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# HIGH LIFE

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Does this Arizona city have it all?

Sold to celebs in the 1950s as a place ‘where summer loves to linger and winter never comes’, Scottsdale basks in 330 days of sun a year. Visitors are captivated by its layered offerings, from varied gastronomy and innovative wellness to outdoor adventures. Is Scottsdale, Arizona an all-in-one destination? **Ally Wybrew** thinks so

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Civana Wellness Resort and Spa has a 25m pool and 22 treatment rooms



## 1. It’s wellness embodied

Not only does the tranquillity of the Sonoran Desert encourage natural self-reflection, but most high-end hotels also offer feel-good activities such as sound healing, aerial yoga and meditation classes, plus massages, facials and mind and body rituals. Water babies should consider a visit to The Spa at [Civana Wellness Resort and Spa](#), whose Aqua Therapy circuit includes a Knepp wading pool, a cold deluge, a Watsu therapy pool and 25m swimming pool. Quick fixes are available on every corner. Stop by [Second Nature Clinic](#) in the Old Town, where Pick Me Up B12, amino acid injections or an IV drip of vitamins and zinc are just the tip of the wellness iceberg.

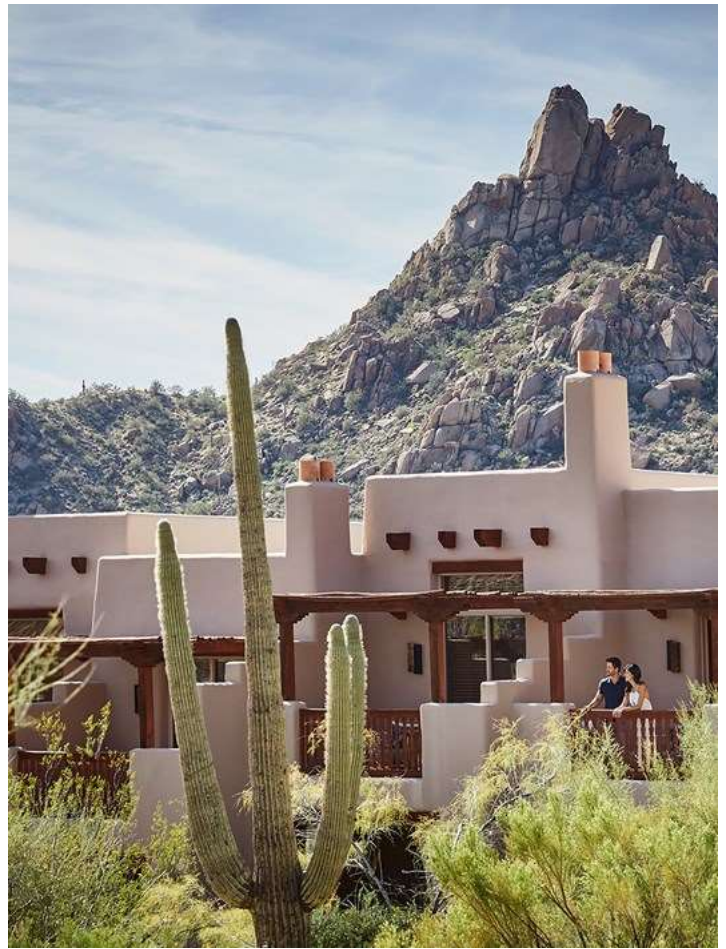




The Arizona desert is a stargazers' paradise

## 2. You'll see the skies differently

Arizona has been a haven for dark sky lovers since the early 1900s thanks to its cloudless skies, mountainous geography and low light pollution. The state has 12 certified dark sky parks, all of which provide ample opportunity for viewing planets, galaxies and other celestial wonders. Various tours depart from in and around Scottsdale, if you're keen not to stray too far from a ready-stocked bar and cosy duvet. Book into the [Four Seasons](#) in North Scottsdale, where Nasa ambassador Mark Johnston gives talks twice weekly to hotel guests. If you're keen to get a closer look, hop in a basket and enjoy a scenic hot air balloon ride over the Sonoran Desert. Flights are around an hour long but depend on the weather.



Talavera restaurant at Four Seasons Scottsdale; guests stay in the hotel's adobe-style casitas

### 3. It's a golfer's heaven


Every year Scottsdale fills up with stick-swinging folk keen to experience the area's greens and fairways, many of which are recognised as the best in the state. Grayhawk Golf Club's Raptor and Talon courses are frequent favourites, while other classic courses can be found peppered throughout the region. For those seeking the ultimate game, [Troon North Golf Club](#), home to the international golf operator, is the place to be. In the shadow of Pinnacle Peak and studded with boulders and cacti, this club sets the bar for desert golf. Other Scottsdale stand-outs include the We-Ko-Pa course, one of two Native American reservation greens, and the more affordable Quintero Golf Course, which provides elevated tees on courses that snake between mountains.





17th hole at the Talon course at Greyhawk Golf Club

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#### 4. There's a buzzing art scene

Scottsdale's stunning desert vistas have made a big impact on its artistic community. Nearly 100 artworks decorate street corners throughout the neighbourhood while, in Old Town, a buzzy art district is filled with dozens of galleries run by local and international artists. There are also two museums worth visiting: [Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art](#) and [Scottsdale's Museum of the West](#). Thursday night 'art walks' see galleries stay open later and put on demonstrations and events, while no visitor should leave without making time to tour [Talesin West](#), architect Frank Lloyd Wright's 'desert laboratory' (opt for an in-person tour rather than the somewhat limited audio tour).

[CattleTrack](#) artists' community, which started in the 1930s as a haven for artists in the area, offers the chance to see creatives at work, sculpting everything from pottery and paintings to all manner of visual arts and is still run by the original family.





*Knight Rise* by James Turrell (Sean Deckert); wild horses in the Tonto National Forest (Alamy); sunrise in Tonto (Adobe Stock); Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West 'desert laboratory'



## 5. Its outdoor lifestyle resets mind and body

Teetering as it does on the edge of the wilderness, Scottsdale's views are second to none. Take them in from the best possible spot via Camelback Mountain, a locals' favourite hike. Two trails lead to the summit and are peppered with runners and hikers from before sunrise every day (no dogs allowed). [Echo Canyon Trail](#) is a challenging scramble over red rock, loose stone and slippery smooth boulders that rewards with panoramic views over the Valley of the Sun, while the Cholla trail is easier, weaving up the side of the mountain and ending in the same spot: a fabulous vantage point to enjoy the state's pink, purple and pastel blue striated skies.

You'll find a heady mix of other activities available, from kayaking down the Salt River alongside wild horses, herons and perhaps a wild boar or two, to exploring [Tonto National Forest](#)'s hidden secrets riding sure-footed trail horses who pick their way through an undulating cacti-strewn valley. Endless other activities on offer include paddleboarding, climbing, biking and more.



Misty at Vintage by Misty

## 6. There's seriously good shopping

The delightful Old Town (built circa 1906) is all swing-doored saloons, handmade jewellery shops and vintage clothes stores. Shop like a celeb at [Vintage by Misty](#), which has clothed the likes of RiRi and Miley Cyrus, or make an appointment at [Fashion by Robert Black](#) for dashing Gatsby-inspired looks. [The Native Art Market](#), the only Native American-owned shop in town sells all manner of jewellery, crockery and souvenirs, as well as giving talks and performances throughout the day on Native American history and culture (stick around for the impressive hoop dance). Take home a true slice of Americana from [Cowtown Boots](#) on North Scottsdale Road – a mini warehouse of a shoe shop selling fabulously embellished cowboy boots of every variety, from gold, glittering kickers to worn out stars-and-stripes-embossed ankle lengths.





Creating a stir at Platform 18; Clover Club cocktail (Grace Stufkosky)

## 7. The FnB is off the chain


Scottsdale's gastronomic offerings have come on leaps and bounds in recent years. In the Old Town, tofu teriyaki poke bowls and garden veggie wraps can be enjoyed at trendy [Farm & Craft](#). Steak and lobster in dark-wooded, art-covered [The Americano](#) sates more carnivorous desires, or find tempting veggie options at [FnB](#) on E Fifth Avenue. Chef Charleen Badman changes her dishes as often as supply from local farmers demands, producing a constantly evolving array of tantalising plant-based (and occasionally meat- and fish-based) delicacies.

For a pre-meal drink, try [Platform 18](#) in Century Grand for seriously strong (but wonderfully inventive cocktails) served by slick waiters in an all-too believable 'train carriage' complete with vistas flying by on LED 'windows'.



The pool at Hotel Adeline

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## 8. There's amazing accommodation

Arizona has a lot of space. Which means that almost all the hotels in Scottsdale feel roomy, quiet and right on the desert's doorstep. One of the best for sandy serenity is [Four Seasons Troon North](#), where sun-kissed balconies proffer views of crumbling red boulders, flitting house finches and the occasional bobcat. Rooms are camel-coloured casitas with thick walls and five-star amenities, dedicated to bringing the quiet of the outside in. Downtown, the mid-century Modern [Mountain Shadows](#) lies in the lee of Camelback Mountain and offers spacious suites, a stylish 'community room' and generous pool. Other highlights include the brilliantly 1950s [Hotel Valley Ho](#), the boutique, motel-inspired [Hotel Adeline](#) and punchy pop-art draped [Sonder the Monarch](#).





Devil's Bridge trail, Sedona (Justin Wolff/Unsplash); Bell Rock (Adobe Stock)

## 9. It's a gateway to the West

While there are more than enough reasons to stay in Scottsdale, its coveted position in the Midwest means it's the perfect jumping-off point for many of North America's greatest treasures. A little north are the red-rocked buttes and dramatic cliffs of Sedona, and beyond, the always enchanting Grand Canyon. To the west lies Joshua Tree National Park and Eastern California, while Tucson, Mexico and the stunning Sonora call from the south. Whether it's a quick flight or a classic road trip that takes you on to new horizons, Scottsdale can be the beginning of a bigger North American adventure. And what a way to kick it off...



[Discover Scottsdale for yourself →](#)



Ally Wybrew

Ally Wybrew is a freelance travel writer who has written for *The Independent*, *Empire*, *MO Magazine* and *The Club*, among others. When not at her desk, you can usually find her scuba diving in Gozo or looking for a mountain to climb

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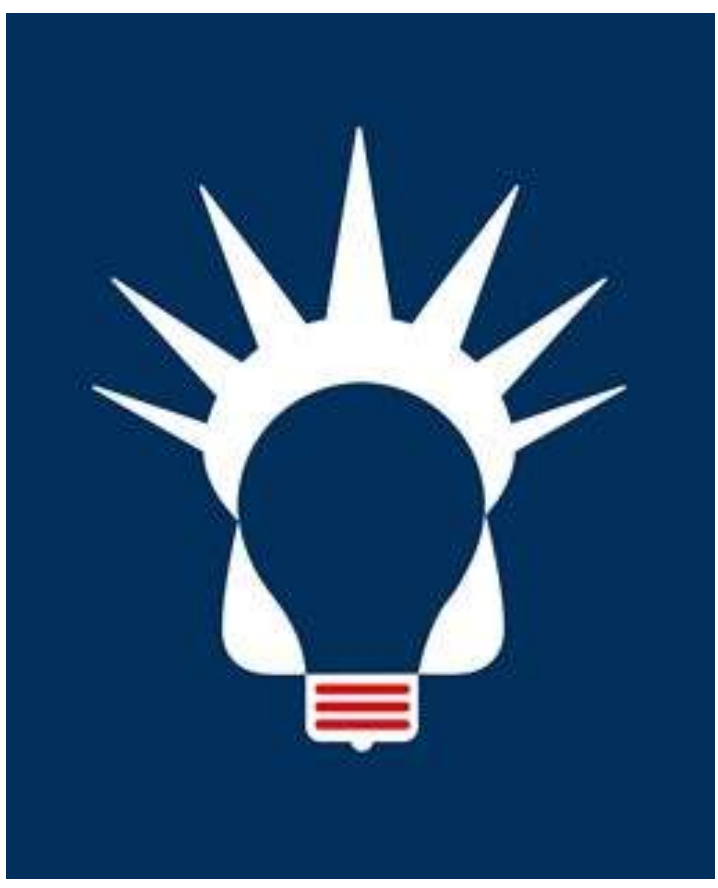
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