



Westways

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QuickEscape

An Arts Oasis

Soak up the vibrant cultural scene in greater Palm Springs

By Robin Jones

I'll admit it: I'd never really considered Palm Springs a great arts town. A perfect place to sunbathe by the pool with a cold margarita? Certainly. A city with sophisticated cultural offerings? Not so much. But on a recent weekend in the area, I sought relief from the 100-degree heat in the air-conditioned Palm Springs Art Museum, and the depth and significance of the exhibits I saw made it clear how much I'd been missing. As I walked back out into the sunshine, dazzled by what I'd stumbled upon, I decided to ditch my poolside chair and dedicate the rest of my stay to discovering the desert arts scene.



APPLAUSE, APPLAUSE

The desert has long been a second home for notable performers, from Liberace to Lucille Ball to Elvis Presley. So it's no surprise that the **McCallum Theatre** in Palm Desert is a top notch performing arts venue. Its 31st anniversary season kicks off this fall, highlights include Willie Nelson (October 15), Bob Newhart (November 17), and Jake Shimabukuro (November 27). (760) 340 2787, mccallumtheatre.com.

FROM TOP: COURTESY PALMS SPRINGS ART MUSEUM; DAVID HIGGS



[historic homes]

"We have an amazing collection of mid-century modern houses no one ever sees," said Melissa Riche, author of *ModMirage: The Midcentury Architecture of Rancho Mirage*. We stopped at a stark, Bauhaus home designed by Crombie Taylor, a Neil Powellham-designed residence with a gullwing roof that looks like it's about to take off, and a William Cody-designed house that is beautiful in its simplicity. Private tours start at \$30 per person. (323) 632-9482; modmirage.com.

An iconic mid-century modern home designed by architect Val Powellson



Museum Quality

Upon its founding in 1938, the **Palm Springs Art Museum** developed a reputation for its American Indian artifacts and natural sciences exhibits. In 1963, it began showing fine art, and since 2004 it has focused on its growing collection of modern and contemporary art, photography, and sculpture. I caught the first-rate "Andy Warhol: Prints" exhibit and continued to the permanent collections. On the mezzanine, I stopped to admire a towering Dale Chihuly glass sculpture that reminded me of sea anemones swaying in the waves at low tide. And Faig Ahmed's *Oslo* translated me with its intricately woven Persian rug that appears to melt in the center, pooling on the ground. Adult admission, \$12. (760) 423-5260; psmuseum.org.



The Dreamer

Sculpting a Vision

In 1986, Palm Desert launched a public art initiative. Now, keen observers can find sculptures along the El Paseo median, on the Palm Desert Public Library grounds, and at Civic Center Park, where I spent about an hour strolling among the more than 20 installations. While I was photographing *The Dreamer*, which depicts a giant man kicking back on a grassy knoll, a maintenance worker stopped his truck next to me. "Make sure you stop at the lake before you leave," he said. "We have ducklings! Just hatched." Of course, I took his advice. Free walking tours of the collection are offered on the first Saturday of the month at 9 a.m., November through May. cityofpalmdesert.org/public-art.

[sleep]

A yearlong renovation transformed Indian Wells' 1950s-era **Sands Hotel and Spa** into a Moroccan-inspired hideaway. Painted dusty rose with white and black accents, the 46 rooms surround the pool, where sunbathers lounge on oversized daybeds. Rates start at \$159. (760) 321-3771; sandsresortandspa.com.

The 150-room **Hotel Paseo**, which opened in March in the heart of Palm Desert's main shopping district, echoes the city's mid-century modern aesthetic in its lobby, a sunny, window-lined room that opens to an enclosed courtyard with lounge chairs surrounding fire pits. A restored 1950 Airstream trailer will also soon be available for overnight stays. Rates start at \$150. (760) 340-9001; hotelpaseo.com.



The Pink Cabana at Sands Hotel and Spa

[eat]

The sushi chefs at Palm Desert's **Domo Sushi**, which opened on El Paseo in January, proffer fish so fresh it feels like velvet in your mouth. It's almost a shame to have to order it in a sushi roll, but house specialties like the Domo Arigato—with shrimp tempura, spicy tuna, avocado, and mango—are irresistible. (760) 610-5760; domosushielpaseo.com.



Free Palm Springs-Indio maps are available at Auto Club branches. For information about TourBook guides and TripTik Travel Planners, visit a branch or go to AAA.com/maps. More info about greater Palm Springs is at (760) 770-9000 and visitgreaterpalmsprings.com.

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