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## DESERT BY DESIGN

*Clockwise from above left: The cool clubhouse at Palm Spring's Escena Golf Club; the lobby of the Riviera Resort & Spa; the view from the Escena Golf Club.*

## Par for Palm Springs

The Rat Pack's favorite golf getaway gears up for a new generation of travelers | *By George Fuller* |

Palm Springs may have been your grandfather's favorite golf hideaway back in the day, as it was for Frank Sinatra and crew. Now this iconic desert community that was once the playground for Rat Packers and Hollywood celebs is welcoming a new generation of travelers who are coming to discover haunts made famous long ago, and new ones as well.

You can book a room at "the Riv"—the recently remade Riviera Resort & Spa where Old Blue Eyes once performed; stay in Marilyn Monroe's favorite room at Rendezvous Bed and Breakfast; and shop for retro-hip 1960s and '70s furniture at one of several boutiques in the emerging Uptown Design District.

Even golf has gotten all groovy, with the November '09 opening of Escena Golf Club ([escenagolf.com](http://escenagolf.com)). "We recaptured that old-school Palm Springs feel," said Mark Tansey, president of Sunrise Golf Company, which manages the facility. "Escena marks a return to what made desert golf great."

Though Dean Martin and Sinatra won't be there to greet you at the bag drop, one look at the midcentury modern style of the clubhouse spins you backward in time. Though it boasts all the 21st-century toys (such as flat screens broadcasting sports events), the open beam construction, lack of interior support walls, ample windows and low-slung roof overhangs are distinctly 1950s and '60s in feel. Even the 50,000 plants and palm trees

that were added around the course are the same species used in classic 1960s Palm Springs landscaping.

Once on the course, players discover that wide fairways afford plenty of room to hit the ball, which is very welcome on windy days. And standing on the first tee, gazing at the phalanx of windmills that populate San Geronio Pass at the north end of the Coachella Valley, one realizes that it can get pretty windy here certain times of the year.

Escena stretches 7,173 yards from the tournament tees, and plays to par 72. Colorful flowers adorn the sides of several holes and panoramic mountain views are enjoyed throughout. Water is in play frequently on the back nine, with a large lake and waterfall making things exciting on holes 14 and 15.

With high-season rates ranging from \$88 (Mon.-Thurs.) to \$98 (Fri.-Sun.), Escena is one of the better bargains in the region. Off-season rates (starting at the end of May) are \$35/\$40. Partner hotels include the Riviera Resort ([psriviera.com](http://psriviera.com)), where the 1950s vibe is carried on in full force, thanks to a \$70 million rejuvenation that was completed in late 2008. Just 10 minutes away from Escena on the edge of downtown Palm Springs, Riviera is also near Palm Springs' other two golf facilities, Indian Canyons Golf Resort (36 holes) and Tahquitz Golf Resort (36 holes), and discounted tee times are available when booking a room. **R**