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This spooky driving tour of L.A. ‘witch’ houses lets you celebrate Halloween, safely

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In honor of [Halloween](#), the preservation group [Friends of Residential Treasures: LA \(FORT: LA\)](#) has unveiled a self-guided tour of five classic examples of the kind of [Storybook-style homes](#) that conjure up images of witches’ lairs, warlocks, hobbits and more.

Every month FORT:LA invites a local personality to create an architectural tour focusing on a particular style. This month, the homes have been selected by actress Amber Benson, best known for her portrayal of Tara Maclay on [“Buffy the Vampire Slayer”](#) and author of [“The Echo Park Coven” trilogy](#).

“Having written about magic and witchcraft in a series of novels set in Los Angeles, I’ve spent a lot of time searching out the city’s hidden paths, secret byways, and spooky architecture to use as texture for my stories,” Benson said in a statement. “This trail gives you a taste of just how much magic and fantasy there is in Los Angeles.”



Lawrence Joseph designed the Storybook Hobbit House and apartments, a historical-cultural monument in Culver City. (Kirk McKoy / Los Angeles Times)

The self-guided tour aims to not only offer a new appreciation for [L.A.'s historically significant residential architecture](#) but also to create a socially distanced sense of fun during the coronavirus pandemic.

Keep in mind that these homes are privately owned, so appreciate them from the street in a socially distant fashion. Unobstructed views are not guaranteed, as “the journey is the destination.”

The scavenger hunt begins in Culver City and ends in Burbank. On its website, FORT:LA has posted a 69-page PDF that includes interesting facts about the five homes, including dark secrets, photos, oral histories, music suggestions such as Screamin' Jay Hawkins' “I Put a Spell on You” and a detailed map.



The Egasse-Braasch House in Eagle Rock. (Michael Locke)

The trail makes stops at the [Lawrence and Martha Joseph residence and apartments](#) in Culver City, assembled by Walt Disney Co. artist Lawrence Joseph from 1946 to 1970; the Hlaffer–Courcier house, inspired by art director Harry Oliver’s Tam O’Shanter Restaurant; the Egasse-Braasch House in Eagle Rock, where renters Ben Affleck and Matt Damon wrote their Oscar-winning screenplay for “Good Will Hunting”; Humphrey Bogart’s one-time home in Beachwood Canyon (Bogart was living in the house when his friend and neighbor [Peg Entwistle](#) committed suicide in 1932 by throwing herself off the Hollywood Sign); and, finally, the four Columbia Ranch Dwarf Houses along Hollywood Way in Burbank.

To view this month’s trail, go to fortla.org and enter your email address for free access.