



# CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD

6671 Sunset Blvd. • Hollywood, CA  
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## Backgrounder - Crossroads of the World

Located in the heart of Hollywood at 6671 Sunset Blvd., Crossroads of the World is a unique landmark of Los Angeles' 1930's architecture. Its 60-foot tower with revolving globe on the top is instantly recognizable, as is the ship -- complete with red railings, portholes and curved corners -- that "anchors" the property. Crossroads of the World features nine buildings in different architectural styles, all of which have been renovated to their original appearance.

A full city block deep, Crossroads of the World stretches from Sunset Blvd. north to Selma Ave., and to Las Palmas Avenue on the west. On the east, it is bounded by the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, whose graceful bell tower provides a beautiful backdrop for the property. Crossroads comprises a total of 50,000 square feet on a 120,000 square foot lot, and has 60 offices.

Recognized by both the city and the U.S. government as an architectural landmark, Crossroads of the World became Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #134 in 1974, and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

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### History

Crossroads of the World officially opened on October 29, 1936, at the height of popularity of Streamline Modern architecture. It was designed by Robert V. Derrah, an architect best known for the Coca-Cola building on South San Pedro Street in downtown Los Angeles. The Coca-Cola building was constructed in the form of a ship, a structure that he repeated at Crossroads.

Crossroads was designed originally as an international shopping center, patterned after the famous trade market in Jerusalem. The entire complex cost \$250,000 to build. It was Los Angeles' first pedestrian outdoor shopping mall, with retail shops on the first floor and offices on the second floor of the buildings.

Each building represents a different architectural style: French, Italian, Spanish, Moorish, California Mediterranean, Cape Cod/Early American, a European village and the ship in the center. Each was meant to give Angelinos a taste of exotic locations around the world in an era when travel was still prohibitively expensive.

Derrah designed Crossroads of the World for Ella Crawford, the widow of Charles Crawford, a pioneer Hollywood real estate man whose offices were located at Crossroads. Said to have underworld connections, Crawford was variously known as "Goodtime Charlie," "The Underworld Czar" and "The Wolf of Spring Street." Mr. Crawford was the victim of a murder which took place in 1931 at what was to become Crossroads of the World. In typical Hollywood fashion, the murder involved scandal, made national headlines and remains unsolved to this day.

Almost immediately after opening, Crossroads became part of the bustling glamour of the 1930's, attracting celebrities such as W.C. Fields and F. Scott Fitzgerald. It boasted hair stylists, a French parfumerie, an Oriental arts and gift shop, a Spanish cigar maker, a high-fashion ladies dress shop and even a "handkerchief specialist," all catering to celebrities and upscale shoppers.

Over time, however, Crossroads did not succeed as a shopping center, and gradually it became a complex of office suites. During the 1940s and '50s, it hosted such tenants at the Screen Actors Guild, the distribution headquarters of Standard Oil, and American Airlines.

The 1960s and '70s were sad years for Crossroads, when neglect and overall deterioration of Hollywood took its toll on the property. In 1974, it went on the auction block, and plans were already underway for Crossroads' demolition. A high-rise by the same name was intended for the site.

Fortunately, Crossroads of the World was saved from the wrecker's ball by Morton La Kretz, who purchased the property in May 1977. He spent the next several years restoring it, closely following Derrah's original plans. He uncovered painted-over decorative tiles, scraped off years of offensive paint, and re-shingled the roofs. He also enhanced the property by adding fountains, more landscaping and replacing asphalt walkways with decorative stamped concrete.

In the late 1970s and '80s, Crossroads began its start as a center for the entertainment industry. Well-known musical artists such as Jackson Browne, America, Poco, and Crosby, Stills & Nash found the complex perfect for the privacy and serenity they craved. Crossroads was also home to Geffen Films ("Beetlejuice"), American Film Magazine, Dolby Sound and Rudy Records.

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## Architectural Details

The beauty of Crossroads of the World lies in the architectural details Derrah included in the original plans. Technically, there are nine buildings; however, the two buildings fronting Sunset Blvd. -- the French and Italian buildings on the west side of the boat, and the Spanish and California Mediterranean buildings on the east side of the boat -- appear each as one building, since they are adjoining. But a closer look at these buildings reveals their architectural styles.

Due to fire laws at the time, these two buildings (as well as the boat) on Sunset Blvd. were required to be of poured concrete. The other buildings in the complex are made of frame and stucco. Each of the nine buildings is unique:

- **The Streamline Modern style "ocean liner"**: Facing onto Sunset Blvd., the ship features curved corners, red ship railings, porthole windows, rounded doors and numerous flat, horizontal surfaces.
- **The Spanish style building**: To the east of the ship and facing onto Sunset Blvd., this building is characterized by red tile roofs, arches, shutters and balconies with wrought-iron grilles.
- **The California Mediterranean building**: Adjoining the Spanish building, this features colorful hand-painted tiles, red tile roofs and unusual windows.
- **The Italian building**: To the west of the ship and facing onto Sunset Blvd., this building boasts Venetian arches and columns, a loggia and a beautiful wrought-iron gate.
- **The French building**: Adjoining the Italian building, this features stained glass windows, decorated "trompe d'oeil" shutters and a fleur-de-lis atop one of the chimneys.
- **The Moorish building**: In the center of the Crossroads complex, the Moorish building has pointed Arabic archways, a minaret and stenciled geometric designs.
- **The Cape Cod/Early American building**: A set of small buildings closest to Las Palmas Ave., the Cape Cod/Early American building includes high-pitched, shingle roofs and chimneys.
- **The European village**: Two buildings facing each other in a village setting, these feature half-timbering, dormer windows and turret towers. There is also a lighthouse facing on to Selma Avenue with a functioning revolving light.

Cobblestone walkways, large palm trees, extensive landscaping, fountains, outdoor seating areas and even a wishing well tie all of the buildings together, and enhance the international atmosphere. There is also a wide variety of greenery, including a 100-year old Valley Oak and walnut, avocado, peach, fig and pepper trees.

Another interesting detail of Crossroads is the doors: every one is unique and custom-designed. Most have windows in all sorts of whimsical designs: heart-shaped, a spider web, porthole, rounded.

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## Into the Twenty-First Century

Crossroads has become a center for the entertainment industry, and a variety of music publishers and producers, television and film script writers, film and record companies, novelists, publicists, casting agencies and costume designers have established their offices in the complex. Many of these individuals have made Crossroads the home of their creative talent for more than a quarter century.

Films such as *L.A. Confidential*, and *W.C. Fields & Me*, and TV shows such as *Dragnet*, *Matt Houston*, *Remington Steele* and *Malice in Wonderland* have been filmed at Crossroads. Numerous commercials, including those sponsored by McDonald's, Ford, Mattel Toys, Mercedes-Benz, Pacific Bell and Arrowhead Water have been shot on the property. In addition, several music videos, international films and college student projects have used Crossroads as the site of their action.

Crossroads of the World has become such a part of the Hollywood scene that the tower, complete with the revolving globe and neon lettering, has been reproduced as the information center at the entrance of Disney's MGM studios Theme Park in Orlando, Florida.

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## Crossroads Today

Today, Crossroads of the World looks much like it did on its official opening on a rainy day in 1936. The buildings and landscaping have been painstakingly brought back to their original splendor. Many of the suites have been decorated to preserve the flavor of the past, boasting antiques and period furniture. The owner intends to continue preserving and enhancing the uniqueness that is Crossroads.

And, perhaps most symbolically, the globe above Sunset Blvd. still turns, lighting the sky with neon just as it did in 1936.

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