

Desert Hot Springs Hiking Trails

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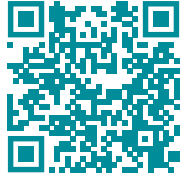
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GREATER PALM SPRINGS

There's always something chill happening in Greater Palm Springs.

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things to do



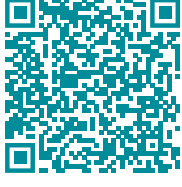
events



restaurants



places to stay



Desert Hot Springs

Nestled at the base of the San Bernardino Mountains, Desert Hot Springs is home to some of the purest hot and cold mineral springs in the world. Visitors can experience these therapeutic waters at several boutique spas — but equally therapeutic and rejuvenating is spending time outdoors, and the city's trails are the perfect jumping off point for immersing oneself in nature. Hikers can climb up into the surrounding hillsides, explore nearby preserves, and even venture as far as the southwest part of Joshua Tree National Park.

WHITEWATER CANYON

Trails 1, 2, and 3 are accessed at the visitor center and ranger station for the Whitewater Preserve, 9160 Whitewater Canyon Road. This preserve is managed by the Wildlands Conservancy. Scan the QR code to the right for hours and temporary trail closures.



01 CANYON VIEW LOOP TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH 3.5-5 mi / 5.6-8 km | ELEV. GAIN 659 ft / 201 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

This trail starts from the ranger station and takes you up along the ridge before dropping down into the riverbed and winding back toward the station. A slightly longer loop up the Pacific Crest Trail to Red Dome can be made into a 5-mile hike.



WHITEWATER CANYON

02 WHITEWATER TO MISSION CREEK STONE HOUSE

HARD LENGTH 12.5 mi / 20.1 km | ELEV. GAIN 469 ft / 143 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) spans more than 2,600 miles from Mexico to Canada, passing through California, Oregon, and Washington along the way. This segment can be accessed from Whitewater Canyon. From the trailhead, follow the rock-lined path over the river until you reach the junction with the PCT, heading north and continuing past a red rock outcrop known as "Red Dome." About 3.75 miles in, take Mission Creek Preserve Trail to the right, which leads to the historic Mission Creek Stone House.



MISSION CREEK STONE HOUSE

03 SAN GORGONIO OVERLOOK TRAIL

HARD LENGTH 10 mi / 16.1 km | ELEV. GAIN 1,190 ft / 362 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

This hike traverses the San Gorgonio Wilderness, following the famed Pacific Crest Trail across sandy hillsides, wide washes, and desert wetlands. Approximately 5 miles in, the path climbs to an overlook with breathtaking views of San Gorgonio Mountain, the tallest peak in Southern California.

17 MCCALLUM TRAIL

EASY LENGTH 1.8 mi / 2.9 km | ELEV. GAIN 95 ft / 29 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

This heavily trafficked trail begins on a wooden boardwalk before turning into a sand path, winding through the Thousand Palms Oasis and arriving at beautiful Simone Pond (home to several species of bird, as well as pupfish). Visitors often feel like they've entered another world, especially when they discover water, a rare sight in the desert, surrounded by tall grasses and towering skirted palms.



TIP: Call ahead to see if the pond is open, as seasonal closures can be common.

18 HIDDEN HORSESHOE AND PUSHAWALLA PALMS TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH 4.4 mi / 7.1 km | ELEV. GAIN 705 ft / 215 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

After making a left turn on Thousand Palms Canyon Road, park in a small dirt turnout located on the right, near the trailhead. The path begins just east of the Visitors Center and follows an uplifted section of an earthquake fault before descending into Pushawalla Canyon, where an oasis of California fan palms awaits, fed by water that rises to the surface through cracks in the fault.



PUSHAWALLA GROVE

04 MISSION CREEK PRESERVE TRAIL

EASY LENGTH 3.2 mi / 5.1 km | ELEV. GAIN 328 ft / 100 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

Trailhead: 60550 Mission Creek Road, Desert Hot Springs (The Wildlands Conservancy's Mission Creek Preserve)

Mission Creek Preserve encompasses lands that were once a dude ranch, and long before that, home to the Mission Band of Sonoran Indians. To find the trailhead, turn onto Mission Creek Road from Highway 62 and follow the dirt lane for 2 miles until reaching a locked gate. Park in the unpaved lot, cross the gate, and set out on the dirt path. This trail also leads to the historic Mission Creek Stone House, connecting from there to the trail that leads back to the ranger station at Whitewater Preserve from trail #2.

05 MARSH TRAIL

EASY LENGTH .7 mi / 1.1 km | ELEV. GAIN 113 ft / 34 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

Trailhead: 11055 East Drive, Morongo Valley

Canyon Marsh Trail follows a trickling stream and immerses visitors in the rich riparian habitat of the Sand to Snow National Monument, connecting with the Mesquite Trail on one end and the Desert Willow Trail at the other. The boardwalk portion is wheelchair accessible and perfect for families with small children and strollers.

MESQUITE TRAIL

EASY LENGTH .5 mi / .8 km | ELEV. GAIN 154 ft / 47 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

DESERT WILLOW TRAIL

EASY LENGTH 1 mi / 1.6 km | ELEV. GAIN 165 ft / 50 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

06 YUCCA RIDGE TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH .72 mi / 1.2 km | ELEV. GAIN 282 ft / 86 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

Trailhead: 11055 East Drive, Morongo Valley

Hikers following this path will venture through groves of Mojave yucca, creosote bush, and calico cactus before climbing uphill to the ridge, where a stunning lookout point with panoramic views of Morongo Valley and San Gorgonio Peak awaits.

07 WEST CANYON TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH .84 mi / 1.4 km | ELEV. GAIN 144 ft / 44 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

Trailhead: 11055 East Drive, Morongo Valley

Expect a couple steep switchbacks during this hike, which climbs to the top of the saddle ridge before leading you back to the canyon floor and marsh habitat. Creosote bush, honey mesquite, and wild plum blanket the hillsides, while springtime wildflowers bring a dazzling pop of color after winter rains.

08 BIG MORONGO THROUGH-HIKE

MODERATE LENGTH 11.3 mi / 18.2 km | ELEV. GAIN 1,240 ft / 378 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

Trailhead: 11055 East Drive, Morongo Valley

From the trailhead at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, this through-hike follows a willow stream for 5.4 miles; once you've reached the end outside Desert Hot Springs, you can return via the same route — doubling your distance to 11 miles — or have transportation waiting for you at the lower end. (To find the lower end of the trail, look for a tan brick structure on the north side of Indian Avenue about 1 mile east of the intersection of Highway 62; turn onto a dirt road here and follow until you get to a locked gate and a parking area where the trail down from the preserve ends.) Arrow-weed, honey mesquite, and cottonwood trees flourish along this path, as well as several migrating and nesting birds.



BIG MORONGO MARSH

09 LITTLE MORONGO TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH 5.4 mi / 8.7 km | ELEV. GAIN 1,814 ft / 553 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

Trailhead: About 1 mile north of Annandale Ave./Little Morongo Canyon Rd.

Explore part of the Sand to Snow National Monument while hiking this one-way trail through Little Morongo Canyon, a valley at the northern end of Desert Hot Springs.

10 WINDY RIDGE TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH 3.6 mi / 5.8 km | ELEV. GAIN 810 ft / 247 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

Trailhead: Enter behind the sign at the intersection of Augusta/Clubhouse Blvd. in Desert Hot Springs

Best enjoyed from September to May, when beautiful wildflowers dot the landscape, this hiking and mountain biking trail begins along the edge of a golf course before climbing up into the hillside, eventually intersecting with an ATV road.

11 BLIND CANYON TRAIL

HARD LENGTH 3.9 mi / 6.3 km | ELEV. GAIN 984 ft / 300 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

Trailhead: Santa Cruz Road/Casa Grande Drive, Desert Hot Springs (parking at top of Santa Cruz)

Only recommended for experienced hikers, this trail traverses an extension of the Little San Bernardino Mountains, with steep ups and downs and the occasional rock scramble.

12 SWISS/BRYCE'S CANYON TRAIL

EASY LENGTH 2.4 mi / 3.9 km | ELEV. GAIN 544 ft / 166 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

Trailhead: 10401-10499 Verbena Drive, Desert Hot Springs

You begin on the south side of a flood control channel, which leads up into the foothills of the Little San Bernardino Mountains, where towering rock walls, boulders, and native flora create a beautiful backdrop for enjoying a couple quiet hours in nature.

13 LONG CANYON TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH 9.1 mi / 14.6 km | ELEV. GAIN 1,223 ft / 373 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

Southern Trailhead: About 1 mile north of the intersection of Long Canyon Road/Hacienda Avenue

This newer trail connects Desert Hot Springs to Joshua Tree National Park (JTNP), traversing wide-open desert terrain blanketed with barrel cacti, creosote, and brittlebush. The JTNP trail corridor winds through the natural wash and climbs Long Canyon, ending in Yucca Valley.

Northern Trailhead: Access off Elk Trail Road in Yucca Valley (34.07645, -116.4222)

For a 12-mile through-hike, have someone waiting for you at the northern trailhead, which you can access by taking Acoma Trail south from Highway 62 to Desert Gold Drive. From there, turn west to Elk Trail, then turn south on Elk Trail.



KIM NICOL TRAIL

14 KIM NICOL TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH 5.6 mi / 9 km | ELEV. GAIN 948 ft / 289 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

Trailhead: Intersection of Corkhill Road/20th Avenue, Desert Hot Springs

Named after Kim Nicol, who dedicated her life to protecting endangered species and open spaces in Greater Palm Springs, this hike climbs almost 1,200 feet and features breathtaking views, with snowcapped mountains, windmills, and wide-open desert stretching in all directions.

COACHELLA VALLEY PRESERVE

Trails 15, 16, 17, and 18 are all accessed from the visitor center at the Coachella Valley Preserve in the Thousand Palms Oasis, 29200 Thousand Palms Canyon Road, Thousand Palms. Scan the QR code to the right for additional information, hours, or trail closures.



15 WILLIS PALMS LOOP

MODERATE LENGTH 4.1 mi / 6.6 km | ELEV. GAIN 531 ft / 162 m | ROUTE TYPE Loop

Setting out in a counterclockwise direction, you'll follow the path up a ridge (featuring fantastic views) before winding back down again through a wash and past the Willis Palms Oasis, one of a series of oases along the San Andreas Fault. The cluster of bright green palm trees provides a strikingly beautiful contrast to the surrounding rocky terrain. If you prefer to see the palm grove first, begin clockwise, finishing at the ridge.



WILLIS PALMS GROVE

16 HERMAN'S HIKE TRAIL

MODERATE LENGTH 6.6 mi / 10.6 km | ELEV. GAIN 1,423 ft / 434 m | ROUTE TYPE Out & Back

While the first part of the trail is deep sand, you'll find more solid terrain as the path ascends into the hills. Approximately three-quarters of the way up, spectacular views unfold all around. You can retrace your steps (which will bring your total trek to about 6.6 miles) or continue along the San Andreas Fault ridge down to the Willis Palms Oasis.



Hiking Safety tips

Our destination is home to more than 1,000 miles of breathtaking hiking trails traversing varied terrain, from wide-open sandy washes and lush palm tree groves to steep alpine wilderness. Keep in mind that from June to October, daytime temperatures here can easily reach 100°F (37.78°C) and beyond.

Hiking in extreme heat can be dangerous and even life-threatening: if there's a heat advisory in effect, do not go hiking.

The following tips will help you explore safely and responsibly.



HYDRATE!
When half your water is gone, it's time to turn back.

Avoid hiking at peak heat during summer months.
Mornings before 9 AM are your friend.

Never hike alone.
And tell someone where you're going.



Stay on the trail.
It can prevent you from getting lost and helps preserve our natural landscape.



Wear the right shoes.
Traction and support are everything.

Give wildlife space.
For their safety as well as your own.



Don't count on your cellphone.
Charge up before you go, but know that service can be limited out on the trails.

- ☐ **Water**
(1 liter/34 ounces minimum per person for each hour of hiking)
- ☐ **Nutrition/Snacks**
(think trail mix and granola bars)
- ☐ **Map & Compass**
(you may not always have cell service, so download map directly to your mobile device)
- ☐ **Sunscreen & Hat**
(you'll need both, with our 300+ days of sunshine each year)
- ☐ **Extra Layers**
(long sleeves and pants provide protection from the sun)
- ☐ **First Aid Kit**
(nature can be unpredictable)
- ☐ **Comb**
(to remove cactus spines and thorny stems)
- ☐ **Flashlight**
(for those who like to catch the sunset)
- ☐ **Hand Mirror**
(to signal for help if your cell won't work)
- ☐ **Whistle**
(in case you get separated from your group)

Scan for a list of Greater Palm Springs hikes.



@VisitGreaterPS



These hiking tips are brought to you by the Palm Springs Mounted Police Search and Rescue Team. Follow their Facebook page for more information.

WHITewater PRESERVE

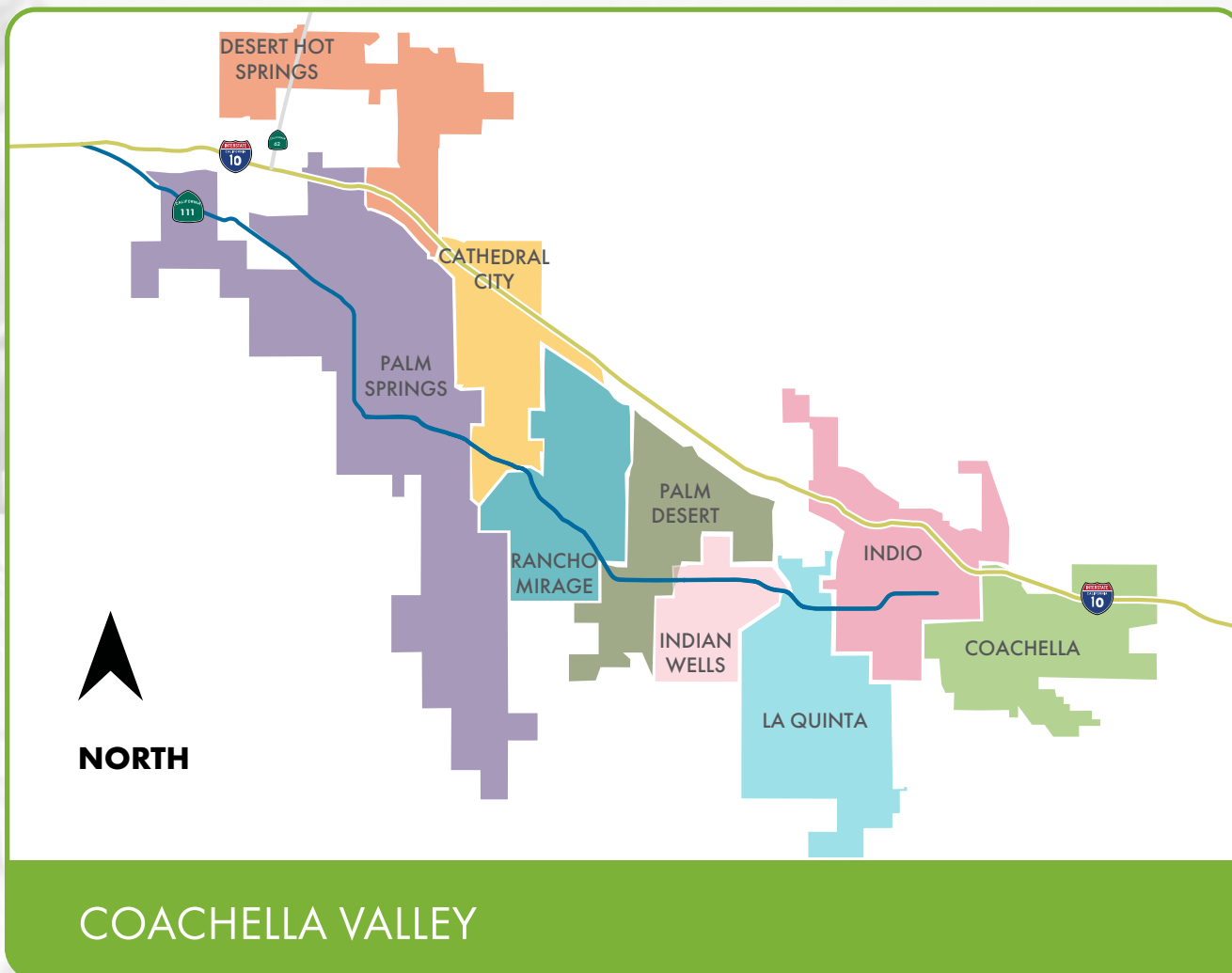
BIG MORONGO CANYON PRESERVE

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have someone waiting for you at
the northern trailhead, which you
can access by taking Acoma Trail
south from Highway 62 to Desert
Gold Drive. From there, turn west
to Elk Trail, then turn south on
Elk Trail.



Trails 5, 6, 7, and 8 are all accessed from the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, 11055 East Drive, Morongo Valley. There is a small visitor center and parking lot at the preserve office next to the trailhead for these trails. For more details, scan the QR code below. Please note that the trail map on the website is oriented to the south, whereas the inset map above is oriented to the north.



MAP NOT TO SCALE.
Depictions of trails/locations are representative.
See reverse side for trail details



Don't forget to review some
hiking safety tips (reverse side)
before you go.

COACHELLA VALLEY PRESERVE

