

Palm Springs

BY ELISABETH ABRAHAMSON

The desert is a great backdrop for new beginnings, and these days, Palm Springs is awash in them. The town has welcomed a slew of fresh cultural, dining, and shopping experiences, not least the recently opened Agua Caliente Cultural Plaza, with its expansive museum and wellness spa. Also making headlines: a new state-of-the-art wave pool for surfers of all skill levels.

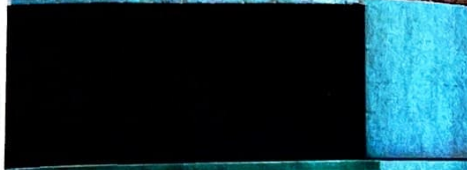
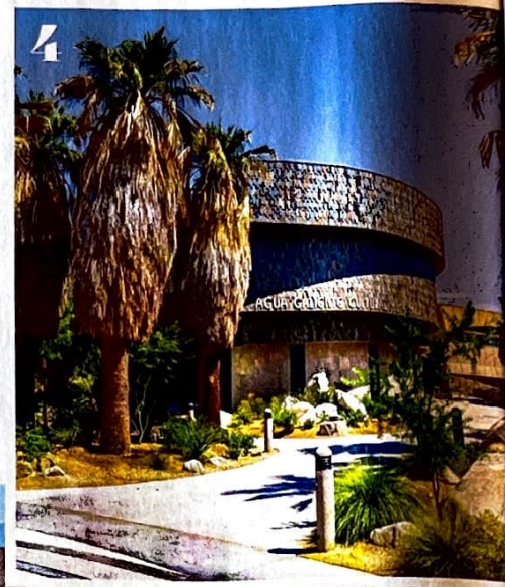
1 Whether you're here to surf or just soak in the good vibes, the **Palm Springs Surf Club** promises something for everyone. The club features a wave pool that opened in January with 2 distinct breaks: an inner reef for beginners and an outer reef for intermediate and advanced skills. (The wave pool was closed for unspecified reasons at press time, but Surf Club officials said the park would fully reopen by early April.) Rounding out the park attractions are a lazy river, 2 waterslides, rental cabanas overlooking the wave pool, and Amala restaurant, which serves California fare. *Surf reservations and prices were pending at press time. 1500 S. Gene Autry Trail.*

2 **Minerva's** at the newly opened Life House Palm Springs hotel draws crowds with its plant-forward food and drinks and posh California pool house vibe. Try the croissant breakfast sandwich or the blueberry-almond pancakes drizzled with agave. *1700 S. Palm Canyon Drive.*

3 Owners Chris Ramirez and Alexis Palomino lead appointment-only, 90-minute splatter-paint sessions (where guests can channel their inner Jackson Pollock) in their design lab, **Superbloom**. Guests choose hues they most identify with using a themed color wheel (hot pink for "equality," for example, or cherry red for "passionate"), then throw,

flick, drizzle, and splatter paint on an item they want to upcycle (shoes, sunglasses, denim, a purse, home goods). You'll be covered by a smock, but wear clothes that you won't mind adding some color to. *\$165 per person. 1414 N. Palm Canyon Drive.*

4 The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians' cultural plaza,



which opened in phases last year in the heart of downtown, is home to the **Agua Caliente Cultural Museum**, originally founded in 1991. The new museum space features a 12-minute, 360-degree animation of the Agua Caliente Tribe's creation and migration stories, and permanent exhibitions that tell the history of its people. Artifacts such as shell ornaments

FROM LEFT: RIDGE BENBEN; COURTESY THE AGUA CALIENTE BAND OF CAHUILLA INDIANS



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SCAN ME
for a TripTik route to
explore these places.



FROM LEFT: COURTESY THE AGUA CALIENTE BAND OF CAHUILLA INDIANS; BRANJON HARMAN; SHEVA KAFAI/VILLA ROYALE; ANDRE NIESING PHOTOGRAPHY

and shell beads that date back 8,000 years and were found during a dig on the plaza's grounds also are on display. The gift shop sells Native American art, jewelry, and handwoven blankets. *Adult admission, \$10. Native Americans with tribal ID, free. 140 N. Indian Canyon Drive.*

5 Also opened last year and part of the cultural plaza, **The Spa at Séc-he** is far from your average wellness venue. Where else can you soak in one of 22 private mineral hot spring baths whose silky waters


are sourced from 1.5 miles below the ground? Other intriguing amenities include 2 halotherapy salt caves (which some claim can strengthen the immune system), a cryotherapy chamber, and 2 float pod suites. After such pampering, relax in the tranquility garden or enjoy light bites at the poolside restaurant. *Spa reservations recommended. 200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way.*

6 **Market Market**, an emporium tucked in the same strip mall as the popular eatery Bar Cecil, sells fine vintage clothing and accessories, midcentury furniture, and one-of-a-kind art and design pieces. *1555 S. Palm Canyon Drive, Unit F.*

7 Stroll past a swimming pool at the boutique hotel Villa Royale and through a speakeasy-style entrance into **Del Rey** for an intimate date night. Sidle up to the 8-seat oak-and-marble bar for one of the desert's best martinis, El León. Whether you take it with gin or vodka, the cocktail deliciously incorporates vermouth blanco, sherry, olive oil, orange bitters, blue cheese olives, and, yes, chorizo. *Cashless payment only. 1620 S. Indian Trail.*

8 Located on the Palm Canyon strip, **Canopy Wine Lounge** boasts enviable views of the San Jacinto Mountains. Two oversize doors open to the midcentury lounge, where wine enthusiasts can pair their vino with a charcuterie tower of meats, cheeses, fig jam, dried seasonal fruit, olives, and nuts. Add on local favorite Bread and Flour's Epi Baguette (served with seasonal butter) and finish with a caviar bump (even tastier accompanied by a glass of bubbly). *175 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 150.*

 **Free Palm Springs-Desert Cities maps** are available at your Auto Club branch.

 Be sure to **designate a driver** if you plan to drink alcohol.