



Relax, Refresh, Renew

Soak up wellness during Spa Month in Greater Palm Springs.

The Spa at Séc-he

BY REBECCA L. RHOADES

Long before the modern-day concept of wellness existed, people turned to nature for healing. From ancient civilizations to early business tycoons, celebrities, and even presidents, folks seeking to treat illnesses, relieve stress, and promote overall health would head to the desert to experience the dry, arid climate; sunny skies; and quiet wide open spaces.

One destination in particular has for centuries seemed to possess an extraordinary power to restore well-being and alleviate miseries, be they physical, mental, or spiritual.

Located in the shadows of the San Jacinto Mountains in Southern California, Greater Palm Springs is best known for its innovative and well-preserved midcentury modern architecture, Hollywood history, and vibrant, tolerant culture. But beyond the carefully curated consignment stores, experimental case study homes, and rainbow flags, you'll find a restorative refuge where sacred Indigenous rituals and modern "me time" collide.

A DESERT OASIS

Located two-and-a-half hours south of Los Angeles and four hours west of Phoenix, Greater Palm Springs comprises nine resort cities: Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, La Quinta, Indio, and Coachella.

Most visitors head to the region's best-known city, Palm Springs. It was here, in the mid-20th century, that Hollywood's biggest celebrities, including Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe, and Elvis Presley, came to escape the spotlight, and where the country's top

architects would test out new designs. The city is now a haven for creatives and the LGBTQ+ community.

Nearby Rancho Mirage is known historically as the “Playground of the Presidents.” Nearly every commander-in-chief starting with Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1950s has lived in or visited the palm-dotted oasis. These days, it serves as a luxury resort destination. And Indio, the largest city in the Coachella Valley, has become world-famous as the site of the biggest music event on the planet, the annual Coachella Music Festival.

Today, the Greater Palm Springs region attracts travelers and wellness enthusiasts from across the country and the world. It boasts more than 130 major hotels and resorts spread throughout the nine cities, ranging from historic boutique hideaways to golf retreats to luxury five-star properties. And it offers more than 200 spa and wellness experiences.

Wellness tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry. As travelers desire to discover unique treatments and refocus on their health, they’re also willing to spend accordingly. Wellness-related travel expenditures are expected to reach \$1.4 billion by 2027, an increase of more than 125% from just 10 years ago.

ANCIENT HEALING WATERS

While travelers can enjoy an array of spa programming during their visit to the Coachella Valley — here, they’ll find everything from traditional massage and personalized detox retreats to cutting-edge treatments such as cryotherapy and mindfulness practices such as yoga and breathwork — the shining star of the region’s spa industry is a sacred spring buried deep beneath the desert floor.

The Spa at Séc-he, part of the 5.8-acre Agua Caliente Cultural Plaza owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, celebrates the ancient healing waters of the Agua Caliente Hot Mineral Spring that flow from a cavern 8,000 feet below the ground. Opened in 2023, the 73,000-square-foot luxury spa was inspired by the natural mineral hot springs — “Séc-he” means “the sound of boiling water.”

The centerpiece of the spa is the 22 individual mineral baths in which guests can enjoy a clothing-optional 15-minute private soak in the 105-degree water and experience the soothing power of the hot springs’ distinctive mineral composition.

“Our waters here are really great for the skin,” says spa director Daniel Spencer. “It’s very hydrating. It’s great for psoriasis, acne, and eczema, as well as for the joints and inflammation in the body. You’ll notice that even a few days later, your skin still feels nice and hydrated.”

The bath is part of the Taking the Waters Day Pass, which can be purchased separately or is included with any \$200 or more spa treatment. The pass includes access to separate men’s and women’s treatment areas that feature aromatherapy showers, a eucalyptus steam room, a menthol inhalation sauna with cold experience showers, and relaxation rooms with



The Spa at Desert Springs

acoustic wellness vibrational loungers and acoustic zero-gravity conducive chairs. Pass holders also can enjoy the coed state-of-the-art fitness center, a lounge area with two halotherapy salt caves, and the outdoor pool deck with whirlpool, waterfall pool, and zero-edge mineral pool. Cryotherapy and zero-sensory flotation sessions can be added on for additional fees.

Fifteen treatment rooms offer an array of services, including massages, body scrubs and wraps, facials, and nail and hair care, that speak to the culture

and traditions of the tribe while showcasing the wellness industry's leading-edge innovations. Specialty Gharieni quartz and water treatment tables use crushed quartz and water cells to create unique sensory experiences. Essential oils, heated gemstones, light therapy, and infrared heat enhance the treatment.

Séc-he isn't just a spa — it's a destination. And it's a must-do for anyone visiting Palm Springs. According to Spencer, guests spend an average of six to seven hours at the spa.

SPAS OF DISTINCTION

An afternoon at Séc-he would be enough to satisfy most travelers, but with so many wellness options available throughout the Valley, it's worth taking some time to explore the myriad resort spas that are designed to pamper the body and nourish the soul.



The Spa at Desert Springs at the JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa in Palm Desert recently introduced a treatment menu inspired by the world's Blue Zones. Introduced by author and researcher Dan Buettner in 2005, Blue Zones are regions where people live longer and healthier lives than average.

The resort's Spa Zone program includes a variety of treatments and products that blend local tradition, natural elements, and longevity-focused practices. Offerings range from a Grapeseed Scrub and Olive Oil Massage to a Microgreens Facial. They're complemented by nutritional bistro fare by Executive

Chef Michael Klicos. The Mediterranean-influenced menu focuses on plant-forward dishes that emphasize freshness and quality.

Over at Tommy Bahama Miramonte Resort & Spa in Indian Wells, Spa Rosa brings the brand's signature tropical flair to the desert. A day pass will get guests access to a private swimming pool, a nice perk when you want to escape the crowds at the main pools.

Signature treatments at Spa Rosa include CBD-infused soaks, scrubs, and massages; an energizing massage and stretching experience tailored to men; and a couples body masque ritual in which you paint your partner with clay and then rinse it away in an open-air shower.

Directly across Highway 111 from the Tommy Bahama resort is the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa, which offers chic midcentury modern-inspired rooms with private balconies and a large central pool with a real sand beach. The resort is also a Certified Autism Center. Its staff are trained on communicating with and assisting neurodivergent guests, and the property features sensory-sensitive guest activities and enhanced accessibility.

At Spa Esmeralda, guests can experience some of the most high-tech treatment options available in the Valley. Offerings at its Renew Recovery Lounge include Therabody SmartGoggles, which combine compression massage, heat, and vibration therapies; a HigherDOSE infrared PEMF mat that emits electromagnetic waves to help ease sore muscles and boost energy; and Normatec 3 compression boots and sleeves that use dynamic air compression to improve circulation and reduce swelling.

Whether you're looking for a full day of relaxation and pampering or you simply want to ease your aching muscles after a day on the golf course or the scenic San Jacinto trails, you're sure to find the perfect spa treatment in Greater Palm Springs. And September is Spa Month! To celebrate, resort spas, wellness centers, day spas, and hot springs are offering special packages and experiences. There's no better time to treat yourself and reset your body, mind, and spirit. 🌿