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Travel

It's Always Fabulous in Palm Springs

How to visit California's old Hollywood oasis in style.

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1 Desert Digs

If midcentury-modern architecture had a mascot, the [Horizon Hotel](#) would be it. Architect William Cody designed and built the ranch-style resort in 1952 for hotelier Jack Wrather and his Hollywood posse (Marilyn Monroe, Betty Grable and Rosalind Russell all stayed here). In 2004, the 22 rooms received a dramatic graphic-meets-minimalist overhaul. Order complimentary continental breakfast on your patio, then indulge in an in-room massage by an expert therapist. After a day of sightseeing, unwind at the poolside bar against the backdrop of the San Jacinto mountain range and the towering palm trees that surround the manicured desert grounds.

2 If You Build It

Until we went on Palm Springs Modern Tours' architectural tour, led by ebullient proprietor Robert Imber (760-318-6118), we had no idea what an Alexander house looked like, that designer Trina Turk's nautically themed vacation home is named "Ship of the Desert" or that the Ocean's Eleven remake was filmed at a house in Palm Springs. Celeb-obsessed history buffs will love Imber's juicy Hollywood lore on everyone from Sinatra to Liberace.





(Top to bottom): A graphic update at the Horizon Hotel; Pimm's Cups are just one of the retro cocktails you can order at Citron in the Jonathan Adler-designed Parker Palm Springs; The pool at the swank, Regency-inspired Viceroy Hotel.

3 Outside Lands

If you're yearning for more activity than reaching for that mid-afternoon martini, we suggest waking up early—to beat the high-noon heat—for a scenic trek through the [Indian Canyons](#). Owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, some 6,700 acres within the city limits comprise three historic canyons, including the lush Palm Canyon, where you can learn about the tribe's history on a leisurely ranger-led hike in California's largest palm-fan oasis. Hard-core hikers will want to tackle the more challenging desert terrain, including unusual rock formations, in the neighboring Andreas and Murray canyons.

4 Retro Fit

Anchored by the Spa Resort Hotel and Casino, downtown Palm Springs is undergoing a revitalization—the city plans to overhaul the casino, replace a defunct mall and usher in the Hard Rock and Mondrian hotels. What's nearby, though, is already worth an afternoon of shopping. Collectors won't go home empty-handed after meandering through the Galleria (457 N. Palm Canyon Dr.), a mid-1940s French-inspired arcade packed with antique, art and furniture shops on North Palm Canyon Drive. Look for vintage architecture books and photos at the [Palm Canyon Galleria](#), a gorgeous collection of vintage Italian glassware at [Bon Vivant](#) or California-modern accessories at [Harker Design](#). Head two blocks north to the posh new [Trina Turk](#) boutique for that desert-heat-inspired impulse buy of a floral-print tunic or color-block bikini.

5 Mix Master

Palm Springs isn't exactly foodie central, but the regal Purple Palm inside the recently renovated [Colony Palms Hotel](#) (once a popular gangster hangout) could help change that. James Corwell recently took over as executive chef, adding a Cal-Mexican sensibility to Mediterranean favorites. Ask for a candlelit table in the poolside courtyard, where you'll begin with the Carlsbad mussels steamed in a creamy toasted almond-chile broth. Move on to a plate of grilled diver scallops before ending with a mug of thick Mexican hot chocolate and a dulce de leche torte accompanied by a blood-orange sorbet.

6 Night Watch

Have an after-dinner drink at glam Citron bar inside the sleek [Viceroy Palm Springs](#) hotel, where Kelly Wearstler designed the interiors. Or make a late-night dessert run to the whimsical [Mister Parker's](#) restaurant inside the opulent Parker Palm Springs Hotel, designed by pop king Jonathan Adler. Wander the sprawling grounds, where men in hot-pink blazers and women in resort wear relax on chaise longues around crackling fire pits.

7 Boiling Point

End your stay with a visit to one of the desert's natural hot springs. Our upscale-rustic retreat of choice? [The Spring Resort & Spa](#) in Palm Desert. You'll find this serene getaway just a 20-minute drive from Palm Springs, atop the mostly residential

& Spa in Palm Desert. You'll find this serene getaway just a 20-minute drive from Palm Springs, atop the mostly residential Miracle Hill. Sign up for the signature full-body 90-minute Spring Buff, then soak for hours in one of three