

Phase 1 Draft: Released March 3, 2025
Industry comment period ends: March 31, 2025
Submit comments to regionalplans@visitcalifornia.com



visit
California

Regional strategic tourism plan

Deserts

 **JLL** SEE A BRIGHTER WAY

March 2025

The development of these regional plans was funded by a State Tourism Grant awarded to Visit California as part of the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation program. The program invested federal funds appropriated by the American Rescue Plan Act to support states and communities whose tourism economy was damaged by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of the grant funds were used to directly support tourism recovery through marketing initiatives. With the EDA’s oversight, a portion of the grant was directed to the development of these plans, which are designed to build a more resilient travel and tourism sector in California. While the one-time nature of the grant does not provide funding for ongoing implementation, the plans identify existing resources that can be leveraged at the state and regional level.

Visit California extends its gratitude to the diverse project teams, strategic partners and industry experts whose contributions were instrumental throughout the two-year process

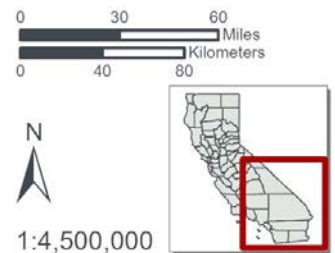
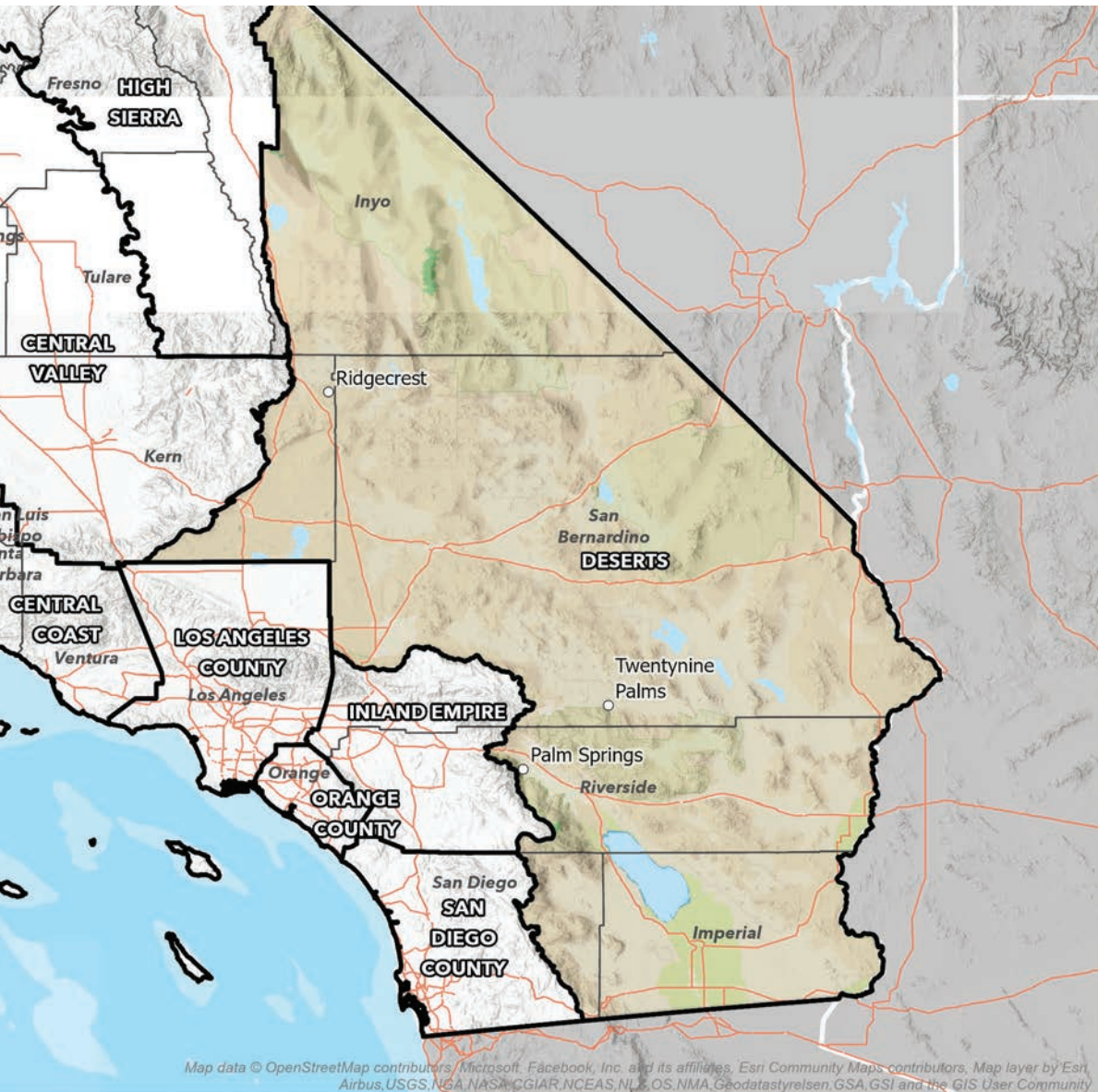


Contents

Executive summary	4
Regional research and discovery	7
State of the region.....	9
Destination plans review database	11
Stakeholder engagement.....	12
Key themes from stakeholder engagement	13
Tourism readiness index.....	14
Demand driver scorecard.....	16
Event matrix	18
Key themes from the research process	20
The Economic Impact of Travel (Dean Runyan Associates, 2023).....	21
Visit California Community Sentiment Study (Future Partners, 2023)	21
The Deserts regional opportunities	22
1. Invest in tourism product development	22
Demand drivers.....	22
Events	23
2. Improve tourism-related transportation infrastructure	24
3. Support workforce development	26
4. Enhance marketing and messaging	27
5. Promote community engagement and balance	28
Conclusion	29
Appendix	30

Executive summary

The Deserts is a region known for its unique ecosystems, extreme temperatures and iconic natural landmarks in the Mojave Desert. The primary urban hub is Palm Springs and the eight additional cities making up the Coachella Valley.



SWCA
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

Tourism plays a significant role in the Deserts’ economy with anchor attractions such as Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park and a robust inventory of resort-style accommodations and marquee events in the Coachella Valley that draw visitors from around the globe. In 2023, the region reported total travel spending of \$8.6 billion, marking a 1.2% growth rate from the previous year, according to “The Economic Impact of Travel” report by Dean Runyan Associates in 2023.

To develop a comprehensive regional tourism strategy, Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) and Visit California undertook an extensive two-year planning process. This effort aimed to enhance, harmonize and validate existing destination plans while examining tourism priorities and opportunities from a regional perspective. The approach included a thorough review of existing plans, such as [Visit Greater Palm Springs’ Destination Development Plan](#) and [Visit 29 Palms’ 2024-2025 Tourism Marketing Plan](#), among others. Broad stakeholder engagement was conducted through various methods, including regional advisory committee meetings, tourism stakeholder surveys with 26 participants, focus groups, individual interviews with more than 100 industry stakeholders, and site visits to more than 70 points of interest. Additionally, in-depth market research was carried out to inform strategy development. This comprehensive approach not only provided valuable insights but also emphasized the importance of regional collaboration across the Deserts region, seeking to complement local strategies while identifying overarching priorities and opportunities to strengthen the region’s tourism sector.

The research process utilized several proprietary tools and methodologies. The tourism-readiness [index](#), developed in collaboration with the World Travel & Tourism Council, analyzed nearly 4,000 tourism related data points across 68 indicators. The region is classified as an “emerging performer” destination, indicating that the region and its destinations are gaining momentum and experiencing a noticeable increase in tourism. Furthermore, results indicated that the Deserts surpasses or performs in line with California state averages in two out of eight of the [index pillars](#), particularly in concentration and urban readiness.

The [demand driver scorecard](#) process evaluated 100 attractions and experiences in the Deserts region. The scoring and analysis indicated the significant inventory and diversity of assets in the Deserts. For example, the Deserts features several large-scale attractions that attract national and/or international visitors, such as Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park, Indian Wells Tennis Gardens, Sunnyslands Center & Gardens, and PGA West. Further, over 30% of the scored attractions were recognized as outdoor recreation assets, including the trails, parks, canyons, preserves, golf courses, tennis clubs and more throughout the region. The region also offers a variety of hospitality accommodations, from luxury boutique properties to large-scale convention hotels. Lastly, the Deserts boasts a variety of arts and culture offerings — including museums, architecture, art galleries, arenas and theater venues, and Indigenous sites.

The [event matrix](#) process assessed 25 events across the region, such as the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, Stagecoach Country Music Festival, the BNP Paribas Open, and Splash House. The results of the event matrix indicate stakeholders should focus resources on greater development or promotion of events that can attract national and international interest, which will continue to drive overnight visitation and substantial economic impact to the region. The Deserts should also focus on new event development during off-peak and shoulder periods to reduce seasonality in tourism.



Joshua Tree National Park

Based on these analyses and stakeholder input, several strategic priorities were identified for the Deserts.

- 1** Invest in tourism product development: enhance and promote tourism offerings to drive additional overnight visitation, all while managing and preserving natural and outdoor attractions/events.
- 2** Improve tourism-related transportation infrastructure: prioritize the ongoing upgrades to Palm Springs International Airport, public transportation enhancement, and wayfinding.
- 3** Support workforce development: continue to leverage apprenticeship programs and partnerships with educational institutions, municipalities, nonprofits and local businesses to promote careers in the tourism industry and develop specialized training programs.
- 4** Enhanced marketing and messaging: develop strategic messaging to educate visitors on year-round opportunities and responsible tourism.
- 5** Promote community engagement and balance: communicate the overall benefits of the tourism economy to local communities, especially in areas outside the Coachella Valley.

These opportunities align with state goals of sustainable tourism development, economic growth and enhancing visitor experiences while preserving natural and cultural resources. Implementation will require ongoing engagement with stakeholders, including destination marketing organizations, local businesses and community organizations.

In conclusion, the Deserts features a strong tourism economy and opportunities for enhancement given its rich portfolio of natural and outdoor recreational attractions, arts and culture, and hospitality. The strategic plan emphasizes the importance of balancing tourism growth with stakeholder and community needs. Ongoing focus among local tourism stakeholders will be crucial in implementing these opportunities and ensuring the sustainable development of the region's tourism industry.

JLL and Visit California would like to thank the Deserts Regional Advisory Committee Members who played a crucial role in this planning process. Their time, expertise, insight, and valuable contributions throughout the process were instrumental in shaping this strategic plan. Their continued involvement and communication will be helpful in supporting implementation approaches to the strategic opportunities and ensuring the long-term success of tourism in the Deserts region. Please refer to the committee participants in the [Appendix](#).



Palm Springs

Regional research and discovery

To ensure a comprehensive approach to this plan, the Deserts Regional Strategic Tourism Plan integrates insights from stakeholder engagement and regional research and discovery to develop a clear vision and strategy. Throughout two years of the planning process, extensive market research was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the current state of the tourism industry and identify potential areas for growth. JLL leveraged both proprietary strategic planning tools, extensive stakeholder feedback and research previously conducted by Visit California to better understand each region. Many of the insights from these findings have been critical to the foundational strategies in this plan.



Palm Canyon Drive

The regional research and discovery section includes vast research which has been detailed further and organized under the following categories.

JLL-conducted research components:

- 1 State of the region overview: The overview provides a brief introductory summary of what currently impacts the tourism industry in the Deserts.**
- 2 Stakeholder engagement: This section incorporates feedback from multiple different methods.**
 - Regional advisory committees: Meetings held monthly for approximately 16 consecutive months with a committee consisting of 20-plus members. Please refer to the [Appendix](#) for a full list of members.
 - Destination plans review database: data gathering process which included 24 individual plans inventoried. Elements addressed housing, employment, guiding development and preserving existing neighborhoods, walkability, water supply, economic development, and improving pedestrian experience.
 - Tourism stakeholder survey: 26 participants representing a diverse range of individuals and organizations involved in the tourism sector. The feedback summary highlights perspectives on strengths, weaknesses and growth opportunities.
 - Focus group feedback: in a small group environment, six in-depth discussions with stakeholders were conducted from multiple sectors, including hotels and lodging; restaurants; retail; outdoor recreation; events; attractions; economic development; resilience and sustainability; workforce; housing; and diversity, equity and inclusion. Through these discussions, valuable insights were gathered on specific areas of interest and growth potential.
 - Individual interviews feedback: over 100 key industry stakeholders interviewed, offering a deeper understanding of perspectives and addressing any specific questions or concerns.
 - Site visits: visited 70-plus points of interest throughout the Deserts, providing valuable insights and observations.
- 3 Tourism readiness [index](#): detailed data analysis process which used nearly 4,000 data points to assess the readiness and capacity of the tourism industry in the Deserts.**
- 4 Demand driver [scorecard](#): evaluation which identified the key assets and experiences driving visitor demand in the region.**
- 5 [Event matrix](#): evaluation which identified key events driving visitor demand in the region.**

Visit California provided research, JLL reviewed components:

- 6 The Economic Impact of Travel (Dean Runyan Associates, 2023)**
- 7 Visit California Community Sentiment Study (Future Partners, 2023)**

A comprehensive research approach allowed for the development of a clear vision and strategy for the Deserts' tourism industry, with foundational strategies that are rooted in data, insights and feedback from stakeholders.

State of the region

The Deserts region of California generally consists of three major tourism areas:

1. The Coachella Valley
2. The High Desert (Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree and the Twentynine Palms area)
3. The Barstow, Mojave, Ridgecrest, Death Valley and Salton Sea/Imperial County areas (referred to as the Outer Deserts in this plan).

The region's strengths lie in its array of tourism assets, including a variety of attractions and events that cater to a wide range of visitor demographics. The presence of internationally recognized national and state parks, leisure demand drivers, and cultural and Indigenous tourism assets contribute to the region being known as a popular tourism destination. The local governments' prioritization of tourism development, coupled with the strategic oversight of one major destination marketing organization, Visit Greater Palm Springs, have further enhanced the region's appeal to visitors. Known for its inclusivity, the Deserts region is also recognized as a welcoming space for LGBTQ+ travelers, enhancing its reputation as a destination that celebrates diversity.

Additionally, the region has a unique capacity to host large-scale events, such as the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, the Stagecoach Country Music Festival, the BNP Paribas Open and the American Express golf tournament. The lodging and event space capacity also allows the region to serve as a popular convention destination. Finally, ongoing strategic partnerships with educational institutions in the region, including hospitality programs at California State University, San Bernardino and College of the Desert, have laid the groundwork for a sustainable tourism labor pool.

However, the region may face several challenges to maintaining and enhancing its tourism appeal. The extreme summer weather can be unfavorable and potentially hazardous for outdoor activities, which may deter some visitors but appeals to a certain segment (heat tourism). More specifically, the perception that the Deserts is "too hot" in the summer months has limited the development of off-season events and attractions. The seasonality of the region leads to fluctuating business levels, posing a challenge to further commercial development. Additionally, visitor impacts can be heavily concentrated in small areas at specific peak times of the year, leading to traffic and accessibility issues, especially since public transit within the region is limited.



Red Rock Mojave desert

Considering the current state of the region, there are several opportunities for growth and development. Prioritizing infrastructure development and utility enhancements in the High Desert to support and manage visitors, capitalizing on heat tourism and promoting lesser-known areas and attractions in the region can help manage visitor flow throughout the year. The development of customs at Palm Springs International Airport (PSP) would likely increase airlift for international travelers, bringing European tourists directly to the region without the need to drive from Los Angeles. Efforts to decrease seasonality through the development of indoor venues, shaded areas, and water-focused attractions and events, such as surf parks and Splash House, could further bolster year-round tourism. The planned rail line from Los Angeles and the Inland Empire to the Coachella Valley would enhance destination accessibility, drawing more visitors to the region in an environmentally friendly manner.

There are some considerations that may impede the region's tourism industry growth. The increasing number of visitors tests the infrastructure and ecological balance of the national parks, while limitations in electricity availability and public sewer utilities restrict potential development in certain areas. A small but vocal group of residents could oppose future tourism development in certain areas. Additionally, the growth in second home ownership and the lack of multifamily housing development are inhibiting tourism workforce housing affordability. Lastly, natural disasters pose a risk to destination accessibility and attraction availability, necessitating disaster preparedness and response strategies.

In conclusion, the Deserts region currently has a tourism industry with significant potential for growth. To realize this potential, a collaborative approach that includes all areas of the Deserts, addresses infrastructure needs and considers the perspectives of local communities is essential. By doing so, the region can enhance its tourism offerings, manage visitor impacts more effectively and ensure that tourism continues to be a driving force for economic and community development.



Joshua Tree National Park

Destination plans review database

The regional strategic tourism planning process was designed to examine issues from a regional perspective, building upon the valuable work already completed in destination-specific plans by DMOs, convention and visitor bureaus and municipalities. This approach ensures that existing efforts are leveraged and enhanced rather than duplicated.

The comprehensive review encompassed 500 plans across California, with 24 plans specifically focused on the Deserts region. A full list of the reviewed plans can be found in the **Appendix**.

Upon analysis of the Deserts plans, several key themes were identified that align with the priorities highlighted in the present plan.

1 Land use and development:

- Balanced land use planning
- Zoning regulations and sustainable building practices
- Protect agricultural lands from urban sprawl
- Infill development to utilize vacant and under-utilized properties

2 Community services and infrastructure:

- Affordable housing
- Transportation infrastructure improvements
- Enhanced mobility
- Public safety services and emergency response capabilities

3 Environmental sustainability and conservation:

- Water conservation and management
- Renewable energy research
- Protect and restore natural habitats

4 Economic development and job growth:

- Job training programs aligning with community needs
- Entrepreneurship and small businesses

5 Public safety and community resilience:

- Public safety services and emergency response capabilities
- Natural disaster resilience

Working in conjunction with the regional advisory committee and armed with insights from the existing plans, the approach sought to examine regional issues holistically. This methodology was further validated through the engagement process. It is crucial to consider this regional plan in the context of destination-specific plans, recognizing that it does not aim to reinvent existing strategies. Instead, the regional plan serves to complement and align with these destination plans, while simultaneously reinforcing the significance of regional cooperation and engagement.

Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder input was collected through multiple methods (outlined below in detail), including regional advisory committee discussion forums, a series of topical focus groups, a comprehensive tourism survey, a thorough site visit, and individual meetings with tourism stakeholders, industry leaders and related entities.

Regional advisory committees

Regional advisory committees were monthly gatherings composed of industry leaders within tourism, economic development, lodging, attractions, retail, entertainment, transportation, workforce, and more. Meetings were held monthly for approximately 16 consecutive months. The committee consisted of 20-plus members, of which a full list can be found in the **Appendix**.

Tourism stakeholder survey

Questions from the survey capture a variety of topics including travel preferences, satisfaction levels with accommodation, transportation, attractions, etc., suggestions for improvements, and more. The tourism survey was conducted anonymously to encourage feedback and diverse perspectives from various sectors across the region, while asking overall demographics and industry profile questions to shed light on the represented stakeholder groups. This survey garnered 26 responses from across the Deserts.

Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted to discuss key themes and gather quantitative data. We conducted six focus groups with nearly 100 total participants, including DMO leaders; representatives from hotels and lodging; attractions; arts; restaurant; retail; and entertainment sectors; and specialists in economic development; transportation; workforce; infrastructure; meetings; events and conventions; diversity, equity and inclusion; and more.

Individual interviews

Individual meetings were held with stakeholders to collect detailed feedback. The stakeholders included industry leadership and management, supporters, and individuals concerned with tourism's potential challenges and impacts on the Deserts. The interview process encompassed 100-plus individual interviews, including all members of the regional advisory committee.

Site visits

Site visits were conducted within the Deserts region to immerse further in the local environment, engage directly with stakeholders, visit tourism sites and attractions, and witness firsthand the dynamics of the tourism industry in the Deserts. Over 70-plus points of interest were visited throughout the Deserts.

The diverse set of perspectives ensured our study comprehensively captured both the benefits and potential drawbacks of tourism. All stakeholder feedback also provided key guidance and direction to become the basis of many strategies.

Key themes from stakeholder engagement

The various methods of stakeholder feedback reflected several major themes within the Deserts region:

- Traffic and road congestion continues to illustrate the importance for increased and enhanced public transportation, connectivity, and mobility options throughout the region. Additionally, enhanced infrastructure and utility improvements are important, particularly for the High Desert area of the region.
- The tourism workforce in the Deserts faces challenges associated with the affordability of living, including the high costs of housing and commuting. Many workers in the hospitality and tourism industries face long commutes from other areas within the region where housing is more affordable — causing additional traffic and congestion in the area.
- Tourism-associated businesses in the Deserts encounter challenges with the high cost of labor. The costs of hiring, retaining and potentially housing employees poses significant challenges when operating in the region.
- Sustainable tourism practices continue to gain importance. With many natural assets in the region such as the national parks, canyons, hiking areas and nature preserves, stakeholders note a key priority is to protect the natural environment. The Resilience & Sustainability Scorecard assessment for the Deserts will provide comprehensive opportunities for achieving best practices in sustainability and resilience in the region.
- Overall resident support for tourism and understanding of the economic impact of the industry is significant and well-known by most residents in the region, particularly in the Coachella Valley.
- Supporting small businesses is important to celebrating cultural and historical heritage and diversity throughout the Deserts.
- During peak seasons, the national and state parks are popular destinations for travelers, resulting in increased demands and pressure on the assets. To efficiently enhance visitor flow and further contribute to the appeal of anchor attractions, there are many opportunities to create and market regional itineraries that promote lesser-known attractions and experiences.
- Continuously improving the leisure visitor and conference/group attendee experience is important, as both the transient leisure and group segments play a vital role in the success of the Deserts' tourism business.

The key themes identified above present a brief synopsis of the stakeholder conversations, focus group feedback, survey results, and individual interviews. The themes supported the development of the priorities in this plan. The regional strategic planning process leveraged stakeholder feedback to validate research and direction for the future of the destination. While this plan addresses many crucial aspects of tourism development, it is important to acknowledge that some identified issues fall outside the direct purview of the tourism industry and may require coordinated action from various levels of government and other sectors to effectively address.

Tourism readiness index

Overview

The first phase of the [regional research and discovery](#) involved an in-depth analysis of the Deserts as a destination based on the tourism readiness index. The tourism readiness index is an analysis tool developed collaboratively by JLL and the World Travel & Tourism Council. The Index offers destinations an opportunity to evaluate and comprehend their own tourism preparedness based on 68 essential data points that directly influence the tourism industry. The indicators evaluate the current state of the region's tourism industry and identify potential areas for future growth.

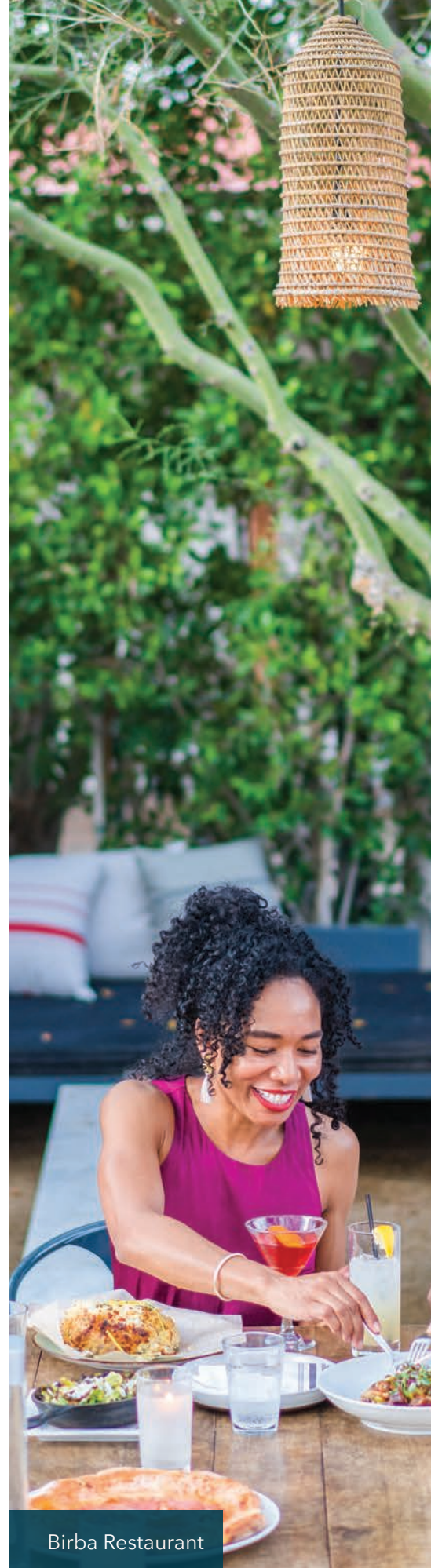
The assessment encompasses research of various aspects within a destination's landscape, including traditional hotel performance metrics, infrastructure and capacity building, environmental sustainability requirements, and more. With the insights provided by the tourism readiness [index](#), destinations can gain a thorough understanding of growth readiness, enabling informed decisions and optimization of tourism strategies.

A comprehensive analysis was conducted on all 58 counties in California, examining 68 indicators. The process resulted in the collection and organization of nearly 4,000 data points, categorized according to regional boundaries. All sources included were vetted by JLL and WTTC.

The tourism readiness [index](#) analyzed data for each region in the following categories:

- **Scale:** the capacity of the destination's tourism infrastructure, considering its size and volume.
- **Concentration:** the tendency to attract leisure visitors who focus on specific key attractions and areas.
- **Leisure:** evaluation of visitor spending, perceived attractiveness and specific attractions related to cultural and natural heritage sites and retail offerings.
- **Business:** the development of necessary infrastructure and products to support business travel.
- **Urban readiness:** investments in enhancing connectivity within the destination to attract business opportunities, talent and visitors.
- **Safety and security:** the prioritization of safety and security within policies and practices.
- **Environmental readiness:** the prioritization of sustainability through reflected strategies, policies and destination positioning.
- **Policy:** the integration of tourism policy within the destination's broader agenda.

These eight categories each incorporate up to 15 data points grouped to create the pillars of tourism readiness. The data points in each pillar are weighted and scored. The outcomes from this analysis determine what features of the destination need to be prioritized to ensure long-term smart growth to positively impact the local economy through tourism's benefits. See [Appendix](#) for further detail on the tourism readiness index methodology.



Birba Restaurant



Indian Wells

The Deserts region results

The tourism readiness **index** reveals that the Deserts surpasses or performs in line with state averages in two out of eight pillars, highlighting steady performance. Notably, the Deserts stands out when compared to the state regional average in terms of concentration and urban readiness. However, it is behind the state regional average in scale, leisure, business, safety and security, environment, and policy.

In-depth analysis of data from sources such as Destination Analysts, TripAdvisor, and more shed light on the factors contributing to the Deserts’ tourism readiness performance. For instance, the analyzed data highlights urban readiness and concentration as key strengths for the region, meaning there are high-quality investments and infrastructure and numerous popular tourist destinations.

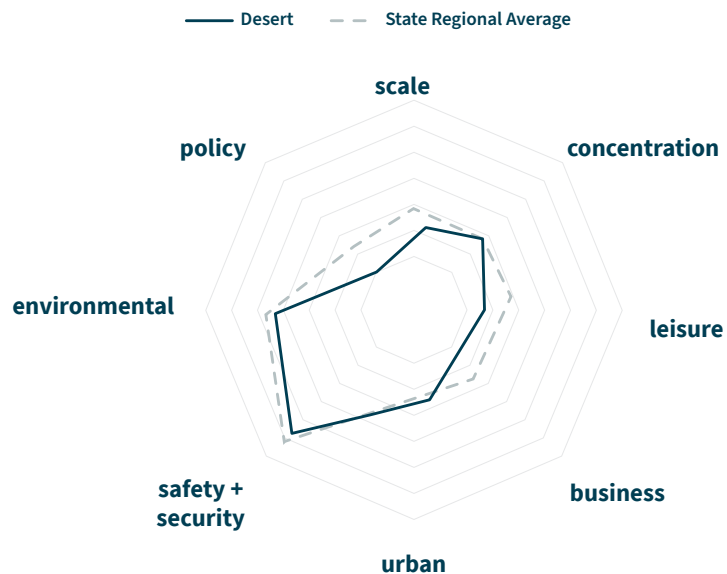
Conversely, certain areas experience challenges such as traffic congestion during peak hours, housing affordability and overtourism. These insights provide opportunities for targeted improvements to enhance the Deserts’ overall tourism readiness and enhance its competitive edge.

Based on the results, the Deserts region is classified as an “emerging performer.” This typology refers to destinations that are gaining momentum and experiencing a noticeable increase in tourism. While such regions may be smaller in scale, this offers opportunities for strategic development initiatives.

As an emerging performer, the Deserts should prioritize actively investing in infrastructure development to support the growing tourism demand. The region should capitalize on the rising momentum by further enhancing tourism offerings to attract a larger visitor base. However, as the region experiences growth, it may face pressures due to limited capacity outside of the Coachella Valley area. Balancing growth with sustainable development, particularly in the High Desert, is crucial for the Deserts to thrive as a destination.

Ongoing strategic planning, including regional research and discovery and targeting new visitor segments, will enable the Deserts to maximize the utilization of its existing assets while identifying new growth opportunities. Finally, sustainable development practices should be prioritized to protect the natural environment, preserve culture and support local communities. Please refer to the **Appendix** for a more detailed overview of the tourism readiness index and all destination typologies.

Outcome by Pillar



Demand driver scorecard

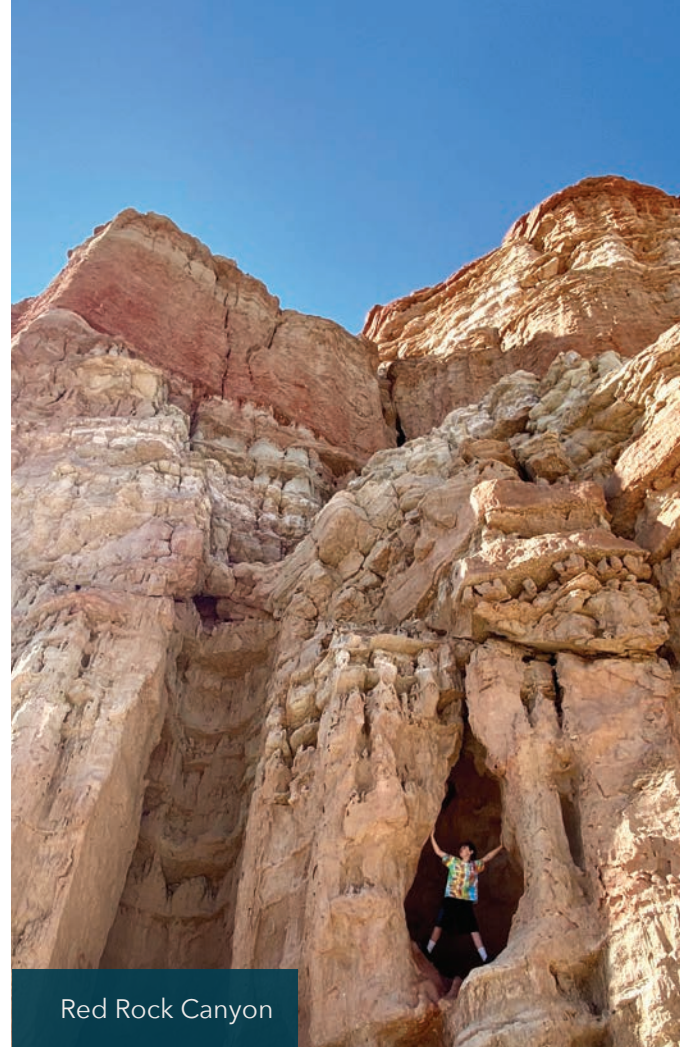
Overview

The regional strategic planning process utilized JLL's proprietary demand driver scorecard to evaluate the impact of individual regional assets and experiences and future investment opportunities. The demand driver scorecard is designed to establish a baseline and identify investment prospects within the tourism sector. Strategic planners, investors and developers gain the ability to make informed decisions backed by robust data and analysis. The scorecard assists destinations in strategic planning and guides stakeholders in the formulation of targeted marketing to maximize returns.

This scoring process was based on an evaluation which includes:

- **Multistep assessment:** evaluating and assigning points to each attraction or experience against eight key criteria, including current visitor demand levels, event opportunities, engaging visitor experience, and more (further detail outlined in [Appendix](#)).
- **Categorization as attractions vs. attractors/demand generators:** categorizing assets as attractions or attractors based on a scoring system of 0-100.
- **Scoring:** classifying each attraction into a category based on overall points score. Categories were little to no visitor interest (0-19), interesting to do on a repeat visit (20-39), "must see" if in the area (40-59), regional attractors (60-79), national attractors (80-95), and global attractors (96-100). Scoring above 60 indicates assets or experiences as an attractor.
- **Categorization of each demand driver:** segmenting assets into 13 unique market categories based on specific criteria and characteristics, including family-friendly attractions, museums, entertainment, educational attractions, outdoor recreation, and more. Assets could be assigned to multiple relevant categories.

Categorization of a region's demand drivers helps assess the visitor experience, assists in strategic planning, identifies areas for future development or revitalization projects, and enables the prioritization of enhancements to visitor-facing attractions. Overall, asset categorization provides a framework for a more organized and detailed analysis, aiding in regional research and discovery, planning, and decision-making processes.



Red Rock Canyon



Desert Hills Premium Outlets



Lancaster

The Deserts region results

The Deserts demand driver scorecard process assessed 100 attractions and experiences across the region, which were identified by regional advisory committee members, individual interviews, desktop research, and by JLL during site visits. The scoring and analysis are a representative analysis intended to highlight the significant inventory and diversity of assets in the Deserts.

Of 100 assets that were measured, the Deserts has a few large-scale attractions that attract national and/or international visitors. Examples include Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park, Indian Wells Tennis Gardens, Sunnylands Center & Gardens, and PGA West — among others. Assets that attract national and international visitation to the Deserts typically create a significant, measurable economic impact on the destinations through room nights, direct spending and other indicators. Two of the region’s greatest tourism drivers are Joshua Tree National Park and Death Valley National Park, consistently attracting domestic national and international demand year-round.

More than 30% of the Deserts’ attractions are recognized as outdoor recreation assets, including the trails, parks, canyons, preserves, golf courses, tennis clubs and more throughout the region. The region also offers a variety of hospitality accommodations, from luxury boutique properties to large-scale convention hotels. Finally, the Deserts boasts a variety of arts and culture offerings — including museums, architecture, art galleries, arenas and theater venues, and Indigenous sites — rounding out the region’s portfolio of demand drivers. Scoring and analysis shows that the Deserts’ diverse mix of tourist attractions is one of its greatest strengths.

However, there is room to further promote the region’s portfolio of arts and culture offerings to a greater audience. Emphasizing cultural tourism draws those interested in the arts and a wider audience in search of distinctive travel opportunities — and can serve as an indoor alternative to the typical outdoor recreation offerings in the Deserts during periods of hot weather. This focus is key to boosting the tourism sector’s growth and longevity in the Deserts and will be further discussed in the forthcoming opportunities. Moreover, regional cooperation is crucial in supporting emerging tourist attractions and improving existing ones.

The demand driver scorecard’s analysis has been pivotal in pinpointing strategic priorities and crafting proposals to ensure the Deserts’ ongoing tourism success.

Event matrix

Overview

The event matrix process encompassed a thorough evaluation of existing annual leisure-facing events within each region. The assessment helps tourism stakeholders understand which events generated the most significant impact and, more specifically, what aspects of event planning could further enhance the event. Like the demand driver scorecard, JLL's event matrix product involves a dedicated analysis of individual events, charting their outcomes and impacts based on overall scores.

The iterative approach enables continual refinement and optimization as events are held each year. It empowers regions, DMOs and event organizers to stay ahead of market trends and make strategic adjustments to optimize event offerings, ensuring events remain competitive in the ever-changing landscape of the industry.

The event matrix process included:

- **Identifying significant events:** collaborated with regional advisory committee members and DMOs to inventory regionwide event master list.
- **Utilizing comprehensive criteria:** scoring each event based on 11 detailed criteria aligned with the broader tourism landscape, such as event infrastructure, planning, marketing, and potential economic impact.
- **Categorizing events based on score:** categorizing assets as attractions or attractors based on a scoring system of 0-100.
- **Scoring:** classifying each attraction into a category based on overall points score. Categories were community-based events (0-59), regional events (60-79), national events (80-95), and global events (96-100). Scoring above 60 indicates assets or experiences as an attractor.
- **Evaluating critical mass:** assessing the overall volume and significance of current events, identifying need periods, gaps and opportunities.
- **Leveraging outcomes:** developing optimal calendar programming and identifying specific opportunities to enhance events.
- **Collaboration:** working closely with the regional advisory committee to review effective tactics, address study results and engage individual event organizers in the future.

This approach ensures a well-informed understanding of the event landscape and helps in positioning regions for success by focusing on high-impact events. See [Appendix](#) for further detail on the event matrix methodology.



Coachella Music and Arts Festival

The Deserts region results

The Deserts event matrix process inventoried and scored 25 events across the region that were collaboratively identified by the regional advisory committee, recognized during our visits to the region, noted as high priority in stakeholder surveys, and validated as significant current and future room night generators during stakeholder discussions. Like its demand drivers, the Deserts hosts an array of events, with a diversity of events across the region and throughout the year.

The outcomes from this analysis identified two unique events that are positioned to draw national demand to the region, including the Coachella Music and Arts Festival and Stagecoach Country Music Festival. These well-established events drive leisure tourism and enhance the destination's visibility nationally. Hoteliers, retailers, restaurateurs, and other regional representatives reinforced the significant annual economic impacts of these events.

The Deserts exhibits some seasonality in its events, with certain new event offerings beginning to be hosted during the hotter summer months, such as Splash House. The Deserts region tourism community is working toward diversifying events throughout the calendar year, considering the potential for extreme weather/climate impacts. However, stakeholders highlight the need for a centralized calendar of all events, with a desire to increase promotion and visibility of year-round event offerings to visitors.

We analyzed several additional significant events, such as White Party, the BNP Paribas Open, The American Express PGA Tournament, and Modernism Week. While these events attract many visitors, overall scores indicate these events draw visitors from the nearby regions and contribute moderate overnight visitation and economic impact as compared to other annual events in the region.

The results of the event matrix indicate stakeholders should focus resources on greater development or promotion of events that can attract national and international interest, which will drive overnight visitation and substantial economic impact to the region. Further, it is recommended that the event matrix is utilized on an ongoing basis as an objective approach to evaluating the event inventory at any given time to assess the impacts of current events in the region.

Additionally, it is highly recommended to supplement the utilization of the event matrix with external resources to support events with regional impact. Collaborating with local DMOs, economic development organizations and industry experts can provide valuable insights, data and expertise to further evaluate the potential economic benefits and overnight visitation drivers of current and future regional annual events. This collaborative approach, with the event matrix, ensures a comprehensive and well-informed decision-making process when assessing the impact of current events in the region.



Indian Wells

Key themes from the research process

- Widespread stakeholder engagement played a crucial role in developing the regional strategic plan, with input gathered through various methods such as interviews, surveys and focus groups.
- Key themes that emerged from the engagement process include the recognition that continuously improving the visitor experience and promoting the diversity of offerings is crucial for the success of the region. The domestic, national and international visitor segments were identified as playing vital roles in driving economic growth and sustaining a thriving visitor economy. Themes will be further explored in the regional opportunities section of this plan.
- JLL's tourism readiness **index** classifies the Deserts as an "Emerging Performer" — with a noticeable increase in tourism interest and activity, and ongoing infrastructure improvements and developments in the region.
- As an emerging performer, the Deserts should capitalize on the rising momentum of tourism and prioritize actively investing in infrastructure and attractions to support the growing tourism demand.
- The Deserts demand driver scorecard process assessed 100 attractions and experiences across the region. An investment prioritization approach based on the results of the scorecard should be put into motion during the first year of implementation.
- The Deserts event matrix process inventoried and scored 25 events across the region. The process indicated that 32% of the region's events are targeted regional draws.
- The event matrix analysis identified two unique events in the Deserts that are positioned to drive national demand — attracting visitors consistently throughout the year and contributing significantly to other tourism sectors, such as hospitality and food and beverage.

Throughout the planning process, JLL also conducted an in-depth review of research and data provided by Visit California. Below is a summary of the findings for the Deserts region.



San Bernardino Mountains



Palm Springs

The Economic Impact of Travel

(Dean Runyan Associates, 2023)

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the economic effects of travel on California’s state economy. It addresses various key metrics such as travel spending, earnings, employment, and tax receipts, broken down by county and tourism regions. The data below is based on estimates and research conducted by Dean Runyan Associates for Visit California.

In summary, in 2023, the Deserts achieved a significant milestone in its travel industry, with total travel spending reaching \$8.6 billion, marking 1.2% growth from the previous year. Visitor spending accounted for \$8.1 billion, while additional travel-related expenditures added about \$500 million. This upward trend reflects strong recovery and robust growth postpandemic, highlighting the region’s attractiveness and resilience as a travel destination within the state.

The economic contributions of travel in the Deserts position tourism as one of the strongest industries in the region. Employment within the travel industry grew by 5.3%, providing 83,850 jobs for the region. Direct travel-generated earnings increased by 10.4% to \$3.2 billion, with key sectors such as visitor air, accommodations and food service, and arts and entertainment showing substantial growth.

Visit California Community Sentiment Study

(Future Partners, 2023)

The Visit California Community Sentiment Study provides detailed findings and insights from various regions, including demographic data and the perceptions of residents regarding tourism. It explores both the benefits and strains of tourism on local communities and regions, highlighting aspects such as economic opportunities, traffic congestion and quality of life impacts. Specifically, the Deserts region is examined in terms of its residents’ views on tourism’s economic contributions, the challenges it creates, and overall community sentiment.

Key findings for the Deserts include residents’ appreciation for tourism’s role in boosting the community’s image (73%), generating local business opportunities (66%), and job creation for locals (62%). Just under 50% of respondents find that the benefits from tourism outweigh problems in both the local communities and the region overall. Respondents highlighted traffic and congestion (64%), lack of respect for the local community and culture (57%) and price increases for residents (57%) as the main challenges created by visitors.

The Deserts offers a variety of appreciated features, such as restaurant and dining options (81%), shopping districts (81%), and entertainment options (68%). Popular tourist attractions include mountains (65%), casinos (63%), and hiking trails (58%). While residents enjoy these amenities, certain attractions that are avoided by residents include large music festivals (23%) and theme/amusement parks (14%).

Residents see tourism as a neutral impact on their day-to-day life, with just under half of the residents agreeing that tourism’s benefits outweigh its problems both locally (47%) and regionally (45%). Concurrently, residents stated that the tourism industry enhances quality of life for individuals and their families, with 49% of locals deeming it helpful to the community quality of life, and 51% deeming it helpful for the region. In addition, approximately 68% feel that tourism is important to the region overall.

Strategically, the Deserts should focus on balancing tourism’s economic benefits with quality of life improvements. Addressing traffic, congestion, visitor/resident communication, and price inflation through infrastructure and policy changes could strengthen tourism’s positive perception. Promoting lesser-known local attractions could distribute visitor pressure more evenly by reducing stress on the most popular sites, such as the national parks. A targeted campaign highlighting the symbiotic relationship between tourism and community well-being might also foster resident support.

Deserts regional opportunities

1 Invest in tourism product development

Demand drivers

The Deserts region of California has a mature and diverse array of tourism demand drivers, ranging from iconic resorts and world-famous outdoor recreation to arts and culture attractions. The region, known for its outdoor landscapes and unique ecosystems, attracts national and worldwide audiences, drawing visitors looking to experience its natural beauty and recreational opportunities. Popular destinations such as Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park and the Coachella Valley are examples of the region's draw, offering visitors a chance to explore the natural beauty.

Certain areas within the Deserts containing world-renowned outdoor demand drivers experience concentrated amounts of visitation during peak periods. The Deserts has an opportunity to implement strategies that manage, preserve and expand natural attractions and outdoor recreational experiences. This includes continuing to develop and implement sustainable tourism practices, enhance visitor education and awareness, and invest in infrastructure improvements

Key Partners

National Park Service; California Department of Parks and Recreation; Bureau of Land Management; California Outdoor Hospitality Association

Strategies

- Feature lesser-known areas of the Deserts that contain natural attractions similar to those in popular outdoor recreation areas with marketing materials that feature alternative hiking destinations, night sky viewing areas and scenic places that contain desert landscapes and Joshua trees in marketing materials.
- Create a regionwide “outdoor recreation passport” campaign that includes visits to lesser-known natural attractions (e.g., Whitewater Preserve, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park).
- Carefully observe and manage the growth in visitor numbers to prevent any adverse, hazardous or undesirable effects on less popular or undiscovered locations and attractions.
- Incorporate shade into new and existing tourism assets to support visitor safety, comfort and accessibility.
- Monitor and foster the creation of attractions that draw visitors during hot summer months when tourism typically slows. Focus on indoor, climate-controlled venues centered around arts and culture, such as artist workshops, exhibition spaces, curated displays, and various types of museums.
- Create off-season itineraries for people staying in the Coachella Valley, emphasizing higher elevation parts of the region as cooler-temperature places to visit during the summer months.
- Capitalize on the current market demand for alternative lodging experiences and develop private campgrounds, RV parks, and “glamping” experiences in the High Desert that provide options less invasive to the natural landscape and do not utilize the residential housing stock in the area.

Events

The Deserts region is renowned for its vibrant event scene, particularly in the Coachella Valley, which hosts several high-profile events during the winter and spring months that attract visitors from around the world. These events, such as the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, Stagecoach, and the Palm Springs International Film Festival, attract large crowds and significantly boost tourism in the area.

During the summer months, the Deserts region sees a decrease in tourism due to a perception that it is “too hot” to hold events. An opportunity exists to strengthen event offerings during the summer months, showcasing the unique appeal of the Deserts even in warmer weather. The strategy could include evening and nighttime events, indoor activities, and events that leverage cooler, higher-altitude desert locations.

Additionally, while the Coachella Valley remains a focal point for events, there is significant potential to develop event programming in other areas of the Deserts. Investing in infrastructure improvements, such as transportation, lodging and event facilities, is crucial to support the growth of events outside the Coachella Valley. The expansion of event programming would not only distribute tourism more evenly across the region but also highlight the diverse attractions and communities within the High Desert.

Strategies

- Identify off-season event opportunities by analyzing the region’s visitation patterns and choose event ideas that appeal to potential visitors during slower periods. Consider events that could leverage the region’s strengths (lodging, outdoor recreation and conference space supply).
- Based on the results of JLL’s [demand driver scorecard](#), encourage the development of additional unique, signature water-based events that could become annual events. The events should be designed to encourage multiday attendance, prompting overnight stays.
 - Splash House is a new event held annually that capitalizes on a low period of visitation in the summer. The event is produced in partnership with local hotels and drives visitor spending throughout the community.
- Develop event programming in other areas of the Deserts outside of the Coachella Valley by identifying areas of the region with enough infrastructure (open space, broadband internet, cell phone service, road access) to adequately support events.
- Based upon the results of JLL’s [event matrix](#) analysis, encourage event planners and cities/towns in the High Desert and Outer Deserts to brainstorm on complementary and additional events that would support the local economies (restaurants, retail, lodging) while appealing to both visitors and residents.
- Develop a schedule of events at destinations within a reasonable drive time of the Coachella Valley to leverage the existing hospitality stock in the area.
- Explore feasibility of the development of alternative lodging/hospitality options to accommodate peak event overnight visitation. Examples could include private campgrounds in the outer portions of the Deserts region to accommodate overflow.



Palm Springs

2 Improve tourism-related transportation infrastructure

The Deserts region consists of three major tourism areas — the Coachella Valley, the High Desert (Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms) as well as the Barstow, Mojave, Ridgecrest, Death Valley and Salton Sea/Imperial County areas (referred to as the Outer Deserts in this plan). A significant opportunity exists to create public transit to connect the various areas of the region with the gateway cities/airports in California. Currently, the Riverside County Transportation Commission is working to advance a rail line that connects the Coachella Valley with the Inland Empire and onward to Los Angeles.

Additionally, opportunities exist to enhance intra-destination public transit options (i.e., within the cities of the Coachella Valley) to reduce visitor reliance on cars which, at times, leads to traffic congestion in the region during peak visitation periods.

Further, opportunities exist to enhance or bring utility access (in particular, electricity, public sewer, broadband internet/cellular coverage) to areas of the region, which may open the doors for additional tourism product development. Portions of the High Desert currently do not have a public sewer utility, which may limit the amount of tourism growth possible in the area.

Finally, due to a multitude of converging factors, housing for tourism workers close to jobs remains prohibitively expensive, leading employees to live in remote areas and commute long distances. In some cases, workers live primarily in areas prone to road closures during intense weather events, causing staffing issues for the industry.



Palm Springs

Key Partners

Palm Springs Airport Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission

Strategies

- Monitor the current Palm Springs International Airport (PSP) master plan and maintain clear communication with visitors about the ongoing project, closures and facilities available.
 - Visit Greater Palm Springs is currently partnering with PSP, collaborating on the addition of an international terminal to further attract international visitation, as detailed in its [Destination Development Plan](#).
- Maintain collaboration with the major airlines currently flying into PSP to understand route economics, passenger capacities, opportunities for growth, challenges in operations at PSP and markets in which the airlines plan to expand in the future.
- Work with tourism stakeholders and economic development organizations to provide airline subsidies for target routes and times of year.
- Discuss the impact of the airport's growth plans on the types and locations of visitors who may be traveling to the region in the future and align on the target markets that the tourism community wishes to attract to PSP.
- Actively share additional visitor and tourism workforce data from all areas of the Deserts region (inclusive of the High Desert), as available, with the Riverside County Transportation Commission to inform Coachella Valley Rail project planning.
- Collect feedback from the region's tourism workforce, namely hospitality workers, to understand commuting patterns and the need for expanded or alternate public transit routes.
- Foster tourism data sharing with the Brightline development organization to ensure the tourism industry's perspective is captured during the rail line planning and development process.
 - As a potential/future major means of entry to the region, enhancing the visitors' en route experience with tourism-minded amenities will increase the attractiveness of the Brightline as an option and subsequently increase visitation.
- Coordinate with Caltrans and/or private entities (e.g., Clear Channel, Lamar) to install signage and digital messaging on Interstate 10, state Route 62 to/from the High Desert and state Routes 178 and 190 to/from Death Valley.
 - Messaging strategy should be to inform visitors of upcoming traffic patterns, congestion, closures, and alternative routes. Improving the visitor experience through enhanced wayfinding could potentially combat traffic congestion at popular destinations.
- Implement digital notification/communication systems to inform visitors of capacity, safety and parking recommendations before arriving at: the national parks, potentially through the National Park Service app, mapping apps, targeted advertising, digital billboards, geofencing and/or QR codes at local businesses en route to the parks.

3 Support workforce development

Given the significant amount of hospitality inventory, attractions and events in the Deserts region, emphasis should continue to be placed on workforce training in the tourism sector. By incorporating local educational institutions, tourism businesses can begin to foster a sustainable and sought-after pipeline of talent to support the industry.

Additionally, according to tourism stakeholders, most of the region’s tourism and hospitality workforce commutes into the Coachella Valley from other parts of the region. Housing supply and affordability in the Coachella Valley and High Desert has experienced compression in recent years, potentially due to the market and zoning laws encouraging the development of single-family homes. Specifically, tourism stakeholders have highlighted the need for additional multifamily developments in the Coachella Valley to attract workers to the region.

Key Partners

CSU San Bernardino, College of the Deserts, Copper Mountain College

Strategies

- Partner with the region’s educational institutions that have hospitality programs and job training certificates, namely CSUSB, College of the Deserts and Copper Mountain College and position the region as a premier destination for education in hospitality, culinary arts and casino management studies.
- Work with nonprofits and local foundations, such as the Tourism Foundation mentioned in the [Visit Greater Palm Springs’ Destination Development Plan](#), to provide scholarships for high schoolers applying to hospitality management programs and for individuals completing job training certificates to enter the industry.
- Align local hospitality students and young professionals with nontraditional tourism internship offerings in all areas of the region (e.g., national parks) to bolster recruitment of community members and residents.
- Assist local tourism employers in navigating the visa process for international workers applying for internships during peak season in the Deserts.
- Strategize on the procurement of housing for international interns and workforce during peak periods of visitation.
- Coordinate and assist with the application process for educational and career/technical grant funding for hospitality programs from county, state and federal sources.
- Engage with tourism business owners to identify the viability of developing “on-premises” workforce housing options.

4 Enhance marketing and messaging

The Deserts region of California can sometimes be viewed as being “too hot” during the summer months, leading to a decrease in tourism outside of the fall, winter and spring seasons. However, the Deserts region can be enjoyed throughout the year. An opportunity exists to capitalize on and expand tourism offerings during the off-season through enhanced marketing and messaging.

Currently, marketing and messaging from the region is often geared toward peak season and major event periods. Outside of select events like Splash House, there is a need for a more comprehensive and strategic approach to marketing the Deserts as a year-round destination from all tourism stakeholders.

Furthermore, certain attractions, particularly the national parks and other outdoor recreational areas, may experience overtourism during peak periods. Sustainable marketing practices are crucial in addressing this issue. Campaigns should promote lesser-known attractions and alternative experiences within the Deserts, helping to distribute visitor traffic more evenly and reduce the pressure on popular sites. Highlighting responsible tourism practices and educating visitors on how to enjoy the region sustainably can also contribute to preserving its natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Key Partners

Visit Greater Palm Springs, National Park Service, Indigenous tribal nations

Strategies

- Develop strategies based upon the location and time of year to promote certain destinations and excursions.
 - For example, create a marketing campaign centered around visiting Death Valley during the less busy winter months, communicating less traffic and milder temperatures in the park.
- Run promotions during unfavorable weather in nearby major markets, such as Los Angeles.
 - Encourage visitation to the Deserts for sunshine during “June gloom” periods in Los Angeles, typically a period of lower occupancy for the Deserts.
- Run campaigns and employ incentives to attract business travel and group conventions to the Coachella Valley, particularly during off-season and midweek periods by promoting robust and diverse hotel offerings and numerous attractions for team building and leisure.
- Identify target markets/demographics that are interested in lesser-known “off the beaten path,” “unique,” or “rough around the edges” attractions (e.g., the Integratron, Salvation Mountain)
 - The [Visit 29 Palms’ 2024-2025 Tourism Marketing Plan](#) details several unique target audiences/demographics, such as national park lovers or creative retreat-seekers.
- Support the Visit Native California campaign by promoting itineraries and tours focused on Indigenous heritage and cultural attractions in the region.

5 Promote community engagement and balance

As indicated by Visit California’s Community Sentiment Study, residents, particularly in the Coachella Valley, are keenly aware of the economic benefits that tourism brings to the community, with 66% of respondents stating that tourism generates local business opportunities, and are generally supportive of the industry. Approximately 73% of respondents feel that tourism can help boost the community’s image. The positive outlook highlights the potential for similar community appreciation in other areas of the Deserts.

The objective is to effectively communicate the overall benefits of the tourism economy to local communities, especially in areas outside the Coachella Valley. By fostering open lines of communication and actively engaging with residents, the tourism community can better understand current sentiments and work together to create destinations mutually beneficial to both residents and visitors. The approach should enhance the quality of life for all community members while supporting a thriving tourism industry.

Key Partners

DMOs

Strategies

- Obtain and analyze further Visit California resident sentiment survey data, as available for the High Desert area, identifying key themes and the overall sentiment toward tourism as compared to the remainder of the Deserts region.
- If no data is available, consider organizing a resident sentiment survey, garnering responses from across the different cities and counties in the High Desert.



Indian Canyons

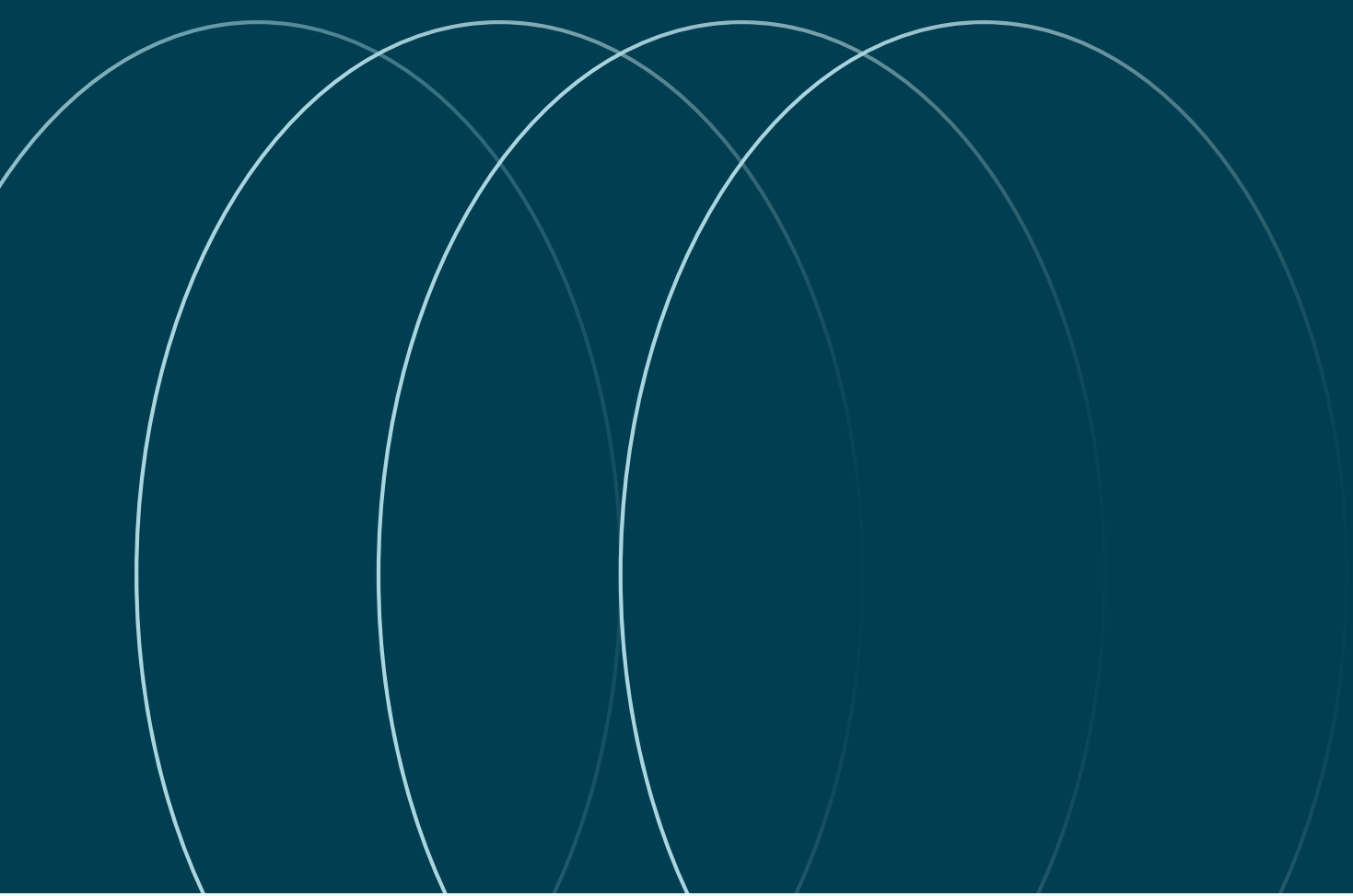
Conclusion

The development of the Deserts regional opportunities represents a significant milestone in the collaborative effort to enhance and sustain the region's tourism industry. This report, grounded in extensive stakeholder engagement, comprehensive research, and strategic assessment, aims to guide the region toward a more vibrant, sustainable and economically prosperous future.

The process of creating these opportunities has been marked by dedication, innovation and a shared vision among a diverse array of stakeholders. Input from DMOs, economic development agencies, arts councils, cultural institutions, attraction operators, transportation authorities, airport officials, hoteliers, restaurateurs, retail representatives, sustainability advocates, and others has shaped a plan that is both ambitious and actionable.

The key priorities identified — tourism product development, tourism-related transportation infrastructure, workforce development, enhanced marketing and messaging, and local community engagement — form the foundation of the strategy. Each key priority is supported by actionable opportunities and strategies, ensuring that the plan is not just aspirational, but also practical.

While the journey ahead may present challenges, it also offers substantial opportunities for growth, innovation and positive change. By staying true to the region's vision and values, the Deserts can exceed expectations and set a standard for sustainable tourism development. The project team expresses heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed their time, insights and enthusiasm to this initiative. Your involvement has been crucial in developing strategies that truly reflect the needs and aspirations of the Deserts region.



Appendix

Regional advisory committee members

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the entire Visit California team, the dedicated members of the regional advisory committee, as well as the stakeholders and partners across the community who actively participated in the regional strategic tourism Planning process for the Deserts. Without their unwavering support and commitment, this plan would not have been possible. Thank you all for your contributions.

Name	Organization
Kate Anderson	Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Joseph Tormey	CSU San Bernardino
Nichole Andler	Death Valley National Park
Ellyse Deldin	Death Valley National Park
Abby Wines	Death Valley National Park
Kimberly Renee	Desert Adventures / Red Jeep Tours
Amber Laird	Joshua Tree National Park
Kendall Neisess	Joshua Tree National Park
Jane Rodgers	Joshua Tree National Park
Kevin Turner	Joshua Tree National Park
Jessika Pollard	Lift to Rise
Heather Vaikona	Lift to Rise
Greg Purdy	Palm Springs Aerial Tramway
Kari Crutcher	Ridgecrest Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
Ken Chavez	Sunnylands Center and Gardens
Lauren Bruggemans	Visit Greater Palm Springs
Kimber Foster	Visit Greater Palm Springs
Davis Meyer	Visit Greater Palm Springs
Scott White	Visit Greater Palm Springs

Engaged destination marketing organizations and convention and visitors bureaus

We extend our sincere thanks to the destination marketing organizations and convention and visitors bureaus whose partnership and expertise were essential to the success of this project. Their insights into local tourism landscapes and their commitment to collaboration were invaluable.

Organization

Visit Greater Palm Springs

Ridgecrest Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

Visit 29 Palms



Joshua Tree National Park

Destination plans review database

A review of the following existing regional plans was conducted to establish context and identify key priorities and available resources for this project:

City/County	Name of Plan
Adelanto	City of Adelanto General Plan
Barstow	2015-2020 General Plan
Blythe	City of Blythe General Plan 2025
Brawley	City of Brawley Final General Plan 2030
Calexico	City of Calexico Climate Action Plan
California City	California’s 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan
Calipatria	City of Calipatria 2035 General Plan
Cathedral City	Cathedral City Climate Action Plan
Coachella	General Plan Update
Desert Hot Springs	City of Desert Hot Springs General Plan
El Centro	Final Vision 2050 Strategic Plan
Greater Palm Springs	2016 Destination Development Plan
Greater Palm Springs	2019 Destination Next
Greater Palm Springs	2023 Two Year Priority Areas of Focus
Imperial	City of Imperial General Plan
Indian Wells	General Plan 2040
Indio	City of Indio Strategic Plan 2022-2024
La Quinta	2035 La Quinta General Plan
Needles	City of Needles Land Use & Transportation Element
Palm Springs	Palm Springs Climate Action Plan
Rancho Mirage	General Plan 2017 Update
Ridgecrest	City of Ridgecrest General Plan
Riverside	Economic Prosperity Action Plan and Climate Action Plan
Twentynine Palms	General Plan Update
Westmorland	City of Westmorland 2021-2029 Housing Element
Yucca Valley	General Plan Update

Focus group attendees

We extend our sincere gratitude to all the focus group participants whose valuable insights and contributions were essential to the development of this plan. Your time and expertise are deeply appreciated.

Name	Organization
Mike Flannery	ACME House Company
John Bolton	Acrisure Arena
Kate Anderson	Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Kathy Dice	Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
Amanda Wasnock	AutoCamp Joshua Tree
Richard Lambakis	Azure Palm Springs
Evan Trubee	Big Wheel Tours
Matt Misko	BMW Performance Center West
Greg Miller	Bureau of Land Management, California Desert District Office
Jay Critcher	Cotino
JoAnn Truax	Craig Realty Group
Nichole Andler	Death Valley National Park
Ellyse Deldin	Death Valley National Park
Abby Wines	Death Valley National Park
Kimberly Renee	Desert Adventures
Steve Christian	Desert Champions/BNP Paribas Open
Michael Green	Desert Gay Tourism Guild
Steve Hankin	Desert International Horse Park
Miguel Nelson	Desert Island Rancho Mirage
Kevin Kalman	Desert Recreation District
Randall James Simpson	Desert Stewards
Ryan Szydowski	Desert Willow Golf Resort
Jeffrey Bernstein	Destination PSP
Willie Rhine	Eight4Nine Restaurant & Lounge
Karin Jaffe	Friends of the Desert Mountains
Mark Girton	Goldenvoice
Katie Brown	Grand Hyatt Indian Wells Resort & Villas
Michael Braun	Grit Development
Alex Casimiro	HALL Group
Sejal Bhakta	Hampton Inn & Suites Indio and Blythe
Aftab Dada	Hilton Palm Springs
Shannon Anderson	Hilton Palm Springs
Rolf Hoehn	Indian Wells Tennis Garden
Nusrat Mirza	J.W. Marriott Desert Springs
Kevin Turner	Joshua Tree National Park
Amber Laird	Joshua Tree National Park

Focus group attendees (cont.)

Name	Organization
Jane Rodgers	Joshua Tree National Park
Mark Bowling	Joshua Tree Rock Climbing School
Dave Kole	King of the Hammers
Everton Gordon	Kitchen in the Desert
Sarah Crosby	La Quinta Art Celebration
Jim Pedone	La Quinta Resort & Club
John Shay	Lulu California Bistro
Matthew Huss	Margaritaville Palm Springs
Lisa Vossler Smith	Modernism Week
Arielle Sewell	Mojave Air and Space Port
Sierra Willoughby	Mojave National Preserve
Bruno Santos	Mojave Resort, Colony Palms Hotel & Resorts
Clark Moorten	Moorten Botanical Garden
Maureen Gilmer	Moorten Botanical Gardens
Richard St. Jean	Morongo Casino & Resort
Mark Hudgens	Mount San Jacinto State Park
Steve Quartieri	Ocotillo Wells SVRA
Katy Abel	Old Town La Quinta
Wells Marvin	Old Town La Quinta
Greg Purdy	Palm Springs Aerial Tram
Greg Purdy	Palm Springs Aerial Tramway
Fred Bell	Palm Springs Air Museum
Heather Lewis	Palm Springs Air Museum
Adam Lerner	Palm Springs Art Museum
Rob Hampton	Palm Springs Convention Center
Lily Rodriguez	Palm Springs International Film Festival
Rhea Woodson	Palm Springs International Film Festival
Ron deHarte	Palm Springs Pride
Eugene Lee	PGA West
Matt Samson	PGA West
Scott Ammons	REI Adventures
Robert Ramirez	Renaissance Palm Springs Hotel
Alana Brennan	Robert Green Company
Cory Samaras Griffeth	Sand Storm Lacrosse Festival
Vanessa Sanchez	Shields Date Garden
Brenda Garcia	Simon Property Group
Timmy Townsend	South of the Border
Tyler McLean	Splash House
Ken Chavez	Sunnylands Center and Gardens
Liz Ostoich	Tac/Quila

Focus group attendees (cont.)

Name	Organization
Mariah Hanson	The Dinah
Allison Krupp	The Living Desert
Celeste Brackley	The Saguaro Palm Springs
Tony Ice	The Thermal Club
Tom Scaramellino	The Westin Rancho Mirage Golf Resort & Spa
Jeffrey Miller	Thompson Hotel Palm Springs
Alyssa Stinson	VRBO
John Kukreja	Xanterra, Death Valley National Park



Palm Springs

Stakeholder interviewees

We would like to express our sincere thanks to our stakeholders and interviewees for their collaborative spirit and willingness to share their knowledge. Their partnership was invaluable in achieving the goals of this project.

Name	Organization
Mike Flannery	ACME House Company
John Bolton	Acrisure Arena
Kate Anderson	Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Kathy Dice	Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
Amanda Wasnock	AutoCamp Joshua Tree
Richard Lambakis	Azure Palm Springs
Evan Trubee	Big Wheel Tours
Matt Misko	BMW Performance Center West
Greg Miller	Bureau of Land Management, California Desert District Office
Melissa Howlett	California GO-Biz
Matt Beurois	California Welcome Center, Yucca Valley
Gary Gardner	City of Desert Hot Springs
Linda Evans	City of La Quinta / Deserts Regional Medical Center
Rose Beardshear	City of Newberry Springs
Jay Critcher	Cotino
JoAnn Truax	Craig Realty Group
Joseph Tormey	CSU San Bernadino
Nichole Andler	Death Valley National Park
Abby Wines	Death Valley National Park
Ellyse Deldin	Death Valley National Park
Kimberly Renee	Desert Adventures
Steve Christian	Desert Champions/BNP Paribas Open
Michael Green	Desert Gay Tourism Guild
Steve Hankin	Desert International Horse Park
Miguel Nelson	Desert Island Rancho Mirage
Kevin Kalman	Desert Recreation District
Randall James Simpson	Desert Stewards
Ryan Szydlowski	Desert Willow Golf Resort
Jeffrey Bernstein	Destination PSP
Willie Rhine	Eight4Nine Restaurant & Lounge
Karin Jaffe	Friends of the Desert Mountains
Mark Girton	Goldenvoice
Katie Brown	Grand Hyatt Indian Wells Resort & Villas
Michael Braun	Grit Development
Alex Casimiro	HALL Group

Stakeholder interviewees (cont.)

Name	Organization
Sejal Bhakta	Hampton Inn & Suites Indio and Blythe
Aftab Dada	Hilton Palm Springs
Shannon Anderson	Hilton Palm Springs
Roelf Hoehn	Indian Wells Tennis Garden
Amber Laird	Joshua Tree National Park
Jane Rodgers	Joshua Tree National Park
Eric Linaris	Joshua Tree National Park
Kevin Turner	Joshua Tree National Park
Jacqueline Guevara	Joshua Tree National Park Association
Mark Bowling	Joshua Tree Rock Climbing School
Nusrat Mirza	JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort and Spa
Dave Kole	King of the Hammers
Everton Gordon	Kitchen in the Desert
Sarah Crosby	La Quinta Art Celebration
Jim Pedone	La Quinta Resort & Club
Heather Vaikona	Lift to Rise
Allison Krupp	Living Desert Museum
Rigel Bitterman	Lucky Find Hospitality
John Shay	Lulu California Bistro
Matthew Huss	Margaritaville Palm Springs
Lisa Vossler Smith	Modernism Week
Arielle Sewell	Mojave Air and Space Port
Sierra Willoughby	Mojave National Preserve
Bruno Santos	Mojave Resort, Colony Palms Hotel & Resorts
Clark Moorten	Moorten Botanical Garden
Maureen Gilmer	Moorten Botanical Gardens
Richard St. Jean	Morongo Casino & Resort
Mark Hudgens	Mount San Jacinto State Park
Steve Quartieri	Ocotillo Wells SVRA
Troy Jones	Old Ranch Inn
Jason Ball	Old Ranch Inn
Wells Marvin	Old Town La Quinta
Katy Abel	Old Town La Quinta
Greg Purdy	Palm Springs Aerial Tram
Fred Bell	Palm Springs Air Museum
Heather Lewis	Palm Springs Air Museum
Adam Lerner	Palm Springs Art Museum
Rob Hampton	Palm Springs Convention Center

Stakeholder interviewees (cont.)

Name	Organization
Lily Rodriguez	Palm Springs International Film Festival
Rhea Woodson	Palm Springs International Film Festival
Ron deHarte	Palm Springs Pride
Eugene Lee	PGA West
Matt Samson	PGA West
Scott Ammons	REI Experiences
Robert Ramirez	Renaissance Palm Springs
Kari Crutcher	Ridgecrest Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
Alana Brennan	Robert Green Company
Cory Samaras Griffeth	Sand Storm Lacrosse Festival
Vanessa Sanchez	Shields Date Garden
Susan Sorrells	Shoshone Village
Brenda Garcia	Simon Property Group
Timmy Townsend	South of the Border
Tyler McLean	Splash House
Ken Chavez	Sunnylands Center and Gardens
Eric Ornelas	Sunnylands Center and Gardens
Liz Ostoich	Tac/Quila
Mariah Hanson	The Dinah
Allison Krupp	The Living Desert
Celeste Brackley	The Saguaro Palm Springs
Tony Ice	The Thermal Club
Tom Scaramellino	The Westin Rancho Mirage Golf Resort & Spa
Jeffrey Miller	Thompson Palm Springs
Breanne Dusastre	Visit 29 Palms
Davis Meyer	Visit Greater Palm Springs
Scott White	Visit Greater Palm Springs
Kimber Foster	Visit Greater Palm Springs
Alyssa Stinson	VRBO
John Kukreja	Xanterra, Death Valley National Park

Visited points of interest

The following points of interest were visited to gather firsthand information and context for this project:

Point of Interest	Location	Point of Interest	Location
Ace Hotel & Swim Club	Palm Springs	Joshua Tree Coffee Company	Joshua Tree
Acme 5 Lifestyle	Yucca Valley	Joshua Tree Saloon	Joshua Tree
"Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla	Cabazon	Joshua Tree Visitor Center	Joshua Tree
Indians Headquarters"	Palm Springs	JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort	Palm Desert
Agua Caliente Cultural Museum	Palm Springs	Keys View, Joshua Tree National Park	Twentynine Palms
Agua Caliente Resort Casino Spa	Rancho Mirage	Kitchen in the Desert	Twentynine Palms
All Roads Desert Market	Yucca Valley	La Quinta Resort & Club	La Quinta
ARRIVE Palm Springs	Palm Springs	Mahogany Flats Campground, Death Valley National Park	Death Valley
AutoCamp Joshua Tree	Joshua Tree	Morongo Casino Resort & Spa	Cabazon
Bar Cecil	Palm Springs	Mount San Jacinto State Park	Palm Springs
Barker Dam, Joshua Tree National Park	Twentynine Palms	Old Ranch Inn	Palm Springs
Billy Reed's Palm Springs	Palm Springs	Painted Canyon & Ladder Canyon Trail	Mecca
Bootlegger Tiki Bar	Palm Springs	Palm Springs Aerial Tramway	Palm Springs
Cabazon Dinosaurs	Cabazon	Palm Springs Art Museum	Palm Springs
Cabazon Outlets	Cabazon	Palm Springs International Airport	Palm Springs
Cactus to Clouds Trailhead	Palm Springs	Palm Springs Windmill Tours	Palm Springs
Café La Jefa	Palm Springs	Panamint Springs Resort	Darwin
"Cholla Cactus Garden, Joshua Tree National Park"	Twentynine Palms	Pappy & Harriet's	Pioneertown
Coachella Valley Preserve	Thousand Palms	PGA West	La Quinta
Cottonwood Visitor Center, Joshua Tree National Park	Twentynine Palms	Pioneer Crossing Antiques	Yucca Valley
Desert Hills Premium Outlets	Cabazon	Rimrock Ranch	Pioneertown
Desert Regional Medical Center	Palm Springs	Ryan Mountain, Joshua Tree National Park	Twentynine Palms
Disney Cotino development site	Rancho Mirage	S Palm Canyon Drive Shopping District	Palm Springs
Downtown Mojave/Route 14	Mojave	Sandfish Sushi & Whiskey	Palm Springs
Downtown Palm Desert	Palm Desert	Shields Date Garden	Indio
Downtown Ridgecrest/Ridgecrest Blvd	Ridgecrest	Skull Rock, Joshua Tree National Park	Twentynine Palms
El Paseo Shopping District	Palm Desert	Sunnylands Center and Gardens	Rancho Mirage
Ernest Coffee	Palm Springs	Telescope Peak, Death Valley National Park	Death Valley
Farm restaurant	Palm Springs	Thousand Palms Oasis Preserve	Thousand Palms
Father Crowley Overlook	Darwin	Tommy Bahama Miramonte Resort & Spa	Indian Wells
Forever Marilyn	Palm Springs	Triada Palm Springs, Autograph Collection	Palm Springs
Hidden Valley Nature Trail, Joshua Tree National Park	Twentynine Palms	Visit Greater Palm Springs	Rancho Mirage
Hyatt Regency Indian Wells	Indian Wells	"Wildrose Campground, Death Valley National Park"	Death Valley
Indian Wells Tennis Garden	Indian Wells	"Wildrose Charcoal Kilns, Death Valley National Park"	Death Valley

Global destinations' readiness for sustainable tourism

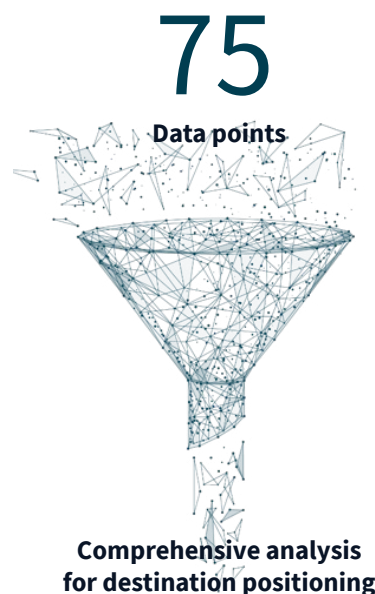
- Tourism readiness index is the product of a partnership between JLL and the World Travel & Tourism Council to assess global cities' tourism readiness.
- While readiness will depend on the ambitions and goals of every city, WTTC & JLL define tourism readiness as a strategic and all-inclusive approach that proactively addresses and implements factors and policies relating to scale, concentration, leisure and business offerings, environmental and urban readiness, safety and security, as well as the prioritization of tourism.
- Indeed, no two destinations are the same and, as such, the challenges they will face, and the opportunities to unlock their tourism potential, will differ.
- However, commonalities can be identified to provide a framework through which cities can assess their context and plan for the future.

Tourism readiness index

- Comprehensive analysis addresses what makes a destination ready for sustainable Travel & Tourism.
- Assess current positioning and ability to manage growth
- Indicators | 75 data points across all facets of the tourism economy
- Outcomes | eight categories and five destination typologies



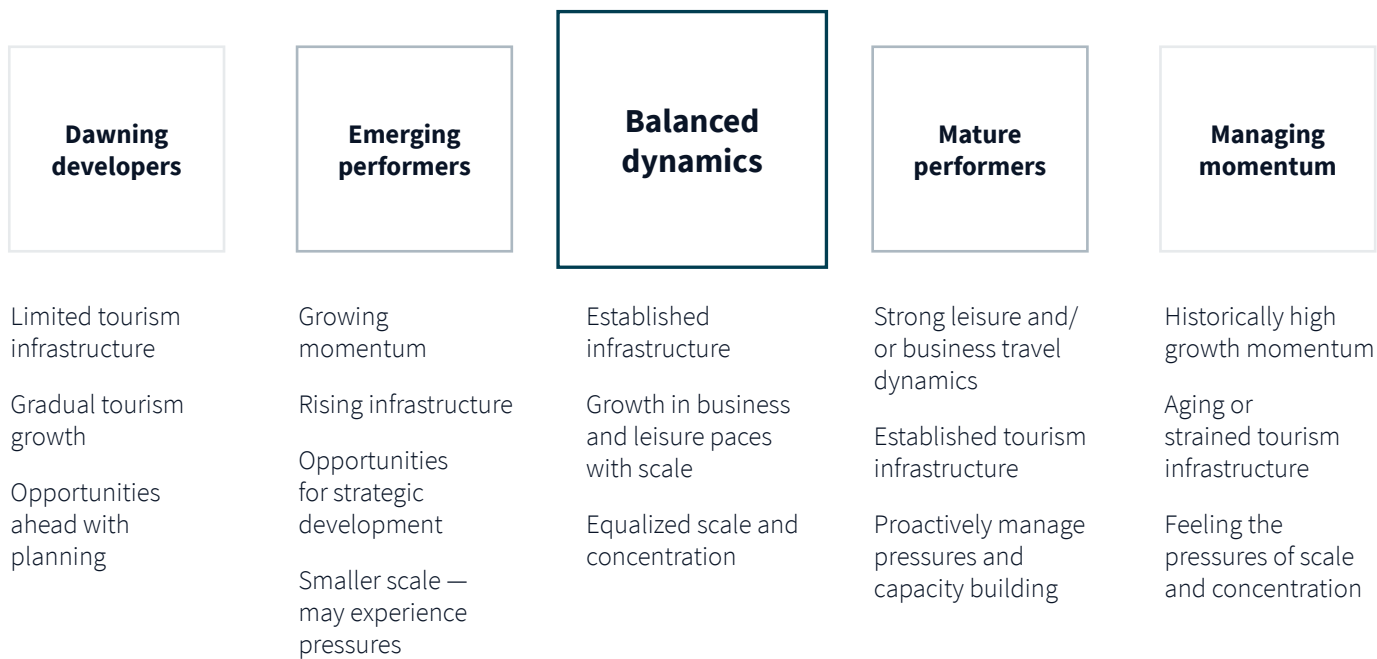
Globally recognized tool validated by over 100 domestic and international destinations as well as the World Travel & Tourism Council



Tourism readiness index categories

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Scale | 5. Concentration |
| 2. Leisure | 6. Business |
| 3. Environmental readiness | 7. Urban readiness |
| 4. Safety and security | 8. Policy prioritization |

Levels of readiness | Destination typologies



Weights by category



The Deserts results

Outcome by pillar

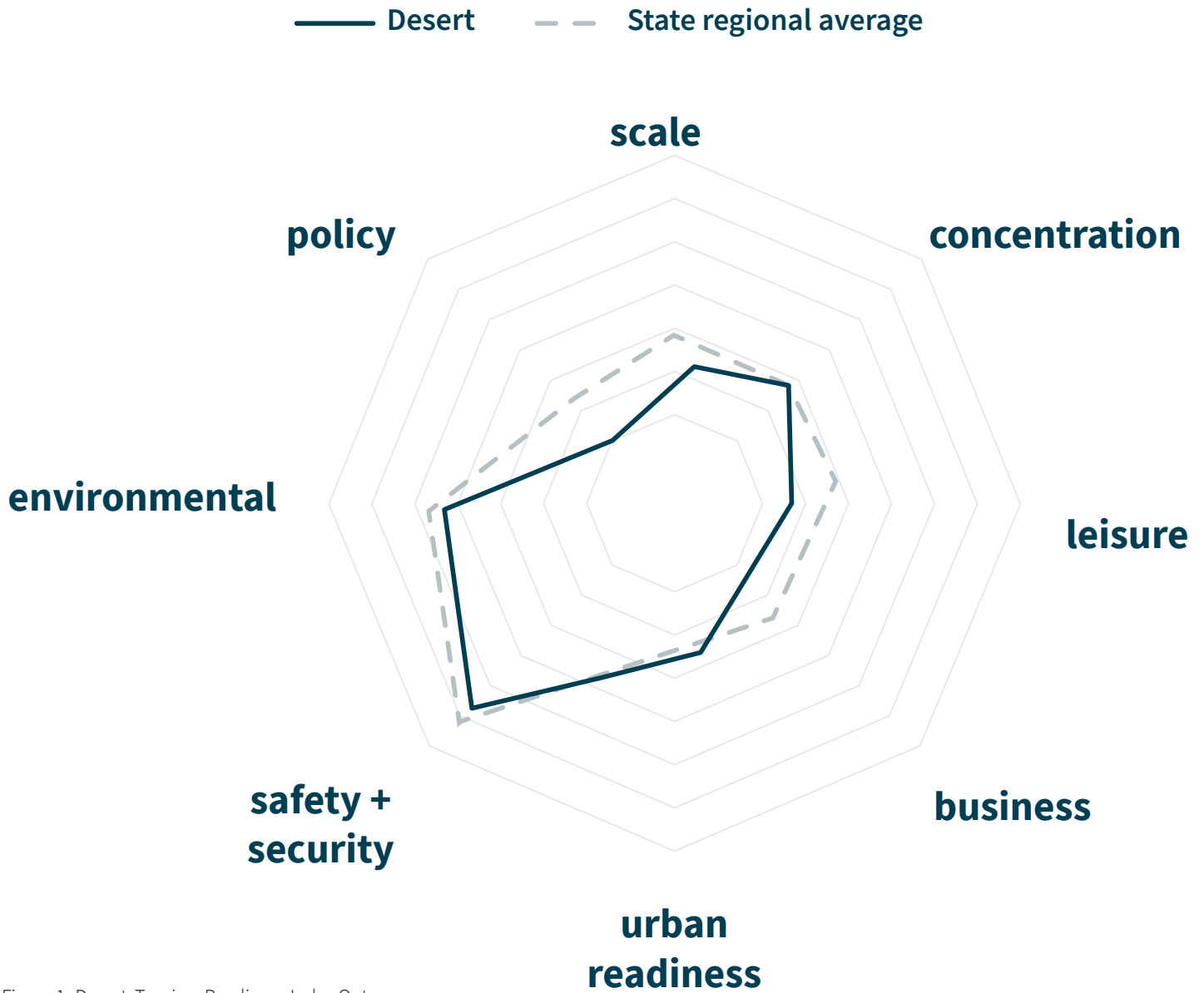


Figure 1- DesertsTourism Readiness Index Outcome

Demand driver scorecard

Process — Multi-step assessment of destination assets



Utilize visitor traffic and flow data to assess current demand



Place individual assets on scale based on eight criteria to score



Rate anything that is a 6-7 or greater as the region's attractors



Utilize the outcome to identify future competitive positioning



Recommend new investment or enhancement to grow assets on the scale

Score card elements

Item	Definition	Max Point Value
One of a kind	Captivating content or collections that drives interest and appeal. Proximity of alternative similar offerings can be a factor in overall uniqueness	25
Iconic scale	Dramatic visual prompting a curiosity powerful enough to inspire a visit (Instagram worthy — trying to capture a moment)	20
Engaging visitor experience	Interaction between the guest and the attraction	15
Current visitor demand	Level of visitor traffic, reviews, etc., to the asset currently	15
Event opportunities	Programming temporal, catalytic events	10
Venue capabilities	Easily transformed and adapted to host various functions	5
Identified target audience(s)	Multiple target audience and visitor types can be targeted based on overall connectivity	5
Future unique development	Upcoming additions or plan initiatives that elevate potential	5

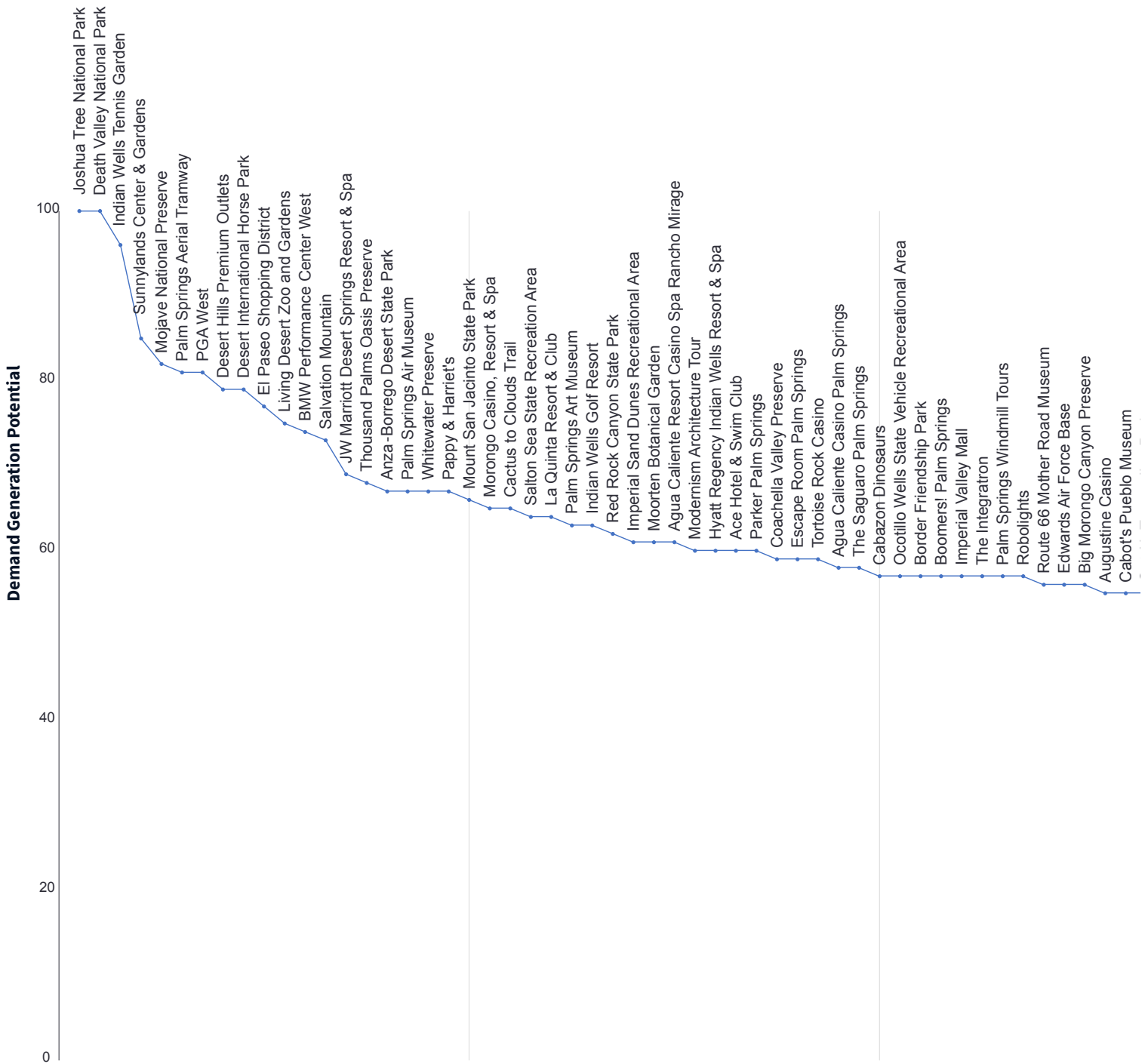
Score Card: Eiffel Tower sample scoring

Item	Definition	Score	Max Point Value
One of a kind	Captivating content or collections that drives interest and appeal. Proximity of alternative similar offerings can be a factor in overall uniqueness	25	25
Iconic scale	Dramatic visual prompting a curiosity powerful enough to inspire a visit (Instagram worthy — trying to capture a moment)	20	20
Engaging visitor experience	Interaction between the guest and the attraction	15	15
Current visitor demand	Level of visitor traffic, reviews, etc., to the asset currently	15	15
Event opportunities	Programming temporal, catalytic events	10	10
Venue capabilities	Easily transformed and adapted to host various functions	5	5
Identified target audience(s)	Multiple target audience and visitor types can be targeted based on overall connectivity	5	5
Future unique development	Upcoming additions or plan initiatives that elevate potential	5	5

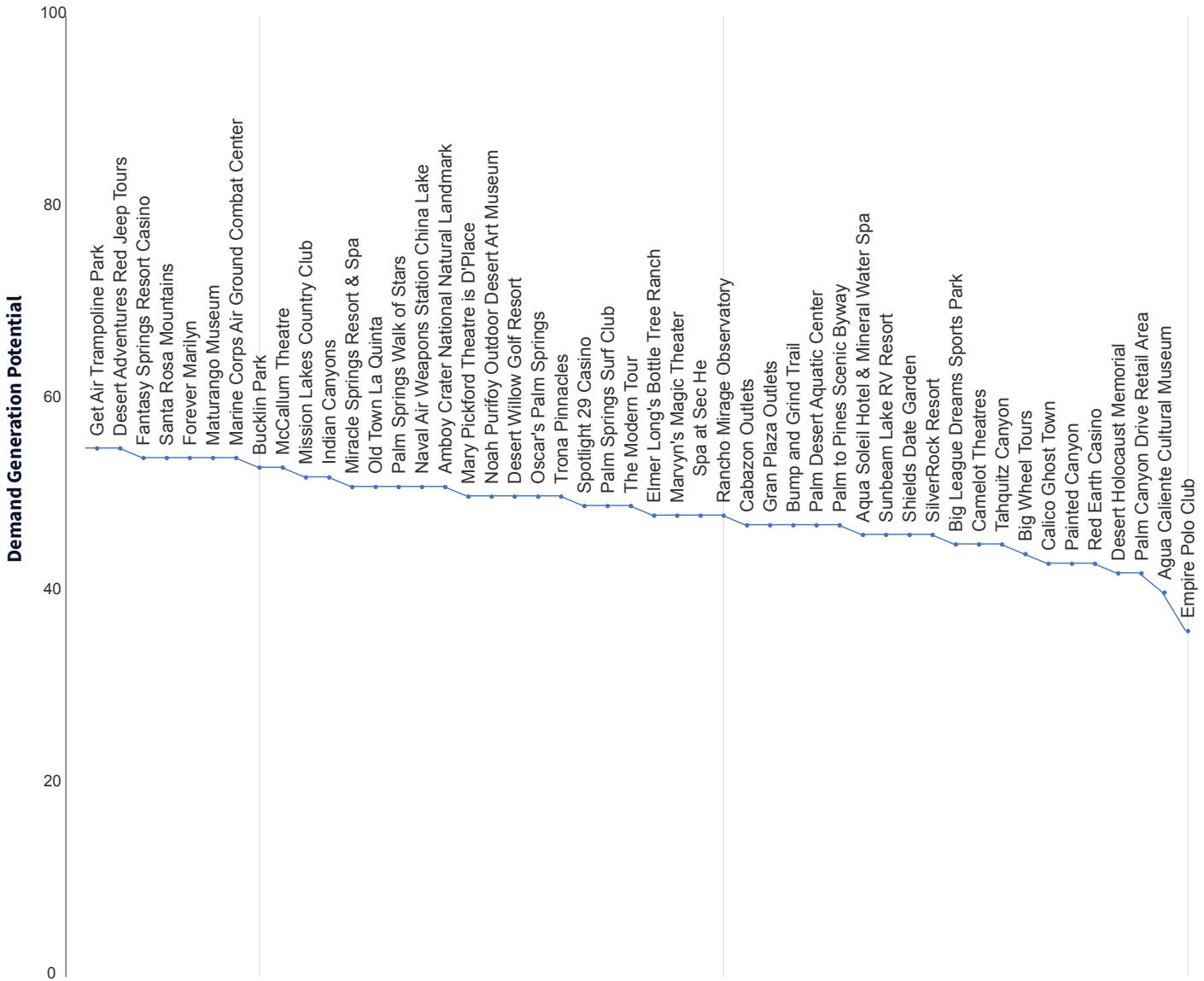


Yucca Valley

Desert Region demand drivers



Desert Region demand drivers



Event matrix

Purpose — Use criteria that drives event return to understand the current landscape of successful events and position the region to support up and coming events.



Identify key events serviced by the region



Rate events on matrix using 11 criteria



Identify those events that can grow in specific areas through matrix outcomes



Work with organizers on tactics for implementation

Program components

- Tourism promotion — destination impact
- Benefit to the destination brand
- Innovation — uniqueness
- Evidence of partnerships
- Organizational structure and management capability
- Economic impact (direct spending)
- Suitable target market(s)
- Comprehensive Marketing Plan/Approach
- Overnight stays (room nights)
- Scale of project — future potential
- Time of year — need periods

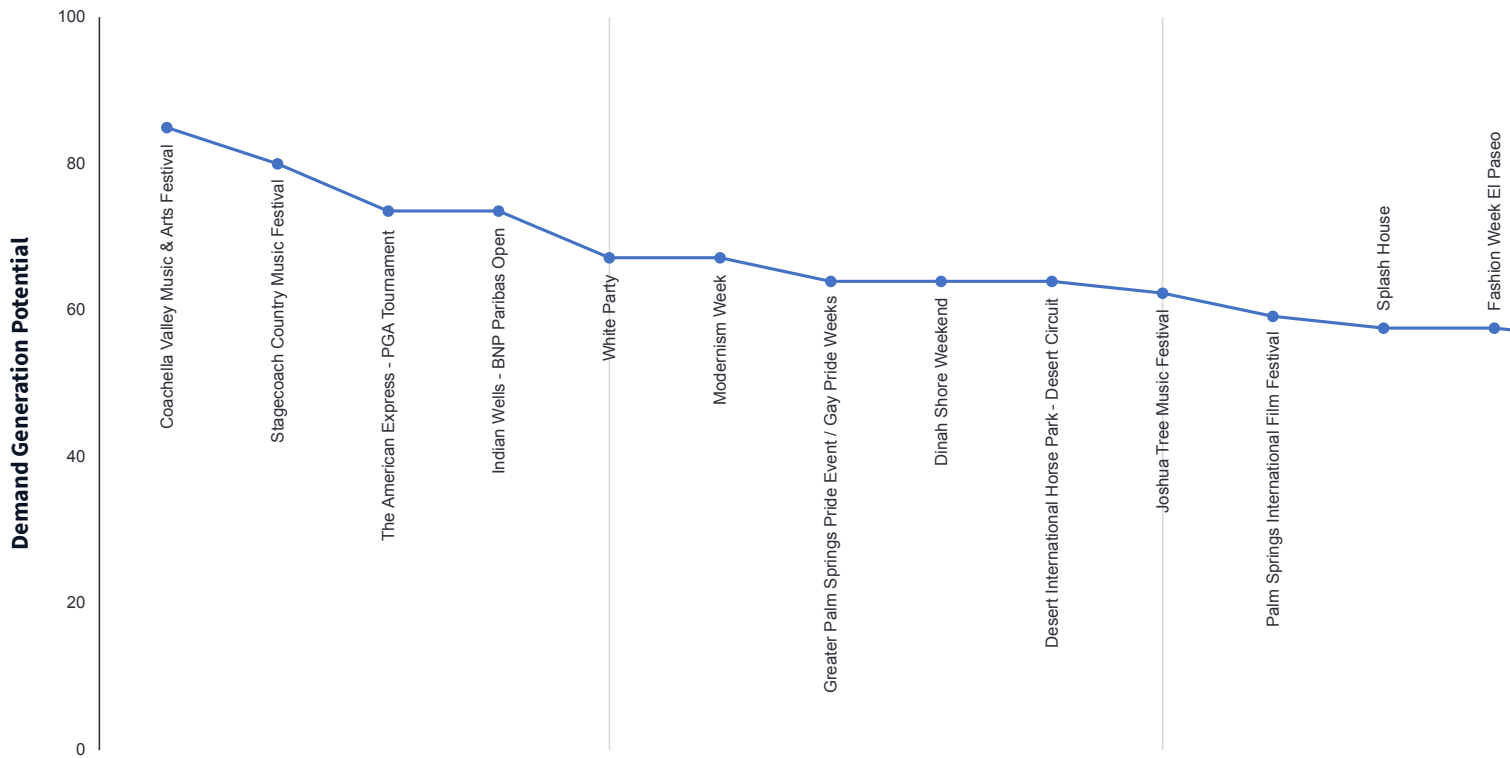


Arrive Hotel

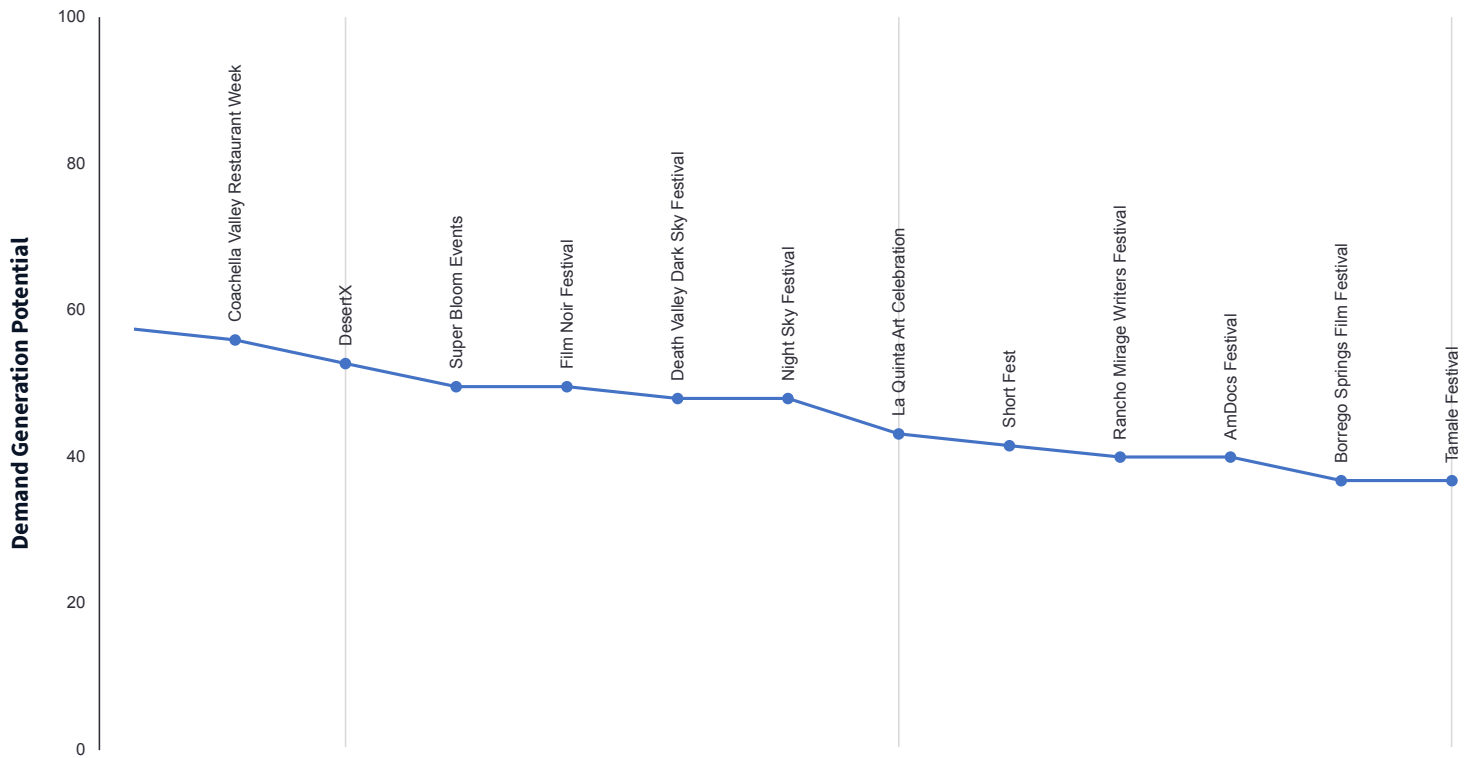
Program components

	Fail	Poor	Average	Above Average	Excellent	Total Points Awarded
Program Components						10
1. Tourism promotion — destination impact						10
2. Benefit to the destination brand						10
3. Innovation — uniqueness						10
4. Evidence of partnerships						10
5. Organizational structure and management capability						10
6. Economic impact (direct spending)						10
7. Suitable target market(s)						10
8. Comprehensive marketing plan/approach						10
9. Overnight stays (room nights)						10
10. Scale of project — future potential						10
Bonus — need periods/ time of the year						
Total Maximum possible points = 100						100


Desert Region Leisure Events



Desert Region Leisure Events





 **JLL** SEE A BRIGHTER WAY