



How To Take The Ultimate Vacation In Scottsdale, Arizona

The desert city isn't just for retirees and bachelorette parties.

By **Caroline Bologna** Jun 27, 2022



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What drew you to Scottsdale as a place to visit or explore?

When people started emerging from pandemic lockdown and traveling again, I noticed a lot of folks on my Instagram feed were heading to Arizona. I had never visited the state, but all of the photos of gorgeous art and stunning mountain landscapes dotted with cacti piqued my interest.

So when my partner had to travel to Scottsdale for work in November, I jumped at the chance to tag along — and I was not disappointed. In fact, I enjoyed my time there so much that I took advantage of the opportunity to make a short return visit during the summer when hotel rates were low.

What are the best times of year to visit?

Fall and spring are popular times to visit Scottsdale due to the temperate weather, especially if you enjoy hiking. But I also had a nice time during my early summer visit.

Sure, it was hot, but it wasn't unbearable. And between the spas, museums, shops and restaurants, there were plenty of air-conditioned activities to fill my time. Plus, the summer hotel rates are pretty appealing if you want to experience luxury accommodations without paying premium prices.

What's your best tip for getting there? How can you make the travel as stress-free as possible?

Just a short drive from Scottsdale, Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport is one of the busiest airports in the U.S., so flight options abound. Although it's easy to get around the metro area with rideshare apps, you might also consider renting a car and making Scottsdale part of a longer Arizona road trip.



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From left to right: a Rainbow Ryders hot air balloon, the Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia and The Canal Club.

Where do you recommend staying when you go?

During my first visit, I stayed at the [Scottsdale Marriott Old Town](#), which was great because it was within walking distance of countless restaurants, bars and shops.

For my second trip, I stayed at the [Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia](#). Although I wasn't as close to the action, I got the classic desert resort experience with scenic grounds, multiple pools and spa time.

That whole area is full of nice accommodations, including the luxurious [Sanctuary Camelback Mountain](#) (where Jay-Z and Beyonce spent their honeymoon). I've also heard great things about the [JW Marriott Scottsdale Camelback Inn Resort & Spa](#) and [Andaz Scottsdale Resort & Bungalows](#).

Where are your go-to restaurants or foods to eat while you're there?

I was pleasantly surprised by all of the amazing food options in Scottsdale. For breakfast or brunch, I'm a fan of [Farm and Craft](#) and [Hash Kitchen](#).

[The Mission in Old Town](#) serves amazing tacos, guac and other latin fare in a really cool space. Shoutout to the white bean puree side and pumpkin bread pudding dessert. [The Montauk](#) is also a great spot for daytime dining.

If you're looking for a restaurant with trendy vibes and delicious food, I recommend [Toca Madera](#). I've also heard great things about [Fat Ox](#), [SumoMaya](#), [FnB](#) and [Elements](#).

As for dessert, I loved [Sugar Bowl](#) – a historic ice cream parlor with adorable decor and tasty treats. Last time I was in Scottsdale, I also had the opportunity cool off by taking a [gelato tour of Old Town](#) with JoyRidesAz.

What bars or entertainment spots do you make sure to hit? What's good to drink there or what else should people know?

Scottsdale has become a top destination for bachelorette parties, so there are plenty of clubs and pool parties in town.

I tend to prefer the cocktail bar scene, however, so I hit up spots like [Second Story Liquor Bar](#) and [The Canal Club](#). During my first trip to Scottsdale, I went to a festive bar called [Giligin's](#) for trivia night.



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From left to right: A cocktail at Second Story Liquor Bar, strawberry treat at Sugar Bowl and pumpkin bread pudding at The Mission.

What are your favorite shops and what do you look for when you're there?

Fashion Square has just about every popular chain you can imagine, but I enjoyed browsing the local shops in Scottsdale. I found a lot of cute clothes and accessories at [Carmen](#), [Rolling Rack](#) and [Iron Rose](#). [Vintage by Misty](#) has great finds, too.

As noted, Scottsdale is a big bachelorette party destination, so I've noticed a lot of shops have leaned into the "disco cowgirl" theme that's become popular.

What's your single favorite spot to go for photos and why?

Don't miss out on the [Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art \(SMoCA\)](#). The James Turrell Skyspace alone makes it worth a visit, and there are always great temporary exhibits. If you're a

Turrell fan, consider checking out the [Skyspace at Arizona State University](#) in nearby Tempe as well.

Scottsdale is also home to the first permanent [Wonderspaces](#) location. It's an interactive art experience with a lot of interesting pieces.

What tourist attraction should people skip and what should they do instead?

Hiking Camelback Mountain is a popular activity, but it can also be very strenuous and even dangerous if you aren't prepared for the heat and elevation. If you still want to get a hike in without pushing past your limits, I recommend [McDowell Sonoran Preserve](#). It's much flatter and still very scenic.

Where do you feel the most relaxed, calm or happy?

Although hiking Camelback Mountain wasn't in the cards for me during my last visits, I reached peak happiness (no pun intended) relaxing by the pool at the Omni and taking in the gorgeous mountain view. Lots of hotels and spas in the area offer similar vistas, so I highly recommend scheduling some relaxation time to enjoy that scenery.

What scenic spots do you recommend checking out?

If you're at all interested in architecture, you've got to take a tour of [Taliesin West](#). It was Frank Lloyd Wright's winter home and studio for more than 20 years and is one of the most unique and beautiful spaces I've ever seen.

Another scenic experience is taking a hot air balloon ride over the desert. I went for a sunrise ride one with [Rainbow Ryders](#), and it was such a special experience.



CAROLINE BOLOGNA/HUFFPOST

From left to right: SMoCA, Taliesin West and Wonderspaces.

What's one thing you make sure to pack if you're going and why?

Don't forget to pack comfortable walking shoes. Even if you aren't planning on hiking, Downtown Scottsdale is very walkable, so you'll want to be able to explore and shop around the area without hurting your feet. Also, a refillable water bottle is crucial for staying hydrated in the desert.

What are some specific planning tips to know before you go so you're not stressed?

Plan your outfits to build in layers. Even in the summer, there's quite a range of temperatures, so you'll want to be prepared to cover up in the evening and early morning. I found myself sweltering in the daytime but shivering at night without a sweater.

What surprised you about Scottsdale when you went the first time?

I was skeptical when I read that Arizona has a top-notch wine scene, but the local wine was surprisingly good. Although most of the vineyards are in the southern part of the state, Scottsdale has a number of great tasting rooms where you can sample their wines. I was a big fan of [Merkin](#) and [LDV Winery](#).

Anything else visitors should know?

Don't try to create an overly rigid itinerary for your trip. Part of the fun of Scottsdale is wandering around areas like Old Town and Fashion Square and coming across interesting shops, eateries and activities you might not have read about online.

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