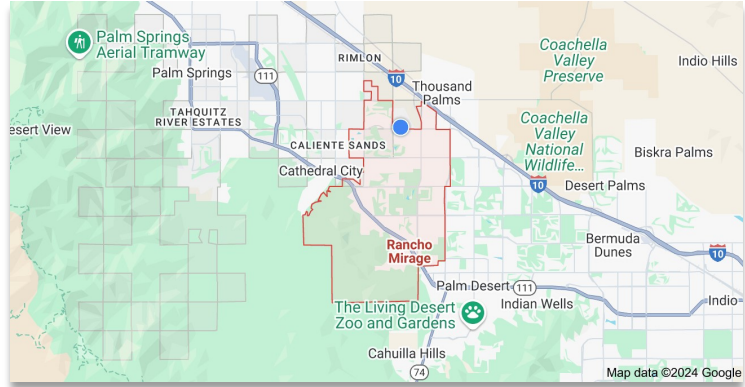


The History of the Coachella Valley and its Cities: Rancho Mirage by Arthur Shapiro

Drum Roll, please! We come to our hometown, the town we live in. We started our journey with Coachella and have been working our way northwest through the valley. Now it's our turn.



Let's start with some basic information about our beloved city. Of the nine cities in the valley, Rancho Mirage is next to the smallest population (only Indian Wells is smaller), with roughly 17,000 people as of the 2020 census.

While the city may be small in population, it more than makes up for it in the characteristics of its residents. The average household income is \$138,993, almost half have a college degree, and home values are \$825,738. The average age is just about 65.

In the 1930s, two real estate developers bought the desert area off Highway 111 to create El Rancho Mirage. Frank Morgan, the Wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), built his home in 1937, which still stands today. The city was incorporated in 1973.

The advent of country clubs turned the desert into an oasis in the early 1950s as the clubs became social powerhouses.

These included Hollywood stars, political leaders, sports celebrities, and successful businesspeople. Are you ready for the glitterati list?

Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, the Marx Brothers, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Phil Harris and Alice Faye, Ralph Kiner, Ben Hogan, Jimmy Hines, Leonard Firestone, Robert McCulloch, and publisher Walter Annenberg, to name a few. In addition, the city earned its nickname "Playground of Presidents" thanks to US presidents — Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, Reagan, Ford, and Obama. Much was due to a rich history of presidents visiting the historic Annenberg Estate at Sunnylands.

[Preservation Rancho Mirage](#), which covers the history of our city, describes it as having three eras:

1924-1950 — *Early Agriculture and Residential*. The residential activity started growing in 1956, led by Art Linkletter and other entrepreneurs.

1951-1973 — *Country Club Era*. Think Hollywood celebrities and mid-century modern.
1973-Present — *City Era*. The growth and expansion of Eisenhower Medical Center and the advent of gated communities.

I want to add a fourth era — 2018, the arrival of Del Webb Rancho Mirage, which added the best 55+ community and lifestyle programs in the valley.