

DESTINATIONS

GREAT SCOTTSDALE!

The desert city is blooming with indulgent spas, awe-inspiring nature, and eye-popping architecture. But that's just the beginning. *By Candice Rainey*



**BING SLEPT
HERE**

After opening in 1956, Hotel Valley Ho played host to Hollywood icons like Bing Crosby and Zsa Zsa Gabor.

● It's not the sheer concentration of luxury spa hotels that makes Scottsdale seem so damn restorative. As soon as you land in this palm-filled northeast corner of the greater Phoenix area, you're surrounded by hundred-year-old saguaros touching a cloudless, seemingly endless sky and rock formations that radiate a pre-civilization vibe. But you're also not so "away from it all" that you can't take it in from a jewel-colored pool with a blindingly good margarita in hand. For the Patagonia fanny-pack crowd, Scottsdale is an easy getaway where you can hike among the chollas as well as drink excellent cocktails, devour taco platters, and soak up life-affirming architecture in perpetual sunshine. And with a new wave of hotel and restaurant openings, the city has lost the country-club stiffness and gained a more southwestern-inflected midcentury feel.



The Big Bite

Where to Stay

The Andaz Scottsdale Resort & Bungalows is the perfect tune-everything-out compound, with its grown-up pool and midcentury-style residences. But if it's the cool-kid crowd you're after, head to the Scott Resort & Spa, which just underwent a massive \$15 million renovation; its lobby bar, one of the slickest in town, serves up frosty, Havana-inspired cocktails. We also love the refurbished Hotel Valley Ho, a stylish homage to its modernist architect, Edward L. Varney, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright's who designed the celeb hangout in 1956. It stays true to the era through its Knoll chairs and bold-colored B&B Italia sofas.

How to Commune with Nature

No matter where you rest your head, you'll need to get up early to climb Camelback Mountain before the Arizona sun immolates you. Take a predawn Uber (parking is a nightmare) and expect to reach the summit after 1.2 to 1.5 miles—at that point, you'll be met with uninterrupted views of Tonto National Forest.

If you're craving wide-open space, take a day trip to McDowell Sonoran Preserve, which has more than 30,500 acres of trippy desert landscape filled with boulders the size of Jeeps and multiarmed cacti. The mountain-biking trails here are some of the best in the West, and AZ Mountain Biking specializes in guided tours for all skill levels, from beginner to spoke-head.

Where to Eat and Drink After Hiking/Biking Your Butt Off

For lunch, visit Taco Chelo. While designing this unnerveingly cool taqueria, artist and restaurant co-owner Gennaro Garcia channeled Mexican architect Luis Barragán's house. Eat as many carne asada tacos as

DESERT MODERN

Clockwise from left: Taliesin West; Taco Chelo; Camelback Mountain.

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you like (don't forget, you just climbed mountains in the desert) and drink from the margarita machine. Once it's time for dinner, know that Pizzeria Bianco is considered one of the best Neapolitan pie joints in the country. (Chef Chris Bianco hails from the Bronx.) Looking to satisfy more of a southwestern craving? Try Chelsea's Kitchen, a reimagined roadhouse with cocktails and chili burgers in an adobe-brick building. Whatever you do, at some point have a nightcap on the patio at the 90-year-old Biltmore hotel, renowned for its massive fire pits and uniformed waiters delivering room service on bikes. No judgment if you just want to grab a bottle at Sauvage Bottle Shop, a natural-wine store, and take it back to your room—especially if you have your own private fire pit.



Where to Get Your Culture Fix

When you've had enough pool time (is that a thing?) and your quads can't take any more adventuring, scope out some serious architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright designed and built his winter home, Taliesin West, in Scottsdale in 1937. "[It's] a look over the rim of the world," he once said about the landmark. It also houses an architecture school and offers guided tours to mid-century and desert-modernist acolytes. Make a reservation if you want to see all that natural light stream into Wright's living room, drafting studio, music pavilion, and garden room, where majorly sophisticated furniture (including those famous origami chairs) will have you foaming at the mouth.

For a day trip full of really out-there stuff (this is the desert, after all), travel about an hour north to Arconsoni, a proto eco-city dreamed up by Italian architect Paolo Soleri in the '60s. The project explores how architecture can play a role in environmental stewardship. Think bell chimes, domed ceilings, concrete-meets-desert-fauna, and a café (see: tacos for lunch, again). ☑

