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ART IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS OFF THE WALL

A look into the living history of
site-specific land art across the
Rocky Mountain West. p. 74



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TRAVEL BY DESIGN
HEAD TO THE DESERT! The hotels and motels of Palm Springs p. 116



WELCOME TO PALM SPRINGS: THE DESERT OASIS WHERE MODERNISM CAME TO PLAY. THIS FORMER RAT PACK HIDEAWAY—POPULATION: 45,000—IS STILL A LOCUS FOR THE DESIGN GLITTERATI. HERE'S WHY, PLUS WHERE TO STAY AND WHAT TO DO.

Palm Springs Forward

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IMAGES: Mickkail Cain

IF you've ever wondered why Palm Springs, a once sleepy stagecoach stopover in the middle of the desert, became a destination for Hollywood stars, the answers might surprise you. For one thing, studios once had a "two-hour rule" requiring that talent couldn't jet more than two hours from the lot during filming—making far-flung vacays impossible. For another? Paparazzi were forbidden to take anyone's photo in Palm Springs without permission. That sense of privacy made it a hedonistic hideout where everyone from Frank Sinatra to Marilyn Monroe had a lush getaway. Why wouldn't they? Everyone loves a playground.

In the decades since, Palm Springs has become a design darling on a global scale, thanks in part to those Hollywood elites who brought their architects with them. In many ways, what they built was a design revolution. The city quickly became a living laboratory for mid-century modern architecture, shaped by some of the most adventurous minds in the field—including an early influx of modern architects like Richard Neutra (who designed the 1946 Kaufmann Desert House, made famous in Slim Aarons photographs in the 70s), Albert Frey (who spent five years selecting the site for his hillside home here), and Donald Wexler (architect behind many buildings, including the Palm Springs International Airport). This was architecture for a new kind of living and lounging. Open floor plans, sliding glass doors, deep eaves for shade—everything pointed outward toward the sun-drenched, bougainvillea-shrouded patios and turquoise swimming pools that became synonymous with Palm Springs chic.

While tastes changed in the decades that followed, the city's design DNA has remained—a stylish celebration of all things terrazzo, teak, and breeze block. Then and now, most homes in town are required to be single story in an effort to preserve views of the San Jacinto Mountains, and it works. Read on to learn where to stay and how to indulge in the ultimate Palm Springs escape for design lovers. Don't forget to pack your Pucci.





Drift Hotel

When o2 Architecture first began envisioning Drift Hotel, “We were seeking to keep the design clean and unadorned with inspiration from arid Mediterranean architecture,” says Lance C. O’Donnell of the Palm Springs firm. “This architecture is naturally bright and health-promoting with interiors and exteriors utilizing white plaster, natural wood and textiles, metals and glass.” It’s also a visual standout, adding eye candy to the city’s main drag. And that aesthetic allure continues indoors. “Typically, interior spaces from this region have high ceilings and modest windows to moderate outdoor temperatures and summer extremes. A few pops of color were inspired by the local flora, with their vibrant seasonal colors and fragrant scents.” Don’t miss the cabana-lined outdoor pool, where cocktail service awaits.

drifthotels.co



Minimalism meets the mountains at the sleek Drift Hotel, where crisp white facades, sculptural cacti, and honeyed desert light turn heads. The dose of yellow supplies just enough warmth to make cool modernism feel delightful.

Know Before You Go

GETTING TO PALM SPRINGS: IT’S A ZIPPY 2 HOUR, 17 MINUTE NONSTOP FLIGHT FROM DEN TO PSP, WITH OPTIONS FROM UNITED, FRONTIER, AND SOUTHWEST.

Mid-Mod Neighborhood Tours:

Fans of mid-century architecture may want to take the self-guided tour offered by Visit Palm Springs (visitpalmsprings.com). After all, this town holds the largest concentration of preserved mid-century modern architecture on Earth... including homes by everyone from Richard Neutra to Albert Frey. Rather tour with a pro? Book through Palm Springs Mod Squad (psmodsquad.com) for jaunts like the Essential Palm Springs Tour, a 90-minute whirl by the exteriors of the city’s most iconic properties, or Interior Tour, in which you’ll step inside three homes themselves, all steeped in decor history.

Hot Dates:

Palm Springs experiences a visitor boom during a few key dates throughout the year, for good reason. There’s Modernism Week (modernismweek.com; October 16–19, 2025 and February 12–22, 2026), a festival that’s been luring the design cognoscenti to town for 20 years. And Coachella (coachella.com), which in April 2025 saw Lady Gaga, Missy Elliott, and Green Day take the stage, among dozens of others.

Eat:

Set within Cary Grant’s former guest house, Copley’s (copleypalmsprings.com) is the spot for celebrations of every sort, thanks to an indulgent menu that includes everything from pomegranate-glazed Scottish salmon to New York steaks served with truffle fries. For something more low-key, The Heyday (theheydaypalmsprings.com) is now a local favorite for its smash burgers—made from steak trimmings with caramelized onions and housemade Thousand Island dressing.

Play:

When in Palm Springs, three things are a must: Palm Springs Art Museum (psmuseum.org), which has 28 galleries and two sculpture gardens, as well as Albert Frey’s own former Palm Springs home within its collection; Sunnylands (sunnylands.org), the sprawling A. Quincy Jones-designed home where the Annenbergs once hosted everyone from Queen Elizabeth II to President Barack Obama; and the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway (pstramway.com), where you can ascend from desert to Colorado-esque mountaintop in a matter of minutes.