In Palm Springs, ditch your golf cart: The desert is Coachella Valley’s true oasis

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Once known as a winter escape for Hollywood’s Rat Pack and other entertainers, Palm Springs and its neighbors are now famous for their 110 golf courses, 24-hour casinos, mid-century modern architecture and rehab facilities, such as the Betty Ford Center. In recent years, the area has also become a popular LGBT destination and home to one of the country’s largest music festivals, Coachella.

So at first blush, it’s understandable that you might gravitate toward the sparkly, colorful side of the desert. After all, those of us from the East tend to associate green with life. Brown is easy to dismiss.

But you’d be forgiven.

Not long ago, I, too, was in the green camp. My grandparents...
moved to the Coachella Valley in 1960, after my grandmother retired from teaching at Eisenhower Air Force Base. Since then, I have been visiting the desert, which was originally World War II military artillery training ground. My grandmother always wore a hat, and I often watched her face as she looked out over the vast desert, without a care in the world.

My grandparents, like many other retirees, found a new life in the desert community. Outside the gates was a world that seemed remote and safe, with fine sand and desert brush. Back then, free-standing yuccas and subtle saguaros transformed the desert during our walks. For sure, there was something about the desert that made it hard to forget.

Inside the gates, my sister and I found a natural world in which we pipped stepped into an art gallery and an outdoor theater. We even met the famous art collector, Harlan, first walked us through an outdoor gallery filled with the works of local artists. He mentioned a free outdoor yoga class, and after he taught us the proper breathing technique, I watched him fold his mat as I folded mine. I was, after all, a yoga beginner.

But the more intimate I've become with the desert, the more I've realized how little I know about it. I've been to the Andreas Canyon Trail and through an oasis of palm trees and shrubs, and I've seen the desert in all its glory. But the desert is also a place of great mystery and beauty. I've seen the desert in all its glory, and I've seen it in the eyes of my grandmother, who has always been fascinated by its beauty.

I stepped into a quiet palm grove and a castle called the cactus, and after her horse was put to rest, I walked around the fandango walk and its fountain. I heard the grunting of my grandmother's horse, and I knew we had arrived at a place of absolute rest.

As I slipped my legs off the horse, I found a tiny air hole at the top of my hat. I turned around and saw a beautiful view of the desert, with the moon shining bright and the stars twinkling in the sky. I felt a sense of peace and contentment.

I was filled with a sense of tranquility and a feeling of connection to the land. I knew that my grandmother would have loved this place, and I knew that she would have felt at home here. I knew that she was ready to go.

In Palm Springs, a tree-lined path, the Smoke Tree Stables, and a pool of visitors to the Coachella Valley, I always found a place to calm my mind. I always found a place to relax and let my body unwind.

Now, I am looking for a place to call home. I am looking for a place where I can feel connected to the land. I am looking for a place where I can feel at peace. I am looking for a place where I can feel part of something greater.

Grill over glam: This desert doesn’t mess around

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