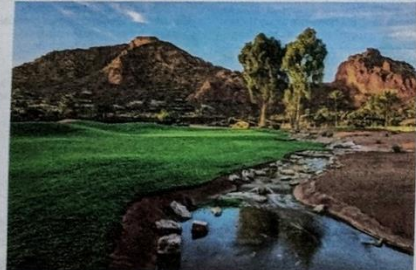
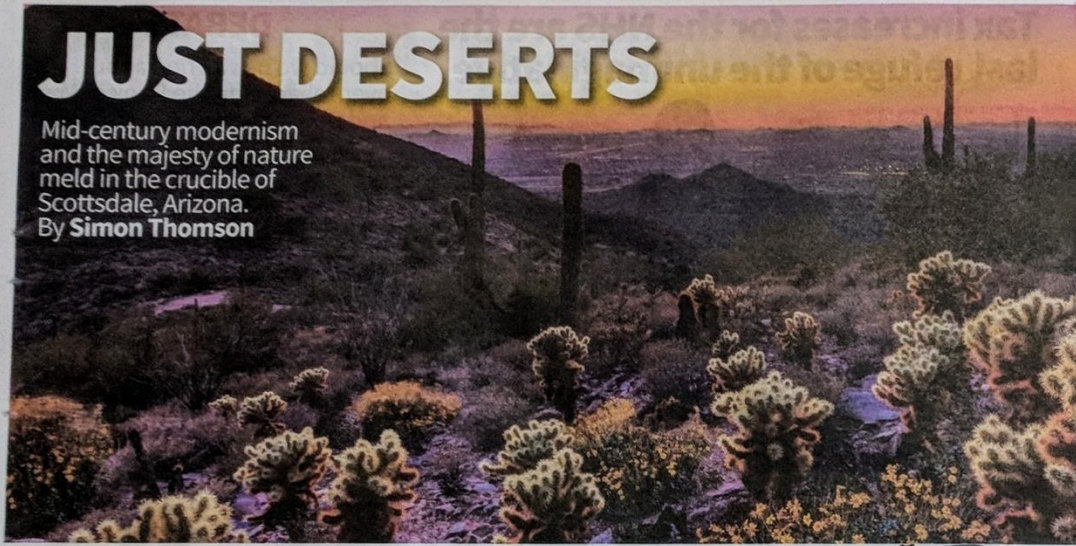


LIFE&STYLE

# JUST DESERTS

Mid-century modernism and the majesty of nature meld in the crucible of Scottsdale, Arizona.  
By Simon Thomson



Surrounded by a desert, and a horseshoe of mountains, greater-Phoenix in summer is the anvil of the sun. I visited Scottsdale around this time last year, a week before a heat wave in which plastic bins melted in the street, people baked trays of cookies on top their dashboards, and flights were cancelled because the super-heated air lacked the density to support slow-moving passenger jets. It was like holidaying in a convection oven.

Incorporated in 1931, Scottsdale retains a powerful sense of mid-century modernism. When the gossip press of the atomic age took too great an interest in the Las Vegas frolics of Hollywood celebrities, they moved the party to Scottsdale, and hotels and resorts sprang up to cater to them. I visited two: the recently reopened Mountain Shadows, and Hotel Valley Ho.

Mountain Shadows is a boutique resort located just outside the city, in Paradise Valley. Appropriately enough, it lies in the shadow of Camelback Mountain, a prominent landmark which resembles the hump and head of a kneeling dramedy. The surrounding red-brown rock-scape looks like a planet where Captain Kirk would fight a space-lizard, but Mountain Shadows itself has the design aesthetic of Thunderbird's Tracy Island.

Built in 1959, outwardly this is a chrome-finned Cadillac of a resort, but thanks to an almost total rebuild, the rooms have all the comforts you would expect of a modern hotel. A family-friendly destination, there is a large pool, and easy access to all the amenities of greater-Phoenix. Their attractive part-three golf course was also redesigned, and offers a package that pairs holes with locally brewed beers, in a way that should appeal to even reluctant golfers. The bar has live music, and the restaurant turns out generous slates of hearty, high quality food; the beef tenderloin was great, but like the beef lentil soup, dotted with leek oil,

**The red-brown rock-scape looks like somewhere Captain Kirk would fight a space-lizard**

“

was perfection. Hotel Valley Ho is of a similar vintage to Mountain Shadows, but its location – within easy walking distance of downtown Scottsdale – gives it a livelier feel. If Mountain Shadows is a place to relax and unwind, then Valley Ho is a place to party. Part of the city's thriving hotel scene, the pool is a focal point for hotel guests and fun-seeking locals alike. Hire a cabana, and kick back with snacks and cocktails from the onsite bar; catch some rays and enjoy the show, or literally throw yourself in.

Rooms are large, with Mad Men-era interiors, and suites are available with kitchens and laundries for those contemplating a longer stay. For more than 60 years, Scottsdale has presented itself as “The West's Most Western Town”, a geographically baffling, yet sentimentally concise phrase that even appears on their official seal, along with a cowboy on a bucking bronco. But whatever may have been the case in the past – and the town's “Museum of the West” sets it out in splendid detail – the Scottsdale of today is not the Wild West. While the Rusty Spur on Main Street is a proper swing-door cowboy saloon, this city of more than 200,000 people has the comfortable affluence you would expect of a community with its own Steinway retail store. The aggressively air-conditioned buildings are the modern, earth-tone blocks common across the south-western states, and owe something to the work of famed architect and former resident Frank Lloyd Wright, whose winter retreat, Taliesin West, lies just outside the city. The streets are wide, and teem with hop-on-hop-off golf buggies and over-

which are festooned with barbed spines that can pierce boots, and cling to unsuspecting victims like Satan's own Velcro. YouTube videos of their attempted removal are the eye-watering stuff of nightmares, yet you might spot desert-dwelling animals such as roadrunners, wild donkeys, or the pig-like javelinas. Back down on the ground, the crew lay on a champagne breakfast, and following my flight one of them found a horny toad, which despite the name is a stubby, endearingly ugly, little lizard. He handed it to me, and it scurried up my arm and onto my shoulder.

To view local flora in a more controlled environment, another option is the Desert Botanical Garden. As well as being open through the day, and offering a range of educational events and activities, it remains open after dark, hosting a variety of performances. I was there on an evening when Ballet Arizona danced for a rapt audience, and although it wasn't to my personal taste, the accompanying prickly pear margaritas certainly were. Walking afterwards through the barely lit paths of the gardens I found my way to an ad hoc observatory, where I peered in wonder through a telescope and clear night sky to the Galilean moons of Jupiter.

Whether you want art and culture, food and drink, the great outdoors, the existential relief of recognising your cosmic insignificance, or simply to tan by a pool, you can find your bliss in Scottsdale.

tion. Dangling over the level sands in a wicker basket is a contradictory experience, at once exhilarating and profoundly calming. You can see for miles in all directions, and if you're lucky you might spot desert-dwelling animals such as roadrunners, wild donkeys, or the pig-like javelinas. Back down on the ground, the crew lay on a champagne breakfast, and following my flight one of them found a horny toad, which despite the name is a stubby, endearingly ugly, little lizard. He handed it to me, and it scurried up my arm and onto my shoulder.

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NEED TO KNOW

For information on Scottsdale, visit [www.experience-scottsdale.com](http://www.experience-scottsdale.com); To stay at Mountain Shadows visit [www.mountain-shadows.com](http://www.mountain-shadows.com) For Hotel Valley Ho visit [www.hotelvalleyho.com](http://www.hotelvalleyho.com); For balloon tours go to [www.hotelvalleyho.com/balloon-tours](http://www.hotelvalleyho.com/balloon-tours); For guided tours and activities go to [www.aos-adventures.com](http://www.aos-adventures.com)

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## Have an ethical fish and chip day

Our resident chef explains why all fish has the potential to be tasty fish

You can't always get what you want. When I'm out on the boat fishing with friends, we're hoping for a mighty catch like bass, pollock or bream. But more often than not, we return with lots of pot whiting, a fish so poorly regarded, it would be in the relegation zone of the third division of the fish football league. They don't really even get eaten, just thrown back into the water, where they will inevitably get devoured by seagulls.

I'm trying to change that down at the fish house by encouraging local fishermen to bring us their bycatch, a trade term for all the specimens they catch unintentionally while searching for other fish. As long as it's a good sized fish, it will have a decent piece of flesh above the bones that can be filleted off, skinned and washed

MY FOOD DIARY

Mark Hix



in a Burrow Hill cider and Doves Dove Farm's organic, gluten-free, self-raising flour so it comes out really crisp. It's National Fish and Chip Day this Friday, as if an excuse were needed to try out this recipe. But then every day is fish and chip day in my book.

FISH AND CHIPS SERVES 4

- INGREDIENTS
- 500g fish fillets such as poiting or pollock
  - 100g Doves Farm gluten free self raising flour
  - Enough dry cider or beer to make a smooth batter
  - Salt and freshly ground white pepper
  - Vegetable, corn or rapeseed oil for deep frying

For the mushy peas

- 30g butter
  - Half a small onion, finely chopped
  - 500g frozen peas
  - 100ml vegetable stock
  - A few sprigs of mint, stalks removed
  - Salt and pepper
- Heat half of the butter in a pan and cook the onion gently in it until it is soft. Add the peas, vegetable stock and mint leaves, season and simmer for 10-12 minutes. Blend in a food processor until smooth. Check and correct the seasoning. Before serving reheat the puree and stir in the remaining butter.
- Mix the flour with enough cider to make a thick-ish batter this season.
  - Preheat about 8cm of oil to 160-180°C in a large thick bottomed saucepan or electric deep fat fryer. Dip the fish in the batter and fry for 3-4 minutes, turning with a slotted spoon, until golden. Drain on some kitchen paper and serve with the mushy peas.



in sea water which naturally forms up the flesh. Once we're done with the meat, we give the head and bones back to the fishermen to use as pot bait so everyone wins.

In the restaurant, use this kind of fish for ceviche, crispy salads and fish and chips deep fried

## I'm going to tell you the secret to perfect steak

MEAL OF THE WEEK

Mike Reid



“All-aged beef has a special tenderness and depth of flavour that's hard to match. Our exclusive beef offering has been aged in an authentic Himalayan salt chamber, the first of its kind in London, built from hand-

picked salt bricks, which concentrate the flavour of the meat to an intense degree. The result is an exceptional range of steaks that will provide an incomparable sensory steak experience.

AGED HIMALAYAN SALT RIB OF BEEF SERVES 4-6

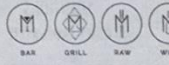
- 2.5kg fore ribs of beef on the bone, at room temperature
- 1 red onion, cut into wedges
- 1 head of garlic
- 2 rosemary sprigs
- 2 thyme sprigs
- rock salt, lightly crushed
- freshly ground black pepper



METHOD

- It's important the joint is removed from the fridge at least one hour before roasting. Preheat the oven to 240°C/Gas Mark 9 with a deep roasting tin inside.
- Remove the hot roasting tray from the oven and add the onion, head of garlic and herb sprigs. Place the joint on top and sprinkle the fat with salt.
- Return the pan to the oven and roast for 15 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 150°C/Gas Mark 2 and continue roasting, occasionally basting with the cooking juices, for a further 2½ hours for medium-rare.
- Remove the pan from the oven, cover the joint with kitchen foil and leave the meat to rest for at least 30 minutes before carving.

Canve and serve the roast beef with the jus on the side.



M Thrusfield Street, 2 & 3 Thrusfield Walk, 60 Thrusfield Street, ECR 8HP, 020 3327 7770  
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M Brewery Lane, 1 Brewery Lane, Twickenham, TW1 3AA, 020 3327 7778  
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