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TRAVEL TALES

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE JEWISH TRAVELLER

By ALEXANDRA COHEN

VACATION PARADISE: Close your eyes. Imagine a place with palm tree-lined streets, beautiful summer weather in the spring and fall, resorts, golfing, hiking, shopping, and more. For many years, I had heard such wonderful things about The Greater Palm Springs (GPS) region, and when I finally had the opportunity to travel there myself, it absolutely lived up to the hype.

JEWISH CULTURE: The local Jewish Federation, which serves the Palm Springs community, estimates that there are approximately 20,000 Jewish residents in an overall population of 350,000. Approximately 55 percent of this Jewish community lives there year-round, with others spending varied periods of time in the desert.

The community currently includes five synagogues and two Chabad entities, including Temple Isaiah of Palm Springs, which is multi-denominational; Temple Sinai of Palm Desert, which is Reform; the Desert Synagogue of Palm Springs, which is Modern Orthodox; Congregation Beth Shalom, B. Dunes, which is Conservative, and Har-El, Palm Desert, the Reform Congregation.

There are two Jewish Day Schools: Desert Torah Academy, run by Chabad, and Jewish Com-

munity School of the Desert. The community also has a full-service Jewish Family Services organization, which specializes in a wide array of services for seniors. The community is very proud of its Holocaust Memorial, located in the Palm Desert municipal park, built at the initiation of two local survivors, Earl Greif and Joseph Brandt. Many National and international Jewish organizations have strong constituent groups in the Palm Springs area, including ADL, AIPAC, JNF, American Friends of Hebrew University, and Technion. The Jewish community is, indeed, a vibrant one.

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TRAVEL TALES

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WHERE TO STAY: During my time in Palm Springs, I had the great pleasure of staying at The Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa (www.renesmeralda.com), a beautiful resort in Indian Wells, which is conveniently nestled between the Palm Desert and La Quinta regions, just at the foot of the Santa Rosa Mountains. Adjacent to the Indian Wells Golf Resort, The Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa is located off Highway 111 and is approximately a 30-minute drive to the airport and Downtown Palm Springs. A few years ago, the resort underwent a multi-million-dollar re-design, which included the creation of new guestrooms and suites, the development of a beautiful new two-story lobby, an olive tree grove, and a new two-story lobby, an olive tree grove, and a new set of menus for their restaurants.

A stay at this hotel truly does feel luxurious. Wherever you turn, you are treated to stunning views of

the blue, typically cloudless sky, the desert mountains and the nearby palm trees. The hotel's large pool area features two swimming pools, one with a fountain and the other with zero-entry and a sandy beach, as well as two hot tubs. There is plenty of seating, but for those hoping for a particularly special day, it is possible to reserve VIP chairs or cabana seating. My travel partner and I enjoyed a lovely day in a cabana, which comes with couches, a television, waters, and a large fruit platter. We also ordered drinks and lunch from the tasty and diverse pool menu. The service was truly top-notch. Are you a golfer ready for a challenge? The hotel offers packages which include the option to play a round at the neighboring Indian Wells Golf Resort. The Renaissance Esmeralda also features a fitness center with state-of-the-art facilities, tennis facilities, an entertainment zone with arcade games, virtual reality, and an escape room, a

camp for children, and a fantastic spa.

DINING: We started off our dining experiences in the Greater Palm Springs region at our own hotel. First, at The Place Lobby Bar, which offers an extensive and creative cocktail menu, as well as many light bites. The second restaurant that we tried at the Renaissance Esmeralda was Cava, which is on the terrace level with a patio adjacent to the swimming pools. Cava has different menus available for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Located at The Gardens on El Paseo, deemed to be the premier shopping and dining destination in the Southern California Desert region, I highly recommend visiting Pacifica Seafood Restaurant. Their fine dining menu focuses on their selection of fresh seafood, as well as cocktails and award-winning wine list. Arnold Palmer's Restaurant opened in 2004. The menu features some of the late golfing legend's favorites,

seafood, aged beef, and comfort foods.

WHAT TO DO: When you aren't relaxing at a hotel pool or playing a round of golf, there are plenty of other activities to consider during your visit to Palm Springs. The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway (<https://pstramway.com/>) is the world's largest rotating tram car. Joshua Tree National Park is another exciting place to visit and less than a one-hour drive from Downtown Palm Springs. The Greater Palm Springs area is home to a large variety of festivals. While you can certainly peruse shops by walking through Downtown Palm Springs, as well as Old Town La Quinta, true shopping lovers may also wish to explore the Uptown Design District for one-of-a-kind boutiques. Palm Desert's El Paseo for upscale, luxury retailers, or Desert Hills Premium Outlets for the best deals.

For more about Palm Springs please go to <https://www.visitgreaterpalmsprings.com>



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*Wishing you all a happy
Hanukkah filled with light,
love and unity!*

Fred Beauchemin
Député de Marguerite-Bourgeoys

Contact :

Téléphone : 514 368-1818

Courriel : frederic.beauchemin.MABO@assnat.qc.ca

Adresse : 7655 Boul. Newman, suite 311, LaSalle, H8N 1X7