

Tiny Palm Springs hotel is couple's favorite pastime

No Vacancy is a monthly features showcasing the small hotels, motels and inns across the Coachella Valley.

At first glance — judging by much of what you may read on TripAdvisor — you may think [La Maison Hotel](#) in Palm Springs is a much-loved coffee shop.

"One thing we hear a lot is how much people like and appreciate the cappuccinos and lattes in the morning," remarked Richard Slosky one recent afternoon while standing next to the gleaming Astra espresso machine in the bright and airy outdoor breakfast lounge off the patio of this charming 13-room French-country style hotel in south Palm Springs.

"We really like the mornings. That's when people are chatty. And we get to visit with them and get to know them," said Slosky, who bought the 1955 hotel — it was known as the Blue Palm back then — three years ago with his wife Cornelia Schuster. The two have have been steadily at work renovating the property. In the past year, the couple has likely invested some \$150,000 to upgrade bathrooms, improve the swimming pool and other improvements.

"We're always working on something," Slosky said.

Being an innkeeper is not new for this pair of Canadians from the western side of the country. They previously operated a four-room B&B on 11 acres in Salt Springs Island, Canada. And at La Maison, they actually live in a residential unit on the property.

"We absolutely love it," said Slosky, sitting beneath one of the very mature palm trees on the property.

"You get people from everywhere and all we have to do is make them happy," Schuster said.

"You just have to look after people," Slosky added, remarking on his own style of management and hospitality.

That level of attention has earned La Maison some of the country's top recognition on the popular online travel site TripAdvisor.

"In 2014, we were ranked the No. 1 small hotel in all of the U.S." The hotel is ranked in the No. 5 slot this year.

"I have no idea," remarked Slosky when asked what it is about his hotel that landed him in such a premier spot.

"I can't say that it really reflected itself in a lot of extra business," Slosky said.

Some guests have admitted that they had originally booked someplace else, and after doing a little TripAdvisor research online, came across La Maison's high ranking. "So we definitely got that," said Slosky.

Much of the hotel's marketing and advertising is handled online through sites like [Small Hotels of Palm Springs](#), an industry group, and the older and more low-tech method — word of mouth.

"Though TripAdvisor is very strong. It's the Holy Grail of travel today," said Slosky.

"Guests arrive, and they've read every story, and they know everything about us," said Schuster.

Most of the 13 rooms face the pool and help to form an enclosed courtyard that has become rich with planting resembling a Mediterranean-inspired garden — a clump of lavender here, a small grouping of rosemary and basil plants there.

Most of the rooms are about 300 square feet, and outfitted in lots of fine old large wooden furniture picked up in estate sales or consignment shops. (Sorry, modernists, the French countryside is not filled with Eames chairs, and neither are these rooms.)

"I think people really like our rooms," Slosky remarked when asked what's already building a steady stream of repeat customers at La Maison. During the heavy tourist season, the home addresses can be from anyplace, much like across the rest of the valley. In the summer months, many of the visitors to La Maison are from Western Europe, said Slosky.

"It's just been a remarkably fun business," Slosky added.

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La Maison Hotel

Location: 1600 E. Palm Canyon Drive; Palm Springs CA 92264

Rates: \$170-\$200 per night (rates are for this weekend and subject to change)

Restaurant or bar: No

Bath products: L'Occitane

Room size: About 300-500 square feet.