

Forbes

Looking For The Hottest New Hotel In Palm Springs? Try Palm Desert

Palm Springs has always been a town of gentle sun-crisped one-upmanship: think "My mid-century modern house has more original mid-century fixtures than yours" or "My swimming pool is bigger" or—and I've heard this one too—"I was invited to Barry Manilow's pool party and you weren't." Lately the daiquiri-slinging has turned to which hotel is the coolest, as brash new spots like The Kimpton Rowan Palm Springs Hotel and smaller ones like the rebooted Holiday House reset the social scene. But for my money the most exciting entrant to this unofficial competition is not in Palm Springs proper but in one of those Other Desert Cities: it's the [Hotel Paseo](#), which officially opened today in Palm Desert.



“My wife Linda and I have been visiting Palm Desert for the past 10 years and noticed that El Paseo [a major shopping street] was missing a luxury hotel to complement its world-class fashion, art, and dining,” says developer Robert Leach. And what the 150-room Hotel Paseo, which is part of Marriott's

Autograph Collection, does better than anything of its size I've seen in the Coachella Valley is blend a breezy cosmopolitanism with a celebration of the local vibe, which is both relaxed and more creative than you might think. From a newly kitted out 25-foot 1950 Airstream trailer replete with eight-foot reclaimed black walnut bar to the "global New American" tastes of the AC3 Restaurant and Bar to the remarkable collection of California contemporary art, the Paseo is on point in all the right places.

The Hotel Paseo does more than pay lip service to the local, it actively incorporates it at touch points throughout the property. I respect a hotel that does this because it creates a path to a more engaging, enjoyable experience all around. The first way it accomplishes this is through design. It's a multistory property, but the orientation you get from the entrance is more horizontal than vertical and that's a good thing: the Coachella Valley is ringed by mountains on most sides, and doesn't do tall buildings well: three floors is enough. The cantilevered roof evokes the mid-century architecture of Albert Frey, in particular his iconic Tramway Gas Station; a pair of towering palm trees protrudes through a modernista porte-cochère, taking the hard edge off the angles.

The designer mercifully eschewed earth tones and went for the white: a perfect choice to reflect the clarity of the light in these parts and also a fitting backdrop for a lobby that's as much democratic art gallery as it is a place to check in. Floor-to-ceiling glass doors and panels let the light spill in and splash over the white Calacatta marble floors. There's a mannequin diving into artist Tom Swimm's painting *Welcome to Southern California*. There's lots of art. The first time I saw the lobby I was reminded in terms of energy if not aesthetic of one my favorite hotels anywhere, the [Diaghilev Live Art Hotel](#) in Tel Aviv. Guest rooms have soft gray, white, and light blue tones, going on with the by now obligatory barn doors opening to spa-inspired luxury bathrooms.

What else? There's dapper and affable GM Gil Reyes who I have met (but whose Yorkipoo Armani I have not). As well as a full-service spa (opening in April), sweet new pool and adjacency to El Paseo, Palm Desert's answer to Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Myriad shops and restaurants are literally footsteps from the hotel's front door but for the best place to imbibe and nosh in the area, you're already home. The AC3 restaurant is the result of a collaboration between noted Palm Springs restaurants Copley's and Trio (the

latter a spot known to have been frequented by celebrities including Robert Downey Jr.).



There's a talented young chef named Brandon Testi who is turning heads straight out of the gate with desert-delish dishes such as Jumbo Lump Crab Cakes with wasabi guacamole, sweet and sour sauce, and tobiko; Berkshire Pork Schnitzel with dijonaise crushed potatoes, and the (completely addictive) Crispy Brussels Sprouts with smoked jalapeño vinaigrette, pomegranate seeds, and cotija cheese.

Designers Monique Lemon and Angela Paladino of Design One Eleven in nearby Indian Wells adorned the large, high-ceilinged space with white and warm woods, with very Californian pops of colors like lemongrass green, blue-violet purple, fire orange and candy red. Seating at both tables and around the big U-shaped bar is almost gleefully *post*-mid-century modern in design. Pushing the envelope further, it is exciting to see the work of a young and gifted local artist, 22-year-old [Nicholas Kontaxis](#), prominently displayed. His large-scale, multicolor canvases are a fitting connection to the other artworks on the property and by design or happy accident amplify AC3's joyous buzz. And did somebody say al fresco? (Yes, it was probably me.) Sidling up to the terrace means you can drink in stunning views of the

San Jacinto Mountains along with your Blood Orange Margarini or [Palm Desert Paloma](#). The desert could use more refreshment like this.



"Backyard Lawn" at the Hotel Paseo in Palm Desert, CA. The hotel entrance (not pictured) is just steps from the numerous shops of El Paseo. DANIEL COLLOPY