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Why You Should Visit Scottsdale Now

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The daytime party pool at The Saguardo. Photo courtesy Joie de Vivre Hospitality.

For a city that gets more than 300 days of sunshine a year, it doesn't take much to lure travelers to Scottsdale, Arizona. But with new places to stay and play, eat and explore—not to mention wintertime temperatures hovering in the mid-70s—there's plenty of incentive to visit this desert oasis now.

Where to Stay:

The November opening of **The Saguardo** ushered in a fresh splash of color to the sandy desert beiges all over Old Town Scottsdale. Previously Hotel Theodore, the boutique getaway underwent a \$10-million renovation and opened as the first Joie de Vivre Hotels property outside of California. Located around the corner from the Civic Center, the 194-room hotel is an exercise in vibrant, modern design. Twelve bright colors (all hues found in native desert wildflowers) mix well with the whimsical décor (think vivid Mexican equipale chairs

and vintage photos of Saguaro cacti). The two outdoor pools have different vibes—one for quiet relaxation and the other for a daytime party crowd complete with cabanas and a central fuchsia fireplace. James Beard Award-winning chef Jose Garces opened the hotel's three new restaurants: Old Town Whiskey for bourbon, whiskey and scotch and tasty bar snacks, Distrito for small plates of Mexican street food, and Garces Trading Company Coffee for baked goods and gourmet java.

Where to Play:

If Scottsdale is known for anything it's these three things: baseball, golf and spas—and there's plenty new on the scene here. Fifteen Major League Baseball teams conduct spring training in Arizona, and devotees have flocked to watch the Cactus League players warm up for the season since 1947. New this year is the Spring Training Festival (Feb. 25-26), a kick-off event where fans can hobnob with players, get autographs and listen to live music.

Phil Mickelson was in town in October to take the first tee shot at the new McDowell Mountain Golf Club. The 18-hole, par-71 course underwent a \$1 million architectural renovation, which included reshaping fairways and adding tee-off areas and waste bunkers. Golfers can take in the views of Pinnacle Peak and Camelback mountains while scoping the scene for Mickelson, now the course owner.

Hit up a different kind of happy hour at the Forbes Travel Guide Four-Star Spa at Four Seasons Scottsdale at Troon North. The recently launched spa happy hour (called the "tapas tasting menu") features a choice of two 25-minute treatments for \$99 between 3-8 p.m., Sun. through Thurs. Mini-treatments range from scalp massages to herbal wraps and all feature a sweet green fig scent.

Where to Eat and Drink:

When Citizen R+D opened in December, it instantly gained street cred as an insider haunt. As the small lounge-like space above Old Town Scottsdale's popular Citizen Public House, the bar is only accessible by a staircase outside the restaurant's back alley. Patrons even call from the outside phone to see if there's availability before heading upstairs. But it's worth a visit, as mixologist Richie Moe does craft cocktails like no one else in town. For a more relaxed vibe, head downstairs for inventive comfort food such as bacon fat heirloom popcorn and pork belly pastrami with rye spaetzle and Brussels sprout sauerkraut.

The cocktail menu at Casablanca Lounge, which debuted in October, will light up your face, literally—it shines with neon lights when cracked open. This



The Chicago Cubs play spring baseball at Hohokam Stadium. Photo courtesy Mark Mabry.

sleek, dimly lit nightclub is decked in plush booths and features outdoor balconies large enough to take in the cool Arizona evening air. Creative handcrafted cocktails are the specialty here—try the Cat's Pajamas made with Milagro reposado, chipotle, raspberry, honey and lime.

Featuring an altogether different spin on boozy treats, Lee's Cream Liqueur on Stetson Drive serves up alcohol-infused ice cream. While Lee's has been popular since it opened in July 2010, it recently introduced new flavors including caramel bacon with Jack Daniels, red velvet with scotch and balsamic walnuts with Irish whiskey. And starting next week, the shop will offer full-scale alcohol-infused ice cream cakes.

What to See:

Arizona celebrates its centennial in 2012 (on February 14 to be exact), and a slew of events are planned to celebrate. To get a real sense of how the state has evolved, visit the Phoenix Art Museum to see *Iconic Arizona: Celebrating the Arizona Centennial with Photographs from the Center for Creative Photography*. The exhibit runs through March 4 and features gorgeous photographs of some of Arizona's most iconic images—Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam, Navajo Reservation—from famed photographers such as Ansel Adams and David Muench.

Also at the museum is *Frank Lloyd Wright: Organic Architecture for the 21st Century*, planned to correspond with the 75-year celebration of the architect's nearby Taliesin West home. The exhibit shows 33 drawings by Wright, his rare home movies focused on green building and explorations of his most famous structures. While the exhibit runs through April 29, special events at Taliesin West will be held through all of 2012, so you can head to the house and see it in person.