

Palm Springs offers up several vacations in one

by Joe Morris
Managing Editor

Looking for a sun-drenched getaway and want to avoid the usual destinations in Florida or the Gulf Coast? Then head west... way west.

Fans of the annual White Party are plenty familiar with Palm Springs, but others around these parts may not be acquainted with the warm, lush desert oasis. But with more than two dozen gay owned and operated resort

hotels, a lively and diverse restaurant and nightclub scene, architectural and cultural tours, canyon and desert hiking, and sun - lots and lots of sun—the city has long been a favorite of West Coast GLBT travelers.

Travel into the city is easy, with flights to and from Palm Springs International dropping you off literally minutes from your hotel, and there are also connectors Los

Angeles and Ontario to the north. Once on the ground, it's just a matter of checking in, then checking out by poolside.

And what poolside they are. Palm Springs has upwards of 40 GLBT resorts and guesthouses, and they come in all shapes and sizes.

In the Warm Sands area you've got the well appointed, Shirley Temple-approved Warm Sands Villas (as a child, Ms. Temple had her

own guesthouse by the pool); the all-suites Hacienda, a top-tier romantic hideaway; the sleek, retro chic of the Century, where the poolside planters give "supersized" a whole new meaning; the Desert Paradise, where chandeliers grace the palm trees and your favorite Hollywood star may well have her own suite; INNdulge, one of the city's historic inns where John and Jean-Guy will throw in a "Citrus 101" lesson so you don't mix up your lemons and oranges; All Worlds (yep, that one), where four different resorts have been combined into a 24/7 getaway for visitors and locals alike; and not too far away there's the East Canyon Hotel & Spa, where sunning can be interrupted for a professional massage and/or facial treatment.

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Over in the San Lorenzo area, there's the Triangle Inn, another historic site where Southern (California) hospitality reigns supreme (they say y'all, y'all!); the Santiago, a two-story affair with plenty of amenities; Tortuga del Sol, where the turtles watch over a Southwest-themed pool, courtyard and more; and again, lots of others.

Now tear yourself away from those 12-man hot tubs and start thinking about lunch, or dinner.

It won't take long to find something to suit most every appetite and budget, from the appetizers and more at the Tropicale or the Asian/Thai specialties at Wang's in the Desert to a new favorite, Trio Restaurant, which features an American-modern menu and also supports local charities through its rotating artwork exhibits.

If breakfast is more what you have in mind, there's a whole page on the menu at Pinocchio's that has "Benedict" after every item, and they start pouring the mimosas bright'n early every day.

And c'mon, you know you want to go out. When you do, head on over to Arenas Road, a one-block stretch that's the Ground Zero for Palm Springs' GLBT nightlife.

Start out at Hunter's, where if you're lucky the fabulous Bella da Ball will be hosting a show that includes some beauties and will be the most fun you've had at a drag show in years,

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The view is great from the roof of the Shirley Temple cottage at Warm Sands Resort.



Century Palm Springs Resort has a modern look while others are more southwestern and traditional.



This outcropping at Indian Canyons trailhead was used by Disney animators for "The Lion King."

guaranteed. (As an aside, it's worth noting that Palm Springs also is host to the Fabulous Follies, where the showgirls are aged 56 and up. This is a town that appreciates a well-seasoned showgirl.) And as for Bella's show, can you really go wrong with an entertainer named Pinkie Meringue Shimmer?

Also on the Arenas drag (or nearby) you've got Toucan's, home of a lethal two-for-one happy hour, Streetbar, Bongo Johnny's Patio Bar & Grill and plenty of other spots to rest your weary self.

Don't get too blotto, though, because you'll want to devote an entire morning to tearing around town with Robert Imber, who runs Palm Springs Modern Tours.

What Imber doesn't know about this burg's architecture isn't worth knowing, and you'll leave with a head full of fun facts and a sincere appreciation for all things Modern. (You'll also know where Ruta Lee and Trini Lopez live, plus see Liberace's old driveway gates.)

And for those who want even more outdoorsy adventures, the Indian Canyons are not to be missed. With hikes ranging from one to three miles and in varying degrees of complexity, this is the perfect place to learn about the Agua Caliente Cahuilla Indians, and see the range of wildlife that flourishes in an unforgiving climate. There's also a rock outcropping that'll be familiar to you Disney buffs.

There's more, plenty more, including the Palm Springs Art Museum, as well as a cluster of settler's homes that comprise the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum, five different casinos, and more Hollywood connections than you can shake a palm frond at.

In short, Palm Springs has pretty much got it all, and has remained remarkably unspoiled while still being very, very cosmopolitan, and that's no easy feat. **O&AN**

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