

Desert Wonderland By: Zachary Kussin

The New York Post says:
Travel



WADE JUST A SECOND: Poolside at the Parker Palm Springs, designed by Jonathan Adler (above).



HOORN THE BOSS? El Jefe's fully stocked liquor shelves at Saguaro.

With new nonstop flights, Palm Springs is now closer than ever

By ZACHARY KUSSIN

ISN'T that where middle-aged gay guys vacation?" asked almost everyone when I recently jetted off for a weekend in sunny Palm Springs, Calif.

That's partly true. Yes, Palm Springs — a charming resort city located about 100 miles east of L.A. — is known for its vibrant LGBT culture. But look at this locale through a wide-angle lens and you'll see it's a thrilling destination with plenty of fun for all.

For instance, its buzzing downtown is home to the impressive **Palm Springs Art Museum** (pmsmuseum.org), and a number of art galleries, shops and eateries. For hipsters, the Greater Palm Springs area also hosts the popular music festival **Coachella** — a two-weekend gig beginning April 15 with headliners including Guns N' Roses and LCD Soundsystem (coachella.com).

Combine it all with new hotels, like the soon-to-debut **V Palm Springs** (from \$300; vpalmsprings.com) and the 2016-opened **Triada Palm Springs** (from \$180; triadapalmsprings.com), plus a newly launched nonstop JetBlue flight from New York (from \$247 one-way; jetblue.com). The flight only returns to JFK as a red-eye, but this first-time direct service means it's a great time to book your escape.

Here's how everyone can get the most out of it.

MAKE HISTORY
If you're fixin' for a dose of remarkable mid-century modern architecture, look no further. Palm Springs is home to one of the world's highest concentration of mid-century modern properties, and there are great ways to see them inside and out.

Book a trek with **The Modern Tour** (\$50 per person; themoderntour.com), which will drive you by Libraccio's former manse and let you walk through other homes. One stop for strolling is the glassy hillside-perched Frey House II, designed and lived in by architect Albert Frey, which overlooks all of Palm Springs below.

once the area's gorgeous desert-meets-mountainous landscape. — and if you're not afraid of quick vertical ascents in a cable car that rotates as it climbs — take the **Palm Springs Aerial Tramway** (\$24.95 for adults; palmtramway.com) to Mount San Jacinto State Park, whose summit towers a whopping 3,054 feet above sea level (parks.ca.gov). Hardcore hikers can actually traverse all the way up to the granite peak, but folks who aren't as fit can check out the mile-long nature walk through the wooded Long Valley, located just off the tramway's stop.

If you want to stay at ground level, visit nearby **Joshua Tree National Park** (\$20; nps.gov) — the 794,000-acre expanse where the Mojave and Colorado deserts meet. Book a tour with **Desert Adventures** (\$200 for adults; red-jeep.com), whose expert guides will whisk you to the park's popular spots — including the sheer Hidden Valley circuit and Keys View, which looks over the San Andreas Fault.

EAT IT!
Whatever the priority is for your trip, you'll need to keep yourself fueled. Grab breakfast at King's Highway — the vintage-chic diner at the **Ace Hotel Palm Springs**, which formerly housed a Denny's location (acehotel.com). Start off with an order of fresh croissants served with honey-sweetened butter. Next, something more hearty, like the ricotta pancakes or the Moroccan

scramble — items right off the menu at partnering Five Leaves in Beesiklyn.

Mosey on down to **Babe's Bar-B-Que** in Rancho Mirage for lunch (babesbarbecue.com). You might not expect authentic southern barbecue in SoCal, but its coriander, smoked meats (brisket!) and peach crisp will let you take a brief vacation from your vacation.

Find your way to **Shields Date Garden** for a date milkshake — Palm Springs' omnipresent sweet treat — which natives say serves up the area's best (shieldsdategarden.com). Nearby, for adult beverages, check out the **Coachella Valley Brewing Company** (cvbc.com), which prides itself on craft brews made from local ingredients.

Never miss the opportunity to have Mexican food in California — it's more authentic and tastes far fresher than New York's bland selection. Head to **El Jefe** in the hip Saguaro hotel (eljefehotel.com) for dinner, where you can wash down pizza, fish tacos and skirt steak nachos with strong margarita.

STAY
You can't go wrong at the luxe 314-room **Parker Palm Springs** (from \$350; theparkerpalmprings.com). Its upscale diner, Norma's, serves breakfast all day long, while Mister Parker's — a bistro — delivers dinner in cozy settings. Jonathan Adler designed its interiors.

TRANS-PARENT: En route to sexy Mt. San Jacinto.



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