical, moving sets of Miriam Buether, the scary, atmospheric lighting of Jon Clark, the spooky and penetrating sound design of Paul Arditti, and the grainy, gritty videos of 59 Productions. D.J. Wade composed the haunted and

haunting original music and Brigitte Riffenstuel deserves kudos for the period costumes.



Florencia Cuenca, Tatianna Cordoba, and
Justina Machado in

Real Women Have Curves.

Credit: Julieta Cervantes

There are plenty of scary moments in *Stranger Things*, but the new musical *Real Women Have Curves* has a horrifying sequence which is even more frightening because it's really happening across the country. As in the *Stranger Things* series, the setting is the 1980s. We are in a dress factory in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. The ladies are hard at work on a rush order of 200 dresses which could make their brand. They hear a crash at the pillow factory next door. "Immigration!," cries the boss Estela. She douses the lights and everyone hides under their sewing machines. There is silence for several terrifying seconds. The workers gradually emerge and resume their labors.

This scary scene in an otherwise joyful musical brings home the insecure status of undocumented aliens which persists some 40 years later. But the focus of this exuberant show is the strong bond among immigrant families and their struggles to get ahead. Based on Josefina Lopez's play and the subsequent HBO film with a screenplay by Lopez and George LaVoo, *Real Women* celebrates the bond between sisters Estela and Ana and their determined mother Carmen.

Estela labors intensely to make the dress factory a success while Ana, a budding journalist, has just received a full scholarship to attend Columbia University. But Carmen opposes Ana leaving the family when they need her the most to complete the rush order. In addition, Ana is the only citizen in the family and can therefore deal with government bureaucracy. The book by Lisa Loomer with Nell Benjamin leans a bit heavily on sentimental melodrama, but balances these soapy suds with sharp wit and a strong depiction of characters too often ignored in Broadway musicals. At one Carmen observes, "I'm 51 and I've working since I was 13. In *gringa* years, I'd be 70."

The score by Joy Huerta and Benjamin Velez is equally snappy and irreverent as well as uplifting.

The title song in which the factory ladies and Ana defy society's body shaming and celebrate their ample shapes, brings the house down with its unapologetic defiance. In another group number tackling a subject you seldom hear about on Broadway, Carmen and the ladies welcome the onset of menopause and the exiting of their "monthly visitor." There's also soaring hopeful song for Ana and Itzel, a recent arrival from Guatemala, and a funny comedy number where Ana and her new boyfriend Henry attempt their first time at sex, but have no idea what to do. Sergio Trujillo skillfully directs and choreographs, combining biting humor with savvy movement. Arnulfo Maldonado's sets create a believable LA atmosphere, along with Hana S. Kim's videos and Natasha Katz's lighting. Wilberth Ganzalez and Paloma Young's costumes blend the everyday life of the workers with their high-fashion aspirations.

Tatiana Cordoba, Florencia Cuenca, and Justina Machado are fierce, funny, and fiery as Ana, Estela, and Carmen, as are Mason Reeves as Henry and Aline Mayagoitia as Itzel. *Real Women* is the real thing, a Broadway show with heart and courage addressing marginalized people.



Tommy Dorfman in *Becoming Eve*.

Credit: Matthew Murphy

Speaking of real women and underrepresented populations, the modern world of fluid sexuality clashes with the rigid rules of Jewish orthodoxy in *Becoming Eve*, Emil Weinstein's powerful and thought-provoking stage adaptation of Abby Chava Stein's memoir. Presented by New York Theater Workshop at the Abrons Arts Center (recently closed), the compassionate play switches narrative tracks between the present-day confrontation between Chava (Hebrew for Eve), a transgender woman and her traditionalist rabbi father (with facilitation by reform rabbi Jonah) and flashbacks to Eve's past. Chava has not revealed her transition from man to woman to her dad and seeks to soften to blow by citing Talmudic scripture. With the aide of Jonah, Chava has prepared examples from the story of Abraham and Isaac, referencing a scholar's interpretation that Isaac had a female soul and was transformed to a male when Abraham was called to sacrifice his life by God.

In the flashbacks, Chava is embodied by elaborate puppets designed by Amanda Villalobos while her voice is provided by the actor playing the role, an expressive Tommy Dorfman, suggesting that her former self was not her true being. Tyne Rafaeli's direction carefully balances the forceful debate with the conflicting emotions of each of the parties. Dorfman's tormented but ultimately triumphant Chava, Richard Schiff's rigid but intellectual father, and Brandon Uranowitz's

amicable Jonah give depth to each corner of this dramatic triangle.

***Stranger Things: The First Shadow*: Opened April 22 for an open run. Marquis Theater, 210 W. 46th St., NYC. Running time: two hours and 45 mins. including intermission. broadwaydirect.com.**

***Real Women Have Curves*: Opened April 27 for an open run. James Earl Jones Theater, 138 W. 48th St., NYC. Running time: two hours and 20 mins. including intermission.**

***Becoming Eve*: April 7-27. New York Theater Workshop at the Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St., NYC. Running time: one hour, 50 mins. with no intermission.**

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