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Travel Quick Fix :: Palm Springs

by David Andrusia

EDGE Contributor

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In my case, the third time was the charm.

I'd twice visited Palm Springs - one of the top three GLBT travel destinations in the U.S. - and left underwhelmed each time. A fan of neither pool lounging, hiking, nor '70s-style gay bars, I never found much to like. (Since I'm also scared of open spaces and heights, the fabled Aerial Tramway is also not on my list.)

But what I really hate is heat. So it's nothing less than miraculous that on my August visit (with daily temps hitting 110 and above), I finally "got" Palm Springs. Full disclosure: I still don't like retro gay bars, circuit parties, hotels-as-bathhouses, and strip malls. But I love the city's walkable downtown, super-stylish resorts, and increasingly appealing dining scene - and the real sense of community you'll find here. Plus, at just two hours from San Diego or LA, Palm Springs can be a welcoming desert destination indeed.

Gay travelers of all ages and seasoned straights have long heeded the call of the desert's allure. Increasingly, hot young Hollywood is making a beeline for the hip hotels, and there's an interesting intersection of this segment and fashion-focused gays. Trendy travelers take note: Palm Springs sizzles with more heat than ever, and all the happenings you should know about are here.

Horizon

Mid-century architecture fans will go ga-ga at the William Cody-designed Horizon, a classic example of the genre. A boutique without the usual attendant attitude, the Horizon's rooms are strategically placed around the pool for an asymmetrical look far more sophisticated than the usual motor-court geometry of PS hotels. Built in 1952 as a private getaway for oilman Jack Wrather, this is now an inviting, intriguing vacation spot that's among the city's very best (and the complimentary Continental breakfast doesn't hurt a bit).

1050 E. Palm Canyon Drive/760-323-1858