

Mesa neighborhood is a 'little slice of paradise' in the desert

By Sidney J. Braquet

Palm Springs is home to 26 unique neighborhoods organized through the City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement, including The Mesa neighborhood.

Nestled at the base of the San Jacinto Mountains just south of the village and west of where Palm Canyon Drive curves to become East Palm Canyon, the Palm Canyon Mesa subdivision — commonly known as The Mesa — is a vibrant neighborhood. The Mesa has an interesting history; it is strictly a residential neighborhood except for being the home to Moorten Botanical Garden founded by the desert's first horticulturist.



Edward Fulford is reported to have first subdivided The Mesa with the intention of building a planned community. A gatehouse that Fulford planned for the grand entrance to The Mesa still stands today near the corner of El Portal and South Palm Canyon Drive. The Mesa Neighborhood Organization plans to encircle the gatehouse with desert landscape and soft lighting.

About 180 homes are within The Mesa. The neighborhood is bounded on the north by El Camino and Ridge Road, on the east by South Palm Canyon Drive, on the south by Cantina and on the west by the San Jacinto Mountains. Each home and yard has its own unique view of the mountains.

The Mesa is definitively eclectic. As in much of Palm Springs, it has a variety of examples of architectural styles. Examples of Spanish-style and adobe to Mid-Century modern to contemporary. Examples of Spanish-style and adobe houses are those by previous celebrity residents such as actor Joseph Cotton at Mesa and Carmelita, Western writer Zane Grey on upper Crestview, songwriter Johnny Mercer at the end of Carmelita, and actors Clark Gable and Carole Lombard at the top of Ridge Road.

California Ranch and mid-century modern architectural styles also dot The Mesa such as the Donald Wexler butterfly-style homes on Lilliana and the simple yet stunning Alexander home on El Camino at Mesa. Additionally, the "Ship of the Desert" home at Monte near Carmelita was built in the 1930s. It is so named for its resemblance to a ship. The home is an example of Streamline Moderne and is whimsical for its juxtaposition of a nautical theme in the bone-dry desert.

The Mesa is home to residents both full- and part-time whose occupations and backgrounds vary as much as the many majestic, jagged edges of the San Jacinto Mountains. Other celebrity residents of The Mesa include or have included author Herman Wouk, Sonny Bono, Barry Manilow, Robert Wagner, Natalie Wood, and author/fitness guru Suzanne Somers.

Simply stated, The Mesa is a neighborhood with diverse residents who love their little slice of paradise in Palm Springs. It is truly a neighborhood of friendly residents walking the streets every day and stopping often to enjoy the company of neighbors.

For more information about The Mesa Neighborhood Organization, please visit www.psmesa.com. If you're interested in forming your own neighborhood organization, visit www.palmspringsneighborhoods.com for more information.