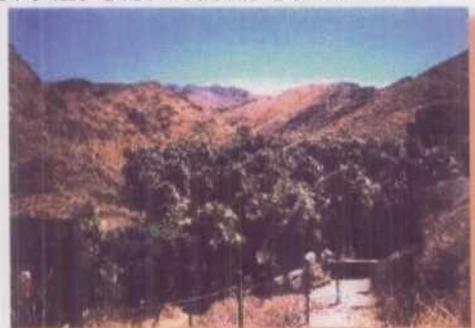


## *The Agua Caliente band of Cahuillas*

**C**enturies ago, ancestors of the **Agua Caliente Cahuilla** (pronounced Kaw-we-ah) **Indians** settled in the Palm Springs area and developed extensive and complex communities in Palm, Murray, Andreas, Tahquitz and Chino Canyons. Abundant water and hundreds of plants (Including Palm trees) and animals found throughout the area ensured stable living conditions. Crops of melons, squash, beans and corn were grown, animals were hunted, and plants and seeds were gathered for food, medicines, basketweaving etc. Many traces of these communities exist in the canyons today, including rock art, house pits and foundations, irrigation ditches, dams, reservoirs, trails, and food processing areas.

The Agua Caliente are members of a large Linguistic and cultural family of Native Americans known to ethnographers as: "Uto-Aztecan Stock". The family of "Shoshonean" stock includes other nearby Aboriginal neighbors such as: The Moapa Paiutes of Southern Nevada, the Chemehuevi along the Colorado River, the Tohono O'otam (Papago) along the Southern Part of Arizona and Northern Mexico and the Pima all the way down to Chihuahua Mexico as well as many other groups. All of the Groups mentioned along with the Agua Caliente Cahuilla have been known to use the *Washingtonia filifera* or Desert Fan Palm; a native palm tree to the areas where these groups have traditionally lived for many centuries. Uses of these Palms in each of the mentioned groups is very similar or identical and includes basketry, food in the form of a mush type gravy and utensils and shelters. Most of the groups have at least some limited oral traditional mention of the Palm which has been handed down through the many generations. The agua Caliente bands have perhaps the most detailed oral traditions surrounding this native plant.

The Agua Caliente Indians were industrious and creative with a reputation for independence, integrity and peace, They believed this productive land of their ancestors would always be theirs, but in 1876 the U.S. Federal Government deeded in trust, to the Agua Caliente people, 32,000 acres to be used as their homeland. At the same time they gave to the So. California Railroad, on either side of the railroad, ten miles of the odd sections of land to induce them to build the railroad. Of the reservation's 32,000 acres, some 6,700 lie within the Palm Springs city limits. The remaining even sections fan out across the desert and mountains in a checkerboard pattern.



Overlooking Palm Canyon from the Trading Post

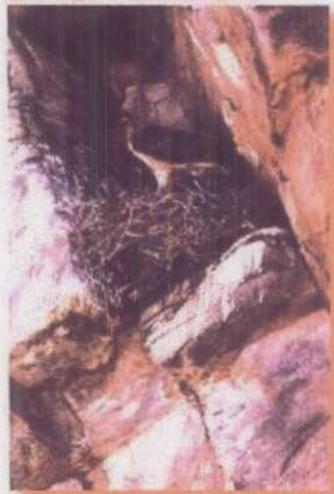
Though Palm Springs and the surrounding area was described as a recreational oasis as early as the 1890's, the historical significance of the three southern canyons, as well as Tahquitz Canyon, is noted by their listing on the National

Register of Historic Places, Palm and Andreas Canyons have the most and second most palm trees in the world, with Murray Canyon listed as fourth.

## Palm Canyon

Fifteen miles long, Palm Canyon is one of the great beauty spots in Western North America. Its indigenous flora and fauna, which the Cahuilla peoples so expertly used, and its abundant *Washingtonia filifera* (palm trees), are breathtaking contrasts to the stark, rocky gorges and barren desert lands beyond. A moderately graded, paved foot path winds down into the canyon for picnicking near the stream, meditating, exploring, hiking or horseback riding. While in Palm Canyon, visit the Trading Post for hiking maps, refreshments, Indian art and artifacts, books, jewelry, pottery, baskets, weavings and conversational cultural lore.

Red-tail Hawk  
Nesting in Indian Canyons



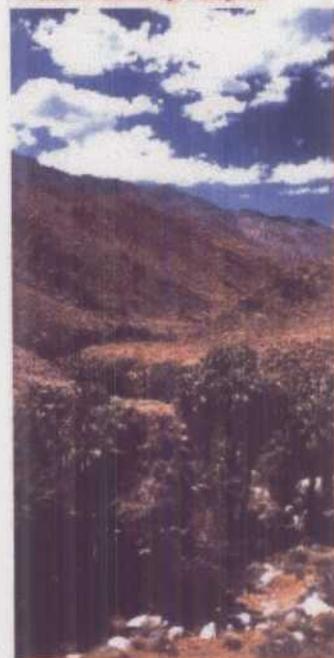
## Tahquitz Canyon

Tahquitz Canyon, just west of the City of Palm Springs, is noted for its magnificent waterfalls and pools. Evidence suggests it supported a large population of Cahuilla Indians. Abundant wildlife and plant life are present throughout. Planning is underway to establish the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum here in the near future. **Note:** Entrance to this canyon is not permitted at this time. **Trespassers** will be cited.

## Murray Canyon

Murray Canyon is an easy hike south from Andreas Canyon. Good foot and equestrian trails lead to beautiful recreational spots among the many palm trees. Peninsula Big Horn Sheep (an endangered species), wild ponies and other wild animals still roam the high ground above the canyon and can be seen by the lucky visitor. Being less visited, Murray Canyon has its own secluded beauty; and at least one known endangered species of bird, the Least Bells Vireo, is known to nest here.

View of Murray Canyon



## Andreas Canyon

The contrasting greens of magnificent fan palms and more than 150 species of plants within a half-mile radius beckon the desert-weary traveler to this lush oasis. A favorite scenic foot trail leads through the canyon, passing groves of stately skirted palms, unusual rock formations (some containing Cahuilla Rock Art) and the perennial Andreas Creek, where one can still see the bedrock mortars and metates used

centuries ago for preparing food. This tranquil setting is excellent for photography, bird-watching or a picnic at one of the tables along the trail.

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*The Agua Caliente people enjoyed a rich and varied ceremonial life, with the sacred and medically beneficial hot springs often serving as a focal point for these activities. This is similar to the Moapa bands of Paiutes in Southern Nevada who also held the Warm Springs as sacred in the old tradition.* The site of the present day Palm Springs Spa Hotel and Mineral Springs is located on a Cahuilla Indian hot spring. There was first a rough-planked structure in this location, followed years later by a building containing private bathing cubicles. Today's spa and hotel is noted throughout the world.

*The canyons and associated resources noted above are especially sacred to the Indians today and are historically important to scientists and lovers of nature.* Please enjoy the free gifts of equanimity and serenity that you may take with you. Appreciate and respect.

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Photos: Cover "View of Andreas Canyon"— Rand Larson; Hawk & Murray Canyon -- George Service; Palm & Andreas Canyons - F/MC

**AGUA CALIENTE BAND**  
**of**  
**CAHUILLA INDIANS**  
Tribal Council Office  
619-325-5673

**[Please click here to go back to Moapa Palms Introductory Page.](#)**