



# **Peaks, Palms and Picnics: Day Journeys in the Mountains and Deserts of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley of Southern California**

*Linda McMillin Pyle*

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In the October heat of Palm Desert under the shadow of the Santa Rosa Mountains our family began to talk of exploring the desert as the next adventure for a picnic series of books. We wondered what story the Coachella Valley desert would want to tell? My husband and I had extensively hiked the high country but the Coachella Valley wilderness was all but unknown to us and Mom and Dad were novices to the trail. How could we pierce the myth of the desert, mysterious and impenetrable.

Searing heat, flat endless terrain, dry sand washes came to mind. Could we safely and enjoyably explore outside the manmade desert of sidewalks, golf courses and hotels? Would there be many places to picnic and hike? What birds and animals could be found? What plants and trees would guide us along. What geology would be revealed to us? Who would speak to us from the pages of history books? How would the desert inspire our menus and picnic locations? Could we find solitude and wildness in the real desert so close to the city? How would the desert change us?

Four months later with all these questions in our mind, we put the desert to the test. Choosing the Boo Hoff trail in the Santa Rosa Mountains, we stepped into the desert and let the story unfold. Peaks, Palms and Picnics describes exactly what we found: Peaks, Palms & Picnics is the story of 4 travelers, 40-75, exploring and picnicking in Palm Springs, the Coachella Valley and beyond following uneven paths into the deserts of Southern California highlighting 33 mountain and desert trails

Adventure for any age

Trails and food shared with family and friends give a deeper meaning to life For each trail there are simple recipes - light meals in hand for trail side picnics served alfresco on the peaks or under the palms inspired by the first people of Agua Caliente, skilled master gathers of desert and woodland foods and the late nineteenth and twentieth century pioneers who introduced dates, fruits and vegetables to the Valley

Come to the oasis where fan palms flutter, cool and shade See the real desert appear when you step off the sidewalks and green grass up to the granite peaks that rise above the city or along sandy desert that stretches out invitingly

Trod ancient Native American footpaths step into a Fish Trap under an age-old sea Ride into the old West of the romantic stagecoach days along the Bradshaw Trail join the posse of the last organized manhunt of the West or pound along the lonely journey of the last local Pony Express rider Fire your imagination along the wilderness paths that were the gateways to the American dream in the Far West

Sit beside the enigmatic blue Salton Sea and let the colors of the Painted Canyon and Indian Canyons seep deep inside Experience the warm gentle brown of the restoring mountains Observe the light changing on these powerful pyramids at twilight when mountains lose their dimension and become silhouettes pasted upon a skyline

Step along a path strewn with blooming yellow brittlebush Walk the history trail of the pioneers of Palm Springs and the writers and artists who passed along the same trails a century ago Stroll the Palm Springs avenues that movie stars claimed as their own

Meet a smiling mountain lion named Reno and a wayward Bighorn sheep called Rosie come along " jump in anywhere" There is time for the swimming pool and golf course but first feast on the wilderness drink from the soul of the desert Find serendipity in unexpected surprises and delights a traveler can not plan Come step into the Desert

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