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The Best of Arizona

Planning a trip to a state as large and diverse as Arizona involves a lot of decision making (other than which golf clubs to take), so in this chapter I've tried to give you some direction. Below, I've chosen what I feel is the very best the state has to offer—the places and experiences you won't want to miss. Although sights and activities listed here are written up in more detail elsewhere in this book, this chapter should help you plan your trip.

1 The Best Places to Commune with Cactus

- **Desert Botanical Garden** (Phoenix): There's no better place in the state to learn about the plants of Arizona's Sonoran Desert and the many other deserts of the world. Displays at this Phoenix botanical garden explain plant adaptations and how indigenous tribes once used many of this region's wild plants. See p. 121.
- **Boyce Thompson Arboretum** (east of Phoenix): Just outside the town of Superior, this was the nation's first botanical garden established in a desert environment. It's set in a small canyon framed by cliffs and has desert plantings from all over the world—a fascinating educational stroll in the desert. See p. 163.
- **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum** (Tucson): The name is misleading—this is actually more a zoo and botanical garden than a museum. Naturalistic settings house dozens of species of desert animals, including a number of critters you wouldn't want to meet in the wild (rattlesnakes, tarantulas, scorpions, black widows, and Gila monsters). See p. 359.
- **Saguaro National Park** (Tucson): Lying both east and west of Tucson, this park preserves “forests” of saguaro cacti and is the very essence of the desert that so many imagine it to be. You can hike it, bike it, or drive it. See p. 364.
- **Tohono Chul Park** (Tucson): Although this park is not that large, it packs a lot of desert scenery into its modest space. Impressive plantings of cacti are the star attractions, but there are also good wildflower displays in the spring. See p. 371.
- **Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument** (west of Tucson): The organ pipe cactus is a smaller, multitrunked relative of the giant saguaro and lives only along the Mexican border about 100 miles west of Tucson. This remote national monument has hiking trails and a couple of scenic drives. See section 1 in chapter 11.

2 The Best Active Vacations

- **Rafting the Grand Canyon:** Whether you go for 3 days or 2 weeks, nothing comes even remotely close to matching the excitement of a

rafting trip through the Grand Canyon. Sure, the river is crowded with groups in the summer, but the grandeur of the canyon is more than enough to make up for it. See p. 232.

- **Hiking into the Grand Canyon or Havasu Canyon:** Not for the unfit or the faint of heart, a hike down into the Grand Canyon or Havasu Canyon is a journey through millions of years set in stone. This trip takes plenty of advance planning and requires some very strenuous hiking. With both a campground and a lodge at the bottom of each canyon, you can choose to make this trip with either a fully loaded backpack or just a light daypack. See p. 227 and 260.
- **Riding the Range at a Guest Ranch:** Yes, there are still cowboys in Arizona. They ride ranges all over the state, and so can you if you book a stay at one of the many guest ranches (once known as dude ranches). You might even get to drive some cattle down the trail. After a long (or short) day in the saddle, you can soak in a hot tub, go for a swim, or play a game of tennis before chowing down. See chapters 6, 9, 10, and 11.
- **Staying at a Golf or Tennis Resort:** If horseback riding and cowboy cook-outs aren't your thing, how about as

much golf or tennis as your shoulders can handle? The Phoenix/Scottsdale area has one of the nation's greatest concentrations of resorts, and Sedona and Tucson add many more options to the mix. There's something very satisfying about swinging a racket or club with the state's spectacular scenery in the background, and the climate means you can do it practically year-round. See chapters 5, 6, and 10.

- **Mountain Biking in Sedona:** Forget Moab—too many other hard-core mountain bikers. Among the red rocks of Sedona, you can escape the crowds and pedal through awesome scenery on some of the most memorable single-track trails in the Southwest. There's even plenty of slickrock for that Canyonlands experience. See p. 198.
- **Bird-Watching in Southeastern Arizona:** As an avid bird-watcher, I know that this isn't the most active of sports, but a birder can get in a bit of walking when it's necessary (like, to get to the nesting tree of an elegant trogon). The southeast corner of the state is one of the best birding regions in the entire country. See section 6, "The Best Bird-Watching Spots," in this chapter and the map on p. 14 of the color section at the front of this guide.

3 The Best Day Hikes & Nature Walks

- **Camelback Mountain** (Phoenix): For many Phoenicians, the trail to the top of Camelback Mountain is a ritual, a Phoenix institution. Sure, there are those who make this a casual but strenuous hike, but many more turn it into a serious workout by jogging to the top and back down. I prefer a more leisurely approach so I can enjoy the views. See p. 140.
- **Peralta Trail** (east of Phoenix in the Superstition Mountains): This moderately difficult trail through the

rugged Superstition Mountains will lead you to one of the most astonishing views in the state. Hike the trail on a weekday to avoid the crowds. See p. 141.

- **Picacho Peak State Park** (south of Casa Grande): The hike up this central Arizona landmark is short but strenuous, and from the top there are superb views out over the desert. The best time of year to make the hike is in spring, when the peak comes alive with wildflowers. Picacho Peak is

between Casa Grande and Tucson just off I-10. See p. 164.

- **Bell Rock/Courthouse Butte Loop Trail** (Sedona): There simply is no better introduction to Sedona's myriad red-rock hiking opportunities than this easy 4-mile loop hike. The trail begins right on Arizona 179 in the Village of Oak Creek, which is a few miles south of Sedona. Views, views, views! See p. 190.
- **The South Kaibab Trail** (Grand Canyon South Rim): Forget the popular Bright Angel Trail, which, near its start, is a human highway. The South Kaibab Trail offers better views to day hikers and is the preferred downhill route for anyone heading to Phantom Ranch for the night. This is a strenuous hike even if you go only a mile or so down the trail. Remember, the trip back is all uphill. See p. 228.
- **The White House Ruins Trail** (Canyon de Chelly National Monument): There's only one Canyon de Chelly hike that the general public can take without a Navajo guide, and that's the 2.5-mile trail to White House Ruins, a small site once inhabited by Ancestral Puebloans (formerly called Anasazi). The trail leads from the canyon rim across bare sandstone, through a tunnel, and down to the floor of the canyon. See p. 291.
- **The Wildcat Trail** (Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park): As at Canyon de Chelly, there's only one trail at Monument Valley that you can hike without a guide. This easy 3.2-mile trail loops around West Mitten Butte, providing a close-up look at one of

the most photographed rock formations in the West. Don't miss this hike. See p. 298.

- **Betatakin** (Navajo National Monument): Betatakin is one of the most impressive cliff dwellings in the Southwest, and while most people just marvel at it from a distance, it's possible to take a ranger-led 5-mile hike to the ruins. After hiking through remote Tsegi Canyon, you'll have a better understanding of the Ancestral Puebloan people who once lived here. See p. 295.
- **Antelope Canyon** (Page): More a slow walk of reverence than a hike, this short trail lets you see the amazing beauty that can result when water and rock battle each other in the Southwest. The trail leads through a picture-perfect sandstone slot canyon, which is only a few feet wide in some places. See p. 303.
- **The Seven Falls Trail** (Tucson): There is something irresistible about waterfalls in the desert, and on this trail you get more than enough falls to satisfy any craving to cool off on a hot desert day. The Seven Falls Trail is in the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area in northeast Tucson. See p. 379.
- **The Heart of Rocks Trail** (Cochise County): While the national parks and monuments in northern Arizona get all the publicity, Chiricahua National Monument, down in the southeast corner of the state, quietly lays claim to some of the most spectacular scenery in Arizona. On this trail, you'll hike through a wonderland of rocks. See p. 426.

4 The Best Scenic Drives

- **The Apache Trail** (east of Phoenix): Much of this winding road, which passes just north of the Superstition Mountains, is unpaved and follows a rugged route once traveled by

Apaches. Here is some of the most remote country in the Phoenix area, with far-reaching desert vistas and lots to see and do along the way. See section 12 in chapter 5.

- **Oak Creek Canyon** (Sedona): Slicing down from the pine country outside Flagstaff to the red rocks of Sedona, Oak Creek Canyon is a cool oasis. From the scenic overlook at the top of the canyon to the swimming holes and hiking trails at the bottom, this canyon road provides a rapid change in climate and landscape. See section 5 in chapter 6.
- **Canyon de Chelly National Monument** (Chinle): This fascinating complex of canyons on the Navajo Indian Reservation has limited public access because it is still home to numerous Navajo families. However, roads that parallel the north and south rims of the canyon provide lots of scenic overlooks. See section 5 in chapter 8.
- **Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park** (north of Kayenta): This valley

of sandstone buttes and mesas is one of the most photographed spots in America and, due to the countless movies, TV shows, and commercials that have been shot here, is familiar to people all over the world. A 17-mile dirt road winds through the park, giving visitors close-up views of such landmarks as Elephant Butte, the Mittens, and Totem Pole. See section 7 in chapter 8.

- **Mount Lemmon** (Tucson): Sure, the views of Tucson from the city's northern foothills are great, but the vistas from Mount Lemmon are even better. This mountain rises up from the desert like an island rising from the sea, and the road up the mountain climbs from cactus country to cool pine forests. See p. 380.

5 The Best Golf Courses

- **The Boulders' South Course** (Carefree, near Phoenix; ☎ 480/488-9028): If you've ever seen a photo of someone teeing off beside a massive balancing rock and longed to play that same hole, then you've dreamed about playing the Boulders' South Course. Jay Morrish's desert-style design plays around and through the jumble of massive boulders for which the resort is named. See p. 137.
- **The Gold Course at the Wigwam Golf Resort & Spa** (Litchfield Park, near Phoenix; ☎ 800/909-4224): If you're a traditionalist who eschews those cactus- and rattlesnake-filled desert target courses, be sure to reserve a tee time on the Wigwam's Gold Course. This 7,100-yard resort course has long been an Arizona legend. See p. 137.
- **Gold Canyon Golf Resort** (Apache Junction, near Phoenix; ☎ 480/982-9449): This resort east of Phoenix

offers superb golf at the foot of the Superstition Mountains. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th holes on the Dinosaur Mountain Course are truly memorable. They play across the foot of Dinosaur Mountain and are among the top holes in the state. See p. 137.

- **Troon North Golf Club** (Scottsdale; ☎ 480/585-7700): Designed by Tom Weiskopf and Jay Morrish, this semiprivate, desert-style course is named for the famous Scottish links that overlook the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde—but that's where the similarities end. Troon North has two 18-hole courses, but the original, known as the Monument Course, is still the favorite. See p. 138.
- **Tournament Players Club (TPC) of Scottsdale** (Scottsdale; ☎ 888/400-4001): If you've dreamed of playing where the pros play, then plan a visit to the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess. Book a tee time on the resort's

Stadium Course, and you can play on the course that hosts the PGA Tour's FBR Open. See p. 138.

- **We-Ko-Pa Golf Club** (☎ 480/836-9000): Located on the Yavapai Nation northeast of Scottsdale, this golf club includes two challenging 18-hole courses that are bounded by open desert and stupendous views. See p. 138.
- **Sedona Golf Resort** (Sedona; ☎ 877/733-6630): It's easy to assume that all of Arizona's best courses are in the Phoenix and Tucson areas, but it just isn't so. Up in red-rock country, at the mouth of Oak Creek Canyon, the Sedona Golf Resort boasts a traditional course with terrific red-rock views. See p. 199.
- **Lake Powell National Golf Course** (Page; ☎ 928/645-2023): Fairways wrap around the base of the red sandstone bluff atop which sits the town of Page. This is one of the most scenic golf courses in the state. Walls of

eroded sandstone come right down to the greens, and one tee box is up on top of the bluff. See p. 306.

- **Ventana Canyon Golf and Racquet Club** (Tucson; ☎ 520/577-4015): Two Tom Fazio–designed courses, the Canyon and the Mountain, are shared by two of the city's finest resorts. Both desert-style courses play through some of the most stunning scenery in the state. If I had to choose between them, I'd go for the Mountain Course. See p. 378.
- **Omni Tucson National Resort Golf Course** (Tucson; ☎ 520/575-7540): With its wide expanses of grass on 18 holes and its additional 9 holes of desert-style golf, this course, once the site of the PGA Tour's Tucson Open, is both challenging and forgiving. The 18th hole of the combined Orange and Gold courses was considered one of the toughest finishing holes on the tour. See p. 378.

6 The Best Bird-Watching Spots

- **Madera Canyon:** The mountain canyons of southern Arizona attract an impressive variety of bird life, from species common in lowland desert to those that prefer thick forest settings. Madera Canyon is a good place to experience this variety. See p. 378.
- **Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge:** Gray hawks and masked bobwhite quails are among the refuge's rarer birds, but a *ciénega* (wetland), lake, and stream attract plenty of others. See section 2 in chapter 11.
- **Patagonia:** With a year-round stream, a Nature Conservancy preserve on the edge of town, and Sonoita Creek State Natural Area, Patagonia is one of the best spots in the state for sighting various flycatcher species. See section 4 in chapter 11.
- **Ramsey Canyon Preserve:** Nearly 200 species of birds, including 14 species of hummingbirds, frequent this canyon, one of the top birding spots in the country. See p. 413.
- **San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area:** Water is a scarce commodity in the desert, so it isn't surprising that the San Pedro River attracts a lot of animal life, including more than 300 bird species. This is a life-list bonanza spot. See p. 413.
- **Cave Creek Canyon:** Although other rare birds can be seen in this remote canyon, most people come in hopes of spotting the elegant trogon, which reaches the northernmost limit of its range here. See p. 427.
- **Cochise Lakes** (Willcox Ponds): Wading birds in the middle of the desert? You'll find them at the Willcox

sewage-treatment ponds south of town. Avocets, sandhill cranes, and a

variety of waterfowl all frequent these shallow bodies of water. See p. 428.

7 The Best Offbeat Travel Experiences

- **Taking a Vortex Tour in Sedona:** Crystals and pyramids are nothing compared to the power of the Sedona vortexes, which just happen to be in the middle of some very beautiful scenery. Organized tours shuttle believers from one vortex to the next. If you offer it, they will come. See p. 191.
- **Gazing at the Stars:** Insomniacs and stargazers will find plenty to keep them sleepless in the desert as they peer at the stars through telescopes at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff or Kitt Peak National Observatory near Tucson. In the town of Benson, you can even stay at a B&B that doubles as an astronomical observatory. See p. 402.
- **Sleeping in a Wigwam:** Back in the heyday of Route 66, the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook lured passing motorists with its unusual architecture: concrete, wigwam-shaped cabins. Today, this little motel is still a must for anyone on a Route 66 pilgrimage. See p. 286.
- **Touring Walpi Village:** Of the Hopi villages that stand atop the mesas of northeastern Arizona, only Walpi, one of the oldest, offers guided tours. Hopi guides share information on the history of the village and the Hopi culture. See p. 276.

8 The Best Family Experiences

- **Cowboy Steakhouses:** No family should visit Arizona without spending an evening at a “genuine” cowboy steakhouse. With false-fronted buildings, country bands, gunslingers, and gimmicks (one place cuts off your necktie, another has a slide from the bar to the dining room), these eateries are all entertainment and loads of fun. See p. 118 and 358.
- **Grand Canyon Railway:** Not only is this train excursion a fun way to get to the Grand Canyon, but it lets you avoid the parking problems and congestion that can be so wearisome. Shootouts and train robberies are to be expected in this corner of the Wild West. See p. 258.
- **Arizona–Sonora Desert Museum (Tucson):** This is actually a zoo featuring the animals of the Sonoran Desert. Exhibits include rooms full of snakes, a prairie-dog town, enclosures that are home to bighorn sheep and mountain lions, and an aviary full of hummingbirds. Kids and adults love this place. See p. 359.
- **Old Tucson Studios (Tucson):** Cowboy shootouts, cancan girls, wagon rides, and horseback rides make this old movie-studio set loads of fun for the family. You might even get to see a movie or commercial being filmed. See p. 365.
- **Shootouts at the O.K. Corral (Tombstone):** Tombstone may be “the town too tough to die,” but poor Ike Clanton and his buddies the McLaury boys have to die over and over again at the frequent reenactments of Tombstone’s famous gunfight. See p. 417.
- **Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass (Phoenix):** Your kids can climb atop a mechanical bull or a real camel, pan for gold, climb a rock wall, or ride in a stagecoach or train. After all this activity, you’ll want to head to Rawhide’s steakhouse. See p. 132.

- **Goldfield Ghost Town** (Apache Junction): Although it may look a little too contrived these days, Goldfield really was a mining town at one time. Today, you can take a tour of

the old mine, learn about the legend of the Lost Dutchman Mine, and otherwise have a thoroughly Wild West experience. See p. 132.

9 The Best Family Vacations

- **Saddling Up on a Dude Ranch:** Ride off into the sunset with your family at one of Arizona's many dude ranches (now called guest ranches). Most ranches have lots of special programs for kids. See "Where to Stay" choices throughout this book.
- **Floating on a Houseboat:** Renting a floating vacation home on Lakes Powell, Mead, or Mohave is a summer tradition for many Arizona families. With a houseboat, you aren't tied to one spot and can cruise from one scenic beach to the next. See p. 56.
- **Lounging by the Pool:** While most Arizona resorts are geared primarily

toward adults, there are a handful in Phoenix and Tucson that have extensive pool complexes. The kids can play in the sand, shoot down a water slide, or even float down an artificial river in an inner tube. See "The Best Swimming Pools," later in this chapter.

- **Having a Grand Vacation:** You can spend the better part of a week exploring Grand Canyon National Park, with trails to hike, mules to ride down into the canyon (if your kids are old enough), air tours by plane or helicopter, rafting trips both wild and tame, and even a train to ride to and from the canyon. See chapter 7.

10 The Best Museums

- **Heard Museum** (Phoenix): This is one of the nation's premier museums devoted to Native American cultures. In addition to historical exhibits, a huge kachina doll collection, and an excellent museum store, there are annual exhibits of contemporary Native American art as well as dance performances and demonstrations of traditional skills. See p. 121.
- **Phoenix Art Museum** (Phoenix): This large art museum has acres of wall space and houses an outstanding collection of contemporary art as well as a fascinating exhibit of miniature rooms. See p. 125.
- **Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art** (Scottsdale): The Phoenix area's largest museum of contemporary art is noteworthy as much for its bold architecture as for its wide variety of exhibits. Unlike most art galleries here

in Scottsdale, this museum eschews cowboy art. See p. 126.

- **Desert Caballeros Western Museum** (Wickenburg): This little museum in the Wild West town of Wickenburg is a celebration of all things Western, including Western (or cowboy) art and the trappings of the American West. See p. 168.
- **Phippen Museum** (Prescott): This museum is devoted exclusively to Western art and features works by members of the prestigious Cowboy Artists of America. See p. 173.
- **Museum of Northern Arizona** (Flagstaff): The geology, ethnography, and archaeology of this region are all explored in fascinating detail at this Flagstaff museum. Throughout the year, excellent special exhibits and festivals focus on the region's tribes. See p. 250.

- **The University of Arizona Museum of Art** (Tucson): This collection ranges from the Renaissance to the present. Georgia O’Keeffe and Pablo Picasso are among the artists whose works are on display here. See p. 366.
- **Amerind Foundation Museum** (west of Willcox): Located in the

remote southeastern corner of the state, this museum and research center houses a superb collection of Native American artifacts. Displays focus on tribes of the Southwest, but other tribes are also represented. See p. 426.

11 The Best Places to Discover the Old West

- **Rodeos:** Any rodeo, and this state has plenty, will give you a glimpse of the Old West, but the rodeos in Prescott and Payson both claim to be the oldest in the country. Whichever rodeo you attend, you’ll see plenty of bronco busting, bull riding, and beer drinking. See p. 173 and 311.
- **Guest Ranches:** The Old West lives on at guest ranches all over the state, where rugged wranglers lead city slickers on horseback rides through desert scrub and mountain meadows. Campfires, cookouts, and cattle are all part of the experience. See “Where to Stay” choices throughout this book.
- **Monument Valley** (north of Kayenta): John Ford made it the hallmark of his Western movies, and no wonder: The starkly beautiful and fantastically shaped buttes and mesas of this valley are the quintessential Western landscape. You’ll recognize Monument Valley the moment you see it. See section 7 in chapter 8.
- **Old Tucson Studios** (Tucson): Originally constructed as a movie set, this

back lot and amusement park provides visitors with a glimpse of the most familiar Old West—the Hollywood West. Sure, the shootouts and cancan revues are silly; but it’s all in good fun, and everyone gets a thrill out of seeing the occasional film crew in action. See p. 365.

- **Cowboy Poetry Festivals:** From heroes on horseback to poets on the prairie, it’s been a long, lonesome ride for the American cowboy. At several events around the state, you can hear how some cowboys deal with the hardships and happiness of the cowboy life. See section 3 in chapter 3.
- **Tombstone:** Unlike Old Tucson, which is the *real* Old West, Tombstone is a genuine historic town—the *real* Old West. However, “the town too tough to die” was reincarnated long ago as a major tourist attraction with gunslingers in the streets, stagecoach rides, and shootouts at the O.K. Corral. See section 6 in chapter 11.

12 The Best Places to See Indian Ruins

- **Tonto National Monument** (east of Phoenix): Located east of Phoenix and reached via the Apache Trail scenic road, this park has one of Arizona’s few easily accessible cliff dwellings that still allows visitors to walk around inside the ruins; you

don’t have to observe from a distance. See p. 163.

- **Besh-Ba-Gowah Archaeological Park** (Globe): These reconstructed ruins have been set up to look the way they might have appeared 700 years ago. Consequently, this park

provides a bit more cultural context than what you'll find at other ruins in the state. See p. 163.

- **Casa Grande Ruins National Monument** (west of Florence): Unlike most of Arizona's other ruins, which are constructed primarily of stone, this large and unusual structure is built of packed desert soil. Inscrutable and perplexing, Casa Grande seems to rise from nowhere. See p. 164.
- **Montezuma Castle National Monument** (north of Camp Verde): Located just off I-17, this is the most easily accessible cliff dwelling in Arizona, although it cannot be entered. Nearby Montezuma Well also has some small ruins. See p. 185.
- **Wupatki National Monument** (north of Flagstaff): Not nearly as well known as the region's Ancestral

Puebloan cliff dwellings, these ruins are set on a wide plain. A ball court similar to those found in Central America hints at cultural ties with the Aztecs. See p. 252.

- **Canyon de Chelly National Monument**: Small cliff dwellings up and down the length of Canyon de Chelly can be seen from overlooks, and a trip into the canyon itself offers a chance to see some of these ruins up close. See section 5 in chapter 8.
- **Navajo National Monument** (west of Kayenta): Both Keet Seel and Betatakin are some of the finest examples of Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings in the state. Although the ruins are at the end of long hikes, their size and state of preservation make them well worth the effort. See section 6 in chapter 8.

13 The Best Places to See Petroglyphs & Pictographs

- **Deer Valley Rock Art Center** (Phoenix): This park northwest of Phoenix not only preserves a rock-strewn hillside covered with petroglyphs but also is the best place in the state to learn about rock art. See p. 120.
- **Palatki Heritage Site** (Sedona): This small Sinagua cliff dwelling west of Sedona preserves not only ruins but also quite a few pictographs (paintings). Such paintings survive in only a few well-protected spots in the state. See p. 192.
- **V Bar V Heritage Site** (Sedona): Not only are the petroglyphs at this national forest site extensive, but they also have been linked to a variety of solar events. At different times of the

year, shadows fall on different images on the rock wall here. See p. 192.

- **Rock Art Ranch** (southeast of Winslow): Set in a remote little canyon, this private historic site preserves one of the most extensive collections of petroglyphs in the state. You can visit only by reservation, and if you're lucky, you might have the place all to yourself. See p. 274.
- **Saguaro National Park** (Tucson): Signal Hill, in the west unit of Saguaro National Park, has a large petroglyph spiral that often catches the setting just right. Although this spot doesn't have a lot of petroglyphs, a sunset visit can be a magical experience. See p. 364.

14 The Best Luxury Hotels & Resorts

- **Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Gainey Ranch** (Scottsdale; ☎ 800/55-HYATT; www.scottsdale.

hyatt.com): Contemporary desert architecture, dramatic landscaping, a water playground with its own beach,

a staff that's always ready to assist you, good restaurants, and even gondola rides—it all adds up to a lot of fun at one of the most smoothly run resorts in Arizona. See p. 87.

- **Camelback Inn, A JW Marriott Resort & Spa** (Scottsdale; ☎ 800/24-CAMEL; www.camelbackinn.com): The Camelback Inn opened in 1936 and today is one of the few Scottsdale resorts that retain an Old Arizona atmosphere while at the same time offering a wide range of modern amenities. A large full-service spa caters to those who crave pampering, while two golf courses provide plenty of challenging fairways and greens. See p. 86.
- **The Phoenician** (Scottsdale; ☎ 800/888-8234; thephoenician.com): This Xanadu of the resort world is brimming with marble, crystal, and works of art; and with staff seemingly around every corner, the hotel offers guests impeccable service. See p. 87.
- **The Boulders Resort & Golden Door Spa** (Carefree; ☎ 866/397-6520; www.theboulders.com): Taking its name from the massive blocks of eroded granite scattered about the grounds, the Boulders is among the most exclusive resorts in the state. Pueblo architecture fits seamlessly within the landscape, and the golf course is the most breathtaking in Arizona. See p. 91.
- **The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess** (Scottsdale; ☎ 800/344-4758; www.fairmont.com/scottsdale): The Moorish styling and numerous fountains and waterfalls of this resort create a setting made for romance. A beautiful spa, a challenging golf course, and

a superb modern steakhouse top it off. See p. 92.

- **Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North** (Scottsdale; ☎ 888/207-9696; www.fourseasons.com/scottsdale): Located in north Scottsdale not far from the Boulders, this is the most luxurious resort in Arizona. The setting is dramatic, the accommodations are spacious, and one of Arizona's top golf courses is just next door. See p. 92.
- **Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa** (Phoenix; ☎ 800/950-0086; www.arizonabiltmore.com): Combining discreet service and the architectural styling of Frank Lloyd Wright, the Biltmore has long been one of the most prestigious resorts in the state. This is a thoroughly old-money sort of place, though it continues to keep pace with the times. See p. 93.
- **Enchantment Resort** (Sedona; ☎ 800/826-4180; www.enchantmentresort.com): A breathtaking setting in a red-rock canyon makes this the most unforgettable resort in Arizona. If you want to feel as though you're vacationing in the desert, this place fits the bill. Guest rooms are constructed in a pueblo architectural style, and the spa is one of the finest in the state. See p. 201.
- **Loews Ventana Canyon Resort** (Tucson; ☎ 800/234-5117; www.loewshotels.com/hotels/tucson): With the Santa Catalina Mountains rising in the backyard and a little waterfall steps away from the lobby, this is Tucson's most dramatic resort. Contemporary styling throughout makes constant reference to the desert setting. See p. 339.

15 The Best Family Resorts

- **Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Gainey Ranch** (Scottsdale; ☎ 800/55-HYATT; www.scottsdale.

hyatt.com): With children's programs; a "Lost Dutchman Mine," where children can dig for buried treasure; and a

10-pool, 2½-acre water playground complete with sand beach and waterfalls, this place is a kid's dream come true. See p. 87.

- **Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak Resort** (Phoenix; ☎ 800/876-4683; www.pointehilton.com): A water slide, tubing river, and waterfall make the water park here one of the most family-oriented at any resort in the Valley. Throw in a miniature-golf course and a children's program, and you can be sure your kids will beg to come back. See p. 95.
- **Arizona Grand Resort** (Phoenix; ☎ 866/267-1321; www.arizona-grandresort.com): Let's see . . . water slides that drop nearly 70 feet, a wave pool, a water play area for the youngest ones, a tubing river, horseback riding, even spa treatments for

teens. Can you say fun for the whole family? See p. 96.

- **Loews Ventana Canyon Resort** (Tucson; ☎ 800/234-5117; www.loews-hotels.com/hotels/tucson): With a playground, a kids' club, and its own waterfall, this resort has plenty to keep the kids busy. A hiking trail starts from the edge of the property, and Sabino Canyon Recreation Area is nearby. See p. 339.
- **The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa** (Tucson; ☎ 800/WESTIN-1; www.westinlapalomasort.com): Kids get their own lounge and game room here, and the pool area has a great water slide. In summer and during holiday periods, special programs for the kids allow their parents a little free time. See p. 340.

16 The Best Hotels for Old Arizona Character

- **Royal Palms Resort and Spa** (Phoenix; ☎ 800/672-6011; www.royalpalmsresortandspa.com): With Mediterranean styling and towering palm trees, this place seems far removed from the glitz that prevails at most area resorts. The Royal Palms is a classic, perfect for romantic get-aways, and its designer showcase rooms are among the most dramatic in the Valley. See p. 93.
- **El Portal Sedona** (Sedona; ☎ 800/313-0017; www.elportalsedona.com): Built of hand-cast adobe blocks and incorporating huge wooden beams salvaged from a railroad trestle, this inn is a work of art both inside and out. The mix of Arts and Crafts and Santa Fe styling conjures up haciendas of old. See p. 207.
- **El Tovar Hotel** (Grand Canyon Village; ☎ 888/297-2757; www.grandcanyonlodges.com): This classic log-and-stone mountain lodge stands in Grand Canyon Village only feet from

the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. The lobby may not be very big, but it has the requisite trophy animal heads and a stone fireplace. This place is utterly timeless. See p. 235.

- **Grand Canyon Lodge** (Grand Canyon North Rim; ☎ 877/386-4383; www.grandcanyonlodgenorth.com): This, the Grand Canyon's other grand lodge, sits right on the North Rim of the canyon. Rooms are primarily in cabins, which aren't quite as impressive as the main building, but guests tend to spend a lot of time sitting on the lodge's two viewing terraces or in the sunroom. See p. 244.
- **La Posada** (Winslow; ☎ 928/289-4366; www.laposada.org): Designed by Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter, who also designed many of the buildings on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, La Posada opened in 1930 and was the last of the great Santa Fe Railroad hotels. Today, the hotel has

been restored to its former glory and is again one of the finest in the West. See p. 275.

- **Arizona Inn** (Tucson; ☎ 800/933-1093; www.arizonainn.com): With its pink-stucco walls and colorful,

fragrant gardens, this small Tucson resort dates from Arizona's earliest days as a vacation destination and epitomizes slower times, when guests came for the winter, not just a quick weekend getaway. See p. 347.

17 The Best Bed & Breakfasts

- **Rocamadour Bed & Breakfast for (Rock) Lovers** (Prescott; ☎ 888/771-1933): Set amid the rounded boulders of the Granite Dells just north of Prescott, this inn combines a spectacular setting with French antiques and very luxurious accommodations. You won't find a more memorable setting anywhere in the state. See p. 177.
- **Hacienda de la Mariposa** (Verde Valley; ☎ 888/520-9095; www.lamariposa-az.com): Set on the banks of Beaver Creek near Montezuma Castle National Monument, this inn was built in the Santa Fe style and blends beautifully with its surroundings. See p. 186.
- **Briar Patch Inn** (Sedona; ☎ 888/809-3030; www.briarpatchinn.com): This collection of luxurious cottages is located in tree-shaded Oak Creek Canyon, a few miles north of Sedona. Few experiences are more restorative than breakfast on the shady banks of the creek. See p. 203.
- **The Inn at 410** (Flagstaff; ☎ 800/774-2008; www.inn410.com): This restored 1907 bungalow offers a convenient location in downtown Flagstaff, pleasant surroundings, comfortable rooms, and delicious breakfasts. Rooms all feature different, distinctive themes. See p. 253.
- **The Royal Elizabeth** (Tucson; ☎ 877/670-9022; www.royal-elizabeth.com): In downtown Tucson

just a block from the Temple of Music and Art, this territorial-style historic home is filled with beautiful Victorian antiques and architectural details. Guest rooms have lots of touches not often seen in historic B&Bs, including "vintage" phones, TVs, fridges, and safes. See p. 336.

- **La Zarzuela** (Tucson; ☎ 888/848-8225; www.zarzuela-az.com): Perched high on a hill on the west side of Tucson, this luxurious B&B boasts great views, colorful decor, and loads of outdoor spaces in which to relax in the warmth of the desert. See p. 342.
- **Across the Creek at Aravaipa Farms** (Winkelman; ☎ 520/357-6901; www.aravaipafarms.com): This is the quintessential desert B&B experience, though it isn't for everyone. To reach this inn, you have to drive *through* Aravaipa Creek (or have the innkeeper shuttle you across). Exploring the nearby wilderness area is the main activity in this remote locale. See p. 343.
- **Cochise Stronghold B&B** (Cochise County; ☎ 877/426-4141; www.cochisestrongholdbb.com): Surrounded by the national forest and mountainsides strewn with giant boulders, this is another of the state's remote inns. The passive-solar building was constructed from straw bales and is not only energy-efficient, but also quite beautiful. See p. 428.

18 The Best Swimming Pools

- **Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Gainey Ranch** (Scottsdale; ☎ 800/55-HYATT): This Scottsdale resort boasts a 10-pool, 2½-acre water playground complete with sand beach, sports pool, lap pool, adult pool, three-story water slide, giant whirlpool, and lots of waterfalls. See p. 87.
- **The Phoenician** (Scottsdale; ☎ 800/888-8234): This resort's seven pools are as impressive as the Hyatt's, but they have a much more sophisticated air. Waterfalls, a water slide, play pools, a lap pool, and the crown jewel—a mother-of-pearl pool (actually, opalescent tile)—add up to plenty of aquatic fun. See p. 87.
- **Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak Resort** (Phoenix; ☎ 800/876-4683): There's not just a pool here; there's a River Ranch, with an artificial tubing river, a water slide, and a waterfall pouring into the large free-form main pool. See p. 95.
- **Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs Resort** (Phoenix; ☎ 800/876-4683): The Falls, a slightly more adult-oriented pool complex than that at sister property Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak Resort, includes two lagoon pools, a 40-foot waterfall, a 138-foot water slide, and rental cabanas. See p. 96.
- **Arizona Grand Resort** (Phoenix; ☎ 866/267-1321): The Oasis water park here leaves other area resort pools high and dry. The wave pool, tubing river, and two terrifyingly steep water slides are enough to make summer in the desert almost bearable. See p. 96.
- **The Buttes, A Marriott Resort** (Tempe; ☎ 888/867-7492): A lush stream cascading over desert rocks seems to feed this free-form pool, a desert-oasis fantasy world you won't want to leave. A narrow canal connects the two halves of the pool, and tucked in among the rocks are several whirlpools. See p. 97.
- **The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa** (Tucson; ☎ 800/WESTIN-1): With a 177-foot-long water slide and enough poolside lounge chairs to put a cruise ship to shame, the pool at this Tucson foothills resort is a fabulous place to while away an afternoon. See p. 340.

19 The Best Places to Savor Southwest Flavors

- **Cowboy Ciao** (Scottsdale; ☎ 480/WINE-111): Scottsdale may not have many real cowboys anymore, but it has great cowboy chow. Forget burned steaks and chili; this place serves the likes of buffalo carpaccio and blue-corn elk tostadas. See p. 101.
- **Vincent's on Camelback** (Phoenix; ☎ 602/224-0225): Chef Vincent Guerithault has made a career of merging classic French culinary techniques with the robust flavors of the Southwest. The results, for many years, have been absolutely unforgettable. See p. 111.
- **Fry Bread House** (Phoenix; ☎ 602/351-2345): Unless you've traveled in the Southwest before, you've probably never had a fry-bread taco. This stick-to-your-ribs dish is a staple on Indian reservations throughout Arizona. The fry-bread tacos at this Phoenix restaurant are the best in the state. See p. 115.

- **Blue Adobe Grille** (Mesa; ☎ 480/962-1000): This nondescript restaurant in an otherwise forgettable area of Mesa serves some of the best Southwestern fare in the state. Meals are flavorful (without being too spicy), prices are great, and there's even a good wine list. See p. 115.
- **Barking Frog Grille** (Sedona; ☎ 928/204-2000): This Sedona restaurant has a split personality. One side of the restaurant is a very sophisticated dining room serving the best Southwestern fare in the city. The other side of the restaurant offers casual family dining with an emphasis on creative Mexican dishes. See p. 209.
- **The Turquoise Room** (Winslow; ☎ 928/289-2888): This restaurant conjures up the days when the wealthy still traveled by railroad. Rarely will you find such superb meals in such an off-the-beaten-path locale. See p. 275.
- **Janos/J Bar** (Tucson; ☎ 520/615-6100): Serving a combination of regional and Southwestern dishes,

Janos has long been one of Tucson's premier restaurants. While Janos is as formal a place as you'll find in this city, J Bar is a more casual bar and grill. See p. 354 and 356.

- **Café Poca Cosa** (Tucson; ☎ 520/622-6400): Forget the gloppy melted cheese and flavorless red sauces. This place treats south-of-the-border ingredients with the respect they deserve. It's Mexican food the likes of which you'll never find at your local Mexican joint. See p. 346.
- **The Gold Room** (Tucson; ☎ 520/917-2930): The main dining room at Tucson's Westward Look Resort combines Southwestern-inspired flavors with a view that just won't quit. Although prices are quite high at dinner, there are reasonably priced lunches. See p. 353.
- **Terra Cotta** (Tucson; ☎ 520/577-8100): Terra Cotta was one of Arizona's pioneers in the realm of Southwestern cuisine, and continues to serve creative and reasonably priced meals at its beautiful, art-filled restaurant in the Tucson foothills. See p. 356.