

DESERT LIVING MAGAZINE

A New Generation of Sun Worshipers

By James M. Williams

Anciently man worshiped the sun. The sun's rays sustained life providing warmth, food and energy. Today there is a new generation of sun worshipers and chances are you're one of them, or soon will be. Whether you are a weekend warrior, a "snowbird," retired and enjoying the golden years or just in need of a rejuvenating vacation, desert living may be the answer.

The desert, once a barren desolate wasteland has blossomed into an oasis filled with recreation (golfing, walking, hiking, biking, swimming, climbing, etc), spas, theater, unique dining experiences, art and architecture, an awareness of nature and the environment, and in some areas...even shopping, not to mention a healthier lifestyle. There is something for everyone.

The desert is one of the few places on earth where there are so many extremes, yet everything remains in a careful balance. With extremes and balance comes a greater appreciation. Age, experience and wisdom are also contributing factors to the way we see and appreciate our surroundings.

Some of the best examples of modern day architecture can also be found in the desert. One might ask why? Is it because noted architects like Frank Lloyd Wright have historically chosen to spend time in the desert regions, open offices in the desert or have even chosen to retire in the desert? Possibly, but I think it is more a function of the desert community itself. Many people in their golden years choose to live in desert communities because of the mild climate as well as the other benefits previously mentioned. Many have made their mark and now have the funds to build or to purchase something designed with their lifestyle in mind instead of the typical production housing that is sometimes forced on the masses. Several have been exposed to art and architecture and have gained an appreciation for both. As people learn to appreciate modern architecture (the architecture of our time) they are willing to pay more for it. It is the difference between a suit off the rack and one that is hand tailored specifically to fit you. Nothing can compare with living in a home that has been designed around your lifestyle, personality and interests.

Homes specifically designed for the desert typically take into account the terrain, the climate, natural materials, and are sensitive to the environment. They house art and are often times a work of art in and of themselves. The proper balance of these criteria requires a skilled and knowledgeable architect, builder, interior designer and landscape architect, working in unison.

Many desert homes are sustainable. A sustainable building is; resource efficient, socially responsible, safe and healthy, well maintained and operated.

Natural stone, concrete, metal, glass, and wood are the materials of choice. Other critical design elements include water and an abundance of natural light. Colors should be selected from the pallet of the surrounding landscape. When these components are organized with the proper mass, orientation, configuration, and purpose the final result should be a structure that provokes thought and permeates beauty, peace and serenity.

In the desert, home itself becomes an oasis from the surrounding world. The feeling of staying at a resort or spa can be experienced on a daily basis. This is desert living at its best!