

# Baseball Spring Training in Arizona

## Scottsdale makes a winning home base both on the field and off

BY ANDREW BENDER

For baseball fans, spring training bursts with anticipation. This year from February 26 to March 29, major league teams head to warm climates (metro Phoenix for western and Midwestern teams, and Florida for eastern ones) where intimate stadiums let fans see favorite players up close and get a jump on the regular season.

After your hour-long flight to Phoenix, neighboring Scottsdale makes a great home base whether you're a sports fan or not. This city of 244,000 offers two stadiums within city limits and an alluring variety of restaurants, shops and cultural attractions for when you're not watching ball. Scottsdale's vibe is urbane and design-forward while honoring its cowtown past. Reliably great weather and an abundance of indoor-outdoor venues make it perfect for these times.

**CATCH A GAME (OR SEVERAL)** The 15 teams of the Cactus League play in stadiums across greater Phoenix, up to 50 miles apart. Unfortunately for Dodger fans, the team's home field, Camelback Ranch, is far-flung with virtually no lodging or attractions nearby — all the more reason to appreciate Scottsdale, pretty central to all the action.

**STAY** Easily walkable to Scottsdale's Old Town and one of the stadiums, **Hotel Valley Ho** dates from 1956 (early celebrity guests included Bing Crosby, Tony Curtis, Janet Leigh and Zsa Zsa Gabor) and has been stylishly restored to its Mid-Century cool, on a campus of pools, motel-style rooms and tower suites. Its VH spa and ZuZu restaurant and bar are favorites of visitors and locals alike.

**EAT** Ballparks aren't the only place to get hot dogs and beer. The welcoming, shaded *biergarten* of **Brat Haus** serves house-recipe sausages, deep-fried sauerkraut balls and giant pretzels with beer cheese fondue, alongside European beers and thrice-cooked Belgian fries. Microbrews more your speed? **Craft 64** pours dozens of Arizona beers to accompany wood-fired pizzas made from its own dough and mozzarella. More upscale, sample Arizona wines (yes, Arizona wines — some quite good!) at tasting rooms like **LDV** — its patio offers excellent people watching. Meanwhile, James Beard award-nominated **Citizen**

**Public House** serves modern American cuisine (we loved the pork belly pastrami over rye *spatzle* and Brussels sprout sauerkraut, and the chopped salad studded with smoked salmon, couscous, pepitas, asiago cheese, dried corn and more). For the next morning, it's worth the drive for "hangover hash," outré pancakes and other creative brunch fare at **Hash Kitchen**; tame the hair of the dog at its eye-popping build-your-own bloody Mary bar, while bopping to DJs.



Craft 64 serves dozens of Arizona beers alongside brick-oven pizzas  
Photo credit: Andrew Bender



Salt River Fields at Talking Stick  
Photo credit: Salt River Fields



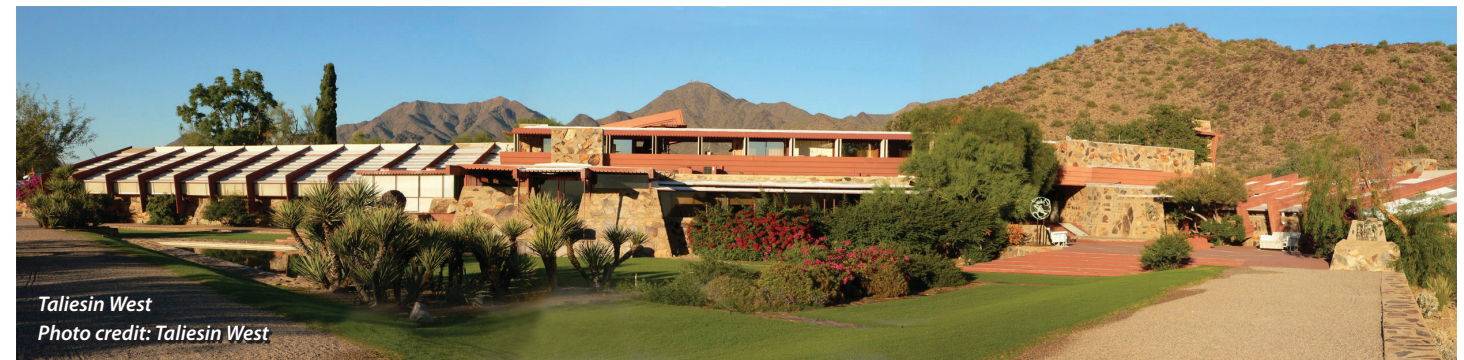
Baseball team Hawaiian shirts at Bischoff's  
Photo credit: Andrew Bender



Two of the thousands of works at Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the American West  
Photo credit: Andrew Bender

**SEE** Since opening in 2015, Old Town's Smithsonian-affiliated **Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West** has won best western museum multiple times thanks to comprehensive collections of art, artifacts and special exhibits like the current offering: Old West photography by the groundbreaking Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952). Nearby, **Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art** presents changing exhibits and one of light-artist James Turrell's acclaimed Skyspace rooms. Away from Old Town, tour the UNESCO World Heritage site **Taliesin West**, built by iconic architect Frank Lloyd Wright and apprentices beginning in the 1930s as his winter home and studio; knowledgeable docents bring it to life. Or get a more natural perspective with a **hike in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve**, 30 times the size of New York's Central Park. Guides from **REI Co-op** share fascinating insights into wildlife like the saguaro cactus, Arizona's state tree.

**SHOP** **Scottsdale's Old Town** is a natural for low-key cool shopping. For baseball fans, **Baseballism** exists for the love of the game, while **Bischoff's** is a half-century-old general store that stocks nifty baseball merch like team-logo Hawaiian shirts. **River Trading Post** sells Navajo weavings to pre-Columbian pottery, and **local designers** for fashion, jewelry and home design seem to be on every block. The doors of dozens of **art and craft galleries** open especially wide on **Thursday night art walks**. When you need a break, stop for fine coffee at one of many one-of-a-kind cafes.



Taliesin West  
Photo credit: Taliesin West

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