Hiking Trails in the Palm Springs Area

Directions and maps for most trails: Sign up with All Trails. Or Every Trail.

Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument—Map and Info
Palm Springs Hiking Trails

Books

- 140 Great Hikes in and near Palm Springs—Philip Ferranti
- Best Easy Day Hikes—Palm Springs and Coachella Valley—Bruce Grubbs
- Joshua Tree: The Complete Guide—James Kaiser

Warnings: This is a desert environment.

- Take plenty of water and a map.
- Wear sun protection.
- Snacks are recommended for longer hikes.
- Do not go off trails.
- Keep children near you and on the trail.
- Wear hiking boots for the more rigorous trails.
- Weather can change quickly so wear layers and bring a waterproof shell.
- In warm weather, watch for rattlesnakes.
- Use common sense at all times.

The information below has been gleaned from various sources and may not always be accurate. Use advisedly at your own risk.

Easy Trails

The Palm Springs Indian Canyons are one of the most beautiful attractions to any Palm Springs visitor, especially if you love to hike. If you are only going to hike one place while in Palm Springs, this is the one you want to make sure you don’t miss.

You can hike Palm Canyon, Andreas Canyon, Murray Canyon, and a few other less known areas as well. Unlike other area trails, most of the trails in the Indian Canyons follow running streams, and are abundant in California Fan Palms, and many other types of vegetation and wildlife.

NOTE: There is a fee to enter the area, so make sure you are prepared for that when you go to visit.

Andreas Canyon Trail

(3 Miles, 160 ft rise: Drive S. Palm Canyon Drive to Andreas Canyon Road.)

The Andreas Canyon Trail is an easy trail that takes the hiker up the right side of the canyon, following a stream that wanders through groves of California fan palms. During warm weather the stream is a welcome sight to hikers and provides some relief from the desert heat.
The canyon is a stark contrast to the usual desert hiking trail due to the abundant vegetation that grows along the stream. One almost feels like they are in a “jungle” environment, instead of desert. If you look closely, you will also see many different birds and other animals, along with countless insects. After hiking about one mile, the hiker comes to a wire fence that signals the end of the trail. At this point you can cross the stream and return via the other side of the canyon, or you can return the way you came. The left side of the canyon gives the hiker a view of the canyon from above it a little, and is very much worth the effort.

During times of mountain runoff, the stream can become a little treacherous to cross. Be careful of slippery rocks, and always use common sense when hiking. During the warmer months of the year there is always the chance of coming across rattlesnakes, so be alert and watch your step.

**Willis Palm Trail**
(4 miles, 375 ft rise, 1-2 hr: From I-10, exit on Ramon Road and drive north to 1000 Palms Canyon Road. Turn left and drive 2 miles to the preserve.

The Willis Palm Oasis located in the Coachella Valley Preserve near 1000 Palms is part of a series of oases that are found along the San Andreas Fault. It is located in the Coachella Valley Preserve which is home to more than 183 bird species. It is also the home of the protected Coachella Fringe-toed Lizard.

The hike to Willis Palms is an easy hike to a palm oasis. You can hike from the parking area to the oasis, which is about a 10 minute walk. You can also take a trail that goes to the right shortly after leaving the parking area that takes you on a loop above and around the oasis. The loop hike leads you uphill for a while, and is a little more difficult. If you follow the loop you will end up at the far end of the oasis and you can follow the trail back to the parking area.

While the trail is mostly flat and easy to follow, there is a lot of soft sand which makes the hike a little more difficult. No dogs are allowed on trails in the Coachella Valley Preserve.

On November 26, 2010 a fire burned most of the oasis; however by February of 2011 the vegetation was already showing signs of regeneration, and now while you can still see signs of the fire the oasis has recovered well.

The fire in November of 2010 burned the palm fronds and skirts where bats, birds and other animals made their nests, however with the new growth the animals are once again nesting in the oasis. Keep your eyes open and you never know what kind of wildlife you will see.

Because the Willis Palm Oasis hike is so short, it is easy for you to check out some of the other trails in the Coachella Valley Preserve on the same day. To read about some of the other hiking trails in the preserve just click the link below.

- [More trails in the Coachella Valley Preserve](#)

**The McCallum Trail**
The Coachella Valley Preserve is located 10 miles east of Palm Springs near 1000 Palms. It is a 17,000 acre site that is home to the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, which is found nowhere else in the world. It is also home of the spectacular Thousand Palm Oasis which is fed by water seeping out of the San Andreas Fault. There are also several other Palm Oases, including the Willis, Hidden Horseshoe, and Indian Palms. Located in the center is the Paul Wilhelm Grove that is also the location of the Preserve’s visitor’s center. The preserve has several hiking trails including the McCallum, Hidden Palms, Moon Country, Pushawalla Palms, and Willis Palms trails.

The McCallum Trail to the McCallum Grove is a very nice hike on a well maintained trail. The McCallum Trail has numbered stops which describe the fan palms, San Andreas Fault, desert pupfish, and various geologic and ecologic features of the preserve. Taking the McCallum Trail from the Visitor Center is about a two-mile round-trip hike, and if you want you can also hike the Moon Canyon Trail which will bring your hike up to over four miles.

When you leave the visitor’s center you will pass through the lush vegetation of Thousand Palms Oasis. Most of the trail in the oasis is on a well maintained raised wooden path above a marshy bottom. There are several ponds in this part of the trail with desert pupfish and other wildlife. After leaving the oasis the trail winds through a sandy wash before reaching McCallum Grove. While the trail is not very strenuous, hiking in the sandy wash can be a little harder.

At the McCallum Grove there is a large pond which is fed by underground springs which are a result of seismic activity along the San Andreas fault. This is a very beautiful lush area, and once again you will see pupfish and other wildlife in the area.

After leaving the McCallum Grove you can take the trail further west. It is slightly uphill, but not very strenuous. You will come to an overlook that provides you with great views of the entire area. From there you can return to the visitor’s center, or continue to the Moon Canyon Trail if you prefer.

**Alexander Trail**

(2 miles RT, 100 ft rise, all skills levels. Access the trail by taking S. Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs to Bogert Trail and turning left. Continue down Bogert Trail and cross over bridge, then bear left and park at the end of the road.)

The trail begins in the wash below the parking area adjacent to the Trading Post. It hugs the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains and ends at the intersection with Palm Canyon Trail.

**Henderson Trail**

(2 miles RT, 200 ft rise. Access the trail by taking S. Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs to Bogert Trail and turning left. Continue down Bogert Trail and cross over bridge, then bear left and park at the end of the road.) Trail begins at foot of slope adjacent to parking area.
Trails of Moderate Difficulty

The Araby Trail
(3 miles, 1000 ft rise)
The Araby trail can be accessed either at the entrance to the Rimcrest / Southridge development (that’s where Bob Hope’s house is), or via the Berns, Henderson and Garstin Trails. If starting from the Rimcrest / Southridge Road, the trail can be found on the left (east) side of the road, before you get to the guard gate. Park in the dirt on the right side of the road immediately after turning onto the Rimcrest/Southridge road.

This trail gives the hiker great views of the Coachella Valley, and you get to hike right past Bob Hope’s house!! It is a fairly easy hike from the start at the Rimcrest/Southridge gate to Bob Hope’s house. You can forget about buying one of those postcards of Bob Hope’s house, instead send your friends one that you took while hiking right next to it! After you hike up the Araby past Bob Hope’s house, you can continue up the trail for access to the Berns, Garstin and Henderson Trails.

Like any of the other trails in the area, even in mild temperature conditions you will need plenty of water. Be sure to bring some snacks to enjoy once you reach the top of the trail. There are no picnic tables, but there are plenty of rocks to sit on and enjoy the view of the Coachella Valley while you take a well-deserved lunch break.

Please hike safely, and follow these hiking tips.

Connecting Trails

BERNS TRAIL
(1.0 miles, one way, 1000 ft rise. Use the directions for either the Araby Trail, or the Garstin Trail depending on which direction you wish to hike.)

The Berns Trail acts as a connector between the Garstin, Araby, Shannon and Eagle Canyon trails. It begins at the top of the Garstin Trail and winds northeasterly over the top of Smoke Tree Mountain until it intersects the Araby Trail. Of course, if you start hiking at the beginning of the Araby Trail, then you can use the Berns Trail to connect with the Garstin. I liked the solitude of the Berns trail as you descend into the canyon that separates the top of the Garstin and the top of the Araby trail. Construction of the Berns Trail was sponsored by friends of Charlie Berns, and opened in 1972.

Shannon Trail
(3 mile RT Hike the Henderson Trail (or Araby Trail) to get to the Shannon Trail. This trail is a connector trail between Henderson and Garstin Trail that begins at toe of slope adjacent to parking area.

Garstin Trail
(2 miles RT, 1000 ft rise., about 2 hr round trip. Hike the Araby Trail or the Henderson/Shannon Trails.)
The Garstin Trail immediately goes uphill, and winds up Smoke Tree Mountain with a series of switch backs. It rises to a plateau connecting with the Shannon, Bems, Wild Horse, and Eagle Canyon Trails. It offers magnificent panoramic views of the Canyon Country Club area, the San Jacinto and Little San Bernardino Mountains, as well as Palm Canyon and Palm Springs. Once at the top you are also rewarded with great views of Cathedral City, and the eastern Coachella Valley.

At the top of the Garstin Trail (elevation 1522 feet ), there is a trail junction that can connect you with the trails mentioned above, as well with the Wild Horse Trail which can be used to climb Murray Hill (elevation 2,210 feet ), the highest peak in the immediate area. The Murray Hill hike is strenuous, but well worth it. To get to Murray Hill, follow the Garstin to the junction of the Wild Horse Trail (the junction is shortly after you reach the plateau of Smoke Tree Mountain at the top of the Garstin. Take the Wild Horse Trail and follow the trailheads that lead you to the Clara Burgess Trail. You will keep to the left when you reach the junction of the Wild Horse and the Fern Canyon Trail, and follow that trail up to the top of Murray Hill. It is a hard hike, but well worth it, as you are rewarded with fantastic views of the Coachella Valley from the top of Murray Hill.

**Difficult Trails**

**Bear Creek Canyon Oasis** -
(8.3 miles RT, 8 hours, 2300 ft rise.  At [Everytrail.com](http://www.everytrail.com))

Drive down Eisenhower Drive to the end and make a left turn onto Avenida Bermudas, which becomes Calle Tecate. Follow Tecate to end and trail head (1.2 miles drive). Start at the west parking lot where Ave. Madero meets Tecate. From the parking area follow the wide well-marked trail to the first "oasis," you will see up the trail to the right. The City of La Quinta has built a hiking park in the area called "Oasis Cove" and the trail leads to that. Keep walking past the oasis about 100 yards. There is a wash to the right, enter the wash, and turn south (left) and keep to the left for about 20 minutes. As you walk, the canyon will narrow. Look for a small canyon to the right that has black charred rock from camper's use. Not far past this canyon, at the Palo Verde tree, is the trail head that marks the beginning of Bear Creek Ridge Trail. From here it is easy to follow the trail. This trail offers panoramic views in every direction. After about 2 miles on the trail, and on a clear day you can see the Salton Sea, and most of the Coachella Valley. The views of La Quinta and the hills and rocks of the area are beautiful. As you continue to climb up this trail, the views get better and better. At the 4-mile mark, you will find a massive oasis tucked into the end of the canyon. This is where we ate lunch before starting back down the trail. If you haven't hiked much, or if you are out of shape, save this one until you have hiked some of the other trails.

**Tips:**
Even though I got lucky and today was cool, probably not a hike for days over 85 deg f. While the fauna and flora was interesting there was no shade until the very top.

**Boo Hoff Loop**
(12.8 miles, 6 hours)
Similar path to get to trail head. Drive down Eisenhower Drive to the intersection with Avenido Ramirez. Trailhead on left.

**Comment from hiker:** In case it's not obvious, this is a completely dry and remote area. There are no emergency services of any kind, and there's no guarantee that you'll have cellular service. It's typically well over 100 degrees much of the year, (not just during the summer). The best months are Dec-April. The rest of the year is miserable out here. Also, April is when the rattlesnakes come out of hibernation, looking to mate. I saw four in one day.

La Quinta Cove to Sugarloaf Café at Rte 74
(14.2 miles, 8 hours)
George, Rick, Chris, Doug & Mark hiked from La Quinta Cove to Sugarloaf Cafe traversing the Boo Hoof, Guadalupe and Cactus Spring Trails. Beautiful day. Clear skies. 75 degrees with gentle breeze. Finished the hike in just under 8 hours with vertical up-5,578 feet, vertical down 1,896 and total of 14.2 miles. We had a nice lunch at the cowboy camp at elevation 5,000’.

**Tips:**
This hike is strenuous and the Guadalupe is undefined in many areas. First time hikers should accompany an experienced hiker with these trails. 2 bottles of electrolyte, 3 liters of water, trail mix and lunch are a must. Return vehicle(s) must be stationed at the Sugarloaf Cafe the night prior where there is plenty of lighting and fire station across the street.

Many, many more hikes in this area. [See Hikes](#).