

# PALM SPRINGS

*A desert jewel surrounded by the towering red San Jacinto Mountains, Palm Springs bubbles with testosterone.*

**Michael Darton**

**a**long with local Californians, men from the world over flock here to enjoy the sunshine and an ambiance that's openly gay. With so many rainbow flags everywhere it's not surprising the Los Angeles Times once dubbed this "the gayest city in America."

Drive from LA in two to three hours across beautiful desert vistas or fly right into town. There are plenty of direct flights, including from Canadian cities, making it a decidedly easy destination. Ground transportation from the airport includes gay-friendly **City Cab** (760-416-2594).

Palm Springs offers exceptional gay accommodations, nightclubs, restaurants and shopping. People are friendly, and there's a laid-back, small-town hospitality. You feel far from the hurly-burly of larger cities.

There are clusters of gay and gay-friendly businesses in several neighborhoods, including Warm Sands, Arenas, Sunny Dunes, San Lorenzo, North Palm Springs, downtown and "Cat City" (that is, neighboring Cathedral City). Bring your GPS device along, as the town is a bit difficult to navigate until you get used to it. Highways contour to the rugged topography, meaning Palm Canyon Drive ends up with South, North and East segments, so you

can become disoriented without making a turn!

Local gay publications include Live from Palm Springs, Desert Daily Guide, Talk, Bottom Line (Psbottomline.com) and Pulp; look for them at local businesses.

## Bars and clubs

Many visitors will start their bar-hopping on Arenas Road, where some dozen businesses are clustered.

**Score Bar** (301 East Arenas Road) is the local party bar where the manly bartenders are especially friendly. It's open early and gets busy with people enjoying cocktails and beers, and there's usually a lively bunch outside on the patio area. They host local regular gatherings and celebrations. Owner Mel loves to meet, chat and share his warm, hospitable nature with all.

Across the street is the enormous **Hunters Video Bar** (302 East Arenas), where the bar and dance club always promise action.

Next door, **Streetbar** (224 East Arenas) is always full of hot men. There's cabaret with legendary performers, and good opportunities for conversation. Maybe you'll find a dinner date here. For a taste of local action, this oldest bar in town is a must. A smoking patio in front overlooks the busy street and the mountains beyond.

**SpurLine** (200 South Indian Canyon

Drive, at East Arenas) offers karaoke and nightly entertainment.

**Rainbow Cactus Cafe** (212 South Indian Canyon), next door, is currently closed, but word is it will reopen.

New on the scene is **Mixies Boy Bar** (120 South Palm Canyon Drive), next to The Follies. Mixies has a large balcony overlooking Palm Canyon Drive, with full bar, dance floor and restaurant within.

A bit uptown is **Azul/Alibi** (369 North Palm Canyon Drive). Azul lounge and patio bar is long known for its tapas-inspired meals, so the grand opening of Alibi above it has been eagerly anticipated, and is just in time for White Party revelers. A video bar screening top-40 hits, sports and comedy clips, Alibi serves up burgers and grill foods, and it's modeled after the popular Georgie's Alibi clubs in Florida.

**Toucan's Tiki Bar** (2100 North Palm Canyon) is a video bar with an incredible staff, with DJ Galaxy at the helm, and drag revues from Tommi Rose and the Playgirls. Toucan's is especially hot on Thursday and Sunday nights.

**Oasis Nightclub and Lounge** (611 South Palm Canyon Drive) is close to Warm Sands and San Lorenzo, and this huge dance venue pulls a late crowd, but is also open during the day on a smaller scale, with happy hours from noon. On Saturdays they go afterhours until 4 am.

Also nearby, there's **Tool Shed** (600 East Sunny Dunes), a men's cruise bar for for leathermen and bears that opens at 7 am. The pool games are free on Mondays, and happy hour is daily until 8 pm. Other regular nights include Underwear Thursdays and Friday-night beer and soda busts. Special leather and fetish nights are also on their calendar.

Cathedral City leathermen, bears and those into fetish, uniforms, cigars and sports head to **The Barracks** (67-625 East Palm Canyon, Cathedral City). It's low-key, with friendly bartenders, happy hours 2 to 8 pm, and other specials, such as the Sunday afternoon beer busts from 2 pm until 2 am. They also have an enclosed patio where they hold barbecues.

The nearby **Sidewinders** (67-555 East Palm Canyon, Cathedral City), across from Target, is another "guy" place. It's an upstairs bar with pool tables, outdoor seating and weekend dancing.

**Hotel Zoso** (150 South Indian Canyon Drive) offers entertainment every Wednesday with a host of female impersonators.

**Club Whatever** (36-737 Cathedral Canyon Drive, Cathedral City) offers Wednesday karaoke, a Thursday underwear party, and Saturday country dancing.

The nearby city of Indio also has a new club, **El Destino** (83085 Indio Boulevard, Indio).

## Accommodations

Palm Springs offers dozens of gay resorts to accommodate you, many in the cruisy Warm Sands neighborhood.

**All Worlds Resort** (526 Warm Sands Drive; 800-798-8781), associated with the porn studio of the same name, is an amazing place, with four hotels in one.

Since 1976, **El Mirasol Villas** (525 Warm Sands; 800-327-2985) has been striking a perfect balance between great service and never intruding. They have one- and two-bedroom suites and studios. All are elegant and custom-designed with furnishings, shutters, French doors, and king beds. DVD play-

**Palm Springs horizons**



**At Triangle Inn**



**At Vista Grande Resort**







Luis at Warm Sands



At Oasis



At Score, the party bar



Great chaps at Chaps Inn

ers are in all bungalow suites and bungalow-deluxe studios. There's a steam room, jacuzzi, pools and lots of space here to roam the grounds and find desert gems.

**Desert Paradise Hotel** (615 Warm Sands; 800-342-7635), one of the finest guesthouses in town, is at the center of the Warm Sands neighborhood. They now do special catering for civil partnerships and other celebrations. All their rooms have large televisions with 15 continuous channels of porn, free wi-fi, refrigerators and showers with massage water heads, plus ironing facilities, ceiling fans and of course air-conditioning. The large pool is surrounded by beautiful gardens and phallic ornamentation, and breakfast is served in their comfy Cafe Paradise.

**Warm Sands Villas** (555 Warm Sands; 760-323-3005) has 27 rooms spread throughout a series of bungalows on an acre of land. The property maintains a California-mission motif and a feel of spaciousness. The amenities include evening refreshments served poolside, and 24-hour access to

swimming and soaking in the jacuzzis. The extended continental breakfast is served daily from 7 to 11 am and features juices fresh-squeezed (in season) from their own citrus trees. The neo-classical rooms offer kitchens and bedrooms, and are always being upgraded. Warm Sands has a friendly atmosphere and a diverse mix of men of many ages and nationalities.

**INNdulge** (601 Grenfall Road; 800-833-5675), built in 1958, revels in classic cool modernity. They offer 24 rooms and 24-hour poolside fun, with a kidney-shaped pool and 12-man key-hole jacuzzi styled for optimum comfort. The whole resort gets sunshine the whole day long. It's clothing optional here, so most men are naked, but your seating options by the pool are complemented by others in a more secluded area. The beautiful accommodations include two-bedroom apartments with kitchen and private patio. Breakfast is relaxed, and juice and snacks are provided throughout the day. There's a small gym and two internet stations, plus wi-fi. John and Jean-

Guy host frequent cocktail-socials for guests to meet and mingle. This professionally and efficiently run resort has a staff that aims to make your stay as good as you can hope for.

At the heart of the Warm Sands neighborhood is the remarkable **Vista Grande** (574 Warm Sands; 800-669-1069), an ensemble including Mirage, Avalon and The Atrium across the street. Owners Robert and Bob are constantly upgrading and attend to every detail. There are waterfalls, bamboo groves, a huge curved hot tub and two heated pools. Don't miss the carved wooden penis totem! Consider it a good luck charm when you try out the new steam "room" that is more like sitting under the curl of a steamy Hawaiian wave. There's plenty of action at this world-renowned resort.

Other Warm Sands-area accommodations include the elegant **Bacchanal** (589 Grenfall Road; 800-806-9059); **Century** (598 Grenfall Road; 800-475-5188); **Desert Eclipse** (537 Grenfall Road; 800-798-0655); and **Hacienda at Warm Sands** (586 Warm Sands Drive; 760-327-



8111), which made Out and About's list of top ten guesthouses in North America.

The San Lorenzo neighborhood accommodations include **Chestnutz** (641 San Lorenzo Road; 800-621-6973), where all rooms offer fridges, microwaves and AC; the romantic **San-tiago Resort** (650 San Lorenzo Road; 760-322-1300), which continues to serve an upscale market after its recent complete make-over; the charming **Tortuga del Sol** (715 San Lorenzo Road; 760-416-3111 or 888-541-3777), where Robert and Ricardo host. It's a very natural feel here with live tortoises — a joy to watch. Not far away is the historic **Triangle Inn** (555 San Lorenzo; 800-732-7555), which offers big morning sun and all-day quietude with outdoor cooling mist.

In North Palm Springs, **Camp Palm Springs** (1466 North Palm Canyon Drive) looks better than ever. It's a big complex with a big pool and a large clover-shaped whirlpool, and the temperature is hot. They offer day passes,

and daily visitors mingle freely with hotel guests.

Other North Palm Springs accommodations include **Desert Bear** (530 East Mel Avenue; 877-GO-GROWL), for bears and leathermen; **Camp Palm Springs** (1466 North Palm Canyon; 888-242-9386), a legend unto itself; **Canyon Club Hotel** (960 North Palm Canyon Drive; 760-778-8042), where you can get a day pass and have some great times; **Chaps Inn** (312 Camino Monte Vista; 800-445-8916); and **East Canyon Hotel Spa** (288 East Camino Monte Vista; 877-324-6835).

Several other leather-oriented resorts are located on this side of town, too. Englishmen Stuart and Ian host at **Chaps Inn** (312 Camino Monte Vista; 800-445-8916). These welcoming and open hoteliers conjure an ambiance that's laid back and warm — and hot! Chaps is fetish-welcoming and totally male. In the comfortable and well-equipped rooms with free wi-fi you'll find sling hooks, with slings available

for hire. There are whips, chains and even a kennel. Nine of the ten rooms have kitchens or kitchenettes. Several have private patios. There's a steam room, which can get busy at night. The St. Andrew's cross, festooned with scarlet bougainvillea, is a sight to behold. Rooms sport the largest, softest leather couches in the history of the world. And the pool is salt-driven, thus free of harsh chlorine. They allow in vetted day visitors between 10 and 5 pm.

**Helios: A Men's Resort** (280 East Mel Avenue; 760-323-2868) is one of the hottest places to stay in Palm Springs. Helios accommodates leather/fetish parties co-hosted by Gear Leather, a premier leather store. This gay Eden has breathtaking views, lavishly appointed guest rooms, sexy gay men from around the world and an eager but unobtrusive staff that caters to your (almost) every need.

Not far away you'll find **Casa Ocatillo** (240 Ocatillo Avenue; 800-996-4108), a small jewel of a resort with four

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# PALM SPRINGS

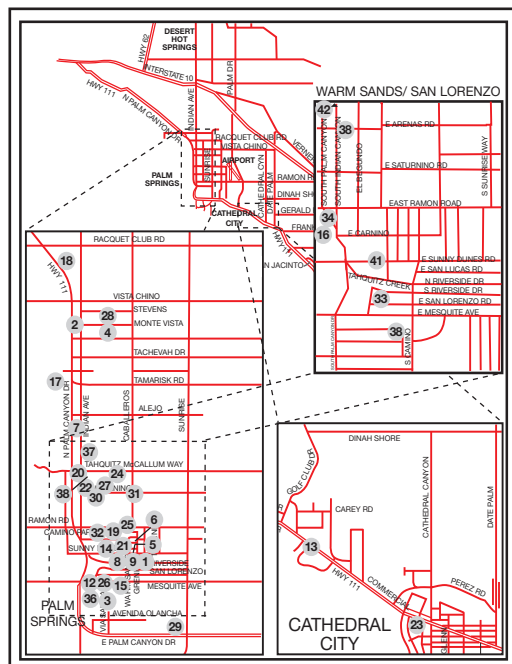
## BARS AND RESTAURANTS

- 7) **Azul /Alibi**  
369 N. Palm Canyon Dr.  
760-325-5533
- 13) **Barracks**  
67625 E. Palm Canyon Dr.  
760-321-9688
- 24) **Blame It On Midnight**  
777 E Tahquitz Cyn Way  
(760) 323-1200
- 20) **Bongo Johnny's**  
214 East Arenas Rd
- 27) **Hunters Video Bar**  
301 E Arenas Rd  
(760) 323-0700
- 34) **Kalura Trattoria**  
124 S. Palm Canyon Dr.  
760-323-4748
- 37) **Look**  
139 East Andreas Rd
- 42) **Mixie's**  
120 S. Palm Canyon Dr.  
760-203-0147
- 16) **Oasis Nightclub**  
611 S. Palm Canyon Dr.  
760-416-0950
- 38) **Score Game Bar**  
301 East Arenas Rd
- 30) **SpurLine**  
200 S Indian Canyon Dr  
(760) 778-4326
- 22) **Streetbar**  
224 E Arenas Rd  
(760) 320-1266
- 41) **Tool Shed**  
600 E. Sunny Dunes Rd.

- 18) **Toucans Tiki Lounge**  
2100 N Palm Canyon Dr  
(760) 416-7584

## ACCOMMODATIONS

- 31) **All Worlds Resort**  
526 Warm Sands Dr  
(760) 323-7505  
(800) 798-8781
- 14) **The Atrium**  
981 Camino Parocela  
(760) 322-2404  
(800) 669-1069
- 9) **Bacchanal**  
589 Grenfall Rd  
(760) 323-0760  
(800) 806-9059
- 36) **Casa Ocotillo**  
240 East Ocotillo Ave  
(760) 327-6110  
(800) 996-4108
- 23) **CCBC Resort Hotel**  
68369 Sunair Rd,  
Cathedral City  
(760) 324-1350  
(800) 472-0856
- 2) **Camp Palm Springs**  
1466 N Palm Canyon Dr  
(760) 322-2267  
(800) 793-0063
- 28) **Chaps Inn**  
312 Camino Monte Vista  
(760) 327-8222  
(800) 445-8916
- 26) **Chestnutz**  
641 San Lorenzo Rd  
(760) 325-5269  
(800) 621-6973
- 6) **Desert Eclipse**  
537 Grenfall Rd  
(760) 325-0655  
(800) 798-0655
- 4) **The Desert Bear**  
530 E Mel Ave  
(760) 325-6767  
(877) Go-Growl
- 21) **Desert Paradise Resort**  
615 Warm Sands Dr  
(760) 320-5650  
(800) 342-7635
- 25) **El Mirasol Villas**  
525 Warm Sands Dr  
(760) 327-5913  
(800) 327-2985
- 8) **Hacienda at Warm Sands**  
586 Warm Sands Dr  
(760) 327-8111  
(800) 359-2007
- 10) **Helios Resort**  
280 E Mel Ave  
(760) 323-2868
- 32) **Inn Exile**  
545 Warm Sands Dr  
(760) 327-6413  
(800) 962-0186
- 1) **INNduge Palm Springs**  
601 Grenfall Rd  
(760) 327-1408  
(800) 833-5675
- 3) **La Dolce Vita**  
1491 Villa Soledad  
(760) 325-2686
- 33) **Santiago Resort**  
650 San Lorenzo Rd.  
800-710-7729
- 29) **Terrazzo**  
1600 E Palm Canyon  
(760) 778-5883  
(866) 837-7996
- 15) **Tortuga del Sol**  
715 E San Lorenzo Rd  
(760) 416-3111



- 12) **Triangle Inn**  
555 San Lorenzo Rd  
(760) 322-7993/(800) 732-7555
- 5) **Vista Grande/Mirage**  
574 Warm Sands Dr  
(760) 322-2404  
(800) 669-1069
- 19) **Warm Sands Villas**  
555 Warm Sands Dr  
(760) 323-3005  
(800) 357-5695

## RESOURCES

- 11) **Desert Pride Center**  
611 S. Palm Canyon Dr.  
760-327-2313
- 17) **Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism**  
Palm-springs.org

rooms built around the original 1934 Spanish villa. The rooms do not have a rental décor; each has pieces that are works of art in themselves. The landscaping is simple yet superb. You may never want to leave!

**La Dolce Vita** (1491 Via Soledad; 877-644-4111) is actually two combined properties, formerly known as The Citadel. New owners Ken and Tim now oversee this rambling, park-like oasis.

At the refined **Terrazzo** (1600 East Palm Canyon Drive, near the corner of Sunrise; 866-837-7996) guests are treated to both breakfast and lunch. There's a great pool and sun, and rooms are exceptionally comfortable.

In Cathedral City, **CCBC** (68-369 Sunair Road, Cathedral City) is among my favorites. Lie on the hill overlooking the heated pool and owner Richard Altman's pride and joy: the cock-and-balls-shaped jacuzzi! Enjoy the steam room, dungeon, video rooms, several outdoor "yellow brick roads," meat racks and more. CCBC is a gay man's

paradise. With clean and fully-renovated rooms and suites, CCBC is functional not fussy. Electronic safes that can fit your laptops and jewels are in every room. Each month CCBC hosts nude contests where delicious young men get on stage vying for your votes. There are fantastic mountain views here, but the immediate views are likely too preoccupying. The entire facility, including the large parking lot, is enclosed. Day passes are available.

## Eating out

Native Italians Enzo, Ignazio and Pino have been in the restaurant industry for over 12 years. In 2001, they decided to bring their culinary talents to Palm Springs and opened **Kalura Trattoria Italiana** (124 South Palm Canyon Drive; 866-4-KALURA), offering a full bar and extensive wine list, along with rustic Italian dishes such as risotto porcini, veal rack in wild mushroom sauce, calamari fritti and gourmet pizza and pastas. Kalura is

open for lunch and dinner seven day a week from 11 am.

**Hamburger Mary's** (415 North Palm Canyon Drive) is part of the chain and lives up to its name!

**Blame it on Midnight** (777 East Tahquitz Canyon, in the courtyard) offers some of the finest cuisine available in Palm Springs.

If you want to impress, bring your date to a new place, **Tropicale** (330 East Amado Road). The potsticker appetizers and salmon entree I enjoyed here were excellent.

For Chinese, dine in style at the handsome **Wang's in the Desert** (424 South Indian Canyon Drive).

Not to be missed is **Look** (139 East Andreas), a couple of blocks north of Andreas and the perfect place to eat outdoors.

For some of the best breakfasts in town, try the "soon to be famous" scrambles at **Bongo Johnny's** (214 East Arenas) — but check out their dinner menu, too.



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At Triangle Inn



Dan at Warm Sands



Roy at Street Bar

At **Shame on the Moon** (69-950 Frank Sinatra Drive, Rancho Mirage) they've been doing their delicious thing for years. Shame on the Moon is about elegant food in elegant environs.

## Shopping and more

There's a friendly reception at **Tuff Stuff Leatherware** (407 South Industrial Place). It's an uncluttered shop purveying off-the-rack leather and leather-repair services.

**GayMart USA** (305 East Arenas) is the sexy "super store" with stores around the country.

**Bear Wear Etc** (319 East Arenas; Bear-wear.com), purveys more than just bear gear, while **Mischief Cards & Gifts** (210 Arenas Road) vends... cards and gifts!

Check out **R and R Menswear** (333 North Palm Canyon Drive) for cutting-edge clothing and more.

Stop by **Q Trading Company** (606 Sunny Dunes Road) for DVD sales and rentals, pride merchandise, sex toys and even Christmas ornaments.

The Corridor is a group of shops that share a courtyard, behind **Palm**

**Springs Koffi** (515 North Palm Canyon Drive). There are many interesting places to browse there.

There are several gyms of note in Palm Springs: **World Gym** (1751 North Sunrise Way), **Power of Fitness** (170 South Sunrise Way) and **Basic Gym** (1584 South Palm Canyon Drive).

If arriving from overseas (or headed abroad!), swap your euros, Canadian dollars, Swiss francs, British pounds and more at **Anderson Travel** (700 East Tahquitz Canyon Way).

## Other diversions

The stunning view of Southern California's deserts, coastlines, lakes and wine country can be seen on a **Fantasy Balloon Tour** (800-GO-ABOVE, FantasyBalloonFlights.com).

Don't leave the desert without taking a ride on the **Palm Springs Tramway** (Tramway Road at North Palm Canyon Drive), a majestic mountain ride that will be etched in your memory forever.

**Palm Springs Art Museum** (101 Museum Drive, downtown) offers a variety of artistic masterpieces, partic-

ularly in the area of sculptures, contemporary glass and Native American art.

**Caballeros** (Caballeros.com), the gay men's chorus of Palm Springs, has regular performances; check their website for up-coming croonings.

Every Saturday and Sunday there is a **College of the Desert Street Fair** (Monterey Avenue and Magnesia Falls Drive, South of Country Club Drive, Palm Desert).

Every Thursday night there brings on **Village Fest** (Palm Canyon Drive, downtown), which includes a diverse array of artists, artisans, entertainers and purveyors. That Palm Springs manages to pull this off on a weekly basis is amazing.

**Desert Pride Community Center** (611 South Palm Canyon Drive; Desertpridecenter.org) offers numerous services and has a wonderful staff.

**Prime Timers of the Desert** (760-416-4421; Ptod-ps.org), a social club for mature gay males, boast thousands of members. There are organized lunches, dinners, mixers, theater outings and more. ▼