

# Silverlake LGBT History Ride

## A tiny look at Los Angeles LGBTQ+ History

### Overview

Los Angeles has a long history when it comes to gay rights and activism. We put together a quick ride visiting some historical sights in the Silverlake/Echo Park area. These sights are documented in Curbed Los Angeles' piece, "[Mapping Los Angeles' groundbreaking role in LGBT history](#)." This ride by no means captures the breadth of history or expanse of geography that LA has in terms of LGBTQ+ history and culture.

We offer two distance options for this ride:

7.7 miles starting at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument and ending at Vermont/Santa Monica B Line Station or 10.8 miles starting and ending at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument. This ride is short but hilly at some points. The majority of the route goes along Sunset's unprotected bike lane, which grassroots group [Sunset 4 All i](#) is hoping to make a safer place to travel on.

### Ride Logistics

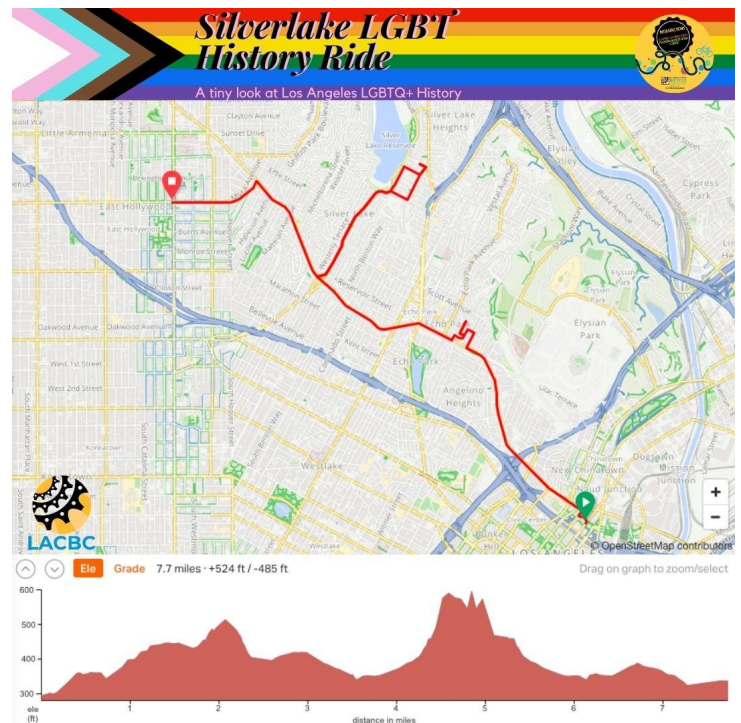
Link to self-guided route:

Link to route only:

7.7 miles: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/36448258>

10.8 miles: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/36448272>

Cue sheet: **see route links above**



### El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument

This ride starts at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, close to Union Station. [At this location there's a plaque](#) that honors the Yangna village and mentions individuals who embodied male and female genders as two-spirit people.

From here, head north along Main St and make a left on Cesar Chavez. Stay on Cesar Chavez as it becomes Sunset, staying here for 1.5 miles then make a right onto Portia. Get ready to climb....

Make a left on Galveston St and follow the curve as it becomes McDuff St then make the first right onto Laveta Terrace. Ride up the block and stop at 1421 Laveta Terrace on the left hand side.

## Tom of Finland Foundation

Tom of Finland was the name that artist Touko Laaksonen used when he started submitting his homoerotic art to magazines popular among gay, male readers starting in the 1950s. This is Tom of Finland's former residence, which drew gay artists such as John Waters and Robert Maplethorpe.

Tom of Finland went on to have appreciation for his art grow, and exhibited his work in museums like LACMA. His work, showing strong, virile men, was considered especially important in the 1980s, when the AIDS epidemic meant that the prevailing image of gay men was the opposite of muscular and healthy.

The house is now the home of the Tom of Finland Foundation, an archive for homoerotic art. In 2016, for its connection to Tom of Finland and its merits as a turn-of-the-century Craftsman house, the Tom of Finland house received city Historic-Cultural Monument status.

From here, head back on Laveta Terrace and make a right at McDuff to stay on Laveta Terrace. Descend downhill with care as it takes you directly to Sunset Blvd, then make a right. Stay on Sunset for 1.2 miles then make a right onto Silver Lake Blvd. In about a mile, make a right at the light, onto Duane St.

Take the first left onto Apex Avenue then a left at Cove Avenue. The next destination will be at the end of the street on your left hand side.

## Harry Hay's House

Sitting at the end of the street at 2328 Cove Avenue is Harry Hay's House. Congrats - this is the highest point on our ride. You made it.

Harry Hay, credited with founding the first gay rights organization, the Mattachine Society, lived and had meetings here at the time the group began in 1950. (It started as Bachelors Anonymous.) Kevin Roderick wrote in his insightful eulogy for Hay in Los Angeles magazine that many consider the house to be the birthplace of the gay rights movement. The concrete stairs adjacent to his home were named the Mattachine Steps in 2012, to commemorate his contributions to the gay rights movement.

From here, head back the way you came - back down Cove, a right on Apex, another right on Duane St and then a left back onto Silver Lake Blvd. Head back down Silver Lake to return to Sunset. Make a right on Sunset and stay here for 0.8 miles.

## Black Cat Tavern

On the right hand side at 3909 Sunset Blvd is The Black Cat, known as the Black Cat Tavern in 1967 when it was the site of a brutal police raid. Now designated city historic-cultural monument #939, this bar was targeted by police, which was followed by a full-blown riot that resulted in more than a dozen arrests. [The protests in response to the arrests predated the Stonewall riots in New York by two years.](#)

The Stonewall Riots themselves are a testament to the intersectional history of efforts to resist discrimination and state harassment. To learn more about the history of Pride as a form of civil disobedience and the role of Black and

Latinx LGBTQ activists, check out this resource by the University of Michigan's Center for Social Solutions: ["A Look Back: Pride and Intersectionality."](#)

The Black Cat and Stonewall were both bars. [Check out this piece by Slate](#) to learn more about why the gay rights movement was born in a gay bar.

From here, you have two options:

**7.7 mile ride:** Continue northwest along Sunset and make a left in two blocks on Santa Monica Blvd. Stay along Santa Monica for about eight blocks and you'll be at Vermont, where you can catch the B (Red) Line to wherever else you may wanna go next.

**10.8 mile ride:** Head back down Sunset the way you came. Make a right onto Spring St then a left at La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora La Reina de Los Angeles to get back to the starting point.