



# THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION TRUST AT SUNNYLANDS

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## **Before becoming king, Prince Charles had been a guest at Sunnylands twice**

RANCHO MIRAGE, Calif. – Long before he became King Charles III, Great Britain’s new monarch had been a weekend guest at Sunnylands twice – once in 1974 while on shore leave as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and again in 1986 as the patron of a leadership program that sent young people on excursions around the world.

Prince Charles, whose coronation as king is scheduled for May 6 at London’s Westminster Abbey, was 25 years old when he first visited Sunnylands in March 1974. His naval ship, the HMS Jupiter, had docked in San Diego for a week, giving the young royal an opportunity to travel by car to the Rancho Mirage estate of Walter Annenberg, then U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom, and his wife, Leonore.

Ronald Reagan, who was then governor of California, and his wife, Nancy, had also been invited to the estate that weekend. Entertainers such as Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope rounded out the guest list.

During his stay, Prince Charles played a round of golf with Walter Annenberg and improvised a game of polo, using a polo mallet to hit golf balls from a golf cart on the estate.

In a thank-you note to the Annenbergs, Prince Charles wrote, “How can I ever thank you both enough for that incredible weekend (all too short, as it was) at Palm Springs? Rarely have I enjoyed myself so much or had such a marvelous opportunity to relax completely as I did with you.”

The prince’s second visit to the Coachella Valley came in February 1986. This time, the 37-year-old royal played a polo match at the Eldorado Polo Club in Indio. After the match, he shook

hands with a crowd of fans before returning to Sunnylands for a black-tie fundraising dinner benefiting Operation Raleigh. The program, founded by the prince, sought to develop leadership skills by placing young adults in science and community service missions throughout the globe. The prince also spoke at a press conference at Sunnylands to promote the program.

Prince Charles thanked the Annenbergs for their hospitality with a rare, 1687 version of Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World, in Five Books*. An inscription signed by Prince Charles reads: "Presented to Walter & Lee Annenberg by His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, in appreciation of their gracious hospitality and continuing support of Operation Raleigh."

Both Walter and Leonore Annenberg were in attendance when Charles was crowned Prince of Wales at an investiture ceremony at Caernarfon Castle in northern Wales in 1969. Two of 4,600 chairs made specifically for the ceremony's attendees, known as investiture chairs, are now part of the Game Room furnishings at Sunnylands. The red chairs, stamped with the Prince of Wales feathers in gold leaf, were designed by Charles' uncle, Lord Snowdon. They are on view to guests touring the interior of the Annenberg home.

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(Editor's note: To download photographs of Prince Charles' visits to Sunnylands, [click here.](#))

#### **The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands**

*The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands is a nonprofit operating entity that hosts high-level retreats on serious issues facing the nation and the world. Programs offered through Sunnylands Center & Gardens educate the public about the history of Sunnylands, its architecture, art collections, cultural significance, and sustainable practices.*