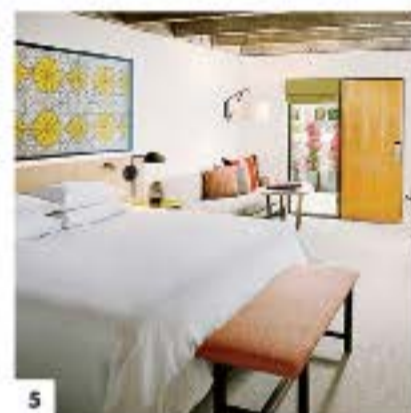




DISCOVER

1. Aridus Wine Company, one of the spots on the Scottsdale Wine Trail, a walkable stretch of tasting rooms. 2. Cycling beneath the cactus at McDowell Sonoran Preserve. 3. Hand-carved saddles at the Museum of the West. 4. Pork belly with minted edamame pesto at Sel. 5. The local arts scene makes its way into the rooms at the new Andaz Resort.



A PERFECT DAY IN

# SCOTTSDALE

Thanks to a new crop of wineries, a craft cocktail awakening, and next-wave artists, this Sonoran city is maturing like a fine Syrah. *By Keridwen Cornelius*

## A full flight

Scottsdale may be known for its ritzy resorts and day spas, but stroll Old Town—a clutch of porticoes and swinging saloon doors—and you'll see the place hasn't lost its rustic roots. Today's pioneers? Winemakers

from Cochise County, the rugged grape-growing country 200 miles southeast. Several of them have recently opened outposts in Old Town, creating the **Scottsdale Wine Trail**. At **Aridus Wine Company**, you can swill Cochise Malbec beneath

wire chandeliers. On the patio of the laid-back **LDV Wine Gallery** down the street, you might be greeted by the owners' dog, Epernay. And newcomer **Carlson Creek Vineyard** already has a cult following. Join the faithful on a Friday, when

vintner Robert Carlson leads blind tastings. *Wine Trail: scottsdalewinetrail.com. Aridus Wine Company: \$10 tasting; ariduswineco.com. LDV Wine Gallery: Tasting from \$8; ldvwinery.com. Carlson Creek Vineyard: \$10 tasting; carlsoncreek.com. →*



GETTING HERE

From Sky Harbor Airport, take Sky Harbor Blvd. to State 202 east to Scottsdale Rd., which runs through Old Town.

Hidden treasure

Just beyond the Old Town galleries, a historic home turned arts compound pushes the boundaries of Western art. **Cattle Track** is tucked away on a leafy street north of downtown. Engineer George Ellis built the place himself out of reclaimed redwood, opening it up to artists in the 1930s. Current residents (including a blacksmith and a ceramist) set their own schedules, but you can watch them work anytime. For a more classic flavor, visit **Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West**. All steel, glass, and right angles, the museum has a modern sheen, but inside you'll find wagon wheels and saddles. On February 10, two dozen cowboys ride onto the museum grounds, delivering 20,000 letters they've brought on horseback from Holbrook via the **Hashknife Pony Express**;

a family-friendly **Cowboy Boot Camp** follows. *Cattle Track: cattletrack.org. Western Spirit: \$13; scottsdalemuseumwest.org.*

Cocktails a-go-go

Some 5,000 people converge on Hotel Valley Ho starting February 17 for **Arizona Cocktail Week**. Sign up for a class with a top mixologist (Botanical Cocktails, say?) or just take advantage of the theme with a cocktail-paired dinner at one of the participating restaurants around town. Once you've raised your booze IQ, raise a glass at **Counter Intuitive**. The shape-shifting pub adopts a new identity every few months, changing its decor and menu. Among this month's themes: Picasso's Secret Visit to Cuba. *Arizona Cocktail Week: From \$10; arizonacocktailweek.com. Counter Intuitive: facebook.com/counterintuitiveaz.*

Desert bliss

Thirty minutes north of downtown in Scottsdale's **McDowell Sonoran Preserve**, singletrack laces around saguaros, with layers of lavender mountains blending into blue sky. Get a mountain bike's-eye view with **Arizona Outback Adventures**, an outfitter that leads half-day rides in the park. En route, guides will reveal the secret relationships between cactus, birds, and bats. Or strike out



6. You can roll through Old Town on a horse-and-buggy.  
 7. Museum of the West.  
 8. Chef Branden Levine of Sel. 9. Counter Intuitive, where drinks are inspired by a rotating series of quirky themes (like Agua Caliente racetrack).

solo—AOA rents bikes by the hour, and they'll happily share trail tips. *AOA: \$140/half-day ride, rentals from \$30/4 hours; aoa-adventures.com.*

Elevated eats

Last year, chef Branden Levine bucked the burger trend to open **Sel**, a white-tablecloth spot serving a changing four-course prix fixe menu influenced by French and Japanese

cuisines. But don't be fooled by the leather seats and crystal accents; the mood, particularly on the patio, is as relaxed as a pair of jeans. Watch the moon rise over Old Town as a leisurely parade of dishes, including squash soup fragrant with kaffir lime and coconut, and Chinese five-spice ice cream melting into molten chocolate cake, arrive at your table. \$\$\$\$; *sel restaurant.com.*

MAKE IT AN OVERNIGHT  
*Local paintings and pottery grace the bungalow rooms at the new Andaz Resort, while Cattle Track artists-in-residence teach photography and blacksmithing workshops. From \$449; scottsdale.andaz.byatt.com.*

turned into a city job buying more open space and easements for more trails... and now, 84 miles of mixed-use paths lace through the city's chaparral, linking the pine forests to the south with the grasslands to the north.

Which says something about how important the outdoors is to this place. Look at how Prescotters spend their free time: 10 hiking groups, a mountain-biking alliance, two equestrian organizations, and more gardening clubs than you can shake a trowel at. "We're attracting a lot of people who work out of their houses and could be anywhere," says Hosking. "They choose Prescott for the quality of life." Even teenagers are trading their screens for the woods: "About four years ago, the first high school mountain-biking team got started, and now we've got eight teams and 150 kids racing mountain bikes every weekend."

But what he's most proud of is that everyone gets along—bikers and hikers and trail runners and horseback riders. "People here have a good outlook. Sure, maybe it's the good weather. But maybe it's not having to work to death to afford to live."

# S W W S T

## LOCAL LOWDOWN

"ALMOST ANYONE CAN RIDE A BIKE OR GET OUT AND HIKE HERE. THE TERRAIN IS SO DIVERSE, AND EVERY SEASON THERE ARE NEW TRAILS GOING IN."

—Chloe Woodruff  
*Olympic mountain biker*

## RUNNERS-UP

### ▶ LOS ALAMOS, NM

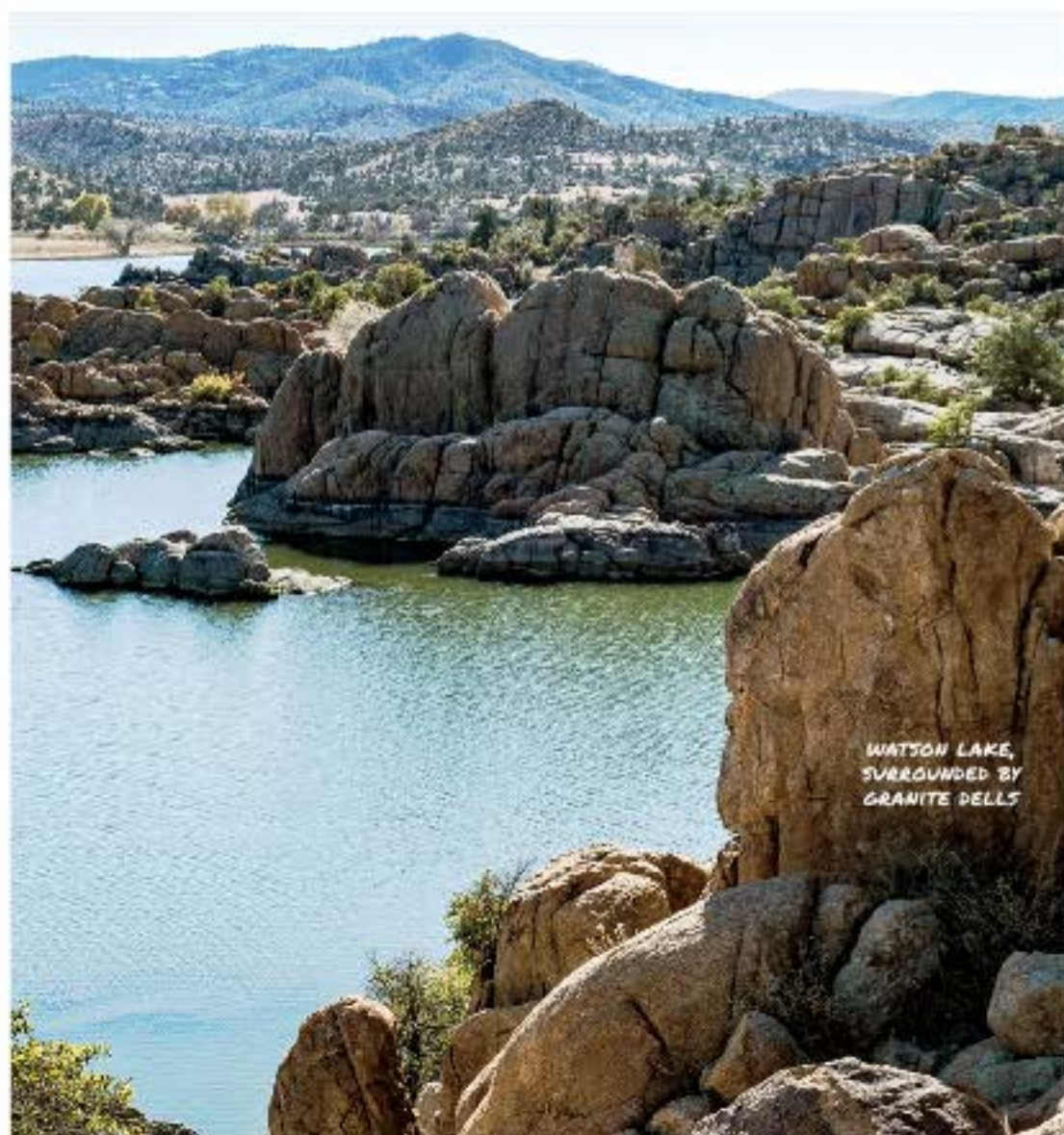
This place is more than just a historical landmark—it's an actual town, and a bang-up one at that. Thanks to Los Alamos National Laboratory (yes, home to the Manhattan Project), tech jobs are plentiful, and though housing prices aren't as low as elsewhere in the state, Los Alamos offers better schools and little crime. And, because this is New Mexico, property taxes are still far lower than elsewhere in the West. Scenery? The town is ringed by the cliff dwellings of Bandelier National Monument, a half-dozen pueblos, Santa Fe, and the eerily beautiful Valles Caldera National Preserve. Population: 11,963. Median home price: \$255,000.

### ▶ SCOTTSDALE

Hear "Scottsdale" and you think, "Desert. Resorts. Golf courses." You wouldn't be wrong, exactly—but you'd be missing the fact that Scottsdale is also a suburb for people working all over the Phoenix metro area. Due to the lingering effects of the foreclosure crisis, housing here is still more affordable than in affluent suburbs of, say, Seattle or Denver, and the schools score high in statewide rankings. Population: 235,213. Median home price: \$370,000.

### ▶ SILVER CITY, NM

Though this mining town (guess what metal?) isn't quite as well off as Los Alamos, it's in a quiet, gorgeous corner of New Mexico's Gila wilderness and has a sizable arts scene. The mining industry is still a big employer—these days, the ore being dug up is copper—and commodity prices can be volatile, but Western New Mexico University is also based here, which helps stabilize the economy. The weather is golden too: Being at 6,000-foot elevation keeps the humidity away, and the town is far enough south to boast warmer winters than Santa Fe or Taos. Population: 10,814. Median home price: \$129,000.



WATSON LAKE,  
SURROUNDED BY  
GRANITE DELLS