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## Travel

### CHECK IN

THE SAGUARO SCOTTSDALE, SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ.

# A Stylish Spot, Young at Heart

By ELAINE GLUSAC

### Upshot

Rates start at \$89 (May 15 through Sept. 15; \$189 otherwise).

### Basics

Formerly the Mondrian Scottsdale, and a James hotel before that, the Saguaro remains trendy in the new hands of the San Francisco-based Joie de Vivre company. The 194-room hotel, which opened in November 2011, was given a kicky overhaul by Stenberg Aferiat + Associates, drenching seemingly every available surface in a spectrum of bright paint colors inspired by Arizona wildflowers.

### Location

The hotel sits in a pedestrian-friendly area of a town that usually requires a rental car. It anchors one end of Civic Center Mall park, and is within walking distance of the shops, restaurants and galleries in the old town.

### The Room

Charm is in the details at the Saguaro. The floor plan — a basic box with bathroom and closets on each side of the entryway — dates back to the building's roots as a DoubleTree, circa 1975. The sliding glass doors (next to a very noisy air-conditioner) in my city-view king room offered only an oblique view of one of the hotel's two heated pools. But the décor delivered on style, with a hot-pink wall and matching bed, vintage copies of Arizona Highways magazine, and leather and wood barrel-shaped chairs. One wall was draped in sheer curtains to soften the geometry, a downy duvet covered the bed, and the desk had an ergonomic chair for anyone strong enough to resist the temptation of the pools (Wi-Fi access is free).

### The Bathroom

Bathrooms are frill-free but have ample room; convex shower curtain rods provide more space in standard step-in tubs. Lime-green and baby-blue walls supply the color scheme, and bath products are by Lather.

### Amenities

Diversions abound in the courtyard of the hotel, including a 100-foot-long centerpiece pool ringed with bright yellow chaise longues where you can laze about to a soundtrack of dance music. Those seeking a quiet spot can steal away to the smaller, circular "calma" pool, where the white noise from a concrete waterfall masks the sound of voices. A well-equipped gym overlooks the main pool, free bikes



are available, and a small spa with three indoor treatment rooms offers a limited but desert-centric service menu, with 30-minute "tapas" samplers (\$60) for the time-pressed or the budget-focused including a prickly pear sugar scrub and a chile ginger massage.

Jose Garces, a regular on "Iron Chef," runs the hotel's Mexican restaurant, Distro, serving shareable Mexico City street food and barbecue, which draws young, well-dressed locals. Staffers are helpful and friendly, offering on several occasions to print out directions and airline boarding passes.

### Room Service

I skipped the free breakfast buffet and ordered house-made granola with yogurt and fruit (\$8) and orange juice (\$4), which arrived in just eight minutes. The server helpfully volunteered that the tab included a standard \$3 service charge and an 18 percent gratuity, so all I had to do was sign.

### Bottom Line

An urban resort in the suburban desert with a pool-party scene, boutique spa and destination restaurant makes a convivial base for anyone who doesn't want the isolation of the large local resorts. The vibe is friendly, indoors and out.

*The Saguaro Scottsdale, 4000 North Drinkwater Boulevard, Scottsdale, Ariz., (480) 308-1100; [thesaguaro.com](http://thesaguaro.com).*