

5

BEST SUBURB

CLAREMONT, CA

EVERY SPRING, PROSPECTIVE students and their parents make the pilgrimage to Claremont, California, to tour the seven campuses of the renowned Claremont Colleges. They also discover a small city that blends worldly sophistication with small-town appeal.

About 30 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, and joined to it by Interstate 10 and Metrolink trains, Claremont is, geographically, a Los Angeles suburb. Spiritually, it's distinct. In the neighborhoods along Indian Hill Boulevard, American climb shade streets lined by vintage cottages and Craftsman bungalows. A few minutes' walk from the campuses, Claremont's compact downtown (known to everyone as The Village) mixes contemporary restaurants and boutiques with local landmarks—like the Some Crust Bakery, famed for its bear claws—that grads from the 1960s remember from their days at Scripps or Pomona.

Clockwise from top, near right: The Village, Claremont; Summer House, Pomona College; James Turrell Skyspace, Pomona College Museum of Art; Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden; Seal Court pond; Claremont Packing House; resident Vanessa Wilkie.



POPULATION	35,824
MEDIAN HOME PRICE	\$624,000
AVERAGE FEBRUARY HIGH	69°
AVERAGE JULY HIGH	90°



renovated. "We pulled up the beinous carpet," she says, "but we wanted to preserve the character."

Claremont, too, strives to preserve its character, even as it evolves. Locals crowd the restaurants and the wine bar at The Claremont Packing House, a once-dilapidated citrus facility turned into a retail and dining destination. Across the street, commuters and students sip craft cocktails around the firepits in the modern-meets-mission courtyard at the boutique Hotel Casa 425.

Not far away is another enduring Claremont institution: the Folk Music Center. Part instrument museum and part performance space and store, it's run by Ellen

Harper, whose parents founded it in 1958. Three-time Grammy Award-winner Ben Harper, Ellen's son and a Claremont native, bought the center from his grandparents to keep it in the family. "We get people from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and all over Europe. If they're on the West Coast, they make it a point to come here."

For Harper and for newer residents like Wilkie, it's that small-town-meets-big-world connection that defines Claremont. "Having the colleges creates a creative environment," Wilkie says. "Even though Claremont has a suburban feel, I don't feel that it's an isolated community, and I like that about it." —M.J.



Clockwise from above: Vintage and new guitars at the Folk Music Center; Claremont Packing House; Grove, a public artwork in The Village, by Lynn Bass; the signature burger at The Back Abbey gastropub; Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.