

Book Worm



A Useful Guide

Romancing the Southland by Robert Badal, Douglas Campbell, P.O.Box 349, Hollywood, CA, pp.710, \$34.95

By a Staff Reporter

The book was written to help people enjoy "what is romantic and unusual in Southern California," writes the author at the top of the introduction. And he doesn't disappoint.

Badal scouts around town to not only dish out unknown fare but actually collate even well known goings on like say the Lompoc Festival, Spago restaurant, the Campanile and La Brea Bakery.

Among the unusual but useful indulgences are whale watching, wildflower blooming times and elephant mating seasons.

What makes his work more effective than any tourist brochure is his grouping of activities under the months of the year. August for instance shows the India Independence Day fair that the Federation of Indo-American Associations organizes each year.

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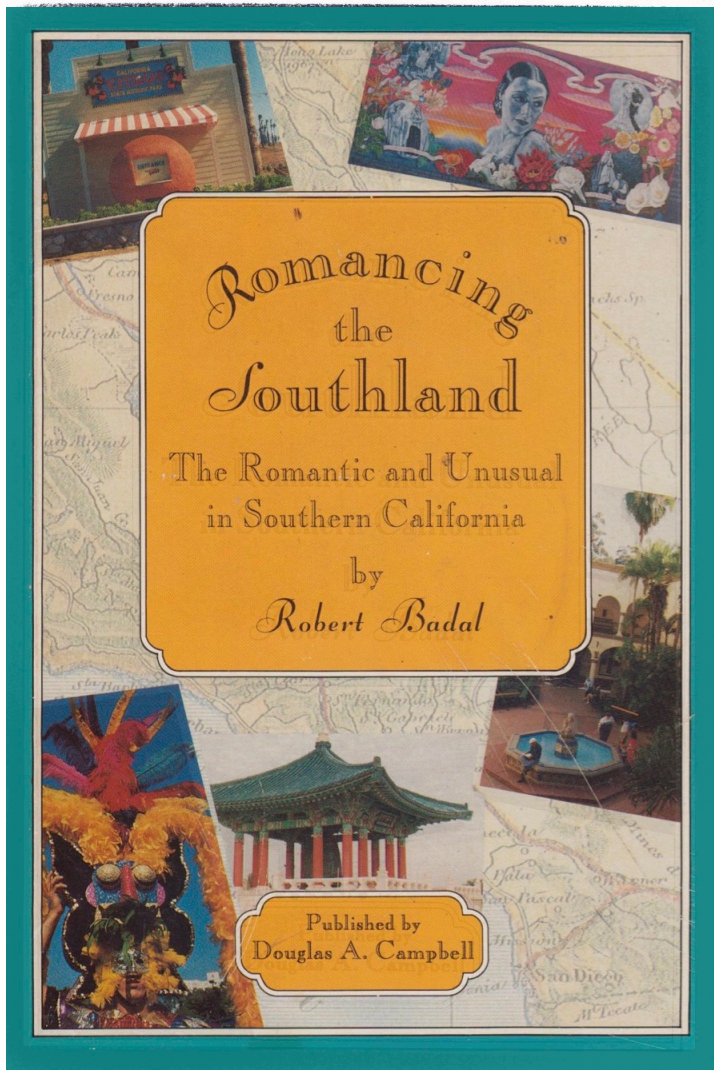


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15605 S. Carmenita Rd., Suite 107, Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670. Tel: (310) 802-9720, Fax (310) 802-9750

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This format, the author notes, was used because the climate remains pretty stable and the months are more marked by a thousand subtle occurrences, like harvests and festivals.

The Indo-American community figures through the book. And when he talks about it he provides useful thumbnail background information: In the 60s and 70s it was Indians from the south who immigrated and they tended to be affluent, well educated professionals or offspring of wealthy families. Most others came as students. In the late 70s, merchants from Gujarat swelled the numbers. Badal mentions a Mr. Lahoti and says Pioneer Blvd. is his legacy.

Others who get mentioned include Jay Bharat restaurant for its unpretentiousness, Sari Boutique for being unique, Bhindi Jewelers for its grandeur, India Food and Gifts for its variety. While Badal, unlike the city fathers, has no problem calling the area, "Little India," he rightly points out that it is less colorful than Chinatown.

That praise is reserved for the Hindu temple at Malibu which, he says, is the most spectacular manifestation of the India presence in Southern California. Then there is Anarkali restaurant from Woodland Hills and India Inn from Hollywood. The Self Realization Fellowship is in the book as a place worth stopping by.

The book's strength lies in the fact that it seeks to be not only comprehensive but also its effort to set them in perspective. This gives the reader information that even a long time resident might not have. Did you know for instance that the birthday for freeways is Dec.30 ? The busiest day on the freeways is Friday and then follows in the back order? The Pasadena freeway lanes are a full foot narrower than mandated making the curves much more abrupt?

'Romancing..' is useful, easy to read and worth the price.