

'Love Hiking' Make Your Girls' Weekend More Exciting



The Girls at Joshua Tree

Girls' Weekend

I recently went to Palm Springs for a girls' weekend, and we were looking for something active to do besides the typical eating, drinking, and lounging by the pool. If you enjoy hiking, warm weather, and dramatic desert scenery and you are in Palm Springs, then head to Coachella Valley. Even though some of us were more agile than others, we all agreed to give it a try.

Coachella Valley

We discovered two unique picturesque areas to hike and spend the day: Joshua Tree National Park, 45 minutes from Palm Springs, and the Indian Canyons, a quick 19 minutes from downtown.



A Joshua Tree

Joshua Tree Folklore

We started on Friday morning and headed for Joshua Tree National Park, named for the thousands of Joshua Trees lining the desert floor. They are tall, slow-growing succulents with Y-shaped branches. Folklore has it they were given their name by a group of Mormon settlers in the 19th century. The tree's shape reminded them of a Biblical story in which Joshua earnestly reaches his hands to the sky.



Rock Formations

Not Just Trees

Joshua Tree National Park encompasses over 800,000 acres of immense desert landscape. Besides the Joshua Trees, the other significant landscape is the massive rock formations. These are a result of deep underground volcanic activity. We spent half a day stumbling over each other, admiring the rock formations amassed in such a way it looked like art. You do need to watch your step due to the loose sand.



Skull Rock Trail, Joshua Tree

Trails

With over 130 hiking trails, and 8,000 climbing routes, it was easy to find trails we knew we could conquer. For obvious reasons, we passed on “Hall of Horrors” and went with Skull Rock, Split Rock Loop, and Indian Cove. These are all easy trails: 5 miles total, and great for incredible photos of rugged rock formations, diverse desert flora, and stark desert scenery.

We enjoyed our day immensely and decided to investigate more hiking trails for the next day.



Flamingo Heights Sign

Flamingo Heights

After our demanding hike, we headed to Flamingo Heights in Yucca Valley to dine at La Copine, a culinary delight. This experience was our reward for a hike well done. As a retired restaurateur, I was astounded by their creatively prepared seasonal cuisine.



Beet & Nectarine Salad at La Copine

What to order? Try the Beet and Nectarine Salad with burrata. The earthy tones of the beets with the sweetness of the nectarines, dressed with a delightful pistachio vinaigrette, were heavenly. The Socarrat, a crispy saffron rice with oyster & lobster mushrooms, was flavorsome and crusty. The Cheesesteak Wit (wit is what you say if you want onions), shaved black hawk wagyu beef with griddled onions, and cheese sauce on a toasted bun tantalized the senses. The melted cheese added a sweetness that complimented the beef. Don't forget to add an order of the crispy papas with rosemary and lemon mayo. You won't regret it.



Indian Canyons Map, Palm Springs

Day Two

After a successful day one in the Mojave Desert, we opted to stay close to Palm Springs proper for our day two hike. We headed to the Indian Canyons, known for lush groves of California fan palms and rocky gorges. The Indian Canyons comprise Andreas Canyon, Palm Canyon, and Murray Canyon, and like no other place with its Palm oases, streams, waterfalls, and exceptional hiking trails.



Palm Oasis at Visitors Center

Visitor Center

We arrived early on a Saturday with perfect fall weather, a reason for nature and hiking enthusiasts to head to the canyons. We stopped at the Visitor Center to get a map and ask for directions to the easy and moderate-level trails. As we left the Center, we were mesmerized by a Palm Oasis, a lush and rich green oasis, a stark contrast to the surrounding desert landscape. Just breathtaking!



California Palm Oasis on Trail

California Fan Palm Oasis

Our first trail was Andreas Canyon, where the world's largest California Fan Palm oasis exists. There were spectacular views of the majestic California Fan Palms amidst the rock formations, sycamores, willows, and a few creeks along the way. Although rocky in some places, this is an easy hike and a 1.0-mile loop. We were ready for a trail more challenging, or so we thought.



Hiking the Murray Canyon Creek Trail

Challenging Hike

Next, Murray Canyon Creek, considered a moderately challenging hike, is 4.7 miles out and back and known for the Seven Sisters Waterfall. The waterfall was seasonal and was not running, so we cut our hike short, mainly because the trail was more challenging than anticipated. There are numerous creek crossings, so wear appropriate shoes. Along the way, you will see palm oases, beautiful California fuchsia, desert sunflowers, and desert lavender. The contrast between the green Palm Oasis and the desolate landscape is stunning. A wonderful, picturesque region.



Beef Carpaccio at Il Corso

Il Corso

After our accomplishment of hiking two days in a row, we deserved a night out. We went into town to have dinner at Il Corso. They are known for their traditional Italian dishes, including homemade pasta, wood-fired pizza, seafood, and roasted leg of lamb. Besides my favorite Aperol Spritz, I ordered the beef carpaccio pictured here. Thinly sliced raw beef with grassy olive oil and the fried capers added a briny, salty taste. The other entree I tried was the Grilled Octopus with string beans, black olives, and arugula. Tasty combination.



The End of Our Weekend

Memorable Trip

Overall, hiking on my girls' trip combined adventure, relaxation, adventure, and quality time with my friends. It was a memorable experience and created unique shared moments in the beautiful outdoors while enjoying the company of my favorite people.