

EXECUTIVE ERRANDS® Professional Lifestyle & Fractional Estate Management

A FREE GUIDE FROM EXECUTIVE ERRANDS®

The Smart Second Homeowner's Guide to Desert Living

What Every Seasonal Homeowner Should Know
About Protecting Their Desert Property

Coachella Valley • Professional Absentee Home Care Since 2006

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This guide was created by Executive Errands®, providing professional absentee home care to Coachella Valley homeowners since 2006. Licensed • Insured • CL 944447

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Desert Living

Owning a second home in the Coachella Valley is a dream for many people—sunny skies, dramatic mountain views, beautiful golf courses, and warm winter weather that draws visitors from across the country.

But living in the desert is very different from living almost anywhere else.

Homes here don't face the same challenges as homes in colder or more temperate climates. Pipes rarely freeze, lawns aren't watered daily, and snow shovels are definitely not required. Instead, desert homes deal with a completely different set of environmental conditions—intense sun, extreme heat, wind-blown sand, hard water, and unique wildlife that thrives in this environment.

For homeowners who are new to the desert—or who spend part of the year elsewhere—these differences can come as a surprise.

"A tiny drip under a sink can release hundreds of gallons of water before anyone notices. A clogged air-conditioning condensate line can cause a ceiling leak. A dry plumbing trap can allow unpleasant sewer odors—and sometimes pests—to enter the home."

None of this means desert living is difficult. It simply means it's different. The key to enjoying your second home in the desert is understanding how the climate affects your property and maintaining your home accordingly.

This guide will help you do exactly that.

Why Desert Homes Are Different

Instead of snow, freezing temperatures, or constant rain, your Coachella Valley home faces:

- Extreme sun exposure and UV radiation
- Temperatures well over 100°F in summer
- Wind-blown sand and dust particles

Extremely hard water with high mineral content
Desert wildlife and insects seeking water and shelter
Long periods of vacancy for seasonal residents

These conditions affect nearly every system in your home—from plumbing and air conditioning to landscaping and pools. Understanding these differences is the key to preventing costly problems.

10 THINGS THAT SURPRISE NEW DESERT HOMEOWNERS

After decades of helping homeowners maintain their properties in the Coachella Valley, we've seen the same issues surprise new desert homeowners again and again.

01

Pipes rarely freeze — but water leaks are a BIGGER risk.

Standing water from undetected leaks can cause structural damage and mold.

02

Your air conditioner works harder here than almost anywhere in the country.

Desert HVAC systems require twice-yearly service to stay reliable.

03

Pools need more attention because the sun burns through chemicals quickly.

Twice-weekly service is often recommended in desert climates.

04

Hard water affects everything from faucets to appliances.

Calcium and magnesium buildup can shorten the life of your equipment.

05

Sand is microscopic and constantly circulating in the air.

It gets into filters, vents, and mechanical components continuously.

06

Landscaping mistakes can kill plants within days during summer heat.

Not all plants survive desert conditions—the right choices matter.

07

Pest control isn't optional in the desert.

Scorpions, black widows, and rodents are common without prevention.

08

Empty homes can develop problems quickly without regular oversight.

A small issue can become a major disaster in just a few weeks.

09

Appliances and electronics struggle if the house gets too hot.

Maintaining 85°F or cooler protects your valuable possessions.

10

Desert homes require a completely different maintenance mindset.

The strategies that protect homes in other climates may not apply here.

CHAPTER 1

Water Management:

The Hidden Risk in Desert Homes

In colder climates, homeowners worry about frozen pipes. In the desert, the biggest concern is **water leaks and evaporation**. Because many second homes sit empty for months, small plumbing issues can go completely unnoticed.

300+Gallons of water a slow drip can release **per day** before it's detected**\$10K**Typical repair cost when a **water leak** in an empty home goes undetected for weeks

+

Keep Plumbing Traps Wet

Plumbing traps hold water that prevents sewer odors, rodents, and reptiles from entering your home through the drain system. When homes sit empty, those traps can dry out. Running water periodically—or scheduling routine home checks—prevents this problem.

Never Cover Your Drains

Some homeowners cover drains before leaving for the season, worried about pests. This is actually counterproductive. If a plumbing leak occurs, open drains allow water to escape into the drain system instead of flooding your cabinets or floors.

Ignore the "Bucket of Water" Myth

Some people recommend leaving buckets of water around the house to create humidity. This is largely ineffective—buckets only add minimal humidity directly around them, and once the water evaporates the benefit disappears entirely. **A better solution: maintain a safe indoor temperature (85°F or cooler).**

PRO TIP FROM EXECUTIVE ERRANDS®

A routine home check every 2–3 weeks during vacancy can catch a slow drip before it becomes a flood. Our team has saved clients from six-figure water damage claims by catching problems early.

CHAPTER 2

Managing Indoor Temperature & HVAC

Air conditioning is the hardest-working system in your desert home. Desert homes should **never** be allowed to become excessively hot inside. Temperatures above 85°F can create a cascade of expensive problems.

85°F

OR COOLER

Maximum recommended indoor temperature while your home is vacant

Set Your AC to 85°F or Cooler

Even when you're away for months, maintaining a stable indoor temperature protects everything inside your home—and reduces the risk of mechanical failures caused by extreme heat.

What Excessive Heat Damages:

- Furniture and wood finishes
- Artwork and paintings
- Delicate electronics
- Fabrics and draperies
- Wine coolers and refrigerators
- Wax toilet seals (causing leaks!)
- Candles (they'll melt completely)

Desert HVAC: Twice-Yearly Service Required

In most climates, HVAC systems are serviced once per year. In the desert, they should be serviced **twice yearly**. Even when the air looks clear, microscopic sand particles are constantly circulating. These particles accumulate in filters and mechanical components. In late summer, wildfire ash from Southern California fire season can also clog filters.

FALL SERVICE	SPRING SERVICE
Heating system inspection Filter replacement Condensate line cleaning Electrical connection check	Summer cooling tune-up Filter replacement Condensate line cleaning System performance testing

Important: A clogged condensate drain line is one of the most common causes of water leaks in desert homes. Regular maintenance prevents this and can save thousands in repairs.

CHAPTER 3

Pools in the Desert

Pools behave differently in desert climates. In many parts of the country, weekly pool service is sufficient. **In the desert, twice-weekly service is often recommended.** The intense sun rapidly dissipates pool chemicals, making it easier for algae to grow—and wind blows sand and dust into the pool constantly.

Without Proper Monitoring:

- Chlorine levels drop quickly
- Water can turn green with algae
- Filters become clogged with sand
- Equipment can be damaged

Pool Water Replacement:

Pool water should typically be changed every **3–5 years**. Over time, mineral levels increase due to evaporation and refilling. High mineral content reduces chemical effectiveness and can damage pool surfaces.

Pool Water Level Tile & Scale

All pool tile exposed to both air and water will develop scale—sometimes quickly, sometimes over time. Even though the water is hard in the desert, the hardness varies from area to area—sometimes even within the same block. When you see white scale buildup, it should be cleaned. Most tile cleaning is done every **2–4 years**, but occasionally it may need to be done yearly.

Pool Autofill Valve Warning

A failed pool autofill valve can cause the pool to overflow and flood surrounding areas—OR cause water levels to drop, allowing the pump to run dry and seize. This is one of the most common costly failures in vacant desert homes.

CHAPTER 4

Hard Water & Its Effects

Water in the Coachella Valley is **extremely hard**. Hard water contains high levels of calcium and magnesium, which leads to mineral buildup throughout your home.

Pool tile & surfaces	White scale deposits form at the water line
Faucets & showerheads	Flow restricts as mineral deposits build up
Dishwashers	Glassware etches and appliances lose efficiency
Washing machines	Calcium clogs internal components over time
Water heaters	Tankless units need annual flushing to prevent damage
Windows	Hard water spots etch glass permanently if not cleaned

Solutions for Hard Water

Many homeowners find these solutions helpful:

Whole-house water filtration system: Most comprehensive solution—treats water at the source

Saltwater pool system: Gentler on pool surfaces and equipment

Lemi-Shine or 20 Mule Team Borax: Helps reduce scale buildup in dishwashers and appliances

Quarterly window cleaning: Prevents permanent hard water etching on glass

CHAPTER 5

Landscaping for Desert Survival

Not all plants can survive desert conditions. Many plants that thrive in cooler climates struggle or die in desert heat within just a few days. Desert landscapes should use **drought-tolerant or indigenous plants** that are adapted to thrive here.

THRIVES IN THE DESERT	USE WITH CAUTION
Bougainvillea · Lantana · Agave Desert Marigold · Palo Verde Trees Ocotillo · Brittlebush · Salvia California Fan Palm	Bougainvillea near pools (petals clog skimmers & pumps) Grass lawns (very high water use) Tropical plants (may not survive summer) Annual flowers (require constant attention)

Irrigation in the Desert

Irrigation is usually run **twice per day** depending on the season, the type of plant life, and whether the system uses drip irrigation or traditional spray heads. A failed irrigation system can kill your landscaping within days during peak summer heat—regular monitoring is essential.

CHAPTER 6

Desert Pests & Prevention

The desert ecosystem supports many creatures that may try to enter your home—especially when it's unoccupied and water sources are scarce outside. **Pest control is not optional in the desert.**

Scorpions	Seek cool, dark spaces. Can be dangerous—especially to children and pets.
Black Widows	Common in garages, storage areas, and undisturbed spaces.
Fire & Sugar Ants	Enter through tiny cracks seeking water and food.
Rodents	Can cause electrical damage by chewing wires; enter through small gaps.
Lizards	Mostly harmless but can enter through gaps near doors.
Crickets	Loud, destructive to fabrics, and can attract larger predators.
Termites	Silent and devastating—require annual inspection in desert regions.

Important HOA Note: Even if your HOA includes pest control, these services typically treat only common areas or exterior perimeters—they may *not* spray close to your home's foundation. A dedicated pest control contract for your property provides the protection your home actually needs.

CHAPTER 7

Absentee Home Care Essentials

When homes sit empty for long periods, problems can develop quickly. A system that works perfectly one week may fail the next. Catching problems early can save thousands of dollars in repairs—and protect the investment you've made in your desert property.

Failures That Happen Without Warning

HVAC capacitors often fail suddenly—leaving the home without cooling

Refrigerators can stop cooling—leading to mold and damage inside

Water leaks can appear unexpectedly from any plumbing connection

Irrigation systems can fail and kill landscaping in days

Pool autofill valves can malfunction—flooding or drying the pool

Circuit breakers can trip—disabling security systems or refrigerators

Insurance Discount Opportunity

Homeowners who engage absentee home care should check with their homeowner's insurance broker—some carriers offer policy discounts when second homes are professionally monitored or checked on a regular schedule.

Additional Preventative Maintenance

Smoke & CO Detectors	If not 10-year sealed units, replace batteries twice yearly—desert's dry climate drains batteries faster than normal.
Hot Water Heaters	Tankless water heaters should be flushed yearly to prevent mineral scale buildup. Traditional tank heaters that have never been flushed may be better left alone.
Golf Carts	Annual service keeps them operating optimally, especially without lithium batteries.

Vehicles	Cars stored in hot garages should be driven every two weeks or connected to a battery charger. Tire mats help prevent flat spots.
BBQ Grills	Clean at the end of each season. Grease buildup attracts rodents and sand accumulates inside the unit.
Window Treatments	Keep window coverings closed during summer—reduces interior heat significantly.
Monthly Cleaning	Even during vacancy, monthly cleaning keeps sand from accumulating and causing permanent damage.

CHAPTER 8

Your Complete Desert Home

Maintenance Checklist

Use this checklist to stay ahead of desert home maintenance. Print it out and keep it with your home file—or share it with your home care provider.

MONTHLY	QUARTERLY	TWICE YEARLY	ANNUALLY
Inspect for water leaks	Window cleaning	HVAC full service (spring & fall)	Flush tankless water heater
Check AC filter & replace	Pest control inspection	Replace smoke detector batteries	Full pest control treatment
Run all faucets & fixtures	Check irrigation system	Pool chemical balance check	Service BBQ grill
Check pool chemical levels	Inspect pool tile for scale	Check all door/window seals	Pool tile cleaning (as needed)
Monitor indoor temperature	Deep clean home interior	Service golf cart batteries	Termite inspection
			Garage door & seal inspection

Quarterly Window Care

Quarterly window cleaning prevents hard water spotting, sand etching, and permanent glass damage. This is one of the most overlooked maintenance tasks—and one of the most important for protecting your property's appearance and value.

ENJOY YOUR DESERT HOME WITH CONFIDENCE

A Final Word

Owning a home in the Coachella Valley should be relaxing—not stressful.

Understanding the unique conditions of the desert helps you prevent costly problems and protect your investment. With proper care and routine oversight, your desert home will always be ready for you when you return.

"When you return to your desert home,
everything should be exactly the way you left it.
Relaxing. Beautiful. Ready to enjoy."

How Executive Errands® Helps

Executive Errands® provides professional oversight for homes when their owners are away. Regular home checks help identify issues early and coordinate repairs before small problems become major ones.

- Routine property checks customized for your specific home
- Monitoring HVAC systems and responding to failures quickly
- Checking plumbing and appliances for signs of trouble
- Monitoring irrigation and landscaping health
- Pool and exterior inspections
- Coordinating trusted local vendors if issues arise
- Photo documentation reports so you always know your home's status

Are You a Realtor?

Feel free to share this guide with your buyers. It's designed to help new homeowners understand the unique conditions of desert living and protect their investment. Executive Errands® welcomes introductions—we'll take excellent care of your clients.

EXECUTIVE ERRANDS®

Need Someone to Check on Your Home While You're Away?

Since 2006, Executive Errands® has helped Coachella Valley homeowners protect and maintain their properties—providing peace of mind no matter where they are.

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