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U.S. SERIES

MOUNTAIN WEST & DESERT ESCAPES

# *Greetings from* SCOTTSDALE

48 hours, solo, at your own pace

POCKET EDITION · 2027

48-HOUR GUIDE · SAFETY GUIDE · PLANNING CALENDAR

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# Welcome to Scottsdale

Scottsdale is the Sonoran Desert at its most polished: sunny, walkable in the old center, ringed by mountain preserves, and full of galleries, patios, and resorts. It is easy to reach from the Phoenix airport, easy to get around, and made for slow mornings and long, golden evenings.

Traveling solo here works because the town is built for lingering. Old Town has a compact grid of galleries and patios, the desert trails start a few minutes from downtown, and a single diner at a bar or courtyard table is part of the scenery.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read through once before you go. Day One covers Old Town, the Arts District, and a sunset hike or patio dinner. Day Two visits Taliesin West, the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, and the Desert Botanical Garden. Section 03 is the new-for-2027 feature on Frank Lloyd Wright's desert camp. Summers are extremely hot, so plan outdoor time for early mornings and evenings.

## ESSENTIAL QUICK FACTS

**CURRENCY**
US dollar (cards accepted nearly everywhere)

**TRANSIT**
Limited — a car or rideshare is easiest; free Old Town trolley

**TIME ZONE**
Mountain Standard, year-round (UTC–7; Arizona skips daylight saving)

**EMERGENCY**
911 · non-emergency 480-312-5000

**TIPPING**
18–20% in restaurants

**SALES TAX**
About 8% — added at the register

01 DAY ONE

# Old Town · The Arts District · Sunset

The first day stays in the compact center, with galleries, shade, and a sunset over the desert.

## MORNING · 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

8:00 AM

### Breakfast — Old Town cafes

Old Town has plenty of patios for a late-morning breakfast, with fresh juice, huevos rancheros, and coffee in the shade.

*Sit outdoors in cool months, and inside in summer.*

9:30 AM

### Scottsdale Waterfront

A shaded canal path with art, fountains, and a view of the Arizona Canal, lined with shops and restaurants.

*The path is cool in the morning, and a good stroll before it gets hot.*

11:00 AM

### Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMoCA)

A small contemporary art museum in a converted movie theater, with changing exhibits and an interior court.

*Check hours and rotating exhibitions.*

## AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM – 5:30 PM

1:00 PM

### Lunch — Los Olivos Mexican Patio

A family-run Mexican restaurant in Old Town since 1946, with a tree-shaded patio.

*Ask for a table on the patio, and try the green chile specials.*

2:30 PM

### The Scottsdale Arts District

A walkable district of art galleries, studios, and sculpture, with a Thursday-evening ArtWalk on a regular schedule.

*Check ArtWalk times before you go; galleries often close early.*

4:00 PM

### Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West

A museum of Western history and art, with changing exhibits and a small gift shop.

*Check hours and admission.*

## EVENING · 5:30 PM – 10:00 PM

5:30 PM

### Sunset at the Preserve

The McDowell Sonoran Preserve's Gateway trailhead has easy paths and a sweeping view as the light turns gold and purple.

*Bring water and a headlamp, and stay on marked trails.*

7:30 PM

### Dinner — The Mission

A restaurant in Old Town serving modern Latin dishes, with a patio and a good bar.

*Reserve ahead, or sit at the bar.*

02 DAY TWO

# Taliesin West · Camelback · Desert Botanical Garden

The second day looks outward, to a famous architect's desert camp, a sweeping mountain, and a garden of cacti.

## MORNING · 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

8:00 AM

### Taliesin West

Frank Lloyd Wright's winter home and school, built from desert stone and canvas in the 1930s. Guided tours explain the design and the life of the community.

*Reserve a tour ahead of time, and dress for the sun.*

11:00 AM

### Lunch — Pita Jungle or a casual cafe

A casual spot with Mediterranean-style food and light options for a mid-day break.

*Look for a table in the shade.*

12:00 PM

### Optional Hike — Camelback Mountain

An iconic red sandstone peak with two very steep trails. Only attempt in cool weather with plenty of water, or choose an easier preserve trail.

*Do not hike in extreme heat; the trails have claimed lives. Start at dawn if you go.*

## AFTERNOON · 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

2:00 PM

### Desert Botanical Garden

A garden in Phoenix with towering saguaros, a cactus collection, and trails through the desert. It is a short drive from Old Town.

*Go in the morning or late afternoon, and check the evening events.*

4:30 PM

### Musical Instrument Museum

A museum in north Phoenix with instruments and music from nearly every country, with headphones that play as you walk.

*Allow two hours or more; check hours.*

## EVENING · 6:30 PM – LATE

6:30 PM

### Dinner — FnB

A small restaurant in Old Town known for its vegetable-forward cooking and an Arizona wine list. It is a favorite of local chefs.

*The counter is a good seat for one; reservations help.*

8:30 PM

### Stargazing Near the City

The preserve's trailheads and parks are darker than the city center, and the desert sky is clear.

*Bring a flashlight, and stay on marked paths.*

03 TALIESIN WEST

# Frank Lloyd Wright's Desert Camp

### DID YOU KNOW?

*Did you know Frank Lloyd Wright built his winter home in Scottsdale as a desert camp, and it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site?*

Wright began Taliesin West in 1937 as a winter retreat and school for his architecture apprentices, using local stone, sand, and canvas. In 2019 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as one of eight Wright buildings recognized for their contribution to modern architecture.

### A SHORT HISTORY

Wright and his apprentices built much of the camp themselves. The buildings blend into the Sonoran Desert, with low walls, big windows, and views across the valley. Wright lived and worked here each winter until his death in 1959.

### HOW TO VISIT

Guided tours run through the day, ranging from short overviews to longer behind-the-scenes visits. Reserve ahead, and arrive early. Tours are walking tours, so wear sturdy shoes and a hat.

### BEST TIME TO GO

Cooler months from October to April are the best. In summer, visit early in the morning. Check the current schedule and any evening events.

04 WHERE TO EAT

# Patios, tacos, and desert flavors

Scottsdale's dining is polished and patio-focused. Most places below suit a solo diner at a bar, counter, or courtyard table.

## BREAKFAST & LUNCH

### Old Town Tortilla Factory
OLD TOWN · $14–28
Southwestern dishes in a historic adobe with a courtyard.

### Los Olivos Mexican Patio
OLD TOWN · $12–24
A family-run patio restaurant since 1946.

### Matt's Big Breakfast
OLD TOWN · $10–18
A simple, busy breakfast spot with a loyal following.

### Pita Jungle
SEVERAL · $10–18
Casual Mediterranean dishes with plenty of vegetarian options.

## DINNER & LATE NIGHT

### The Mission
OLD TOWN · $25–45
Modern Latin dishes on a patio, with a lively bar.

### FnB
OLD TOWN · $30–55
A vegetable-forward menu and an Arizona wine list.

### Barrio Queen
OLD TOWN · $14–28
Tacos and guacamole made at the table.

### Rusty Spur Saloon
OLD TOWN · $10–20
A Western-style saloon in a former bank, with live music.

05 GETTING AROUND

# Navigating Scottsdale

Old Town is compact and walkable, but the town and its attractions spread out across the desert. A car or rideshare is the easiest way to get around.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Walking** | Free | Old Town and the Arts District are easy to cover on foot. |
| **Old Town trolley** | Free | A free trolley loops through Old Town; check current routes. |
| **Airport (PHX)** | Rideshare or taxi | About 20 to 25 minutes by car from Phoenix Sky Harbor. |
| **Rental car** | varies | The best option for Taliesin West, trailheads, and Phoenix. |
| **Rideshare** | by trip | Widely available, especially in Old Town. |
| **Bikes & scooters** | by the minute | Available in Old Town, though the heat limits use in summer. |

Desert heat is serious in summer. Carry water, wear sun protection, and avoid hiking in the afternoon.

06 BACKUP PLANS

# Scottsdale on a hot afternoon

From June through September the heat sends visitors indoors. These are good air-conditioned options.

OLD TOWN
### SMoCA
Contemporary art in a converted theater.

OLD TOWN
### Western Spirit
Western art and history.

PHOENIX
### Musical Instrument Museum
Instruments and music from around the world.

PHOENIX
### Heard Museum
A Native American art museum with a strong collection.

OLD TOWN
### Scottsdale Fashion Square
A big air-conditioned shopping center.

OLD TOWN
### A long lunch on a patio with misters
Many patios use misters to keep diners cool.

07 NEIGHBORHOODS

# Know your neighborhoods

HEART OF THE TOWN
### Old Town
Galleries, patios, and nightlife in a compact grid.

ART
### Arts District
Galleries and the Thursday-evening ArtWalk.

CANAL PATH
### Waterfront
A shaded walk along the canal, lined with shops.

SHOPS & HOTELS
### Camelback
Resorts, restaurants, and views of the mountain.

DESERT HIKING
### McDowell Preserve
Miles of trails in the Sonoran Desert.

ARCHITECTURE
### Taliesin West
Frank Lloyd Wright's winter home and school.

08 GOOD TO KNOW

# What nobody tells you

- Plan around the heat. From May through September, stay outdoors early and late, and use the afternoon for museums.
- Hike with plenty of water, even on short trails, and avoid steep trails like Camelback in extreme heat.
- Reserve ahead for Taliesin West and top restaurants, especially in winter and during spring training.
- Winter and spring are the peak seasons, with higher hotel prices.
- Tip 18–20% in restaurants. Sales tax is about 8% and is added at the register.
- Arizona does not observe daylight saving time, so check the time when you travel.

## WHEN TO GO

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Mar–May** | Best overall | Warm days, wildflowers, and spring training baseball in March. |
| **Jun–Aug** | Peak heat | Very hot, with monsoon storms in July and August. |
| **Sep–Nov** | Second best | Cooling weather and fewer crowds. |
| **Dec–Feb** | Peak season | Warm, sunny days and cool nights; the busiest season. |

09 SOLO TRAVELER SAFETY

# Is Scottsdale safe?

Very safe for travelers. Old Town and the resort areas are busy and well-lit. The main risks are heat, dehydration, and falls on desert trails, not crime.

## NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AT A GLANCE

| | |
|---|---|
| **Old Town (day)** | ●●●●● |
| **Waterfront** | ●●●●● |
| **Arts District** | ●●●●● |
| **McDowell Preserve trails** | ●●●●○ |
| **Old Town late at night** | ●●●○○ |
| **Camelback Mountain in heat** | ●○○○○ |
| **Remote desert trails alone** | ●●○○○ |

## COMMON SCAMS

Be wary of timeshare and discount-ticket pitches. Never leave valuables in a parked car at a trailhead, and lock your vehicle.

## HEALTH & MEDICAL

HonorHealth Scottsdale Osborn and Shea medical centers are the main hospitals. Heat exhaustion and dehydration are the usual problems. Drink water, wear sunscreen, and rest in the shade. Carry travel insurance.

## SOLO TRAVELERS

Tell someone your hiking plan and carry a charged phone, extra water, and a map. Avoid hiking alone in the heat, and watch for rattlesnakes in warm weather.

## EMERGENCY CONTACTS

| | |
|---|---|
| **Police, fire, medical** | 911 |
| **Scottsdale non-emergency** | 480-312-5000 |
| **Poison Control** | 1-800-222-1222 |
| **Nearest ER** | HonorHealth Scottsdale Osborn · 7400 E Osborn Rd. |

10 PLANNING CALENDAR

# Scottsdale, month by month

Exact dates shift each year, so confirm before booking.

**JAN** BARRETT-JACKSON

- A major collector-car auction fills Scottsdale each January.

**FEB** WM PHOENIX OPEN

- A big golf tournament at TPC Scottsdale, with a lively party atmosphere.

**FEB–MAR** SPRING TRAINING

- Major League Baseball teams train in the Valley.

**MAR** ARABIAN HORSE SHOW

- A longtime show brings horses and riders to Scottsdale.

**APR–MAY** WILDFLOWERS

- Desert blooms fill the preserve trails.

**NOV** CANAL CONVERGENCE

- Light and art installations fill the Waterfront each fall.

# SCF

*Every Stop, Mapped*

Scan the code to open the free interactive Scottsdale map — every stop in this guide, filterable by day, food, and transport.



**goingsolo.life/maps/scottsdale**

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