Palm Springs sits like a glistening jewel on the edge of California’s Coachella Valley. This mecca of mid-century design in the middle of the desert is an easy two-hour cruise down the freeway from Los Angeles and it’s a dream holiday destination that should be on every stylish woman’s bucket list.

Palm Springs has everything – warm weather, great food, fabulous architecture and a glamorous retro vibe. It first became famous after Hollywood’s powerful studios enforced the ‘two-hour rule’ on their film stars, which dictated they had to live close by in case they were needed for last-minute filming or photo shoots. Suddenly Frank Sinatra, Kirk Douglas and Elizabeth Taylor made Palm Springs their home and it still attracts the A list today. A recent showing of Louis Vuitton’s cruise collection at Hollywood icon Bob Hope’s estate was attended by high-flying clients and celebrities, including Kanye West and Michelle Williams (not to mention 800 journalists). Palm Springs, it seems, is having a moment and it is the place to be seen for models, movie stars and creative types alike.

Taking in the incredible Spanish-inspired architecture, vintage boutiques, furniture stores and delicious, locally grown organic food, it’s easy to see why its popularity has endured. At 487ft above sea level, Palm Springs is surrounded by mountains and is famous for its hot, dry climate and year-round sunshine. In winter, daytime temperatures rarely drop below 20°C, while in summer you can expect to bask in 38°C, although it can get much, much hotter. Visit in April or May to make the most of everything Palm Springs has to offer, and don’t forget to take Simply You’s guide with you to ensure you have a stylish break.
Where to stay
With 6,500 rooms on offer in 130 hotels, every price range and style is catered for in Palm Springs.

The Saguaro offers a fun stay against a colour scheme of zingy shades. Built around a rectangular pool and encircled by sky-high palms, evenings here are long and relaxed. If you’re hungry, wander along to Tinto bar and restaurant to enjoy Spanish tapas created by chef Jose Garces, or opt for Mexican fish tacos and margaritas at El Jefe. Rooms are styled with hand-crafted Mexican furniture, organic bath products and linen. From $150 per night (www.thesaguaro.com).

Ace Hotel & Swim Club is not only the place to hang out in Palm Springs thanks to its upcycled design, but it’s also the place to eat, from the delicious poolside snow cones to the full menu at the excellent King’s Highway diner. From $169 per night (www.acehotel.com/palmsprings).

Luxury boutique hotel L’Horizon Resort & Spa was a celebrity hot spot in the ’50s and ’60s – legend has it Marilyn Monroe once caused a stir by showering al fresco. Its 25 bungalows with private patios and outdoor showers feature Frette linen, Le Labo toiletries and marble baths (www.lhorizonpalmsprings.com).

Where to eat and drink
Foodies are spoilt for choice in Palm Springs, where you can find everything from fine dining and al fresco tables by the pool, to market-style food at street fair VillageFest every Thursday evening.

For breakfast head to Norma’s at the Parker hotel, where you can sit in the leafy garden courtyard and enjoy a melon bowl filled with fresh fruit and homemade yoghurt (www.theparkerpalmsprings.com). Or join the queue at Cheeky’s (it’s long on weekends) where the menu changes weekly (www.cheekysps.com). If it’s mid-morning coffee you need, stop at Ernest Coffee for mouthwatering French pastries and an excellent flat white (www.ernestcoffee.com).

At lunchtime, indulge at King’s Highway diner. A delicious homemade lemon ricotta with sun-ripened nectarines and toasted fruit bread was my most memorable meal (www.acehotel.com/palmsprings).

For pre-dinner drinks and snacks head to the aptly named Bar, where the house mozzarella sticks are to die for (www.barwastaken.com).

For an evening of fine dining, three Michelin star chef Michael Beckman offers exquisite food at Workshop (www.workshoppalmsprings.com). Or head to Mr Lyons to sample a great American steak (www.mrlyonsps.com).

Where to shop
The Uptown Design District, on North Palm Canyon Drive, is home to vintage clothing, jewellery, mid-century furniture and ceramics. Start at Deja Vu Vintage Finery for a mesmerising collection of shoes and dresses (www.dejavuroom.com). Just Fabulous is the place for gorgeous coffee table books and quirky home décor from brands like Jonathan Adler, Kate Spade and Rizzoli. Madonna and Heidi Klum are fans of Grace Home, which has a must-see fabric collection (www.gracehomefurnishings.com). For quirky artwork pay a visit to Raymond Lawrence (www.raymond-lawrence.com), or for the mid-century furniture, lighting and accessories Palm Springs is famous for, go to Just Modern – I had to be dragged away (www.justmoderndecor.com). The retro prints and resort wear at Trina Turk make it the perfect place to start your stay (www.trinaturk.com).

What to do
The Palm Springs Art Museum is renowned for its travelling exhibitions and breathtaking permanent collection (www.psmuseum.org). The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is a spectacular ride at dusk. Lifting you from the desert floor, it has panoramic views of the Coachella Valley and beyond (www.pstramway.com).

Moorten Botanical Garden is a privately owned family estate boasting more than 3,000 cacti and rare sub-tropical plants (www.moortengarden.com). If you visit in January or June be sure to catch movies as part of the Palm Springs International Film Festival (www.psfilmfest.org). Walkers should strap on their boots (and take plenty of water) on the 5.5 mile Araby trail from which you can glimpse Bob Hope’s space-age home (www.hiking-in-ps.com/the-araby-trail). At Joshua Tree National Park you can see nature at its best with frantic roadrunners, busy hummingbirds and bighorn leisurely strolling by. Entrance is $30 (www.nps.gov/jotr).
What makes Palm Springs special?
The town was established by some wonderful developers and architects during a very fun era. With the resurgence of mid-century modern, there has been an influx of design-savvy people who are renovating homes and bringing that vibe back.

What is your must-see tourist tip?
With such a unique desert landscape, Palm Springs is a photographer’s dream, so pack your photo gear and head out of town for a day. The Art Museum is a treasure trove of fabulous information and I highly recommend coming for Modernism Week in February to get a true fix on what Palm Springs is all about.

Best hike or walk?
Take the Aerial Tramway to the top of the San Jacinto Mountains. The views are stunning and it’s a little cooler up there, so a great way to escape from the midday heat.

Best place to watch the world go by?
The Ritz Carlton Hotel is a fantastic spot for kicking back with a cocktail and soaking up the desert panoramas.

Best bar?
Workshop has a fun cocktail list and it’s a must-see space for design. The outdoor dining and music make Birba a great place to eat and drink wine. Bar has a bit of an edge and the best old-fashioned feel. Melvyn’s Restaurant and Lounge is the original piano bar that all the old musicians come back to. Finally, for some true desert flavour, head to the Pappy and Harriet’s in Pioneertown to hear some great bands play – it’s guaranteed good Cali fun.

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Best restaurant?
I like Mister Parker’s at the Parker hotel and Johannes for fine dining. Birba’s great for gourmet pizza and delicious salads, while you can dine under the trees at Spencer’s. For the best lamb chops outside New Zealand, head to Shanghai Red’s.

Favourite place to stay?
The Parker hotel has been my go-to for many years. The rooms are eclectic and large, and the vibe is true resort. You can explore meandering paths to clay tennis courts, play croquet, or lie in one of the hammocks hanging from palms. It is a true Palm Springs experience.

Best hair salon?
It is a 30-minute drive to Giancarlo Salon in Palm Desert but definitely worth it.

Best homewares store?
Palm Springs is the mid-century mecca so the list is long! You will find true collector pieces in these stores and work by new artists that is fast becoming collectible: A La Mod; Flow Modern; Palm Canyon Galleria; Towne; Hedge. If you visit the Uptown Design District you’ll discover many more.

Best vintage store?
All the stores carry vintage, but for some unique affordable finds go to Bon Vivant for homewares or Deja Vu Vintage Finery for clothes.

How to get there
Palm Springs International Airport is just three miles from downtown Palm Springs and handles direct flights from around the US and Canada. Alternatively hire an Enterprise car for an easy two-hour drive from Los Angeles International Airport. Thanks to Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism (www.visitpalmsprings.com).