



PALM
SPRINGS
REFRESHER



GET RENEWED AND REVITALIZED
AT THESE CLASSIC—AND
NEWLY HIP—DESERT SPAS

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Even before the Rat Pack made Palm Springs a swinging retreat in the '50s, stars like Greta Garbo and Cary Grant sought refuge here, just a two-hour drive from the Hollywood soundstages. Today, this desert getaway known for its restorative waters, dramatic landscape and lazy, iconic trees is stylistically hot again. Due to the reinvigorated interest in both mid-century Modernism and the SoCal leisure life, a new generation is heading to the area's design-centric spa resorts. Luckily, you don't need to score a network deal—or even to check in overnight—to savor the experience: For the price of a treatment, you can luxuriate all day at a number of celebrated retreats. Here are five of our favorites.

1.

THE WITTY DECADENT

PALM SPRINGS YACHT CLUB AT THE PARKER PALM SPRINGS

In 2004, designer Jonathan Adler (head judge of Bravo's *Top Design*) redid Merv Griffin's Resort & Givenchy Spa, adding a stylish irreverence the desert had never seen. The artsy, boho-modern playland is decorated with whimsical pottery, bright geometric shapes, South American prints, animal skins and wire-grid Bertioia chairs. Last summer, the resort enjoyed a Bravo show of its own, *Welcome to the Parker*, which showed off fab guests at play on the red clay tennis and petanque courts, lounging by the four pools (two saline) and cooling off at the retro lemonade stand. Adler's manifesto: "We believe in the American country club experience: mixed doubles, a long steam and a stiff cocktail."

The 16,500-square-foot spa is humorously called the Palm Springs Yacht Club, and the 20 treatment "cabins" continue the nautical theme with porthole windows and ships' names (Mayflower, Manifesto, Black Magic). Don't miss the Voodoo We Do (\$180), a Thai stretch massage, or Poseidon's Confidant (\$180), a facial that combines moisturizing collagen with licorice and orange blossoms. During the Soak-A-Vision (\$80), you can watch a DVD from a giant hydro-jet tub while steeping in water scented with, say, patchouli and vanilla. If there's any stress left in that body, the spa's 24-hour gym, called the Boiler Room, may well be the best-equipped than any other hotel gym in town.

2.

THE HIP SYBARITE

ESTRELLA SPA AT THE VICEROY PALM SPRINGS

Lucille Ball and Bing Crosby used to hang out at this 1930s Spanish colonial-style bungalow hotel. Then in 2001, Los Angeles designer Kelly Wearstler (another judge on *Top Design*—see a theme?) re-imagined the resort as a sort of Hollywood regency-meets-Alice-in-Modland. Faux-ancient busts and oversized chairs join citrus trees on the lawn. Inside are marble tables, mirrored walls, white shag carpets and stark white surfaces accented by spots of black and lemon yellow. The property also features three pools.

The Estrella Spa feels like a movie star's guesthouse, with futuristic translucent outdoor chairs and the rocky desert ridge rising behind it. The interior has white fireplaces and brightly upholstered French antiques. Though you can get all the traditional massages here, the L.A. hipster set opts for more creative treatments like the Hammam Detox, which uses Moroccan mint tea in a refreshing scrub, followed by an aromatic clay wrap (\$185); and the Bamboo Ritual, which gets your blood flowing with yuzu mimosa, algae and crushed bamboo (from \$120). Though the place may be glitzy, the massage therapists are caring and attentive. If you're coming for the day, arrive early to have time for a yoga class, some treatments and a lengthy laze by the pool with complimentary Mind Over Muddle herbal tonics. Then dine poolside on elegant comfort food at the hotel's acclaimed Citron restaurant.

3.

THE INDULGENT SPIRITUALIST

THE WELL SPA AT MIRAMONTE, INDIAN WELLS

A manicured golf community 20 minutes east of Palm Springs, Indian Wells is home to the 215-room Miramonte, a Mediterranean-style resort with flagstone courtyards and, yes, a wishing well, all in view of the Santa Rosa Mountains. A recent \$10-million renovation gave its Well Spa a sophisticated Tuscan 2.0 design while adding four mud-mixing bars and 14 massage rooms.

The Well appeals to traditional desert visitors looking to restore their sense of well-being with more holistic treatments. The Aroma for Life Massage (from \$190), for example, uses an oil custom-blended according to your responses to a lifestyle questionnaire (Do you smoke? Are you anxious? Fatigued?). After a yoga and exercise class, such as yo-chi (a blend of yoga and tai chi, \$18), you can relax under the grotto's massaging waterfalls. The Pittura Festa (from \$145) is a painting party in which guests take turns applying colored (nourishing) mud to their friends and partners. The Watsu massage (\$130) teaches partners restorative in-water bodywork that they can do at home in a pool or bathtub. During the Bella Body (\$150), warm gauze is wrapped around the torso and dried to create a "sculpture"—intended for sentimental pregnant women (or perhaps severe egomaniacs).

Calm yourself: (clockwise from top left) Mid-treatment at The Spring in Desert Hot Springs; the patio at Norma's, one of the Parker's restaurants; scallop dish at Citron, at the Viceroy; healing moves at the Viceroy's Estrella Spa; Citron's lemon-yellow room; treatment ingredients at the Estrella Spa; a yo-chi class at The Well; a Joshua tree at Joshua Tree National Park; poolside at the Parker. Previous spread: The Parker's fabulous front entrance; a corner of suite 104 at the Viceroy.



4.

THE CHIC NATURALIST

TWO BUNCH PALMS, DESERT HOT SPRINGS

Legend has it that this cozy 1920s retreat outside Desert Hot Springs, just a 15-minute drive north of Palm Springs, was once Al Capone's hideaway, and it still feels utterly secluded. Lanky fan palms and tamarisk trees shade the grassy, 56-acre grounds and low-rise buildings house the 53 guest rooms. Streams of hot mineral springs water flow into two pools in the grotto, complete with waterfall. Guests may not speak above a whisper in any public spaces except the Cal-Med restaurant.

Hollywood royalty—such as Madonna and Bruce Springsteen—have checked in here for a choice of more than 45 eclectic treatments, such as the four-hand synchronized Ayurvedic massage (as sitar music plays, hot oil drips onto your forehead; \$250). Some treatment rooms are underground in a former bordello in Capone's casino building. Just a few feet away are the clay cabanas where Tim Robbins, playing a movie producer, took a mud bath with his mistress in Robert Altman's *The Player*. Two Bunch is more laid-back, and slightly more hippie, than your average boutique spa—which is what guests love. The robes are less luxurious than those at the Four Seasons, but somehow more comforting. Then there's the nearly infantilizing Wassertanzen treatment (\$120/60 minutes), a shiatsu-style massage in which a therapist holds your body close to his or hers in warm water to work your muscles, ending with a few moments of full submersion.

5.

THE HIDDEN SOAK

THE SPRING RESORT & SPA, DESERT HOT SPRINGS

The elegant, former spa-tel sits on a hill overlooking Desert Hot Springs. When the wind kicks up, you'll want to run for the Finnish sauna or right into one of three mineral pools whose waters are said to have healing powers (the warmer the pool, the higher the mineral content). Once your body is warmed up, try the European Power Polish: a lymphatic massage (to drain toxins) followed by a serious exfoliation and an iced-lemongrass-and-ginger wrap with scalp rub (\$120). The Sinus Facial (\$55) and Cranial Dreamwork massage (\$100) may not sound luxurious, but they effectively relieve nasal pressure, migraines, TMJ and general stress.

Built in the 1950s, the resort has clean, unobtrusive furniture in earth-tone colors throughout the low-lying, wood-beamed buildings. Intimate guest rooms open onto a patio; they tend to lure movie industry types and Whole Foods fans. Each of the 10 rooms has a full kitchen (necessary since there's no restaurant on the grounds). You can come for the day, but you might leave wondering why you didn't book the weekend—those guests lingering over their berry and melon fruit plates just seem so . . . rested. 🍷

Opposite: Taking the waters at The Spring. The spa's mineral-rich springs emerge from the ground at 170 degrees, and its three mineral pools range in temperature from 88 degrees (shown) to 104 degrees.

TAKE IT HIGHER

Palm Springs offers more than spas: It's also a haven for nature lovers keen to explore the desert landscapes. In winter, mountain climbs are no sweat—starting at a pleasant 75 degrees and reaching a cool 50 at the top. Here, three favorite hikes, including one that starts with a ride up into the Coachella Valley sky.

ANDREAS CANYON TRAIL

Created in 1923 on land bought from the Southern Pacific Railroad, and just a few miles south of downtown Palm Springs, the two-mile Andreas Canyon Trail follows a stream past palms and cholla cactuses—as well as 150 other species of plants—over one jagged rock formation after another. indian-canyons.com

49 PALMS OASIS TRAIL

Just 45 minutes from the Palm Springs area, the 49 Palms Oasis Trail in Joshua Tree National Park is a slightly rocky and moderately strenuous three-mile canyon walk that takes you past jaw-dropping fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*, for the botanists) and delicious pools of cool water. nps.gov/jotr

MOUNT SAN JACINTO

During the 2½-mile ride up the mountain on the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, you'll see the desert landscape become increasingly alpine. Once you reach the peak, there's a ¾-mile nature walk through pine tree-filled Long Valley. Bring a jacket—it can get chilly up there. pstramway.com

stay

RCI-affiliated resorts in the Palm Springs area include:



INDIAN PALMS VACATION CLUB, Indio

INDIAN PALMS VACATION INTERVALS, Indio

RAINTREE'S CIMARRON GOLF RESORT PALM SPRINGS, Cathedral City

For more information, visit RCI.com or call
Weeks: 800-338-7777
Points: 877-968-7476

THE SPAS:

PALM SPRINGS YACHT CLUB AT THE PARKER PALM SPRINGS

4200 E. Palm Canyon Dr., Palm Springs; 760-770-5000; theparkerpalmsprings.com; doubles from \$325, treatments extra

ESTRELLA SPA AT THE VICEROY PALM SPRINGS

415 S. Belardo Rd., Palm Springs; 760-320-4117; viceroypalmsprings.com; doubles from \$239, treatments extra

THE WELL SPA AT MIRAMONTE RESORT

45-000 Indian Wells Lane, Indian Wells; 760-341-2200; miramonteresort.com; doubles from \$299, treatments extra

TWO BUNCH PALMS

67425 Two Bunch Palms Trail, Desert Hot Springs; 760-329-8791; twobunchpalms.com; doubles from \$259, treatments extra

THE SPRING RESORT & SPA

12699 Reposo Way, Desert Hot Springs; 760-251-6700; the-spring.com; doubles from \$149, treatments extra

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