

48 hours

# Palm Springs

A raft of recent openings makes the southern California city a tempting stop-off in the Golden State, writes **Jo Fernández**

**C**alifornia's glamorous desert

oasis offers more than rounds of golf and poolside cocktails. Palm Springs combines cultural, sporty and wellness activities, from surfing and hiking to farm-to-table food and exploring Indigenous culture. It was once a weekend playground beloved of Hollywood stars – Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley and Elizabeth Taylor among them – but with a variety of new hotels, restaurants and attractions to explore, this classic holiday hideaway has a fresh sense of energy. So what should clients do once they've basked in the glow of Hollywood's golden age and marvelled at its mid-century modern architecture? ➤



## DESTINATIONS

### THE US | PALM SPRINGS



FROM LEFT: Creativity at Superbloom; Palm Springs Visitor Centre; Joshua Tree National Park; Spa at Séc-he, part of the Agua Caliente Cultural Plaza; a mid-century modern home PICTURES: Visit Greater Palm Springs/Tara Howard; Myles McGuinness; Shutterstock/minizen

### INSIDER *insight*

“Watching the desert light shift across the San Jacinto Mountains feels like witnessing a living canvas. From sunrise to sunset, the colours and textures transform, glowing against the desert landscape. Floating in one of the valley’s 40,000 pools is also a true Palm Springs experience. Whether it’s drifting solo, sipping a cocktail or turning it into a pool party with friends, time in the water always strikes the perfect balance of energy and relaxation.”

**Alexis Ramirez,**  
co-founder, Superbloom



#### DAY ONE

**09.00:** Every morning should begin with a good breakfast at a classic American diner. The King’s Highway is a roadside restaurant at the hip Ace Hotel & Swim Club, with 1950s flagstone walls, terrazzo tiles and huge windows framing the misty San Jacinto Mountains. The menu’s healthy comfort food includes acai bowls rich in sweet dates, toasted coconut and drizzles of wild honey.

**10.00:** Now clients have the energy for a 90-minute session at nearby Superbloom. Part gallery, part design studio, part workshop, they can release their inner child by spraying, flicking and daubing items such as a pair of fresh white Converse trainers with paint. It’s surprisingly therapeutic as you’re encouraged to choose colours that suit your mood, and can finish by adding your own brush strokes to the old VW camper van parked outside.

**12.30:** Around three million visitors per year pass through Joshua Tree National Park, a 40-minute drive from downtown Palm Springs. This otherworldly sprawl of rugged rocks, stark landscapes and the famous

twisted tree that gave the park its name is a mesmerising place to hike and admire big-sky views. Local expert Conan Allen of tour provider Joshua Tree Connectivity showcases the park’s spiritual side, with guided hikes rich in facts about medicinal plants, rock formations and Indigenous history. It culminates in an ancient cacao ceremony, guided meditation and a sound bath.

**15.00:** Hungry? DEZ is a sweet spot for a coffee and many-layered sandwich, a few minutes’ drive along Palms Highway from the park entrance. Wraps range from organic chickpea and dill to classic pastrami and Swiss cheese with spicy mustard.

**16.00:** Head back into town to the Cultural Plaza, home to Agua Caliente Cultural Museum, which shares stories of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. There’s a moving multi-media display, Cahuilla artefacts discovered during the museum’s excavation and an educational garden. If there’s time, soak in the mineral-rich hot springs at The Spa at Séc-he next door – it has a salt cave, floatation tank, zero-gravity chair and cryotherapy.

**18.00:** It’s a five-minute drive to family-run restaurant El Mirasol, which dishes up favourites inspired by the chef’s roots in the Zacatecas region of Mexico. Sample their well-mixed margaritas, rich mole sauces, chunky guacamole and rustic tortillas.

**21.00:** After painting, hiking and exploring, clients will probably be looking forward to an early night at a hotel such as the Royal Sun. Built in the heyday of Palm Springs, it’s a classic 1950s landmark that’s recently been renovated to include High Moon, a new bar and restaurant with vintage lamps and colourful, desert-inspired decor.

#### DAY TWO

**10.00:** Palm Springs is a design lover’s dream, renowned for its mid-century modern architecture. David Dixon, creative director of the twice-yearly Modernism Week event, leads private walking tours in summer, with sights such as the House of Tomorrow – Elvis’s honeymoon hideaway – and Frank Sinatra’s Twin Palms estate, where a piano-shaped pool is hidden away behind high hedges. ➤

## DESTINATIONS

### THE US | PALM SPRINGS



LEFT:  
Professional surfer Eithan Osborne rides a Palm Springs Surf Club tube

PICTURE: Aaron Checkwood

**12.30:** A suitably SoCal lunch is barely 10 minutes away. The Heyday diner is a quirky burger joint with a simple menu of beef patties and the playfully named Magic Mushroom vegetarian burger with caramelised onions.

**14.30:** The ritzy Palm Springs Surf Club opened in 2024. Catch waves in its enormous pool, blue as the Californian sky, and if clients are new to surfing there's a one-hour, beginner-friendly session. Then they can toast to their surfing success with a tropical-inspired cocktail at the bar.

**18.00:** Everyone will fall in love with the plant-filled Porta Via Palm Desert California bistro – and that's before they've even tasted the fresh flavours. With plush green banquettes and an outside terrace, dreamy dishes

such as butternut squash tortellini in white wine sage cream sauce please a steady stream of diners.

**20.00:** Every Thursday, VillageFest takes over Palm Canyon Drive, the city's main thoroughfare. This night-time street fair has more than 180 stalls selling artisanal breads, jewellery, paintings and handicrafts, with entertainment from acoustic guitar players and singers so good they deserve a record label signing.

**21.30:** End the trip with a nightcap at the Thompson, a new hotel also on Palm Canyon Drive. Sexy, Italian-inspired Bar Issi serves blood-orange mimosas and herb-garnished spritzes, with vintage bar stools that wouldn't have been out of place in a Marilyn Monroe movie.

## BOOK IT

**Gold Medal** offers five nights' room-only at the Riviera Resort and Spa from £2,695 per person, which is based on two sharing, with flights via San Francisco, based on an October 7 departure. [goldmedal.co.uk](http://goldmedal.co.uk)

**Ocean Holidays** offers a 10-night trip including five nights at the Royal Sun and five at the Lodge at Sonoma Resort, Autograph Collection, from £2,939 per person, based on two sharing on a room-only basis, with flights via Los Angeles and car hire. Departs June 8. [ocean-holidays.co.uk](http://ocean-holidays.co.uk)

**Visit Greater Palm Springs** has more information and resources for agents at [visitgreaterpalmsprings.com/travel-trade](http://visitgreaterpalmsprings.com/travel-trade)

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