

## **PALM SPRINGS CELEBRATES 80 YEARS OF FREY**

*How renowned architect Albert Frey helped shaped Palm Springs'  
Modernist legacy*



Left to right: Palm Springs Visitor Centre, Aluminaire House (credit Michael Schwarting), City Hall (credit Jake Holt Photography)

**XX May 2019** – 2019 marks 80 years since star architect Albert Frey made the city of Palm Springs his permanent home. The renowned modernist architect played a key role in shaping the city and was the mastermind behind some of the city's most iconic buildings. When visiting the city, travellers do not need to seek out shining examples of mid-century architecture and, even if they don't know it, they are never far from one of Frey's famous buildings. To help travellers discover the best of Frey, Palm Springs has shared insights on some of his most iconic structures in the city:

### **Not Just a Tourist Highlight: Aerial Tramway Valley Station**

A trip to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is a must for any visit to the city, but travellers might not know that while they await their carriage for the ascent to 8,500ft, they are standing in one of Albert Frey's masterpieces. Constructed in 1963, the station was designed by Albert Frey and Robson C. Chambers and offers stunning framed views up the mountain canyon which the aerial tramway travels through.

### **A Gas Station Repurposed: Tramway Gas Station**

One of the first modernist buildings that visitors see when they exit the i10 on their visit to Palm Springs, the Tramway Gas Station acts as a mid-century gateway to the city. Another joint project between Frey and Chambers, the Tramway Gas Station is one of the city's architectural highlights, with visitors seeking the building out for photos of its futuristic kite-shaped roof, which is beautifully set against the backdrop of the San Jacinto Mountains. A perfect example of how Palm Springs seeks to preserve and repurpose its fantastic architecture, the Tramway Gas Station now serves the city as the Palm Springs Visitors Center.

### **New for 2020 – Aluminaire House**

2020 will see the opening of the brand-new Downtown Park, which will not only see the return of the popular Forever Marilyn statue, but will also become the new permanent home for Frey's Aluminaire House. The Aluminaire House was actually a piece of work Frey designed with A. Lawrence Kocher for an exhibition in 1931. Taking just ten days to assemble in Grand Central Palace (New York), the house is said to have seen over 100,000 people tour it in the first week it was open. Produced at a time when housing issues in the USA were a common talking point of concern, the

three-story building served as a prototype in a study on affordable housing and was constructed using aluminium and other 'off-the-shelf' materials.

### **A Modernist Government Structure: Palm Springs City Hall**

Designed in 1952, Palm Springs City Hall is the result of a collaboration by four of the city's most influential architects, Albert Frey, Robson C. Chambers, John Porter Clark and E. Stewart Williams. Perhaps one of the most iconic pieces of mid century modern architecture, the building features the unusual yet functional use of angular cut metal tubing to protect the building from the intense desert morning sun – a feature which became popular in buildings across the region. Perhaps its most famous element though is its portico, which features a circular cut-out to allow three palm trees to stretch above the building, while becoming a part of it.

### **A Mid-Century Hotel fit for Movie Stars: Movie Colony Hotel**

The [Movie Colony Hotel](#) was the first hotel to be designed by Frey, alongside John Porter Clark, in the 1930s and was a property that went on to be a favourite with A-list stars, including Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe and Jim Morrison. Originally known as the San Jacinto Hotel, the property was a three-unit townhouse complex with outdoor living rooms upstairs and a design that was very different to the Spanish colonial style favoured across California at the time. A decade later more apartments were added to the complex and most recently the property was renovated to maintain its mid century modern integrity while 'recasting' Frey's two-story townhouses into duplex suites.

### **A resident Modernist: Frey House II**

Completed in 1964, Frey House II was the architect's second home in Palm Springs. Perched on the hillside and sculpted around the natural rock formations, Frey House II is an outstanding example of modernist architecture. It is said that Frey took five years to select the site and a year to monitor the movement of the sun in relation to the future property. Designed to have minimal impact on the environment the compact residence is only 800sqft but is very functional in its layout. Once home to the star architect, the property is now a focal point for architect lovers and mid century modern enthusiasts. Travellers can visit Frey House II on selected tours and during selected special events. [www.psmuseum.org/visit/frey-house](http://www.psmuseum.org/visit/frey-house)

### **Stay with Frey: Kocher - Samson Building**

The Kocher – Samson Building, designed by Frey in 1934, is considered to be Palm Springs' very first 'modernist building'. Located in the heart of downtown on Palm Canyon Drive, the building has been beautifully restored to its 1930s glory and is now a vacation rental known as '[The Frey](#)' - perfect for those looking to add a little extra 'Frey' to their Palm Springs stay.

Known as one of Desert Modernism's founders and perhaps Palm Springs' first 'full-time architect in residence' Frey's impact on the city is still very clear today and plays a huge part in what makes Palm Springs like nowhere else!

For more information on the city of Palm Springs, visit: [www.visitpalmsprings.com](http://www.visitpalmsprings.com)



Left to right: Frey House II (Credit Dan Chavkin), Aerial Tramway Valley Station, Movie Colony Hotel (2019),

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### **About Palm Springs**

One hundred miles east of Los Angeles, Palm Springs is a desert playground with year-round sunshine, blue skies and stunning natural beauty. Nestled beneath California's San Jacinto Mountains, the city is famed for its Hollywood legacy, Native American heritage and huge collection of mid-century modern architecture. The desert oasis boasts a wealth of adventurous hiking trails and historical canyon tours, as well as chic boutiques, world-renowned golf courses and unique experiences, including the chance to stay in the former homes of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. For more information see [www.visitpalm Springs.com](http://www.visitpalm Springs.com).

For regular updates on the city of Palm Springs, please click on the relevant icons below:



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