

destination I DO Palm Springs

By Kathryn Bechen

If you're longing for a chic and sunny "desert I do" only about a two hour drive from the beaches of San Diego and Los Angeles, be prepared to fall in love all over again, not just with your fiancé, but with the entire Palm Springs area in the enchanting Coachella Valley.

A hideaway paradise for celebrities and luminaries past and present, Palm Springs has long attracted an eclectic crowd from around the world with its hard-to-match-very-own-vibe. Glamorous and chic yet easy-paced, charming, and possessing a spiritual aura due to its history with the Agua Caliente Cahuilla Indians, the area boasts breathtakingly beautiful mountain views, pristine golf courses with luxurious country clubs, varied cuisine, and mountaintop sanctuaries, as well as the world's largest aerial tramway where yes, you can marry and have your reception too.

We personally traveled to Palm Springs and toured, ate and slept at several wedding venues just so we could give you perfect desert destination wedding options and info. There's something for every couple, whether your bridal style is young and hip, elegance and antiques, midcentury modern, or Hollywood chic, so come on, let's find YOUR "desert destination I do" style!



Photos from left to right: Ace Hotel, Colony Palms Hotel, Parker Palm Springs, Riviera Resort & Spa, The Willows Inn, Viceroy Palm Springs



Hip Camp Swim Club

Is a modern twist on camping your casually-young-and-hip way of tying the knot? Then you'll love the **Ace Hotel** which has just undergone a multimillion dollar renovation and was formerly the spacious campus of a Howard Johnson hotel. Think "indulgent camping" with rooms of simple vintage furnishings and canvas bedspreads for a bit of a retro bohemian feel. You and your new mate can listen to records on vintage record players and have a couples massage in a cozy yurt, or relax the afternoon away in a hammock near the oh-so-deep swimming pool. Tasty and affordable dishes like Wild Mushrooms and Polenta and Harissa Lamb are available on site at their King's Highway restaurant, so technically, you could spend your honeymoon on the property and not leave for days.

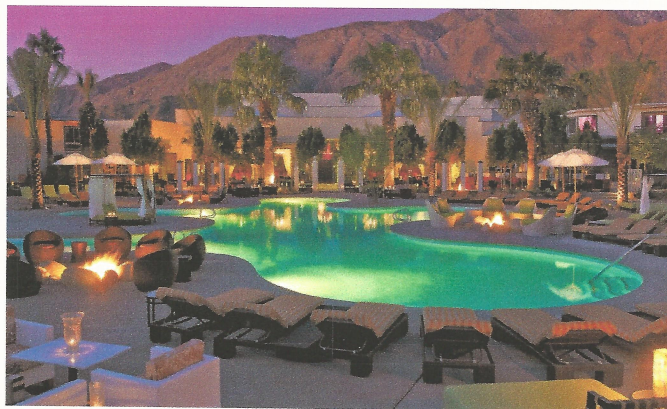


Hollywood Regency Chic

For those of you who love Hollywood's glamour era, be sure to check out the **Viceroy Palm Springs** just minutes from downtown. A five acre pristine paradise at the foothills of the San Jacinto Mountains, the property has perfectly symmetrical manicured gardens with three lovely courtyards and pools, one of which once sported a bridge so a bride and groom could walk over the pool. Lemon yellow accents and bright orange doors dot the bright white modernized Hollywood Regency style décor, giving it a chic "LA luxe" feel. Always available on the grounds is ice water with lemons to quench your thirst in the desert sun, and visitors from around the world indulge in The Viceroy's Estrella Spa as well as their California Modern cuisine from their Citron Restaurant. Rent one of the suites or private villas where you and your honey can sink down into pillowtop bedding and Italian linens after a brisk workout at their fitness center.

Hollywood Glam With Midcentury Modern Flair

If a 24 acre luxury resort campus of stunningly renovated midcentury modern design, meandering swimming pools, multiple courtyards, themed gardens, private cabanas with vintage Miss America posters, a huge world-class spa, a renowned restaurant, and a bikini bar all sound like your desert wedding dream, then check out the over-the-top-glitz of the **Riviera Resort & Spa**, which bills itself as a "beacon for cultural sophisticates." With 406 luxurious guestrooms and colorful oversized suites sporting marble bathtubs, widescreen plasma TVs, paintings of Marilyn Monroe, and soft linens, you'll feel poshly pampered indeed. Their Spa Terre offers an oasis of soothing relaxation with 18 treatment rooms. And just think what you can do with your reception in their 19,670 square feet ballroom with its nine crystal chandeliers, or perhaps you'd prefer to host your reception poolside amidst the fire pits and cabanas. If retro-indulgence is your style, you'll love the **Riviera Resort & Spa**, where the legendary Frank Sinatra and his pals used to frolic.



Moroccan Villa Amidst Candlelit Walkways

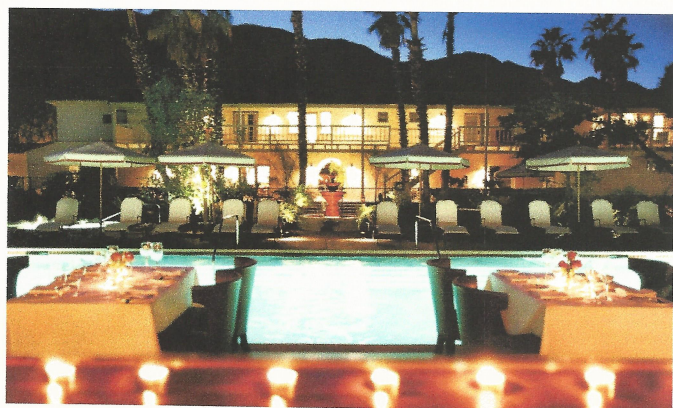
Have a hankering for an intimate wedding with Moroccan-themed charm set on 1.5 acres amidst winding candlelit walkways, jasmine vines, and incredibly beautiful views of the mountains? Then welcome to **Korakia Pensione**. Built in 1924, its bungalows and guesthouses beckon with its unique keyhole-shaped entrance of ornately carved Moorish doors, rustic romantic rooms with wood-beamed ceilings, ornate lanterns, and fire pits that flicker under the night stars against illuminated heated pools. The property will accommodate up to 80 wedding guests who are welcome to indulge in a full-cooked breakfast, afternoon Moroccan tea service, vintage books and games in the library, a massage, or classic and foreign films. A favorite subject for location photographers, Korakia Pensione has been featured in Architectural Digest, Conde Nast Traveler, and The New York Times, to name a few.





Luxurious Yet Casual Croquet and Spa Estate

If a hip, fun-eccentric, and retro-style Hollywood estate on 13 beautiful natural acres set against a backdrop of majestic mountains appeals to your desert wedding fantasy, check out the **Parker Palm Springs**. Formerly Gene Autry's Melody Ranch and Merv Griffin's Givenchy Resort, the **Parker Palm Springs** aptly describes itself as "happy luxe," or what they call "luxury without formality, beauty without pretension, elegance with comfort." The grounds include 144 guest rooms, 12 private villas, tennis courts, croquet lawns, 10,000 square feet of banquet facilities, and two fab restaurants. There's a huge Yacht Club Spa with leather chairs, navy blue walls, elegant coffee tables, delicious snacks, an indoor pool for a co-ed experience that's perfect for newlyweds, and The Deck, their English garden style outdoor café. Oh, and did we mention the charming Lemonade Stand so you'll never go hungry while poolside?



Charming Retro Glamour and Purple Passion

One of Palm Springs' most historic boutique properties, the quaint, charming, and elegant **Colony Palms Hotel** sits on three lush acres and oozes 1940s glamour with a gracious modern and exotic touch, blending Spanish Colonial architecture with Turkish Suzani tapestries, French tiles, and intimate spots to sit and relax by stone fountains. You can rent the entire property and enjoy their eight casitas, five junior suites, two Presidential suites, or 41 guest rooms with private outdoor bathtubs, oversized showers, high definition TVs, Italian linens, and wireless high-speed internet. Their Purple Palm restaurant sits poolside under charming striped terracotta-colored awnings and offers fine Mediterranean cuisine with a French flair. A Moroccan-inspired spa features four treatment rooms, a quiet room, his-and-hers changing facilities, and a fitness center. The Colony Palms has received accolades from Travel & Leisure, Los Angeles Magazine, and Architectural Digest, to name a few.



Elegant Antiques in a Mountaintop Hideaway

If you're fond of saying you were born at least 50 years too late because you love elegant antique beds and armoires, fine china, plus you have a penchant for historic homes and fascinating celebrity history, **The Willows Inn** is perfect for you. An exquisite yet cozy and quiet historic hideaway nestled right into the mountainside, and just steps away from the hip happenings of downtown Palm Springs, this 1927 Italianate Mediterranean villa is set amidst towering palm trees and hot-pink bougainvillea and boasts a stunning 50 foot cascading mountainside waterfall directly adjacent to its lovely indoor dining room. Listed in the book 1000 Places to See Before You Die, you can hold your ceremony outdoors on the Willows' charming triangular grassy area which backs up to a beautiful rocky mountain and overlooks the entire panoramic desert floor, and then have dinner and cocktails poolside. Spend your honeymoon at the Willows too where you'll be served breakfast on fine china and can toast your sweetie by clinking crystal champagne glasses. Or take a golf cart high atop the mountain to the Willows' more rustic sister property, **The O'Donnell House**, where you can enjoy your ceremony, reception, and honeymoon with an even broader panoramic view of the desert valley below.

Whatever your particular "desert destination I do" style, there's just the spot for you and your special someone in the Palm Springs area that's sure to be a perfect fit! ■