

**TOURISM**

# Hotels hope walking tour leaves visitors with Christmas spirit

**HOLIDAY HIKE:**

Participants will get chance to admire decorated lobbies of nine inns.

By **ROSE WOJNAR**  
The Desert Sun

**PALM SPRINGS** — "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas." That's what some Palm Springs hoteliers are humming as they plan to decorate their lobbies for the "Self-Guided Walking Tour of the Inns of Palm Springs Village" in December.

High humidity and 110-plus temperatures — bah humbug. These business people have visions of Christmas trees and other holiday decorations dancing in their heads.

As of Monday, owners and managers of nine inns and hotels had agreed to participate in the first-ever tour, said Sue Bennett, general manager of the Orchid Tree Inn and an event organizer.

"This will be more of a community event in the beginning," said Diane Matzner, owner of La Mariposa clothing store and another organizer. "I don't see it as a huge tourist attraction in the beginning."

"But I hope it will become a holiday tradition," she said. "The goal is to make Palm Springs a destination in the holiday season, so it will put the word out that Palm Springs is a great place to come for the holiday."

Matzner and Bennett sit on the city's Visitors and Promotion Commission and its holiday committee. The group's aim is to create more activities and better promote existing events to draw more visitors during December, a slow tourism month.

Matzner said she modeled the local walking tour after one that inns in the Mendocino area have held for the past five years.

Barbara Reed, owner of a five-room bed and breakfast in Mendocino, said she and other hoteliers began decorating their lobbies and opening them to the public to coordinate with other businesses that decorated for the holidays.

The aim was to draw more tourists to the area — four hours north of San Francisco — which doubles as the outdoor set for the CBS television show, "Murder She Wrote."

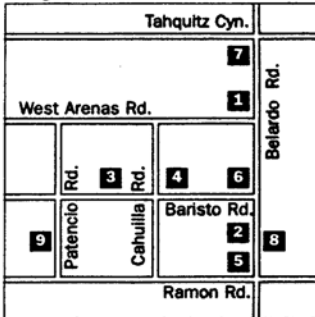
"I think about the fifth year we saw an increase in (tourists)," Reed said. "It takes time."

"But you're in a different area," she said of Palm Springs. "We're kind of remote. . . I think it will work (for Palm Springs)."

December doesn't draw many

**Holiday tour of Palm Springs Inns**

These inns will decorate their lobbies for residents and visitors to take a self-guided tour on Dec. 5.



**Inns participating in holiday program**

- 1 **La Palmer**  
200 W. Arenas Road
- 2 **Estrella Inn**  
415 S. Belardo Road
- 3 **Casa Cody, A Country Bed & Breakfast Inn**  
175 S. Cahuilla Road
- 4 **San Marino Resort Hotel**  
225 W. Baristo Road
- 5 **Ingleside Inn**  
200 W. Ramon Road
- 6 **Orchid Tree Inn**  
261 S. Belardo Road
- 7 **Palm Mountain Resort/ Holiday Inn**  
155 S. Belardo Road
- 8 **Skye Jordan Inn**  
350 S. Belardo Road
- 9 **Korakin Panselona Historic Villa, Bed & Breakfast Inn**  
257 S. Patencio Road

*Desert Sun Graphics by John Rodriguez*

**December tour of Palm Springs Inns**

**What:** A self-guided tour of nine inns in a two-block area. Banners, sponsored by Starbuck's and hung from Palm Canyon Drive light posts, will announce the tour.

**When:** 5 p.m.-8 p.m. Dec. 5.

**Cost:** Free entrance to the inns includes refreshments and some entertainment.

**Where:** Maps will be available at a VillageFest booth.

**Information:** Diane Matzner, La Mariposa, 322-0833; Sue Bennett, Orchid Tree Inn, 325-2791.

tourists to Mendocino and the surrounding area, home to about 22,000; said Barbara Matheson, administrator of the Fort Bragg-Mendocino Coast Chamber of Commerce.

Since its inception, the Mendocino program — the Candlelight Tour of Bed and Breakfast Inns — expanded to include inns in Fort Bragg and Little River, resulting in 26 lodging facilities decorating their lobbies, she said.

Inns are open for tours in Fort Bragg on Dec. 4, Little River on Dec. 11 and Mendocino on Dec. 12.

With other businesses decorating their store fronts, Matheson said, travelers could stretch their visit into a week to take in all the sites as well as shopping.

The Palm Springs tour will just be one night the first year, Matzner said. The number of participating inns could grow as Matzner contacts more owners returning from vacation.

Bennett said the Orchid Tree will be part of the tour because: "It's a great opportunity for residents and visitors alike to get an idea of what the inns have to offer. It's a different atmosphere from full-service hotels."

She said valley residents can look at potential lodging for friends and relatives visiting them if their homes can't accommodate visitors.

"December hasn't been our busiest season in Palm Springs, so we'd

**December calendar**

**What:** A calendar of events open to the public in December that will be distributed at the Palm Springs Visitor Information Center and some hotels.

**Why:** To list activities that will draw more visitors to the city and for Coachella Valley residents to enjoy. Fax information about events to Palm Springs Tourism Division, 323-3021.

**Information:** 778-8415.

like to stimulate some activities and promote the winter solstice," Bennett said.

Carolyn Cowing, owner of the Skye Jordan Inn, said she will participate in the walking tour by expanding upon the decorations she usually puts up for her guests.

"Lights, lights, lights (are) the success to everything and I'll start from there," she said. ". . . I'm doing this for my guests, but if I pick up a little bit of business, it won't hurt."

Mel Haber, owner of the Ingleside Inn, doesn't expect to book any overnight guests by participating in the walking tour. "I think it's a nice experience, a friendly exposure," he said. ". . . It sounds like fun."

"I enjoy VillageFest, all things community oriented," Haber said. "I don't think it will mean anything business wise."