



## SUNNYLANDS Landscape Tour

Below is the script of the 45-minute Landscape Tour offered Wednesday through Sunday on days when retreats are not scheduled. This tour uses the 7-passenger shuttle or the 13-passenger electric vehicle, dubbed the “solar roller,” but takes up to six passengers in the same party only.

Depart Center

- *Welcome, introduction*
- *Provide guidelines for the tour*
  - *Stay seated while in shuttle, etc.*
  - *Face coverings are mandatory*
  - *Photography is allowed*

Hello, my name is ----. Welcome, I hope you will enjoy this 45-minute tour that will focus on our purpose as a high-level retreat center, the efforts the Trust is making to both preserve and responsibly introduce sustainable approaches, and original elements of the grounds and golf course. It will also provide a summary of the Sunnylands estate and some history of the Annenbergs.

I will be wearing my facemask, and ask that you please wear your face covering for the duration of the tour. Our acrylic panels add an extra layer of protection on this open-air tour.

*History of the Annenbergs/Primary purpose of Sunnylands today (3 points: successful businessman/public service/philanthropists) (3 minutes)*

- **Introduction of the Annenbergs and Sunnylands:**  
Sunnylands was the winter home of Walter and Leonore Annenberg from 1966 until 2009. Walter was a successful businessman—at the age of 32 he took over the responsibility of his father’s publishing business, Triangle Publications Inc. Under his leadership, Triangle Publications Inc. became a communications giant. *TV Guide* magazine and *Seventeen* were two of his most popular and successful publications.

Leonore was seven when her mother passed away. She was raised by her Uncle Harry Cohn, the head of Columbia Pictures. She graduated from Stanford University in June 1940 with Bachelor of Arts in history and political science.

Both Walter and Leonore were engaged in public service. Walter as the Ambassador to the Court of Saint James’s in London for President Richard Nixon (1969-1974) and Leonore as Chief of Protocol for President Ronald Reagan (1981-82).

Considered among the most generous philanthropists of their generation, some of the most important contributions made by the Annenbergs were to education. For instance, the Annenbergs founded the Schools of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Southern California, and in 1991 they donated \$50

million to the United Negro College Fund. In 1993, Walter attended a White House ceremony at which President Clinton announced the ambassador's \$500 million matching-grant program that ultimately provided funding to 2,000 public schools.

The historic Sunnylands estate is built on 200 acres. The design team for Sunnylands consisted of architect A. Quincy Jones, interior designer William Haines and partner Ted Graber, and golf course designer Dick Wilson.

## **STOP 1** Entry Court

*Discuss Mexican column while at Entry Court and then the house (5 minutes)*

- **Mexican Column:**

Your first up-close view of the historic house is influenced by the 20-foot tall replica of a Mexican column displayed at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City designed by architect Pedro Ramirez Vazquez and artists Tomás and José Chávez Morado. In 1968, this bronze column with riverbed stones below replaced the original fountain and reinforced the Mayan theme of the house—a theme suggested to Jones by the Annenbergs.

The column itself represents Mexico. The carved relief depicts, in four vertical sections (east, west, north, and south), the history of modern Mexico. The east represents integration and the west represent Mexico's projection into the Western world. Both sides represent the coasts of Mexico where the primary events that shaped modern Mexico began. The north and south sides represent specific events that led to the independence of the Mexican people.

*Note: Please refer to the Mexican column fact sheet for detailed information.*

- **House:**

Sunnylands is one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's 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. There are various elements that define midcentury modern architecture, and many can be seen in A. Quincy Jones' designs. These elements include the use of industrial materials (steel, glass, concrete, etc.), straight lines and geometric shapes (squares, rectangles, triangles, circles, etc.), natural lighting, and bringing the outside in (the idea of transitioning outdoor elements of a garden or the landscape into the home).

- **Mayan theme:**

Leonore and Walter Annenberg suggested the Mayan theme as they felt the design would relate the house more sympathetically to its desert site. It's important to note that midcentury modern homes connect with their landscape. A. Quincy Jones designed the house with retaining sloped walls and a pyramidal roof (both Mayan influences).

- You'll note the two sides of this courtyard are enclosed by long-windowless walls faced with lava stone. The use of this stone also connects with the Mayan building techniques and style seen at Chichen Itza. The lava stone at the historic house was imported from Mexico (the lava stone at the Center was brought from Utah). Plantings create an outdoor room as well. The use of the open meandering drive, the circular courtyard and the oblique entrance all emphasize the underlying concept of informality.

*Head out of Entry Court down driveway towards Mausoleum (3 minutes)*

- **Birds of Welcome:**  
Another sculpture on the grounds is this bronze and aluminum sculpture, *Birds of Welcome*, created by Canadian artist Art Price in 1971. The artist produced this model for the Annenbergs after they saw the first cast at the Gander International Airport in Newfoundland.
- **Sunnylands Flag:**  
Whenever the Annenbergs were in residence, the white flag with an image of a sun emblem was flown. The use of a 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 Annenbergs' lifetime and continues as the logo today.

**STOP 2** Mausoleum/view of house/midcentury style/pink roof/Mayan influence (5 minutes)

**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY—guests disembark to small grassy area on left**

- **Mausoleum:** (50 acres designated as cemetery)  
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—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.

*Drive—towards the Historic entrance at Frank Sinatra Drive (3-5 minutes)*

We are currently driving the same path that famous and important guests to Sunnylands have driven. For over 50 years, leaders from across the world visited Sunnylands. Presidents from Eisenhower to both Bushes to President Barack Obama, royalty from Princess Grace Kelly to Queen Elizabeth II, domestic and foreign dignitaries from Colin Powell to Margaret Thatcher, all visited “behind the pink wall.” Most recently, Prince Albert of Monaco and the 10 leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

(ASEAN) were here at Sunnylands. You would begin the drive to the house on this road, which is ¼ mile from the gate to the house.

- **The birds of Sunnylands**

During migration in the spring and fall, we have a large number of birds on our grounds. 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. We have a birding experience at Sunnylands. A walking, 90-minute bird-watching tour of the estate led by an experienced birder. (See Sunnylands.org for ticketing information.)

### **STOP 3** Historic entrance at Frank Sinatra Drive/pink wall/guard gate (3 minutes)

The pink block wall that frames the east and south side of Sunnylands' perimeter has for many years lent an air of mystery to this grand estate, but it was not always the case. The pink wall, one of the most-asked-about elements at Sunnylands, was a mid-1990s addition. The Annenbergs grew concerned over the privacy and security of the estate when the oleanders began to die due to a blight that ravaged most of the oleanders across the Coachella Valley. Leonore Annenberg requested that the wall match the pink color of the roof of the house, which she thought reflected the pink hues on our local mountains at sunrise and sunset.

#### *Drive by pink wall and exit into the golf course—introduce Golf Course; discuss trees (3 minutes)*

Before Sunnylands, the Annenbergs use to stay at the La Quinta Resort & Club. Leonore Annenberg explained, "One day, we were playing golf at Tamarisk Country Club and coming down the 14<sup>th</sup> fairway we saw the land. It was unusual to see an elevated piece of land right here." It was in fact this "unusual piece of land" they so often drove by that would one day become Sunnylands. At one point, the Annenbergs owned 933 acres in Rancho Mirage—400 acres are currently owned and maintained by the Trust.

The nine-hole golf course was designed by Dick Wilson, a nationally renowned golf course designer, and was finished in 1965. The golf course can be played in either a 9-hole, 18-hole, or 27-hole format. Boasting an 11- or 15-handicap, the Annenbergs would typically play two 18-hole rounds of golf a day while in residence. The course was designed by Dick Wilson to be challenging but still enjoyable. Wilson's design included elevated greens, each surrounded by either three bunkers or a water feature. A stunning part of the landscape, 13 man-made lakes doubled as hazards for the golf course (today only 11 of the original 13 lakes remain).

The golf course, as you can see, is integrated into a larger garden landscape consisting of olive, eucalyptus, carob, California Pepper, tamarisk, and oak trees. There are over 6,000

trees on the estate to create the park-like setting the Annenbergs wanted for their home in the desert.

Tamarisk trees were used on the property for wind control and privacy. A common practice was to use these trees along highways and rail lines. Their durability allowed them to thrive. Today they have been identified as invasive exotics.

Eucalyptus: This Australian native was first imported to California in 1865 as an experiment for construction lumber. It was later discovered that the lumber was inadequate for use, but the extensive presence of these trees at Sunnylands is key in the design approach of the property. For the construction and design team, blow sand and strong winds were a great challenge. The Eucalyptus tree became the solution to this problem as it is a strong wind protector. Eucalyptus trees are also a preferred resting spot for Monarch Butterflies on their migration north.

- **Mexican Fan Palm (*Washingtonia Robusta*):**  
Suggested by former President Dwight Eisenhower when he visited in 1966, these two palm trees are referred to as the Eisenhower Palms. They serve as a course hazard and were the result of Eisenhower's surprise that there were no palm trees at Sunnylands.
- **Olive trees:**  
Over 680 olive trees are found on the estate. 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. 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. This reduces the use of chemicals on the estate and has an added benefit of producing a food product. We have been harvesting olives annually in house for about six years.

*Drive—discuss 11 lakes/irrigation holding system and water features/fish (identify)/Xerces/Pacific flyway (3 minutes)*

Sunnylands also has eleven man-made lakes, which are part of a water circulation system. Our lakes are stocked with fish for historic reference and to keep a well-balanced eco-system. Bass, bluegill, and catfish inhabit our lakes as do many aquatic macro-invertebrates.

We have been studying the diversity in the water system. Water sampling has shown that we have quite a few dragonfly (including some migratory species), and damselfly species which are thriving. We are part of a larger project call "Pond Watch" sponsored

by the Xerces Society. For the study we are monitoring our system and sharing results regarding what inhabits our waters.

These invertebrates also provide food for the various native and migratory birds on the estate.

We consider ourselves to be a living laboratory. The green management strategies we're currently employing make it possible to determine what works best. We share this information with other golf courses in the desert.

*Drive—discuss Chinese Pavilion (3 minutes)*

- **Chinese Pavilion:**

The Annenbergs commissioned Harry Saunders, an architect who had worked on the main house under A. Quincy Jones, to design and construct the Chinese Pavilion, which was completed in 1976. The pavilion serves as a folly on the estate grounds. A folly is a conversation piece built for visual effect to enhance the landscape. They were popular in England during the 1700s and 1800s. Walter and Leonore saw beautiful follies during Walter's ambassadorial years in England, which inspired their desire to have a folly on the Sunnylands estate. According to the Annenberg staff, the pavilion was used by Walter and Leonore Annenberg for lunch with golf guests when the weather permitted, especially by Leonore and her friends on ladies' golf Tuesdays.

*Continue to Sunnylands Totem Pole*

**STOP 4** view of totem pole and restoration/view again down the 5<sup>th</sup> fairway/area for pollinators (discuss)/2010-11 restoration of grounds/goals/water reduction/ecology (5 minutes)

- **Totem Pole:**

**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY—guests disembark to grassy area on right**

Between 1969 and 1974, Walter served as the Ambassador to the Court of St. James's. During that time, Walter read an article about totem poles in *Natural History* magazine titled "Out of Silence." He wrote that "The idea of getting a great old historic totem pole for my estate, 'Sunnylands' in the Southern California desert, is rather appealing" and inquired where he might "obtain a pole of distinction." After being informed about the importance of the original site to historic totem poles, Walter and Leonore commissioned First Nations Kwakiutl artist Henry Hunt from Fort Rupert, British Columbia to create a totem pole for Sunnylands.

The totem pole is 30 feet high and constructed from a single red cedar log. The figures on the pole reflect the crests that were specific to the Hunt family. A Kwakiutl chief holds a copper (a sign of wealth) at the top of the pole. Next is a grizzly bear with a seal. The third figure from the top is Tsonoqua, the wild woman of the woods, who is also holding a copper. The bottom figure is Sisiutl, a double-headed serpent.

In 2010, the Hunt family restored the totem pole after years of weather damage. In 2012, the Hunt family returned to Sunnylands to hold a traditional dedication and re-raising ceremony, involving traditional performances in full regalia on the historic estate. This totem pole provided the inspiration for the 2019-2020 exhibition *Reach for the Sky: Tradition + Inspiration*.

*Drive to Cottage Campus—discuss use of this campus for retreats/mission/FFP/Discuss 19<sup>th</sup>-century Neoclassic sculpture (5 minutes)*

- **Retreat Pavilion:**  
Frederick Fisher and Partners (architects of the Center & Gardens) designed the Retreat Pavilion, completed in January 2014. The architecture, like the Center, is contemporary in style but inspired by the estate's original A. Quincy Jones midcentury modern designs. Its purpose is to provide a meeting space for retreats.
  - Conference room
  - Pool
  - Outdoor gathering space
- **Retreats:**  
Up to 22 retreat participants may meet at Sunnylands over the course of several days to discuss issues of national and international importance. Retreats take place on the historic estate—12 guest accommodations are available here at the guest cottages. There are four bedrooms in Mesquite (formerly cottage 1), two bedrooms in Ocotillo (formerly cottage 2), and six bedrooms in Palo Verde (formerly cottage 3). Five guest accommodations are located inside the main home and five color-coordinated guest rooms are adjacent to the main house in the historic guest wing.
- **Sunnylands as a high-level retreat center:**  
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 President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China or the 2016 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting with President Obama.

- **Midcentury Modern Architecture at Sunnylands (Cottage Campus):**

The architect for Sunnylands was A. Quincy Jones (1912-1979) who had opened his architectural office in Los Angeles after World War II and entered into partnership with Frederick 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. Designed by A. Quincy Jones, the cottages were built and completed in 1964, two years before the home's completion. The Cottages were used as temporary residences for the Annenbergs, their guests, and their staff.

From this view point, you are able to see the midcentury modern architectural emphasis on the horizontal line, the use of concrete block, and the modest scale of modern homes like the Eichler Homes for which A. Quincy Jones is famous. Further, 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.

Arid-adapted plants and wildflowers, like the ones used in the Center & Gardens landscape, were introduced around the cottages during the 2010 restoration. They require less water and provide habitat for our local pollinators.

**STOP 5** At the top of the hill overlooking the golf course (**3 minutes**)

*Discuss golf course use today/Original 3 greenhouses behind hedge*

- **How the golf course is used today:**

Today, Sunnylands provides an atmosphere of serenity and beauty in which to think, imagine, and achieve outcomes that exceed individual expectations with our high-level retreats. The golf course is used as an amenity for high-level retreat participants. Before the COVID pandemic, special organizations, First Tee of the Coachella Valley and Desert Arc, have also used the golf course. These programs are not for fundraising or charity, but rather have an educational component—designed to have an impact on society.

- **Sustainability:**

In relation to sustainability, Sunnylands has continually focused on the future and best practices.

Prior to opening, during the restoration, special attention was given to reducing the turf. Sixty acres of turf were removed where it did not affect historic sight lines. The old hydraulic block irrigation system was replaced with a state-of-the-art system that includes weather station and GIS-controlled emitters. Lakes and streams were completely relined to prevent water seepage.

In the 2014-15 season, we began the elimination of the overseeding process. Today, we have eliminated the winter rye grass on all but 51 acres of the historic estate adjacent to the historic house. Soil moisture-retaining methods such as soil surfactants helped



reduce water use even more. By recognizing the aesthetic value of the dormant Bermuda grass and creatively applying pigments, we were able to create a visually appealing landscape of gold and green that utilized far less water than ever before, while preserving the aesthetic value of the estate, prized by visitors.

Outside the pink wall, three additional acres of turf were removed in 2016 and replaced by rock, succulents, and olive tree landscape. This landscaping change reduced water use outside the pink wall by 85%.

*Drive—follow the road toward the direction of the Nixon Magnolia and relate that story as you drive.*

#### **STOP 6** The Nixon Magnolia (3-5 minutes)

This *Magnolia Grandiflora* was a gift from President Nixon in 1972 to the Annenbergs. 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 estate, The Hermitage. Gifting tree cuttings from the White House is a common practice, and the Andrew Jackson Magnolia in particular, has a long list of cuttings now living at different sites.

When Andrew Jackson took office as the seventh President of the United States, he brought with him a cutting from one of his wife Rachel's favorite magnolia trees. The tree was planted on the South Lawn, west of the portico.

Rachel died on December 22, 1828 after Andrew Jackson won the presidency. She had been the target of campaign attacks. As she had been previously married, there was speculation regarding the legitimacy of her marriage to the president. Jackson blamed her death on the cruel treatment she had received during the campaign and was still in mourning when he went to his inauguration on March 4, 1829.

Tree planting became a tradition, followed by later presidents, of adding features to the White House grounds. Teddy Roosevelt added an American elm. Jimmy Carter added an herb garden, a cedar of Lebanon, as well as a tree house built without nails to protect the Atlas cedar in which it was built. George H.W. Bush added three trees, which included a red bud, purple beech, and a little leaf linden, he planted with Queen Elizabeth II in 1991. George W. Bush added a cut leaf silver maple and during President Barack Obama's term, Michelle Obama added a kitchen garden.

The White House Magnolia was removed in 2017 after 19 decades when the National Park Service determined the tree was dangerous due to structural weakness and decay.

*Drive back to Center (3-5 minutes)*

- **Tennis court:**

Although the Annenbergs entertained presidents, heads of states, and leaders from government, business, science, and the arts at Sunnylands, it was also a family home. Their children and grandchildren often visited, and on occasion, the grandchildren could be seen riding bicycles down the road or playing tennis.

Barbara Bush and Sandra Day O’Conner were some of the guests who enjoyed playing tennis on this court. The Annenbergs often had golf, swim, and/or tennis coaches available when the grandchildren visited.

- **Concluding tour:**

Among the last gifts made by the Annenbergs is the Center & Gardens. In collaboration with Leonore Annenberg, Frederick Fisher and Partners Architects designed a public center that maintains a formal relationship with the original residence, while also serving as an effective venue for educational programs, events, and public tours. The Trust created a sustainable Center with desert plantings, a photovoltaic system, and a geothermal heating & cooling system.

Hope you have enjoyed your peek “behind the pink wall.”