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What it means to wait for Christmas in Beverly Hills

Shimmering palms in place of traditional fir trees, Santa Claus in a hipster key and a toast for good luck under the stars. Here's how the Californian luxury capital gets ready to celebrate December 25th

For an Italian grown in pandoro and Fantaghirò replicas, imagine **Christmas** in **Beverly Hills** is anything but simple. And not only because with an average temperature that exceeds 20 degrees for most of the day the traditional woolen sweaters with reindeer and related could be a little out of place. This little town in the County of Los Angeles, just over 34 thousand souls set in an architectural tribute to **luxury** and the good life with stars and stripes, lives the approach of December 25 in a way that we Italians could describe with one word: **surreal** .

That's right. Because with the beginning of the advent calendar the renowned Californian atmosphere, made of palm trees, cinema glamor, sunsets by the pool and still palm trees, is suddenly forced to deal with a **global collective imagination** that includes snowmen and red hats with white fur in abundance. The result of this cultural and climatic short circuit is a curious mix that deserves to be tasted in every single nuance.

Without even having to resort to the nostalgia effect for the Dylan-Brenda-Kelly triangle, or for the adventures of detective Axel Foley of Beverly Hills Cop. Here because.



Living illuminations in Rodeo Drive

Bando the classic illuminations

The decorated fir trees are there, for heaven's sake. Especially the super luxurious ones that stand out in the halls of the various 5-star hotels, as happens at **Beverly Wilshire** (already, the hotel of the Four Seasons group that hosted the cinematic love story par excellence, that of *Pretty Woman*). Along the streets of the city center, the real protagonists are the **palms**. Covered with layers and layers of colorful lights that light up intermittently, they are the perfect synthesis of Californian Christmas, with all due respect to the traditional tip, omitted for simple structural reasons of the plant. For the rest, the designer lights of this 2017 bear the signature of the artist Yelena Filipchuk, whose project **Hyperspace Bypass**- composed of

geometrical structures finely carved with laser, like a sort of three-dimensional and bright doily - in the Beverly Canon Gardens. While in front of the entrance to the **Luxe Rodeo Drive Hotel** you can occasionally find some living luminaries: cheerful ballerinas with cloaks covered with LEDs that flutter to the rhythm of music on Beverly Hills nights, creating voluptuous choreography of lights. Question: could someone seriously regret the tip of the fir?



Fashion Santa

The Santa Claus hipster

In that of Beverly Hills **Santa Claus** is not a jovial grandfather in his sixties with a soft belly to lean on while rattling the letter of desires. In reverse. He's a handsome forty-year-old hipster who probably spends something like \$ 200 a week to take care of his beard, and has more than **24,000 followers on Instagram** . Walking along Rodeo Drive, the shopping street par excellence, it is possible to run into the model Paul Mason, aka **Fashion Santa**, a runway Santa Claus, who prefers a skinny fit dress with a red tie in the thick voluminous coat of fur. Ready to pose for a photo next to you, for the joy of mothers. And to remind you to atone for your throat sins in the gym just after the holidays.



Christmas decorations under construction

The competition of decorations

The TV series that for decades has told us the thousand nuances of American society have taught us: in California just any excuse to turn on the most bitter competition between **neighbors** . Happens to Halloween, of course, as well as Christmas. Here then that already in the first days of December it is possible to come across banana trees nicely whitened with fake snow, **puppets of Santa Claus** that climb on the balconies, slides and any other dangling from the roofs and like snowmen that stand out there, in the garden, next to the driveway where the inevitable **family SUV** is parked. Walking through the suburbs of the city, moreover, it is easy to find advertisements of companies specialized in "Christmas decorations for the coolest houses". Dear neighbor, eat your heart out. Or as we would say, also liver.



The Beverly Hills Hotel, the Polo Lounge soufflé

No panettone, we are Americans

For Italians, you know, the Christmas menu is a tasty comedy based on typical dishes of your area that is repeated almost identical every sacrosanct year. From stuffed pasta in broth to zamponi with lentils. From the struffoli of Naples to the Milan panettone. And in Beverly Hills? None of this. Families usually choose whether to bring to the table the **turkey's** brother served on Thanksgiving or to opt for a **baked ham**, perhaps glazed with plenty of honey. No specific recipes for the period, in short. If not the sweet proposals that come out of the kitchen of one of the most famous hotels in all of California, the legendary **The Beverly Hills Hotel** of Sunset Boulevard: here the Christmas period of the **Polo Lounge**, the dining room of the structure that celebrates the champions of the pole, is marked by the alternation of 12 different creative variations of the chef's special **soufflé**. Ranging from caramel to peppermint, just to be clear.



Dinner on the rooftop of the Waldorf Astoria

A toast to Christmas under the stars

In this case it is once again the climate to revolutionize everything. Yes, because if our Christmas Eve dinner and our Christmas lunch are held strictly around the dining room table, possibly with a **fireplace lit** in the immediate vicinity, in Beverly Hills the mild temperatures make it possible to overturn any type of convention. Larger than the lunches by the pool, or rather, **brunch**, like the one proposed at **Beverly Hilton**, where the chef at the head of the kitchen is still of Italian origin (Pavia, to be precise). Or alternativa dinners on the **rooftop** of the most luxurious hotel in the district, such as the **Waldorf Astoria**. A terrace of wonders for a perfect toast under the stars, in full Californian spirit. It's the magic of Christmas, baby. Or maybe that of Beverly Hills.