



Palm Springs & the Deserts

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

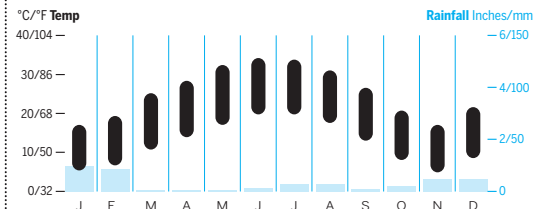
The desert is a land of contradictions: vast yet intimate, remote yet sophisticated, searing yet restorative. At first glance it may appear barren and boring, but look closer and you'll notice harrowing beauty: weathered peaks, subliminally erotic sand dunes, purple-tinged mountains, groves of cacti, tiny wildflowers pushing up from caramel-colored soil for their brief lives, and uncountable stars.

Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley, which stretches to the southeast, are the desert's chief draw for poolside lounging, golf, tennis and the 'it' factor. Nearby, Joshua Tree National Park is a favorite of hikers and rock climbers. Beyond the nearly 2-mile-high San Jacinto Mountains, gigantic Anza-Borrego Desert State Park thrills with wide-open spaces and desolate hills. Julian, to its southwest toward San Diego, was the base of Southern California's gold rush.

Spend some time here, and you too may understand why so many find this land so magical, chic and irresistible.

When to Go

Palm Springs



Dec-Apr Moderate temperatures lure in 'snowbirds' and LA weekend trippers.

May-mid-Jun, mid-Sep-Nov Crowds thin out as temperatures arc during shoulder season.

Jun-Sep Some inns and restaurants close in summer's heat; many of the rest offer great deals.

PALM SPRINGS & COACHELLA VALLEY

POP 47, 806

The Rat Pack is back, baby, or at least its hangout is. In the 1950s and '60s, Palm Springs, some 100 miles east of LA, was

the swinging getaway of Sinatra, Elvis, Liberace and dozens of other stars, partying the night away in futuristic homes built just for them. Once the Rat Pack packed it in, the 300-sq-mile Coachella (co-chell-a) Valley gave over to retirees in golf clothing and grew, well, *not* hip. That was until the mid-



Palm Springs & the Deserts Highlights

1 A nighttime mineral bath under infinite stars in **Desert Hot Springs** (p343)

2 Whisking 6000ft up the San Jacinto Mountains aboard the **Palm Springs Aerial Tramway** (p335)

3 Marveling at Palm Springs Modernist masterpieces (p338)

4 Checking out the trees and zipping up and down giant rocks at **Joshua Tree National Park** (p351)

5 Watching for wildlife in **Indian Canyons** (p339) or **Tahquitz Canyon** (p339)

6 Gazing at the vast expanse of desert that unfurls below you from

Font's Point at **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park** (p358)

7 Testing your depth perception with a mandatory photo shoot at the salt flats in **Badwater** (p363).

8 Partying with Elvis, Cirque Du Soleil style, at the **Aria** (p365), one of several captivating Cirque shows in Las Vegas.