



48 HOURS IN

Palm Springs

HIGH DESERT · HIGH COUNTRY

WELCOME

Welcome to Palm Springs.

Palm Springs built its identity twice. First as a 1930s–60s Hollywood escape — close enough to Los Angeles for a two-hour drive, far enough for real privacy — and again, more recently, as the unofficial capital of American midcentury modern design, a status the city now actively protects and celebrates rather than simply inherits.

What most first-time visitors miss: Palm Springs is a small, walkable desert city ringed by genuinely dramatic geography. The San Jacinto Mountains rise more than 8,000 feet directly from the valley floor, and the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway — the world's largest rotating tram car — covers that entire elevation change in under 15 minutes, from desert floor to alpine forest.

Palm Springs is unusually well suited to solo travel. The city has a long-standing culture of inclusivity, a compact, walkable downtown along Palm Canyon Drive, and a wellness-and-design-forward tourism identity built around spas, architecture tours, and quiet poolside time — all activities that are, if anything, better alone.

Day One · Aerial Tramway · Art Museum · Palm Canyon Drive

7:30 AM

Palm Springs Aerial Tramway

1 Tram Way, 10 minutes from downtown: the world's largest rotating tram car climbs from Sonoran Desert floor to alpine forest in the San Jacinto Mountains in under 15 minutes — a genuine change of ecosystem and roughly 30–40°F cooler at the top. More than 50 miles of hiking trails await at the summit station. Round trip \$33.

Insider Tip: Go on the first tram of the day — both for shorter lines and because the desert-to-forest light change is most striking in the morning. The observation decks near the top station need no hiking at all if you'd rather just take in the view.

11:00 AM

Palm Springs Art Museum

101 Museum Drive, downtown: a strong permanent collection spanning contemporary art, glass art, and Native American artifacts, plus the Annenberg Theater for concerts and film. Admission \$16.

Insider Tip: The museum's Architecture and Design Center annex (300 S Palm Canyon Drive) is a short walk away and worth adding if midcentury design is the draw.

1:00 PM

Lunch: Sherman's Deli & Bakery

401 E Tahquitz Canyon Way: a New York-style deli and Palm Springs institution, open daily 7am–9pm. The sandwiches are enormous and the bakery counter is a genuine draw on its own. \$14–22, counter and table seating.

Insider Tip: It's busy but turns tables fast — a solo diner rarely waits long even at peak lunch hours.

2:30 PM

Palm Canyon Drive Walking Tour

Downtown's main street: the Palm Springs Walk of Stars honors more than 450 entertainers and civic figures along the sidewalk, and the Forever Marilyn statue recreates the iconic Seven Year Itch pose. Wide, shaded sidewalks make this an easy self-guided architecture-and-history walk.

Insider Tip: Early afternoon light is harsh for photos — if photography matters to you, save the walk for closer to 4 or 5pm.

5:00 PM

Moorten Botanical Garden

1701 S Palm Canyon Drive: a small, privately owned desert arboretum with thousands of cactus and succulent varieties, a walk-through cactarium, and resident tortoises. Quiet, easy, and genuinely peaceful. Admission \$6.

Insider Tip: It's a small garden — 30–45 minutes is enough — which makes it an easy, low-effort stop to close out an active day.

7:00 PM

Dinner: The Tropicale

330 E Amado Road: a lively bar and restaurant with a gorgeous patio, consistently cited as one of the most welcoming spots in town for a solo diner. Globally-influenced menu, strong cocktail program. \$32–48.

Insider Tip: Sit at the bar rather than the dining room — the bartenders here are genuinely good company for a solo evening.

Day Two · Indian Canyons · Uptown Design District · Downtown Park

8:00 AM

Indian Canyons

38520 S Palm Canyon Drive, on Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians tribal land: a series of fan-palm oases fed by year-round streams, a striking contrast to the surrounding desert. Palm Canyon and Andreas Canyon are both accessible via moderate, well-marked trails. Entry \$12.

Insider Tip: Start early — there's minimal shade on the approach trails before you reach the palm groves themselves. The short Andreas Canyon loop (1 mile) is a good option if time is limited.

10:30 AM

Uptown Design District

North Palm Canyon Drive, above Alejo Road: the city's concentration of midcentury furniture and design shops, alongside independent galleries and cafes. A slower, more local-feeling counterpart to downtown's main strip.

Insider Tip: Koffi (multiple locations) is the reliable local coffee stop if you want a slow browsing morning rather than a packed schedule.

12:30 PM

Lunch: Wilma & Frieda's

Multiple locations, including one downtown: a bright, popular brunch-and-lunch spot known for biscuits and gravy and classic scramble plates, often served on a balcony overlooking a small courtyard. \$16–24.

Insider Tip: Weekend mornings draw a wait; a weekday lunch slot is the easier solo-dining window.

2:00 PM

Palm Springs Historical Society Walking Tour

221 S Palm Canyon Drive: guided architecture and history walking tours covering the city's Native American roots, Hollywood-era rise, and midcentury design boom. A structured, informative way to see neighborhoods you wouldn't otherwise reach on foot. \$20–30.

Insider Tip: These are seasonal and don't run in peak summer heat — check the schedule in advance and book ahead; solo travelers are common on these tours.

5:00 PM

Downtown Palm Springs Park

Adjacent to the Art Museum: a shaded green space with mountain views, a favorite local spot to sit with a coffee or catch live music if it's scheduled. A genuinely restful stop between an active day and dinner.

Insider Tip: Check for scheduled events — Villagefest (Thursday evenings, seasonal) turns Palm Canyon Drive into a street market and is worth timing a visit around.

7:30 PM

Dinner: Farm

6 La Plaza, downtown: a Provençal French restaurant in a genuinely charming courtyard setting, known for classic French dishes and a strong wine list. \$38–55.

Insider Tip: Request courtyard seating — the fairy-lit outdoor space is the reason to choose Farm over a comparable downtown option.

WHERE TO EAT

Palm Springs's Table

DOWNTOWN

The Tropicale

DOWNTOWN • \$\$\$

A lively bar and patio consistently cited as one of the friendliest spots in town for solo diners.

Farm

DOWNTOWN • \$\$\$

Provençal French cooking in a fairy-lit courtyard — request outdoor seating.

Sherman's Deli & Bakery

DOWNTOWN • \$\$

New York-style deli institution, open 7am–9pm daily — turns tables fast.

UPTOWN & CASUAL

Wilma & Frieda's

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS • \$\$

Popular brunch spot known for biscuits and gravy — go on a weekday to skip the wait.

Koffi

UPTOWN • \$

Reliable local coffee chain, ideal for a slow browsing morning through the Design District.

BARS & NIGHTLIFE
Bongo Johnny's

DOWNTOWN • \$\$

Second-floor patio bar overlooking Palm Canyon Drive — excellent for solo people-watching.

Blackbook

ARENAS DISTRICT • \$\$

Cocktail bar and kitchen anchoring the Arenas District, the city's LGBTQ+ nightlife hub.

The Purple Room

DOWNTOWN • \$\$\$

A Rat Pack-era supper club with live music — a genuinely unique Palm Springs evening.

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Palm Springs

MODE	COST	NOTES
Walking	Free	Downtown Palm Canyon Drive and the Uptown Design District are both entirely walkable.
Uber / Lyft	Varies	Best for the Tramway, Indian Canyons, and evening transport around town.
Rental Car	\$40–65/day	Useful for the Tramway, Indian Canyons, and day trips to Joshua Tree.
Bike Rentals	\$25–35/day	Palm Springs is flat and bike-friendly; several downtown rental shops.
BUZZ Trolley	Free	Seasonal weekend trolley loop connecting downtown to Uptown.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	Palm Springs International Airport (PSP) is a 10-minute drive from downtown — Uber (\$15–25).
Best Time	November–April: ideal desert weather (65–85°F), peak season. May and October are shoulder months. June–September: extreme heat, regularly 105°F+.
Solo Dining	Palm Springs has an unusually solo-friendly restaurant culture — The Tropicale and Bongo Johnny's both handle single diners with ease.
Hydration	Carry water for Indian Canyons or any Tramway summit hiking; the desert floor and mountain trails both dehydrate faster than expected.
Tramway Weather	The summit station can be 30–40°F cooler than the valley floor — bring a layer even on a hot day downtown.
Useful Apps	Uber, OpenTable, AllTrails for Indian Canyons and Tramway summit trails, Google Maps offline.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- Buy Aerial Tramway tickets online and go on the first car of the day
- Book a Palm Springs Historical Society walking tour in advance — seasonal, sells out
- Bring a layer for the Tramway summit — it's significantly cooler than downtown
- Reserve Farm or The Tropicale ahead during the November–April high season
- Check the Villagefest schedule (Thursday evenings, seasonal) before planning dinner downtown
- Carry water for Indian Canyons — minimal shade on the approach trails
- Download AllTrails for offline Tramway summit and Indian Canyons trail maps

GoingSolo.Life

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.

goingsolo.life/maps/palm-springs

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.

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