



## SUNNYLANDS Historic Walk

This 60-minute, one-mile walk focuses on the history of Sunnylands, the Annenbergs and their guests, midcentury modern architecture, and design. Offered Wednesdays through Sundays.

**0:00**—Guests arrive at shuttle gate. Welcome them, indicate your awareness that they are part of Modernism Week, and invite them to follow you onto the estate where you will stop at a beautiful space to give them your introduction.

*Introduction, provide guidelines and rules, tell them what you are going to tell them*

- I am ---- and I will be leading your tour today. I am a student at ---- and am participating in a program that continues the Annenberg commitment to education while providing paid positions for tour guides. For the duration of the tour, I will be wearing a face mask and ask that you please keep your face coverings on. I will also be keeping a distance of at least six feet. Although I will be using a speaker, if you have any trouble hearing me, please feel free to ask me to speak up and/or repeat myself. Let's start our walk. I promise to be sensitive to the heat and stop at shady spots!
- This is a timed, guided tour, so please stay with me and follow our predetermined path. You will have many opportunities for taking photographs. Please silence your cell phones at this time so that we can all share this experience without outside interruptions.
- Bathrooms will be made available at the end of the tour, but if you need a break, please let me know. Also, there will be a moment to sit and rest, if needed, in the second half of our tour.

Stop 1:

*Before the tennis court—view of the historic house*

- I will be speaking about the Annenbergs, the many people who visited them here at Sunnylands, and the mission of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands to act as a high-level retreat center. I also hope you will learn something about midcentury modern architecture, the golf-course, landscape, and the design team who helped shape the experience of this special place. Here you have your first good look at the A. Quincy Jones designed iconic midcentury house.
- Please follow me to our next stop past the tennis court for another spectacular view of the estate. *[In passing, point out the administration campus with its emphasis on desert plants and a net-zero approach to landscape.]*

Stop 2:

*Between the tennis court and Nixon Magnolia*

*[Talk about Sunnylands and who the Annenbergs were]*

- Sunnylands was the winter home of Walter and Leonore Annenberg from 1966 until 2009. A 200-acre estate, the property was originally modeled after park settings usually seen on the East Coast. In the middle of this estate is the Sunnylands historic house,

where Walter and Leonore enjoyed the winter months, usually visiting after Thanksgiving and departing back to their home in Pennsylvania after Easter.

- Walter Annenberg was a highly successful businessman. He oversaw a communications empire. In 1940, he took over Triangle Publications, Inc. from his father and developed a thriving business that included *Seventeen* (the first popular magazine for young women), *TV Guide* (which had the largest circulation in America for two decades), and TV and radio stations. He served as the Ambassador to the Court of St. James's in London for President Richard Nixon from 1969 to 1974.
- Leonore Annenberg graduated from Stanford University with a Bachelor of Arts in history and political science in 1940. Known for her diplomatic skills, charm, and attention to detail, Leonore was an excellent hostess with an ability to bring people together. She served as Chief of Protocol for President Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1982.
- They were the most generous philanthropists of their generation—most noteworthy was the \$500 million challenge grant for K-12 education in 1993 or their \$50 million gift to the United Negro College Fund in 1990, which ultimately assisted in securing \$200 million in support. In 1991, the Annenbergs bequeathed their collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, valued at \$1 billion, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.
- At our next stop, I'll speak about the cultural landscape here at Sunnylands.

Stop 3:

*Nixon Magnolia and 360 degree view*

- At this point, we have a chance to see the breadth of the landscape that the Annenbergs developed. From 200 undeveloped desert acres, the Annenbergs created a parkland setting with more than 6,000 trees, 180 acres of turf, a winding drive from the public street to the house, and a nine-hole golf course. This property qualifies as a cultural landscape, one that reflects the design intent of A. Quincy Jones, Emmet Wemple, and horticulturist Rolla Wilhite in the mid-1960s. The golf course was designed by Dick Wilson.
- Over time, the original plantings were occasionally supplemented by new elements in the landscape. Planted close to the ninth hole on the golf course is a magnolia tree. This *Magnolia grandiflora* was a gift from President Nixon in 1972 to Walter Annenberg in thanks for his service as the Ambassador to the Court of St. James's. It was taken from a cutting of the magnolia tree at the White House, which was grown from a cutting of the magnolia tree that was at President Andrew Jackson's Tennessee estate, the Hermitage.
- This is a lovely spot to look all around yourself—just do a 360 degree turn here to see the golf course on the right, the mountains in the distance, the house ahead, and the lake to the left.
- Now we will walk to the entrance to the entry court. *[In passing, stop before turning to walk into entry court and point out the view of the Mexican column and the hedge line in front of them.]*

Stop 4:

*Mexican column, midcentury modern architecture/Mayan influence, historic plaque..*

*Stop near the hedge line because there is a bit of shade here and you can talk about the architecture from this point.*

- This location gives us a chance to talk about many aspects of midcentury modern architectural design and the unique Mayan influence here. One of the surprising aspects of this residence is that the architecture is modern in style. Sunnylands is one of the largest midcentury modern homes built in the 1960s. It follows the tradition of great estates, but its commission indicates the openness of the Annenbergs to the contemporary style of architecture—a progressive perspective among wealthy clients at the time.
- The architect for the project was A. Quincy Jones who had opened his architectural office in Los Angeles after World War II and entered into partnership with Fredrick Earl Emmons in 1951. He taught architectural design at the University of Southern California and was the Dean of their School of Architecture from 1975 to 1978. He is widely known for his more modest designs for Eichler homes in the Bay Area and in Southern California. Jones designed three small houses on the estate in addition to the main house that you see here.
- The double doors are set at an oblique angle at the entrance. This placement stands in contrast to the usual formal straight drive flanked by rows of trees that frame the entrance to rigidly symmetrical homes. The use of the open meandering drive, the circular courtyard, and the diagonal entrance all emphasized the underlying concept of informality.
- Note the cantilevered egg-crate coffered ceiling over the entrance. A. Quincy Jones used this element in many of his buildings, including the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California in 1976. Here it has the effect of hovering over the entrance and then it continues inside—bridging the outdoors and indoors. Modern architecture emphasizes flexibility of space, light, openness, the use of innovative materials, and new building techniques, as well as the integration of the indoors and outdoors.
- Two sides of this courtyard are enclosed by horizontal windowless walls faced with lava stone. The use of this stone also connects with Mayan building techniques and style. Surrounding plantings unite the space as an outdoor room. You will note the grapefruit trees that are planted in lava-rock containers.
- In the courtyard stands the 20-foot tall replica of the Mexican column, originally seen at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, designed by artists José and Tomás Chávez Morado. In 1968, this bronze column with river rock stones below was installed and reinforced the Mayan theme of the house—a theme suggested to Jones by the Annenbergs as being sympathetic to the landscape.
- The column serves as a direct representation of Mexico and is formed with carvings that illustrate the history of modern Mexico. The story reads chronologically from the bottom to the top. Both the east and west sides represent the coasts of Mexico where the primary events that shaped modern Mexico began. *[Walk to the front doors for*

*shade. Turn to look at the landscape from the front door. Look closely at the lava stone tiles.]*

- There is a plaque from the City of Rancho Mirage at the entrance noting Sunnylands as an historic site. In March 1990, President George H.W. Bush was scheduled for a weekend visit to Sunnylands when a crisis erupted. After tolerating a huge trade deficit with Japan, Congress was threatening to retaliate. To avoid a trade war, President Bush invited Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu to Rancho Mirage for an emergency meeting. The meeting was held at Morningside Country Club, and an official state dinner took place at Sunnylands. This would be one of the few times a state dinner was held outside the White House. The Annenbergs and their experienced staff had only three days' notice, but they pulled it off. Due to the meetings and the dinner, a trade war was averted, and the city of Rancho Mirage recognized Sunnylands as an historic estate.
- Please follow me to a quick walk to the flagpole.

#### Stop 5: (0:20)

- *Flagpole*
- *View of the house and mausoleum*
- *Olive trees*
- *Birds of Welcome*
- *Cactus garden*
- Whenever the Annenbergs were in residence, the white flag with an image of a sun emblem was flown. The use of an pre-Columbian design as an emblem to represent Sunnylands reflects the Mayan influence that the Annenbergs requested as part of the Sunnylands design. The sun emblem proved adaptable for other Sunnylands uses and became the identifying feature on stationary, golf cards, and related items during the Annenberg's lifetime and continues as the logo today.
- Imagine driving up from the original entrance on Frank Sinatra Drive and reaching this location in anticipation of arriving at the front door of the house. Think of all the political leaders (7 US presidents), British royalty (Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip), and the Hollywood celebrities (Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra) would followed this driveway to the house. *The layout of this landscape created a hide-and-reveal approach to the view of the house from the drive.*
- Straight ahead is a bronze and aluminum sculpture titled *Birds of Welcome* created by Canadian artist Art Price in 1971. The artist produced this cast for the Annenbergs after they saw the first cast at the Gander airport in Newfoundland. The *Birds of Welcome* was placed here to welcome guests. *[Walk to a spot under the shade of the olive trees.]*
- Dotted over the landscape are more than 680 olive trees. Walter loved olive trees and was inspired to introduce them onto the property after acquiring Van Gogh's painting, *Olive Trees*. The first trees were planted in the 1960s with others added later. They were intended to be ornamental and used to soften the wind-break tree lines on the estate. Historically, they were sprayed to prevent fruiting, as is done with most ornamental

olive trees. The Trust decided to allow the fruiting process and harvest the olives to produce a Sunnylands Olive Oil, available in our gift shop and online store.

- Let's continue our walk so that we can have a perspective of the cactus garden and the mausoleum.

#### Stop 6:

- From here, you can see the cactus garden that Walter loved. The birdhouse in the garden had a microphone that amplified the sounds of the birds and was funneled into Walter's dressing room. This way Walter could hear the birds in his dressing room when he was getting ready in the morning. This was the only place on the estate where desert plants appeared.
- To the south of us is a covered mausoleum. Going back to the late Roman Empire, prominent citizens built mausoleums on their country estates. This tradition was also evident in the 18th century in Britain. A simple mausoleum, rectangular in plan was built here following drawings prepared by Palm Desert architect Alfred H. Cook. Walter Annenberg was interred here in 2002 and Leonore Annenberg in 2009. Sited on this rise, the mausoleum references the pink pyramidal roof, the marble of the interior of the house, and the egg-crate coffered ceilings. [*glimpse of Chinese Pavilion*]
- To the north, you can see a beautiful view of the house. We also have a magnificent view of Mt. San Jacinto. At sunrise and sunset, this mountain range turns a particular shade of pink that the Annenbergs were so fond of they had their pyramidal roof painted the same color. That color became iconic to Sunnylands and can also be found on the perimeter wall. Mt. San Jacinto becomes snowcapped in the winter while the valley stays sunny, creating an enchanting view of "sand to snow."
- Let's now move to a place of special recent importance.

#### Stop 7: (0:30)

- *Retreats / Obama visits*
- *Golf course / Dick Wilson*
- *Stand on the bridge in the shade and look at the house again.*
- See again the horizontal lines of the flat roof and trellises adjacent to the iconic pink pyramidal roof. The shutters are closed during this Covid year, but there are walls of glass that are part of the overall balance of materials in this wing.
- In 2013, President Barack Obama and President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China met at Sunnylands for a three-day summit. During that time, President Obama and President Xi had many intimate conversations, strolling through the grounds, including time spent on this bridge. This summit concluded in stronger relationships between the two leaders, along with significant progress on several issues of bilateral importance, including cybersecurity, North Korea, and controlling rising hydrofluorocarbon emissions from industrial activities.
- The primary purpose of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands is to host high-level retreats. Sunnylands was established to serve as neutral ground for national and world leaders seeking the privacy and peace needed to address the most pressing issues

of the day. High-level retreats may vary in form, yet all have the goal of making an impact on society, facilitating international agreement, or opening further dialogue on issues of national and international importance. For private retreats that focus on solutions for these challenges, Sunnylands draws together leaders in the fields of:

- Promoting global cooperation
- Strengthening democratic institutions and expression
- Advancing global health and food security
- Past retreats include U.S.-Mexico Relations, Education & Technology, Rising Sea Levels and Ocean Acidification, and special Presidential meetings like the 2013 meeting of President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping or the 2016 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting with President Obama.

#### Stop 8:

- Imagine the magical effect of this landscape on retreat participants.
- On the left is an example of new planting that is part of our landscape master plan.
- We are constantly balancing the preservation of the cultural landscape, the requirements of the new use as a retreat center, and sustainability concerns. This delicate balance bends toward preservation directly around the house with more sustainable strategies farther away from the historic core. The new plantings here are introducing aesthetic elements that require less water than the previous turf areas.
- As we move on, the Annenbergs' golf course spreads out before us. This nine-hole golf course was designed by Dick Wilson, a nationally renowned golf course designer, and was finished in 1965. Dick Wilson's designs at Sunnylands include elevated greens, each surrounded by three bunkers. The Annenbergs would usually play the golf course twice as an 18-hole course. They also encouraged their guests to play with them. Some of the people who have played this golf course include Bob Hope, Dinah Shore, General Colin Powell, Prince Charles, and most of the eight U.S. presidents who visited here (7 in Annenbergs' time and President Obama).
- The golf course has been available to retreat participants during their retreats and before the pandemic, special organizations, First Tee of the Coachella Valley and Desert Arc, have also used the golf course.

#### Stop 9: (0:35) *[Talk under the shade cloth, some people can sit on plastic stools]*

*Entertainment use of area, Agam paintings/sculpture outside, Eisenhower fishing*

- We're standing in front of the guest wing with its two bedroom suites and the Game Room—an area used for entertaining. Note the use of cement blocks with a square design, in white and pink, on walls and planters. The walls of glass achieve that inside/outside aesthetic.
- Entertainment outside was a large part of Walter and Leonore Annenberg's lives at Sunnylands. The pool and poolside patio were a source of fun and relaxation for the Annenbergs, their family, and friends. The grandchildren learned to swim in the pool, and famous guests spent time alongside the Annenbergs fishing, lounging, or getting

ready to golf. Photos in the archives show President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan lounging around the pool in the 1980s.

- The pool was designed by A. Quincy Jones to be part of the landscape, keeping his midcentury modern buildings the only structures with straight lines. See that it is shaped like a lake rather than an angular lap pool. This pool is 12-feet deep and was used in the spring by the Annenbergs, their family, and friends when the weather started to warm up.
- This area was dominated by four artworks: one sculpture and three large paintings, all by the Israeli artist Yaacov Agam. Usually next to the pool is a kinetic sculpture by Agam titled *Square Waves*. This large sculpture is currently part of our exhibition at the Center called *In Motion: Agam at Sunnylands*. The Annenbergs were fans of Agam's works and had two specially designed paintings that hung on the upper terrace: *Situations* and *Sunnylands*. Over the years, the desert climate took a toll on the paintings and they were placed in our archives when the Trust inherited the property. For our current exhibition, these two paintings were masterfully restored and can be seen in the Center or online via the 3D exhibition tour, which you can view at [Sunnylands.org](http://Sunnylands.org).
- If we look toward the main house, we'll see one of A. Quincy Jones' first concepts for Sunnylands. Jones set a battered wall on the lake, like the prow of a ship. Leonore Annenberg said, "It's my favorite thing." Note that the pink wall that supports the flat pad of the house is bermed and merges with the lake so the blue of the sky and the blue of the water frame the pink and the white of the house within this emerald green landscape. Jones originally designed the walls of the house to be battered (or sloped) but that early design was changed to emphasize vertical glass walls.
- Photos from the archives show President Dwight Eisenhower fishing in the lake at just this spot in the 1960s and then President George H. W. Bush fishing there in the 1990s.
- Let's head to Leonore's Rose Garden, [*noting Bertoia's "Peacock" sculpture and locker rooms*].

### Stop 10 (0:45)

*Original design and remodel of rose garden, specially named roses*

*Bathroom break*

- Quincy Jones designed this rose garden with ribbons of color—yellow, white, and pink. But as the Annenbergs grew older, they wanted a more organic look to their rose garden. So, in the 1990s, the Annenbergs mixed the garden with an emphasis on the rose type, not the color and included signature roses, like the Barbara Bush rose, the Nancy Reagan rose, the Leonore Annenberg rose, and the Uncle Walter rose, all named by official rose associations.
- Please take a moment to enjoy the rose garden or to use the restrooms before we head back toward the Center.
- Next, I'd like to talk about birds and water use, so please follow me to our next lovely viewpoint.

### Stop 11 (0:50)



*Water features, bird sanctuary, Pacific Flyway  
Sustainability*

- Sunnylands was built in the 1960s with 13 manmade lakes (today we have 11) on the property. Some of these water features are part of the golf course, acting as water hazards. But all the lakes are part of the bird sanctuary Walter wanted Sunnylands to be. Walter instructed his landscape design team to create a place, here in Southern California, to attract native and migratory birds. A plethora of trees created a canopy layer, pockets of bushes and hedges created ground coverings, and the lakes and streams created waterways and established a third layer—all of which together created a place for various types of birds to visit, hunt, or nest.
- During migration in the spring and fall, we have a large number of birds on our grounds (more than 150 species of birds have been spotted at Sunnylands). They are flying along the Pacific Flyway and often come to our area on route to or from the Salton Sea. We are within 50 miles of the Salton Sea, which is the second largest water stop for migrating birds in the United States. *[Referencing again that balance between preservation, reuse, and sustainability.]*
- Sustainable strategies are employed here. For turf reduction, 200 acres of park-like setting with 180 acres of turf was reduced by 60 acres (1/3) to 120 acres.
- Mulch and meadow grasses were introduced so that the irrigated area was substantially reduced. Using two types of irrigation that respond to the special needs of trees and turf, less water is required.
- Here you can see the landscape and golf course blending beautifully with the mountain range in the background. The Annenbergs wanted a park-like setting for their home in Southern California. The landscape designers worked with the natural elevated landscape, creating rolling green hills spotted with trees.
- We will now walk across the driving range to our final stop. *[Walk in the shade of the trees on the right and then cross the driving range.]*

**Stop 12 (0:60)**

*Conclusions*

- Thank you for being part of the tour today. You were all excellent guests and I hope you enjoyed yourselves while learning something about the Annenbergs and Sunnylands.
- I encourage you to visit the Center & Gardens where the exhibition *In Motion: Agam at Sunnylands* [if building is open] is currently displayed and walk our gardens.