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11 EMERGING
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DISCOVER A MEETING OASIS

COACHELLA VALLEY SHINES WITH POSSIBILITIES

By JT Long

The Greater Palm Springs area economy is powered by group business. With more than 300 sunny days per year, the 120 hotels in Coachella Valley incorporate extravagant outdoor options (including 125 golf courses) with their ballrooms and breakouts—because why come to the desert if you aren't going to see any sunshine? Thinking about booking your next meeting in a business oasis backlit by the ever-present Santa Rosa Mountains? Here are tips from local experts.

ARRIVE: This celebrity playground is 90 miles from Anaheim. That has made the destination popular with American and Canadian "snowbirds" looking for a warm winter reprieve. Palm Springs International Airport (PSP)—recently named one of the top 10 U.S. Stress-Free Airports—has grown to serve that demand with nonstop flights to New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver and even Winnipeg.

MEET AND SLEEP: The valley is served by three properties in Marriott Convention & Resort Network. That means planners can work with one point of contact to schedule all the flavors these full-service resorts have to offer.

In 2019, **JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa** will open its doors to 884 completely reimagined rooms with a water-forward sand and blue palette. The 450-acre property, with its 68,000 sq. ft. of indoor meeting space, two golf courses and eight restaurants, is so vast that Duffy boats whisk guests from meeting to dining through a network of waterways. The new Costas Nightclub is not the only place where the wild things are, either. A flock of flamingos, a game of black swans and a sprinkling of exotic birds make their home amid the fountains and greens. If your group is looking for something more relaxing, a champagne- and fruit-soaked gathering in the VIP area in the 4,000-square-foot The Spa at Desert Springs offers room to breathe.

Smart Tip: Book a private dinner in the redesigned Innovation Kitchen with chef Peter, along with his team of mixologists and pastry magicians.

The Westin Mission Hills Golf Resort & Spa in Rancho Mirage covers 34 acres, with two championship golf courses, 65,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, and 512 guest rooms with all the amenities of home (if your home includes room service from six restaurants and access to three swimming pools and a

waterslide). From glow golf to fauxchella—a concert festival experience on the green—this property has hosted groups from all over the world. Because the indoor meeting spaces on the campus-like property are separated into three ballrooms ranging from 17,325 sq. ft. to 4,838 sq. ft. with 30 breakout rooms, groups feel as if they own their space.

Smart Tip: Let guests create their own essential oil-infused scrub in The Spa at Westin Mission Hills, with harvested, on-site honey as a fragrant memento.

Discover classic traditions and create new ones at **Renaissance Indian Wells Resort & Spa**, where the dramatic curving wood lobby staircase delivers guests to a great room looking out over the heart of the property—a series of swimming pools and waterfalls surrounded by a sandy beach, patios, cabanas and grassy areas perfect for team-building and breakouts. The 560 guest rooms include suites dedicated to midcentury stars, but the property also boasts modern amenities, including bandwidth capable of handling up to seven streaming devices in each room. When it is time to move indoors, 60,000 sq. ft. of meeting space awaits, including 18,392-square-foot Esmerelda Ballroom, where 200 cars were driven in for an event.

Smart Tip: Take over Stir Event Lounge, a high-tech platform overlooking the 18th hole of the award-winning Players Course. With security worthy of a Laura Bush talk, this stage is ideal for product launches and corporate celebrations.

EAT AND DRINK: More than 90 percent of dates grown in the U.S. are from Coachella Valley. Tap into the local flavors by recreating the popular Shields Date Garden diner and its caramelly date milkshakes (boozy or otherwise). As a fun bonus, send everyone home with their own packet of fig sugar.

DO: BMW Performance Center in Thermal puts attendees in the driver's seat, pairing them up to run the track and beat their personal best for the fastest lap. Or rent a midcentury modern home with celebrity status, such as the Frank Sinatra Twin Palms Estate, to add glamour to a reception dinner. For stunning views of the valley, The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the largest rotating tramcar in the world, whisks visitors to observation decks and two restaurants more than 8,500 feet above sea level. The 10-minute ride crosses five micro-climates to reach the cool cliffs of Chino Canyon.



*JW Marriott Desert Springs
Resort & Spa*



*Renaissance Indian Wells
Resort & Spa*

Need to Know

1,600

Guest rooms in walking distance of Palm Springs Convention Center's 112,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space

125

Courses in "Golf Capital of the World"

135,000

Attendees at Palm Springs International Film Festival in January

75 degrees

Average winter high temperature

70 degrees

Average summer low temperature (average high temperature in July, August and September—the low demand season—is 101 degrees)