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PALM DESERT: A FAMILY-FRIENDLY VACATION DESTINATION

PALM DESERT, CA – While Palm Desert has a well-deserved reputation as a mecca for golf and tennis players – with 32 challenging golf courses and 150 tennis courts – this city in the heart of the California desert resorts also offers a host of other attractions and activities for fun-loving parents and children of all ages.

With 350 days of sunshine each year, Palm Desert is a great destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Like to hike? Ringed by three majestic mountain ranges, the Coachella Valley has an awesome selection of hikes for every fitness level. The Santa Rosa Mountains form the City's southern boundary and offer some of the most spectacular vantage points from which to enjoy breathtaking vistas of this desert oasis. Newly complete hiking and mountain biking trails beckon with a variety of easy to difficult trails named after such famous residents as Hopalong Cassidy and Randall Henderson, one of Palm Desert's founders. A map with a selection of hiking trails is available from the Palm Desert Visitor Center.

If you prefer to ride up the mountains, don't miss the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway to the top of Mount San Jacinto. You ascend 2.5 miles in 15 minutes to a pristine wilderness aboard glassed-in rotating tramcars – the world's largest. At the top, enjoy sweeping views of the Valley and surrounding mountain ranges from the Tram's restaurant, lounge or observation deck, or hike one of the dozens of well-marked trails. Cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snow-shoeing, and even snow camping are also available in season.

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Back on the Valley floor, Palm Desert is the perfect place to explore on two wheels. Whether you prefer a leisurely loop through the city's attractions – including public art displays, lush golf resorts and native desert flora – or a more challenging climb to elevations that reveal stunning vistas of the Coachella Valley, Palm Desert will give you a ride to remember. Bike route maps also are available at the Palm Desert Visitor Center.

Or you can take the family for an up-close look at the desert's flora, fauna, and unique geology with a Desert Adventures jeep tour, the area's premier eco-tour company. Then, for a completely different perspective, hop aboard a hot-air balloon and check out the polo fields and date groves to the east, and the rock formations around the San Andreas fault to the west.

If you'd like a walk on the wild side, discover The Living Desert Zoo and Botanical Gardens – 1,200 acres of blooming, scampering, flying, howling fun. Here you'll find wild creatures and creature comforts for the entire family including nearly 450 native and exotic animals from the world's deserts, scenic trails and beautiful botanical gardens. Picnic areas, a café and gift shop, Native American exhibits and year-round special events make this one of the area's most popular attractions.

You also can take a self-guided tour of Palm Desert's renowned "Art in Public Places" which features more than 150 works of art in parks, street medians, public facilities and even private business buildings. Palm Desert was the first city in Riverside County to create such a program. Maps are available at the Palm Desert Visitor Center.

The Palm Desert Civic Center Park, which includes a sculpture walk as part of the Art in Public Places Program, also offers a terrific family-oriented location to relax, picnic, skateboard, or bring the dog for a visit to the dog park.

The McCallum Theatre for the Performing Arts also offers an array of world-class music, theater, dance and comedy as well as special programming for children – including Imagination Station Summer Camps.

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Just minutes away, children of all ages will enjoy Knott's Soak City Water Park and its 13 water slides and wave pool. Nearby is Boomers family entertainment center, a theme park featuring three 18-hole miniature golf courses, batting cages, bumper boats, and a game pavilion to provide fun for all ages.

Also nearby is the Children's Discovery Museum of the Desert in Rancho Mirage. This unique museum inspires and promotes intellectual curiosity and self-expression through inventive and interactive exhibits and programs. Children can paint a car, take apart computers and other electronics to see how they work, learn about archeology and native plants and animals, even shop in a mock grocery store.

If all these family-friendly activities have convinced you to visit Palm Desert, the city has accommodations to fit all budgets, from value-priced motels to full-service golf and tennis resorts. Resorts such as Desert Springs JW Marriott Resort & Spa offer recreational and educational programs just for kids – freeing mom and dad to lounge by the pool, get pampered at the spa or play a round of golf. The Kid's Klub provides fun and excitement for guests aged 4 to 12; professional counselors lead such activities as T-shirt painting, Nintendo, swimming, tennis, scavenger hunts, boat rides, playing the putting course, sand castle building, potato sack races, and more.

Information: For complete visitor information on Palm Desert and a free Vacation Guide, call the Palm Desert Visitor Center at 800-873-2428 or visit online at www.palm-desert.org.

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