



Photos by Suzanne Morphet/Special Contributor

Tahquitz Canyon is owned by the Agua Caliente Indian Band. The area's winter temperatures are perfect for hiking.

Retro's cool in Palm Springs

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Age Pop."

The Del Marcos, designed in 1947 by William F. Cody, was the first independent commission for the architect, winning him a creative-design award and launching his career in the style that became known as desert modernism.

"Midcentury was booming," Ramstead says of that period.

"It was an incredible time of life, a time of excess. ... You had to be wealthy."

It would be easy to lounge by the saltwater pool all week, emulating the Hollywood stars who flocked to Palm Springs in that era, but there are too many other things to do. Most importantly, the desert beckons.

The Coachella Valley boasts 1,250 miles of hiking trails, according to Philip Ferranti, author of *140 Great Hikes in and Near Palm Springs* (Westcliffe, \$19.15). Guidebook in hand, we headed to a different area each day, from palm-filled canyons to

fragrant sage-covered mountaintops.

Winter temperatures are perfect for hiking. But even then it can get uncomfortably hot in slot canyons and along valley bottoms.

"Stay by the water," warned the sunburned woman we picked up hitchhiking on our way to Lower Palm Canyon one day. She and her partner had left the trail by the creek bed to take a shortcut and got lost. Six hours later, exhausted, they finally came to the road.

A sweeter way to end a day of hiking is to visit Shields Date Garden and sip an icy cold date shake.

While there, don't miss the free flick on the sex life of dates.

And there's no better way to spend an evening in Palm Springs than listening to Frank Sinatra and his pals sing about a different time, one you can still glimpse at the Del Marcos.

Suzanne Morphet is a freelance writer in Victoria, B.C., Canada.



Vintage furniture decorates the lobby and each of the rooms at the Del Marcos Hotel.

When you go

Stay

The Del Marcos Hotel is located in the historic hotel and shopping district, one block from downtown. It's within easy cycling distance of the Vistas Las Palmas neighborhood, with its acclaimed midcentury residential architecture. Coaster bikes are available to guests of the hotel. delmarcoshotel.com

Eat

Lulu California Bistro, 200 S. Palm Canyon Drive, draws diners like moths to a light. Lower prices if you sit at the bar. The avocado and ahi tuna tartare appetizer (\$12.99) was memorable. lulupalmsprings.com/index.htm

Native Foods Café, 1775 E. Palm Canyon Drive, offers delicious vegan cuisine. Eat in or take out. nativefoods.com

Koffi, 515 N. Palm Canyon Drive, serves great coffee and muffins. kofficoffee.com

See

Shields Date Garden is half an hour east of Palm Springs on Highway 111 at Indio. shieldsdategarden.com/default.aspx

TEXAS & NEIGHBORS

TEXAS

Enjoy fall fun at several state parks

It's campfire and camping season — and really, the best time of the year to explore the state's parks. Here are a couple:

■ Built in 1934 and modeled after the Mission San Francisco de los Tejas, the state's first Spanish mission, Mission Tejas State Park is a great place for fishing, camping and enjoying fall. The curious can get a crash course in the area's history from 7 to 8 p.m. Friday. The park has 24 fishing poles for visitors; eight GPS units are also available on loan for geocaching. Park entry is \$2 per adult; children 12 and younger get in free. Email mick.haven@tpwd.texas.gov for more on the educational session.

■ Camping, fishing, rock climbing, mountain biking and other activities abound at Lake Mineral Wells State Park & Trailway. Park interpreter David Owens will take visitors on a walk through Penitentiary Hollow's most remote areas from 2 to 4 p.m. Dec. 14. The trek involves crawling through narrow rock crevices and short caves, so dress appropriately. Entrance is \$7 per adult; children 12 and younger are free. Reservations: 940-328-1171.

Contact: tpwd.state.tx.us

Jessica Elliott



Winter Park Resort

Get a second night for half price when you book one night at a Winter Park property through Dec. 20.

COLORADO

Don't have to look too hard for ski deals

White powder has fallen across the state, and there are an abundance of deals. Here are a few:

■ Arapahoe Basin: Children 14 and younger ski free Dec. 1-20 and get \$10 off snow-sports classes, too. arapahoebasin.com.

■ Copper Mountain: Get a third night of lodging, a day of rentals and a third day of ski lessons free when booking at least three nights. Kids 12 and younger ski free, too, with the purchase of an adult Secret Pass. Book the package now to be used anytime through April 20. coppercolorado.com.

■ Crested Butte: You'll have to book the trip ASAP, but it's worth mentioning that Crested Butte Mountain Resort is offering free skiing on opening day, which is Wednesday. If you can't make it, you can still catch an early-season deal: It's \$79 per person each night to ski and stay at the Grand Lodge Crested Butte, through Dec. 17. skicb.com/earlyseason.

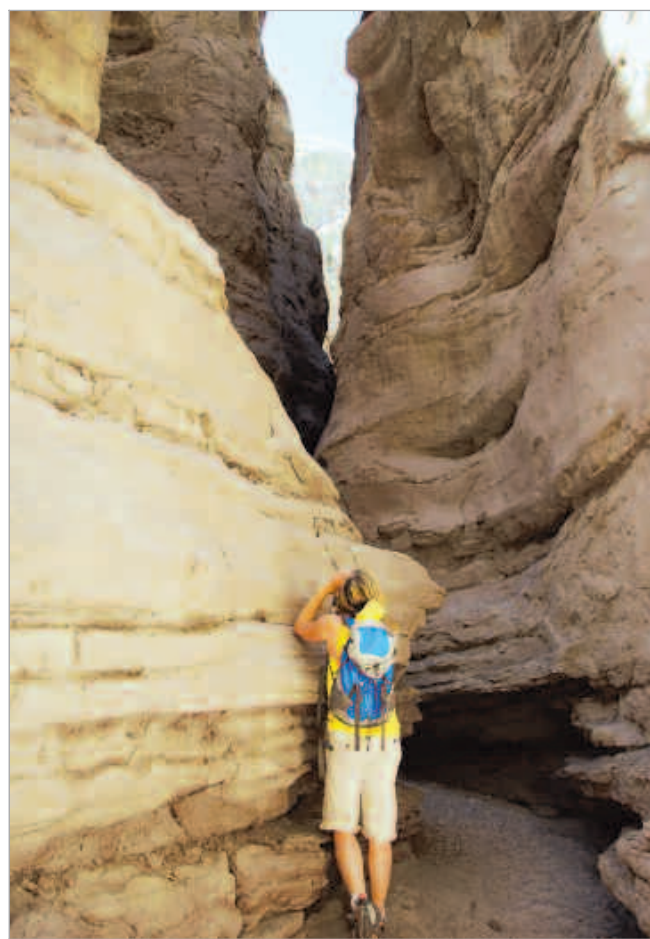
■ Winter Park: Book one night at a Winter Park property through Dec. 20 and get a second night for half-price. Or book two nights and get a free lift ticket for children 6 to 12 years old with the purchase of an adult lift ticket through Dec. 19. winterparkresort.com.

■ Wolf Creek: Wolf Creek Ski Area is offering a Ladies Day Ski and Board Clinic. It includes a two-hour women's lesson from 10 a.m. to noon Dec. 7 and an all-mountain lift ticket, all for \$69. wolfcreekski.com.

J.E.



Shields Date Garden has been in business for almost 90 years. A date shake is a great way to refuel.



The Mecca Hills southeast of Palm Springs are riddled by slot canyons. There are no trails — just follow the canyon for as long as you want.



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