

Destination Guide- SCOTTSDALE, Arizona

Created by Toccara from [Forget Someday](#)

This guide is designed to make the planning of your upcoming trip a little easier! This is not a comprehensive guide of this particular destination, as I can only give reviews based on what we experienced during our stay.



Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX), located less than 30 minutes from downtown Scottsdale, is the main airport serving the area and offers non-stop service to and from more than 100 cities worldwide. **Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport**, located in Mesa (30 miles from Scottsdale), is a regional airport offering service via Allegiant, Frontier and Spirit airlines.



Although limited public transportation is available, including a [free trolley](#) that runs throughout the city, it would probably be best for you to have/rent a car to explore all that Scottsdale has to offer.

When is the best time of year to visit Scottsdale?



Each season brings varied weather and accessible activities. In the summer, the heat can be staggering and most activities are reserved for after the sun goes down. Due to the low humidity, the air can feel cooler than it actually is, but temperatures in the summer frequently reach over 100 degrees. Spring will bring beautiful wildflowers and provides perfect weather for exploring the desert, just like the fall (when we visited). Winter presents mild temperatures and holiday festivities. With 330 days an annual sunshine, Scottsdale is an appealing destination for those who like to be outdoors!



[The Scottsdale Visitor & Convention Bureau](#) is a great resource for everything Scottsdale!



We stayed at [Scottsdale Camelback Resort](#) situated at the foothills of the Camelback mountains. Despite being ridiculously close to a major road (causing irritating traffic noise in the rooms closest to the front of the property), the resort has all of the amenities one would want in their 'home away from home'. Guests have access to a pool, hot tub, fitness center, walking trail, meditation garden, tennis courts, on-site movie theatre, in-room fireplace, etc. There are 2- or 3- bedroom villas to choose from, and all include a full kitchen. The well-maintained landscaping at and around the resort mimics the surrounding splendor of the Arizona desert. Scottsdale Camelback Resort has close proximity to world class shopping, dining, and many recreational activities such as golf and hiking. We booked at SCR through a timeshare exchange, although rooms are available to book on an individual and multi-night basis.



Activities to Enjoy in Beautiful Scottsdale

- **Old Town Scottsdale (\$)**
 - Shop, dine, tour museums and art galleries, see historic structures, and enjoy the night life
- **[Arizona Food Tours](#) (\$\$)**
 - Take a lunch or dinner tour to some of Scottsdale's most notable dining establishments
 - This unique 3-hour tour provides guests with scrumptious samplings of eclectic entrees at restaurants in Old Town Scottsdale
 - Meet new people, learn about Scottsdale's history, and enjoy some delicious food!
- **[Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve](#) (\$)**
 - Permanently protected 27,800-acre sustainable desert habitat
 - Currently contains approximately 120 miles of non-motorize, multi-use trails





- Popular Trailheads at McDowell Sonoran Preserve Include:
 - **Brown's Ranch**: A major access point to the vast network of trails in the area. Views from the trails include: **Granite Mountain, Cholla Mountain, Brown's Mountain, Balanced Rock** and **Cathedral Rock**.
 - **Lost Dog Wash**: Several trail options to choose from depending on the desired length and difficulty of your hike. We took **Lost Dog Wash Trail** to **Old Jeep Trail** and then to **Ringtail Trail**, creating a nice 4+ mile hike.
 - **Pinnacle Peak**: 1.75 miles each way (3.5 RT) loop / elevation gain ~1,300 ft
- **Desert Botanic Gardens (\$\$)** (*Phoenix*)
 - 140 acres make up this beautiful collection of over 50,000 plant displays
 - Garden admission is FREE the second Tuesday of every month from 8 am – 4 pm
- **Taliesen West (\$\$)**
 - Tour and explore the winter home of Frank Lloyd Wright
 - Variety of tour options ranging from 1-3 hours
- **Tomcar Adventure with Green Zebra Adventures (\$\$\$)** (*Fort McDowell*)
 - Ride through the Fort McDowell Yavapai Reservation on military-grade Tomcars
 - Tours depart at 9 am and 2 pm daily and last approximately 2 hours
- **Hot Air Balloon Ride w/ Rainbow Ryders (\$\$\$)**
 - Peacefully float over the Sonoran Desert in a basket big enough to fit up to 10 passengers
 - Flights leave at sunrise / Meet at RR office and take a 5-10 min van ride to launch site

\$= FREE or <\$10/pp \$\$= \$10-\$99/pp \$\$\$= >\$100/pp

Restaurants/Food We Visited While in Scottsdale/Phoenix

- **Food Truck Caravan (\$\$)**
 - Saturday (*5th & Goldwater- 6:30-10:30 pm*) & Thursday (*5th & Marshall- 6:30-9 pm*)
 - Sample a variety of food from up to 15 different food trucks and enjoy live music
- **The Farm Kitchen (\$\$)**
 - Located at *The Farm at South Mountain* in Phoenix
 - Sandwiches, soups, seasonal salads and made-from-scratch baked goods in picnic baskets
- **Stax Burger Bistro (\$)**
 - Each sandwich is perfectly portioned at 3oz so you can try many combinations
 - Fresh ingredients, handmade buns, hand-crafted cocktails. Great happy hour!
- **Karsen's Grill (\$\$)**
 - Tiny bar/restaurant in Old Town serving great drinks and delicious food
- **Jalapeno Inferno (\$\$)**
 - Mexican Bistro / Southwest food with attitude! Incredible entrée and combo options!
- **That's Amore Gelato (\$)**
 - Choose from over 30 flavors of delightful and creamy gelato. Simply amazing!!
- *There are also a plethora of grocery stores in the Scottsdale area to choose from*

Average Entrée \$= <\$10 \$\$= \$10-\$20 \$\$\$= >\$20





Day/Overnight Trips from Scottsdale

- **Sedona** (2 hours) - Enjoy history, archeology, arts and culture, shopping, outdoor adventure, and breathtaking scenery; known as “Red Rock Country”
- **Flagstaff** (2.5 hours) - Home to the world’s largest ponderosa pine forest. Small town charm meets outdoor adventure hub. Enjoy hiking, biking, skiing and snowboarding (winter), and rock climbing.



- **Grand Canyon National Park** (4 hours) - One of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World. South Rim houses the main visitor center and offers an abundance of hiking trails and scenic overlooks.
- **Saguaro National Park** (2 hours) – A national park dedicated to preserving the nation's largest cacti (Saguaro). Located to the east and west of Tucson, this park provides a great opportunity to see these enormous cacti, silhouetted by the beauty of a magnificent desert sunset.



Money Saving Tips for the Frugal Traveler

- Take advantage of the city’s **free trolley**
 - It runs every 15 minutes and stops at most of the city's popular attractions
- Hike or bike through the **Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve** (no admission charge)
- Visit the [Desert Botanic Gardens](#) on the 2nd Tuesday of the month / FREE from 8 am – 4 pm
- Walk around **Old Town Scottsdale** and peruse the eclectic shops and art galleries
- Attend [Art Walk](#) Thursdays from 7-9 pm (year-round w/ the exception of Thanksgiving)
 - Art galleries open their doors to the public and show off the works from some of the Southwest’s most extraordinary artists
- Neighboring Phoenix hosts its own [ArtLink](#) on the 1st and 3rd Friday of every month
 - 1st Fridays is more of a festive environment, whereas 3rd Fridays is geared more towards the serious art collector
- Take a walking or driving architectural tour of the city. Download a [free guide](#).
 - The tours highlight 30 of the city’s most notable buildings and homes by locally and nationally renowned masters of the craft.
- Take a hike, go mountain biking or enjoy a picnic in the **Piestewa Peak** area (Phoenix)
- Visit the **Pueblo Grande Museum & Archaeological Park** (Phoenix)
 - Experience the ruins of an ancient Hohokam Indian village, including an excavated prehistoric ball court and two full-scale reproductions of prehistoric Hohokam dwellings. Admission is only \$6 for adults, \$3 for children (6-17 yo)
- Plan ahead and create a budget for how much you want to spend on your vacation (i.e.- transportation, food, activities, etc.)
 - When we don’t plan in advance, we tend to spend well over our intended amount