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OASIS **OF** STYLE

Midcentury architect Donald Wexler's designs—such as this Palm Springs steel house—embody the desert-modern look.

EXPLORE MIDCENTURY DESIGN AT ITS FINEST—NOT TO MENTION HAUTE HOTELS, CREATIVE EATS, AND WORLD-CLASS SHOPPING—**IN PALM SPRINGS**. / BY VIRGINIA SHANNON

ZAN ON

Exceptional farm-to-table cuisine and dining design are hallmarks of Kitchen and Bar.



A recent renovation upgraded the iconic Melvyn's restaurant and piano lounge.



environment at this 21-and-over lodging is part of its appeal. [holidayhouseps.com](#).

EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY

In Palm Springs, the focus on design also extends to eateries. Case in point: Workshop Kitchen and Bar, which won the 2015 James Beard Award for best restaurant design in all of North America. Located inside the Uptown Design District's historic El Paseo Building, the stark, industrial-style space features towering ceilings dripping with hanging Edison bulbs, and a 32-foot cast-concrete communal table, where diners can befriend one another over aperitifs. Many guests, however, prefer to sit in the

spacious outdoor courtyard, where hip 20-somethings snap photos of their meals as stylish older couples chat convivially.

Executive chef and co-owner Michael Beckman trained in France, where he developed his nuanced take on French and Mediterranean cuisine. He sources most of his ingredients locally and maintains restraint when exploring flavors. Decadent diver scallops mingle over a mound of rich Anson Mills grits dotted with braised pork jowl, while the zing of Cara Cara orange dances with a salty-sweet shallot-bacon marmalade in the house-signature mesquite-grilled pork chop entree. As for small plates, two preparations of brussels

sprouts are offered—shaved into a salad, with apple, persimmon, walnuts, and pecorino; and a candied roasted version with pancetta, honey, and thyme. Both are sublime. Bread baked fresh in-house daily and creative cocktails incorporating exotic liqueurs and seasonal flourishes sweeten the deal. [workshoppalmsprings.com](#).

For a classic Palm Springs experience, the iconic Melvyn's is worth a visit. The dimly lit restaurant and piano lounge frequented by the likes of Sinatra, Cher, and the rest of Hollywood's A-list back in the '70s recently underwent a renovation by its new operators, the Bay Area-based Plumjack Group, following the death of its legendary proprietor, Melvyn Haber, in 2016. But the swanky, old-time vibe remains—as do most of the staff; maitre d' Brian Ellis, who acted as the establishment's gatekeeper in its heyday (famously turning away superstars Steve McQueen and Ali MacGraw on opening night in 1975 because they weren't properly dressed), still mans the podium. Here, tuxedo-clad waiters serve flaming plates of steak Diane to locals in the white-tablecloth dining room, while friendly bartenders pour wine for tourists hoping to capture the glamour of a bygone era. The piano lounge features live music seven nights a week during the "season" (late fall through early spring); when there's no live music, Rat Pack standards often echo through the speakers. And despite the preponderance of chandeliers and the Old World ambience, the crowd isn't entirely made up of gray-haired golfers: Younger patrons are now discovering Melvyn's and its historic charms. [inglesideinn.com/melvyns-restaurant](#).

BRANCHING OUT

While Palm Springs tends to have a boutique-y feel, some of the other desert communities offer more breathing room. Palm Desert—a city about 14 miles away—boasts many larger-scale resorts and golf clubs (not to mention the region's longest luxury-shopping strip). Nearby, Indian Wells is home to

what may be the region's buzziest new retreat: Sands Hotel and Spa. Opened in March 2018, this property epitomizes the chic desert vibe that has replaced the kitsch the region was once known for. Celebrity designer Bullard created the hotel's eminently Instagram-able look: Moroccan-themed, with intricate black-and-white tilework, and a soigné pool area similar to the one he designed for the Colony Palms, with private cabanas and bedlike chaises. Of the 46 guest rooms—most of which include a balcony or private patio—the standout is the two-story presidential suite, which features a

billiard table and a kitchen. Perhaps most alluring is the spectacular spa space; its ethereal aesthetic—with mirrored mosaics, downy textures, and rose-colored accents—is reason enough to book a rejuvenating treatment.

Even if you don't stay at the Sands, you must visit its restaurant, The Pink Cabana; every in-the-know desert local is talking about it, and for good reason. Executive chef Jason Niederkorn—who worked under the legendary Jeremiah Tower at Stars restaurant in San Francisco—has created a unique, Mediterranean-style menu with nods to Morocco.



Seasonal vegetables with labneh, at The Pink Cabana.



Upon arriving at Sands Hotel and Spa, guests find a relaxed (yet glamorous) sitting room instead of a reception desk.

(Tower visited, and cooked with, his onetime protégé at a special event at the Sands last fall.) The "grilled yogurt naan" (pillowy, yogurt-infused flatbread) that arrives with a meze platter takes two days to make, and it's out of this world even without the delicious dips and spreads. Indeed, many of chef Niederkorn's signature creations are masterfully prepared and burst with layers of flavor. The delicately spiced lamb tagine is melt-in-your-mouth tender. Supremely fresh day-boat catches are flown in straight from Hawaii.

The Pink Cabana's bar program deserves special attention too. Cocktail enthusiasts rave about food and beverage director Mollie Casey's clever twists on classic libations, such as a Jalisco Sidecar, made with reposado tequila, pear, ginger, and fresh lemon juice; or the Fig Orange Old Fashioned, which mixes Japanese whiskey with orange-fig marmalade and bitters. Casey—who, like Niederkorn, honed her skills in San Francisco—is a certified sommelier with a deep knowledge of vino, so her esoteric wine list contains dozens of unexpected and tantalizing choices.

Add in Bullard's updated take on throwback tennis-club chic—complete with a palm fern-leaf motif and classic photos of the hoi polloi frolicking in Palm Springs' mid-century heyday—and a professional, accommodating waitstaff, and The Pink Cabana amounts to a desert hot spot that's not to be missed. [sands hotelandspa.com](#).

FROM TOP: AUBREY MA; STEVE KEPPEL

JANIE KOWAL (2)

Designed by Martyn Lawrence Bullard, The Pink Cabana evokes Palm Springs' midcentury tennis-club scene.



LAURE KOWAL

FROM TOP: LANCE BERRY/OUTLINE; PHOTOFEST; K. COOPER/REX USA

GOOD BUYS

Of course, there's more to Palm Springs than modernism and food. Many visitors flock to the region to indulge in retail therapy. Palm Desert is the place to find luxury designer boutiques—such as Ralph Lauren, Bottega Veneta, Burberry, and Gucci—which line El Paseo near the corner of Highway 74. This upscale shopping strip boasts about a dozen blocks of retail, restaurants, galleries, and cafes, including the delightful Il Sogno—the perfect spot to break for an espresso, panini, or decadent baked good. elpaseo.catalogue.com.

In Palm Springs proper, Palm Canyon Drive is where you'll find big-brand outposts including H&M, Free People, and Kiehl's, among smaller fashion boutiques. A few blocks north, Trina Turk's landmark store—housed in a Frey-designed building—serves as the jumping-off point to the Uptown Design District. Turk's colorful apparel, accessories, and homewares embody the sunny Palm Springs aesthetic—as does Christopher Kennedy's midcentury modern-inspired furniture, which you'll find at his eponymous store a few doors up. In fact, the Uptown neighborhood is known for vintage and vintage-inspired furniture and home-decor showrooms, as well as galleries and independent womenswear boutiques such as the fabulous Elizabeth and Prince.

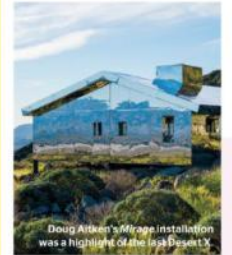
Another not-to-be-missed retail destination: The Shops at Thirteen Forty Five, a series of 14 mini-stores and galleries that flow together inside a fantastic, mazelike building designed by E. Stewart Williams. Vintage Murano glass, midcentury furniture, art, contemporary menswear, souk rugs, and handmade jewelry are some of the items you'll find here—as well as pottery by the renowned ceramicist Stan Bitters. theshopsat1345.com.

If you can't bear to leave Palm Springs without a swoon-worthy souvenir, there is a hidden treasure trove full of original modernist furnishings in nearby Cathedral City. Few tourists make their way to the nondescript industrial park sequestered behind Highway 111, but those who do marvel at the row of little shops—including Spaces, JP Denmark, and At Hom—filled with some of the best curated, high-end vintage furniture in the area. [Perez Art and Design Center, 68-929 Perez Rd.](http://PerezArtandDesignCenter.com)

Thankfully, many local shopkeepers will gladly ship their wares to the East Bay. Because luxuriating in Palm Springs among midcentury masterpieces and relics of the Sinatra era—as well as the contemporary takes on modernism—will inevitably inspire you to inject some of that high design into your own life. ■

Discover more of the desert's charms at visitgreaterpalmsprings.com.

ART ATTACK



Doug Aitken's 'Mirrors' installation was a highlight of the 2017 Desert X.

Another visually enticing reason to visit Palm Springs soon: the thrilling Desert X biennial art exhibition, which occurs February 9 through April 21. Curated by art-world heavyweights including Neville Wakefield (known for his work at Frieze Projects in London), Desert X showcases site-specific works by internationally acclaimed artists that incorporate or respond to the desert landscape. The 2017 event featured a much-buzzed-about installation by artist Doug Aitken: a ranch-style structure covered entirely with mirrors, which reflected the surrounding earth, sky, and sun. Insiders expect the 2019 Desert X to produce some similarly unforgettable offerings. desertx.org.

To learn about more events happening in the desert before summer, visit diablomag.com.

Souk Modern, a striking boutique inside The Shops at Thirteen Forty Five, sells vintage and new Moroccan decor items.

