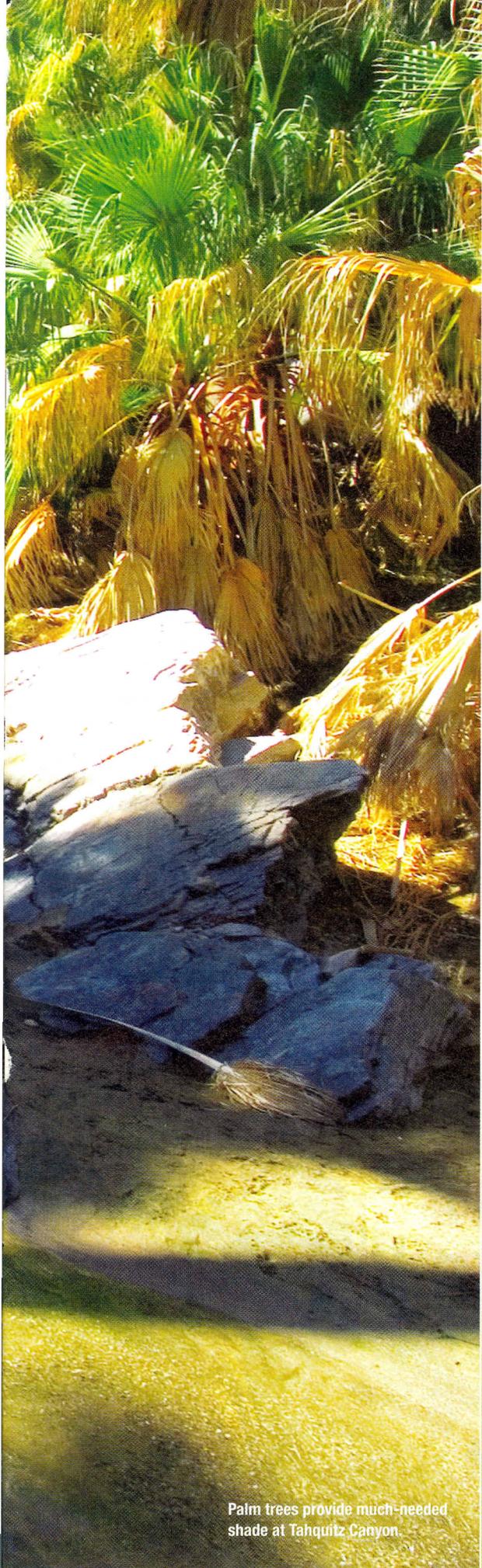


made IN THE shade

Keep your cool during the hot
Palm Springs summer. BY ELIZABETH HANSEN



Palm trees provide much-needed shade at Tahquitz Canyon.

Richard Broadwell/Alamy

ike many residents of coastal Southern California, I visit the Palm Springs area fairly regularly. Located in the Coachella Valley of the Colorado Desert, the region has an appeal all its own. Sometimes I am lured by nothing more than the stillness that only the desert can provide.

Last summer, motivated by the lackluster economy, I braved triple-digit temperatures and drove east on Interstate 10 in search of off-season bargains. Lower greens fees, two-for-one restaurant offers, and discounted admissions to popular attractions would be worth a little pain and suffering, I figured.

How wrong I was. Yes, the bargains abounded. But the pain and suffering were missing. I found plenty to do indoors, where air conditioning makes life comfortable, and I learned that at 8:00 a.m., the desert is no hotter than my hometown at midday.

As another summer approaches and the mercury begins to climb, here are some of my coolest discoveries that you should explore next time you're in town:

1. Grand Canyons

Long before Frank Capra filmed the 1937 classic *Lost Horizon* here, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians was drawn to the valley's canyons, which provide an oasis of palm groves, natural waterfalls, and hot mineral springs at the base of towering mountains.

Start on West Mesquite Avenue (west of Palm Canyon Drive), where you'll find the **Tahquitz Canyon** Visitor Center, which pays tribute to Coachella's first inhabitants with educational and cultural exhibits. Take the video tour, then head out on a hike led by one of the knowledgeable rangers, who will point out remnants of Indian culture, such as the mortars in which the Cahuilla ground corn. You'll learn that the valley sits on one of the largest aquifers in the western United States. The water bubbling up at your feet? It's emanating from an earthquake fault.

Tahquitz has much to offer, but Andreas, Palm, and Murray, three other canyons in the area, are certainly worth your time, too. **Andreas Canyon** is host to more than 150 plant species within a half-mile radius, and it's a bird-watcher's delight. But the real reason to visit this canyon is the temperature. Under a canopy of fan palms, it's considerably cooler than on the desert floor.



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2. Cable Access

Getting to Mount San Jacinto — where it's 30°F cooler than in the valley — is at least half the fun when you're on board the **Palm Springs Aerial Tramway**. State-of-the-art tram-cars rotate 360 degrees, providing a magnificent view of the Coachella Valley during the 2.5-mile ascent to the Mountain Station in Mount San Jacinto State Park. Once you're there, it's time for a hike. With 54 miles of trails, ranging from a one-mile nature walk to a 5.5-mile climb to San Jacinto's peak, you're sure to find one that suits your pace. Stop along the way at the lookout points, which provide superb vistas of the desert below and of surrounding peaks that soar to more than 10,000 feet in elevation.

And there's no better place to eat than at the top of the mountain. The Tramway's Ride 'n' Dine package is one of the best deals in the Palm Springs area. A ticket that includes dinner at the ski lodge-style Pines Café can be purchased for only slightly more than the cost of the tram ticket alone.

3. 'Mill Around

Why were turbines built in the Coachella Valley? What's so special about the way the wind blows through this area just north of I-10? And what

is a wind gypsy? Ask Ken Huskey, who serves as a guide for the **Palm Springs Windmill Tour** (offered by The Best of the Best Tours), and knows just about everything there is to know about wind power. The San Geronio Pass, flanked by Mount San Geronio and Mount San Jacinto, and only 90 miles from the Pacific, is the best place in the United States to harness wind power, according to Huskey.

He'll also tell you that the first turbine was installed here in 1926, but General Patton later ordered it removed, and the metal was used for the war effort. Today 3,200 turbines create 650 megawatts of electricity,

providing power to 200,000 Southern California homes.

Huskey also talks about the future of turbines in the United States. With the government's plans to increase the use of wind energy, there's the potential for the industry to support a half million jobs across the country by 2030.

As for what a wind gypsy is, you'll just have to take the tour to find out.

4. Cozy Cuisine

The late Don Callender, son of piety Marie, designed the **Jackalope Ranch** restaurant and the surrounding grounds, which sprawl over 6.5 acres in the nearby city of Indio. Clearly, he



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palm READINGS

We asked Interval members who live in the Palm Springs area about their favorite summer haunts and activities. For your to-do list:

Mel, Palm Springs

MUST-DO KIDS' ACTIVITY

Knott's Soak City: "Kids love the water park, located on Gene Autry Trail. Families can spend an entire day there — and still not have enough!"

Hal, Palm Springs

TOP THAI

Thai Smile restaurant on North Palm Canyon Drive: "It's where all the locals go, but perhaps I should not tell you that!"

Eric, Palm Springs

HOTTEST SPOT FOR SUNSETS

Mikado Japanese Steakhouse & Sushi Bar: "When you sit here, you can easily see why the desert is so popular. The mountains will change colors from tan to brown to amber to red to purple as each finger falls into shadow from the setting sun until it's eclipsed by the 10,000-foot peak of San Jacinto."

Andee, Palm Springs

COOLEST BAR

Azul on North Palm Canyon Drive: "Misters and lots of people-watching, not to mention terrific two-for-one drinks during happy hour."

Dean, Palm Springs

COOLEST BAR, TAKE 2

Melvyn's Restaurant & Lounge: "It was the watering hole for the rich and famous from the bygone days of Palm Springs."

Larry, Palm Springs

BEST HEAT-BEATER

Take the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway to Mount San Jacinto State Park: "This trip takes only a few minutes and brings you 8,500 feet above sea level for a day of cool hiking, lunch, or just enjoying nature."

was going for the visual equivalent of his mom's comfort food. Ponds, waterfalls, a well-manicured lawn, and a peaceful patio suggest not so much a restaurant as somebody's backyard. Cool off inside, where the Western ranch decor, with horse paintings and cowhide bar stools, continues the down-home theme.

Live entertainment and specials — including Wednesday night line dancing and a daily happy hour with half-price drinks and bar food — draw locals and visitors alike. Barbecue is one Jackalope specialty, but the contemporary Southwestern menu also features steaks and seafood. If you go for lunch, be sure to order the delicious grilled salmon salad, served with artichokes, asparagus, and *haricots verts*.

5. H.O.G. Heaven

Born to be wild? Rent a Harley at Palm Springs International Airport, and tour the desert with the sun on your face and the wind in your hair. **Eagle Rider** is the first motorcycle rental agency at an airport terminal, making the open road just a people mover or two away.

6. Child's Play

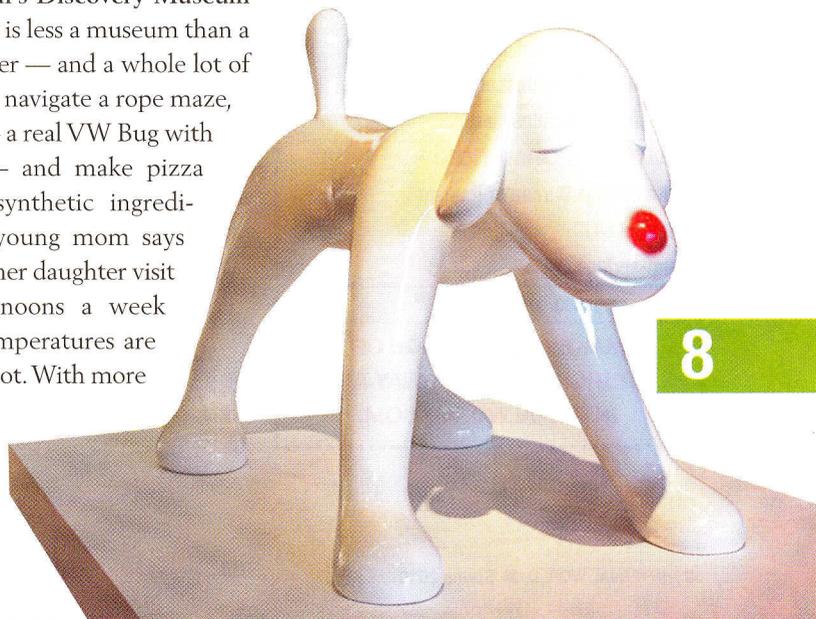
The **Children's Discovery Museum of the Desert** is less a museum than a learning center — and a whole lot of fun. Kids can navigate a rope maze, paint a car — a real VW Bug with real paint — and make pizza (alas, with synthetic ingredients). One young mom says that she and her daughter visit several afternoons a week when the temperatures are particularly hot. With more



than 50 hands-on exhibits providing educational entertainment, it's easy to understand why.

7. Make A Splash

If you're traveling with kids — actually, it really doesn't matter if you have children in tow — cool down at **Knott's Soak City Palm Springs water park**. What adult could possibly say no to the thrills of the Tidal Wave Tower — twin seven-story slides that will see you go from 0 to splash in the blink of an eye — or the slithering Sea Snake tube slide? The park's most recent addition, the Pacific Spin, is a multi-person raft ride boasting a 132-foot-long tunnel that drops 75 feet into a six-story funnel and culminates in a waterfall curtain. How cool is that?





fastFACTS

RESORT DIRECTORY: IntervalWorld.com or pages 136 to 138 and 142

CLIMATE: The summers are dry and hot, with an average high temperature of 106°F and an average low of 74°F.

INTERVAL TRAVEL: IntervalWorld.com

RENTAL CAR: Recommended

CONTACT: Tahquitz Canyon, tahquitzcanyon.com; Andreas Canyon, theindiancanyons.com/andreas.html; Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, pstramway.com; Palm Springs Windmill Tour, thebestofthebesttours.com; Jackalope Ranch, restaurantsofpalmsprings.com; Eagle Rider, eaglerider.com; Children's Discovery Museum, cdmod.org; Soak City, knotts.com; Palm Springs Art Museum, psmuseum.org; VillageFest, villagefest.org; Shields Date Garden, shieldsdates.com

VISITOR INFORMATION:

Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism
760.778.8418
palm-springs.org
palmspringsusa.com

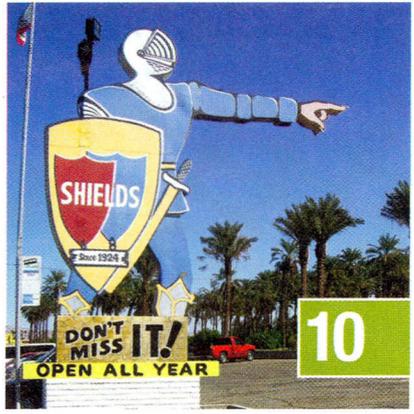
MAKE AN EXCHANGE OR PURCHASE A GETAWAY AT INTERVALWORLD.COM.

8. Art Direction

If you're thinking of a quick drop-in at the Palm Springs Art Museum — beat the heat for a bit and then move on — you might want to reconsider. The museum has undergone a major makeover, taking it from a dark, bland space to a sparkling repository of art housed in a light and bright place complete with beautiful beech floors. How did this happen?

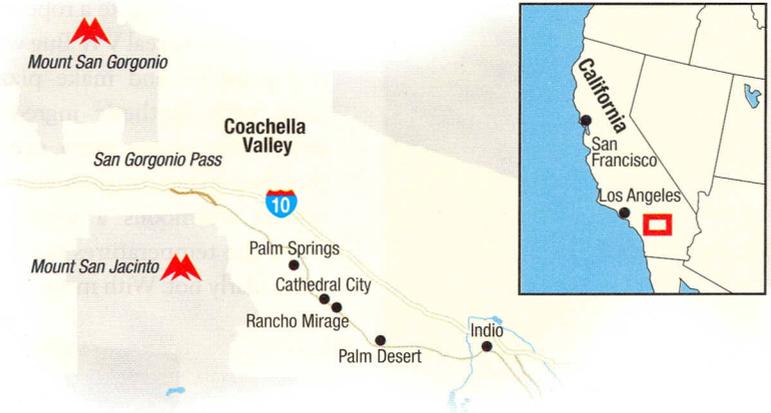
“Our affluent donors kept leaving us their collections, and it just made sense to put them on display,” says Bob Bogard, the museum’s director of marketing communications.

The result is a world-class museum (in a city of only 48,000). The collection is eclectic — ranging from Western art donated by actor George



Montgomery to an original Brillo box dress sculpted by Andy Warhol. Other celebrity donors include Frank Sinatra and William Holden.

Plan on spending an entire day here (it’s always 75°F inside), making time for a nice leisurely lunch in the Muse



Index Stock Imagery/photlibrary; Adams/Hansen Stock Photos

Café, where the walls are lined with black-and-white images of 1950s and '60s Hollywood celebrities who lived in Palm Springs at the time.

And speaking of movie stars, the museum's Annenberg Theater hosts the Global Lens film series, as well as lectures and a variety of live performances throughout the year.

9. The Beet Goes On

On Thursday nights in Palm Springs, six blocks of Palm Canyon Drive are closed for a street fair/farmers' market happening. **VillageFest** includes entertainment and vendors selling fresh produce from local farms and date gardens, as well as crafts, art, and jewelry. Munch on meatball sandwiches while watching a constant parade of locals, visitors, kids, and dogs; then thank the late Sonny Bono. He initiated VillageFest during his tenure as mayor of the city.

10. Crave The Date

Shields Date Garden has been in the same spot since 1924, when Floyd and Bess Shields, inspired by the desert conditions around Indio, first started cultivating heat- and sun-loving date palm trees. Today, the Coachella Valley produces 30 million pounds of dates every year.

Pick up a cool, tasty date shake (seriously, they're delicious), which you can sip while catching the 15-minute educational classic film, *The Romance & Sex Life of the Date* (Floyd footage included). As with the shake, it's become something of a legend in the area over the years, and it's surprisingly good. ■

Elizabeth Hansen is the travel editor of the San Diego-based *Ranch & Coast* magazine. She wrote about coastal Southern California in the Spring 2007 issue of *Interval World*.