

# ESSENTIAL TRAVEL GUIDE SERIES

ARIZONA



**STYLED** to SPARKLE

*life & style for the real girl*

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## PHOENIX, ARIZONA (+GREATER AREA)

The Phoenix, Arizona area is one of my favorites to visit in the USA. What I love about it is that there is something for everyone to do – for every interest and taste. It is also a vacation destination that works for a week or a quick week-end away. Many airlines also offer direct flights to Phoenix Skyharbor Airport as it is a large hub for air travel.

Phoenix also offers great shopping, attractions, accommodations and activities for every budget! Its great climate and endless blue skies make it an ideal destination throughout the year.

I have spent a lot of time in the Phoenix area over the past number of years and hope to highlight some of my favorite things to see and do in this guide.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

In this guide I will be sharing everything you need to know for planning your trip to Phoenix! From where to stay, when to visit, how to get around, where to shop/eat/stay, what to see and so much more. This guide should help you to plan the logistics of your trip, determine an





itinerary that works well for you and your group and answer any questions you might have about traveling to the Phoenix area.

Logistics: When to Visit, Where to Stay, How to Get Around

### **WHEN TO VISIT**

Arizona is one of those places that is beautiful no matter what time of year it is, but it is important to consider climate when choosing when to visit. If extreme heat isn't your thing, avoid visiting in the summer months. Although many 'snowbird' to Arizona, if you're after heat in the winter months, you might not find the level of warmth you're looking for. It gets chilly in the desert in the winter months and can even snow in northern parts of the state.

I suggest visiting in the Spring and Fall months; this way you'll get enough heat that you can wear shorts and lay by the pool, but the heat isn't so unbearable that you can't go for a hike or play a round or two of golf.

### **WHERE TO STAY**

Where to stay really depends on the attractions you're hoping to visit and activities you're going to be doing. Like most cities, hotels and share-economy accommodations are your two main choices. What I suggest is this: Consider the size of your group. Perhaps renting a house with a pool, grill and a few bedrooms might be the right fit. Try searching on Airbnb for a great spot with a pool! TIP: Look for one near a Starbucks to ensure it's in a safe neighbourhood!





Maybe you're looking for a more luxury spa-like getaway in which case a boutique hotel, spa hotel or resort might be what you're looking for. For this, I would suggest The Phoenician Scottsdale. This luxury resort has every amenity you could ever require, including incredible views of Camelback Mountain! Click here for a list of the best luxury hotels and resorts in Phoenix. My favorites include the Andaz Scottsdale, Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, Hyatt Regency and Four Seasons. Each features a gorgeous pool, spectacular view, spa and golf, among other highlights.

Feeling a little more outdoorsy? Why not consider one of the many 'glamping' options in the area. Not sure what glamping really is? Here is Everything You Need to Know About It!

## GETTING AROUND

When it comes to getting around, I highly suggest renting a car for your stay in the Phoenix

area. This will allow you to visit all of the attractions and little boroughs without the high cost of taxis to get you to and from. If you're just planning on staying in one area, for instance Scottsdale, then I'm sure über is just fine for getting around.

## WHAT TO PACK & WHAT TO WEAR

Like for any other vacation, pack what makes you feel most comfortable and for what activities you will be partaking in. If you plan to play a round or two of golf, be sure to pack appropriate attire based on the course's dress code. If you're going to be doing any hiking, be sure to pack all of the necessary gear, clothing and footwear for that. If you're visiting in the warmer months, don't forget to pack your swimsuit!

As far as what you can expect for other leisure and sightseeing activities, shorts and t-shirts, jeans and dresses and really any other casual attire you would see anywhere else goes! Do



Andaz Scottsdale

consider dress codes for restaurants you may be visiting for dinner (often long pants are required for men, some may require a blazer). Also know that it gets chilly in the desert at night so be sure to pack a light jacket or sweater.

A few other 'must-pack' items include sunscreen, sunglasses and extra moisturizer. The climate is quite dry in Arizona and you may find your skin and lips are bit drier than normal. Staying properly hydrated will help with this as well.

### **THINGS TO SEE & DO**

There is so much to see and do in the Phoenix area – there is something for everyone! Here are a few of the main highlights that I suggest catching while in Arizona!

### **GOLF**

Phoenix is considered to be one of the premier golf destinations in the USA and for good rea-

son. There are golf courses for every skill level and budget. As with all courses, please see dress code requirements.

When I say that there are courses for every budget, I want to include that there are tee-times for every budget, too. Many courses offer incentives to golfers who tee-off later in the day (when it is much warmer outside). Some of these incentives include discounted green fees, complimentary lunch + beer, free course swag, a bucket of balls for the driving range, etc. The list goes on! Even the most expensive courses offer different rates for different times of day.

All courses will offer power cart rental (often complimentary with green fees). This cart will have a cooler which the snack-cart attendant will come and re-fill your ice supply throughout your round. Many courses provide complimentary bottled water as well. They will also have a staff who will clean your clubs following your round,





so be sure to have cash on hand for tipping.

There are more golf courses than I could possibly recommend, so definitely do a little bit of research on cost, course difficulty and location before you book. Many courses allow you to pre-book your tee times online.

## HIKING

Hiking is a very popular activity in the Phoenix area. There are a ton of great hiking trails within the city, especially around Camelback Mountain in Scottsdale. There are also a number of great hiking opportunities in Sedona, which is a great day trip option from Phoenix.

Recommendations: Consider hiking early in the day before the sun has peaked in the sky to avoid heat stroke or other sun-induced conditions. Be sure to dress in layers as it can be

chilly in the mornings/evenings but quite hot during the day. Pack plenty of water and try to stay as hydrated as possible. The air in Arizona is quite dry and this will require you to be extra diligent about hydration.

## SPORTING EVENTS

Major league and college sports are a great reason to visit the Phoenix area! Even if you aren't a sports fan, these events can be a ton of fun to attend, just for the experience!

NHL Hockey: Arizona Coyotes (Gila River Arena, Glendale)

NFL Football: Arizona Cardinals (University of Arizona Stadium, Glendale)

The NFL Stadium and NHL Arena are situated beside the Westgate Entertainment District



Hiking Phoenix

in Glendale. This area boasts a variety of open air shops and restaurants where you can enjoy some food and fun before and after the game!

NBA Basketball: Phoenix Suns (Talking Stick Resort Arena in Downtown Phoenix)

MLB Baseball: Arizona Diamondbacks (Chase Field in Downtown Phoenix)

The NBA and MLB Stadiums bookend the Legends Entertainment District in downtown Phoenix. This area offers plenty of places to eat, shop and enjoy before and after the game or event you're attending!

### Other Sporting & Special Events

Among those listed above, there are a number of other sporting events that you can attend while you're visiting. There are a number of college sports teams (too many to list)

as well as the Fiesta Bowl football game each year over New Years. The city has also boasted hosting the Super Bowl. You can also take in Major League Baseball Spring Training in a variety of Phoenix's boroughs or take in a motor race at the local speedway! There are always special events happening at the US Airways Center in Downtown Phoenix, too!

All events are subject to seasons, so be sure to check schedules before you arrive. Please check individual team/event websites to view restrictions on backpacks and purse sizes for events. TIP: Pack a sweater or top layer as many of these stadiums are air conditioned on warmer days.

### SHOPPING

One of the many things that Phoenix is known for is its incredible shopping opportunities!



Scottsdale Fashion Square



The area boasts a number of great outlet malls, complexes with shops and restaurants, big box stores and other great retailers. Here are some of my favorite places to shop in the Phoenix area:

**Outlet Malls:** There are several outlet malls in the area (a quick “Phoenix Outlet Malls” search will bring up plenty), but my favorites are:

#### **Tanger Premium Outlets (in Glendale)**

Tanger Outlets in Glendale is one of the newer outlet malls in the area and it is really nicely located. It is right off the freeway (I5) and sits on the same area as the NFL and NHL stadiums, Westgate Entertainment District restaurants and shops. There are also plenty of other restaurants and large box retailers in this same area.

#### **Phoenix Premium Outlets (in Chandler)**

The Phoenix Premium Outlets shopping complex might feel a bit out of the way as it is quite a bit south from the main parts of the city, but

the shops that it boasts are worth it. Other nearby attractions include: a casino, botanical gardens and MLB Spring Training facilities.

#### **Nordstrom Rack & DSW Stores**

We’re all familiar with these great discount retailers, but the Phoenix area boasts many locations for these two retailers, each carrying slightly different stock. For high-end designer discounts, visit their locations in Scottsdale (they each have more than one). For ready-to-wear styles, visit their other locations across the area.

**Traditional Shopping Malls:** There are a number of traditional shopping malls in the area, however, Scottsdale Fashion Square is by far the best. This is where you will find high end department stores (Barneys, Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus, etc.) along with a mix of other retailers that range from inexpensive to luxury. There are also plenty of great places to eat nearby so you won’t go hungry while you’re on the hunt!



Scottsdale Waterfront



Other Shopping Complexes: Something I love about the climate of Arizona is that it allows for a more open-air shopping experience and because of this a number of shopping complexes have emerged. Each features a great selection of restaurants, boutiques and outdoor spaces to enjoy. My favorites include:

### **Scottsdale Waterfront**

Scottsdale Waterfront is located across from Fashion Square Mall. It boasts unique shops and fantastic restaurants. Before you visit, be sure to check their website for upcoming events for foodies and shopping lovers alike.

### **Scottsdale Quarter**

Scottsdale Quarter is a fantastic outdoor shopping center and well worth a visit. There are plenty of shops and boutiques to peruse and countless restaurants and eateries. It's a great spot to spend an afternoon and evening!

### **Canadian Must-Stops**

No trip to the USA is complete for a Canadian

without a stop at a Target store, of which there are many in the Phoenix area. I also suggest checking out what the local Costco might be carrying (this is a great place to purchase discounted alcohol to bring home) and of course The Container Store!

Note for Shopping: Each city in the Phoenix area has a different local sales tax rate, so you might notice some variations if you are shopping in different areas.

### **OTHER THINGS TO SEE & DO**

For those of you looking for a more interesting experience than what has been included so far, here is a list of other exciting attractions that might pique your interest:

### **Taliesin West (Scottsdale)**

Taliesin West is the former home and school of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Explore his former home and discover the deeper meaning of his iconic architecture. This is a



Taliesin West





Westgate Entertainment



lovely way to spend a few hours in the morning or afternoon. It can be a bit tricky to find so [click here for directions](#).

### Orpheum Theatre

If you are looking to view a unique piece of history, I suggest a stop by the restored Orpheum Theatre. It was originally built in 1927 and has gone through a number of transformations since.

### Old Town Scottsdale

I love Old Town Scottsdale and try to visit each



Scottsdale Fashion Square





time I'm there. This area of original buildings where the town of Scottsdale began features a number of great local restaurants as well as boutiques and markets where you can find goods from local artists and artisans. This is a great spot to pick up unique artwork and souvenirs.

### **Arizona 'Glamping' Experience**

We touched on Glamping when we discussed accommodations, but it's important to mention how much fun this could be to do as a vacation experience. I suggest checking

Glamping Hub or Schnepf Farms for accommodation options.

### **Desert Botanical Garden**

The Desert Botanical Garden is a really interesting place to visit! They feature a number of different exhibits and tours, so be sure to check their schedule when planning your visit.

### **Aquariums**

The Phoenix area boasts two different aquariums to visit. These include OdySea Aquarium in Scottsdale and Sea Life Aquarium in Tempe.





Each has a focus on education and conservation and is fun for visitors of all ages.

### **DAY TRIP SUGGESTIONS**

Phoenix is nicely located in that you can take a few short trips by car to see some unique places! Here are my favorite “day” trips from Phoenix that you might want to consider:

#### **Sedona**

Sedona is a really interesting place to visit! It features incredible desert and mountain landscapes with great hiking and walking trails. It is home to spa and retreat centers and boasts magnetic energy thought to be there from the supernatural. It’s both a great place for a quick day trip from Phoenix or to even spend a few days relaxing. Take a stroll through the streets of town where you’ll find quaint eateries, unique art galleries and goods sold by local artisans. TIP: Drive into the mountains where you will find local Native Americans selling handmade jewelry and other traditional goods.

Distance from Phoenix to Sedona: 2hours by car.

#### **The Grand Canyon**

Many people want to visit The Grand Canyon when they visit Arizona and rightfully so – it is more amazing than it appears in photos. This spectacular spot, though, is not something you can do as just a day trip unless you were to take a helicopter or not spend much time at the site itself. If you plan on driving out to visit The Grand Canyon while in Phoenix, I suggest driving up to Flagstaff and staying overnight before heading out to The Grand Canyon for the next day to ensure you get ample time there. Distance from Phoenix to Grand Canyon Village: 3hrs45mins by car.

#### **WHERE TO EAT**

I believe that some of the best restaurants in the USA are in the Phoenix area. There are SO many great places to eat (at a variety of price points). Here are my favorites:





### **Elements at Sanctuary Spa (Camelback Mountain, Scottsdale)**

Elements is my absolute favorite restaurant in Arizona for a number of reasons. The restaurant boasts a fantastic menu, custom craft cocktails,

a vast wine cellar and on-staff sommelier and spectacular views. Not to mention that their chef, Beau McMillan has been featured on a number of Food Network programs, including the Next Iron Chef competition.

My recommendations: The Orange Jalapeño Martini and the Salt & Pepper Pork Belly, and sit on the patio if you can (if weather permits).

### **Olive & Ivy (Scottsdale)**

Olive & Ivy is where I claim to eat the 'best salad I've ever had'! Although their dinner menu is positively lovely, I highly suggest this spot for lunch or brunch. I love their dining room, but their patio is fantastic on a Spring morning!

### **Mexican Cuisine**

Being so close to the USA/Mexico border and with a high local Hispanic population, the Phoenix area boasts some of the best Mexican cuisine in the country. There are a lot of great places to enjoy. My favorites are **The Spotted Donkey Cantina** and **Blanco** (both in Scottsdale) as well as **Manny's** in Avondale.



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