



© jenfoto / 123RF.com



afonskaya / 123RF.com



By Judy Colbert



# Experience SCOTTSDALE

As many things to do as grains of sand in the desert... well, almost

**W**hether this is your first or 101st visit to Scottsdale, there's always something new, intriguing, and memorable to do during your off hours, or if you're arriving early or staying late.

For a great way to see Scottsdale, hop on a **Segway Personal Transport** two-hour tour, covering more ground than if you were on foot and easier than driving (getting lost, etc.). Segway tours let you learn about the fascinating city while experiencing riding a Segway. You can take a two-hour tour of intriguing Old Town or more modern Tempe Town Lake. A mic and earbud system makes sure you hear your tour guide. Or, if you just want to ride a Segway, you can take a 30-minute trip. Each tour comes with a 20-30 minute training session. Check their website for ticket discount.

[www.segwayofscottsdale.com](http://www.segwayofscottsdale.com)  
(480) 306-4801

For a still different look at your surroundings, try the evening **Stargazing Tours by Stellar Adventures**. See the dark desert landscape and gaze upon the greatest wonders of the galaxies. In February, you should be able to see Orion the Hunter in the southern sky; the star Sirius (it's blueish and twinkles violently); and the Pleiades (the Seven Sisters). The

moon will be in the first quarter, and the Big Dipper will be rising in the northeast. You'll also have a chance to spy nocturnal animals through night vision devices. Of course, with anything that relies on Mother Nature, your experience may vary.

**3102 S. Roosevelt St., Tempe**  
[stellaradventures.com/arizona-stargazing-tours/](http://stellaradventures.com/arizona-stargazing-tours/)  
(602) 402-0584

**Hot air balloon rides** provide still another view of Scottsdale and the Sonoran Desert. Catch a flight with Hot Air Expeditions for a gourmet champagne breakfast or evening hors d'oeuvres, complete with tables, linens, and china following your flight. The morning flights are about an hour and the sunset flights are about 45-60 minutes long. You may soar as high as 5,000 feet, depending on the conditions. Remember to bring your camera! Be ready for the world to be so quiet you can almost hear cactus grow (well, that may be a slight exaggeration).

**702 W. Deer Valley Rd., Phoenix**  
[www.hotairexpeditions.com](http://www.hotairexpeditions.com)  
(800) 831-7610

Rainbow Ryders fly over Deer Valley and the Sonoran desert.

**715 E. Covey Lane, Phoenix**  
[www.rainbowryders.com](http://www.rainbowryders.com)  
(800) 725-2477



kzenon/123RF.com

Going the other direction, the largest aquarium in the Southwest is at the **OdySea in the Desert**. Its newest attraction is the Pangaea Land of the Dinosaurs that takes young and old to the era of dinosaurs with interactive educational exhibits. There are life-size animatronic dinosaurs, fossil excavations, sluicing activities, face painting, balloon art, and more. Yes, there are aquarium exhibits, too, in the Rivers of the World exhibit. Enjoy the Butterfly Wonderland (largest butterfly conservatory in the country), Lazer and Mirror Maze, and Bumper Boats. When hunger and shopping call, there are more than 15 dining and shopping establishments.

*9500 E. Via de Ventura, Scottsdale*  
[www.odyseaaquarium.com](http://www.odyseaaquarium.com)  
 (480) 291-8000

Lots of strange and wonderful things fill the Scottsdale air and now you can be one of them at **iFly with flying trapeze classes** at the Phoenician Resort. You'll have a ground intro, an instructor's demonstration, then you can attempt a catch (if you wish) with an instructor, with swinging from the bar and doing a back flip dismount into the net. Yes, you're wearing a harness and safety ties. There are also classes for those who have mastered the basics. Flying is available for anyone between the ages of four and 104. Closed Monday.

*6000 E. Camelback Rd., Scottsdale*  
[iflytrapeze.com/schedulePhoenician.php](http://iflytrapeze.com/schedulePhoenician.php)  
 (480) 599-2345

February is great hiking time in Scottsdale and one beautiful place is the **McDowell Sonoran Preserve**. You have a choice of 195 miles of trails, some easy and some more challenging, all well-signed. The Preserve has a total of 30,580 acres and the trails are open to walkers, joggers, horseback riders, and bikers (not motorized). Chose from morning walks or sunset strolls (stay for the

star show). Bring water and wear sturdy shoes. Bathrooms are available at the visitor center. Fur babies, on a leash, are welcome. Check the website for scheduled lectures, hikes, and other events.

*3939 N. Drinkwater Blvd., Scottsdale*  
[www.scottsdaleaz.gov/preserve](http://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/preserve)  
 (480) 312-3111

**The Heard Museum** has a jaw-droppingly spectacular collection of the culture and arts of Native Americans of the southwest. Among the collections are about 1,200 kachina dolls donated by the late Senator Barry M. Goldwater and the Fred Harvey Company. Special temporary exhibits include *Awa Tsireh: Pueblo painter and metalsmith; Of God and Mortal Men: Masterworks by T.C. Cannon* from the Nancy and Richard Bloch Collection; and Creative Casting. Free guided tours at noon, two and three p.m., included with admission. Take time to relax in the outdoor sculpture gardens. The gift shop sells books, jigsaw puzzles, authentic Native American works, and more. Café, coffee cantina.

*2301 N. Central Ave., Phoenix*  
[www.heard.org](http://www.heard.org), (602) 252-8848

When music is your life, stop by the **Musical Instrument Museum**, where they have more than 6,600 instruments on display from 200 countries. This includes instruments from John Lennon, Taylor Swift, Elvis Presley, Carlos Santana, and other famous musicians (in the artist gallery). The instruments are organized by continent with galleries featuring Africa and Middle East, Asia and Oceania, Europe, Latin America Gallery, and United States and Canada (with a special exhibit on Martin and Steinway, American manufacturers). Check their calendar for a MIMkids Mini Music Makers program that introduces your little ones to music from around the world. Or, look for evening concerts for older folks.

*4725 E. Mayo Blvd., Phoenix*  
[www.mim.org](http://www.mim.org), (480) 478-6000

Every city needs a great sports bar that also has good food. **Don & Charlie's** fits the bill (of fare) for Scottsdale. They have a burger bar, BBQ, chicken, scrumptious steaks and prime rib, a full wine list, and a children's menu. If museum-quality sports memorabilia is at the top of your list, look at the displays on the walls and ceiling where you should be able to see jerseys worn by Willie Mays, Michael Jordan jersey, and Al Clark. Then, there are racks filled with 750 autographed baseball, and much more. Depending on the season, you may see famed players and officials among the diners. Dinner only.

*7501 E. Camelback Rd., Scottsdale*  
[www.DonandCharles.com](http://www.DonandCharles.com), (480) 990-0900

What don't you see in the desert? Fresh seafood. Therefore, when you're thinking about things that swim, head to **Salt Cellar for Seafood**, Arizona's only underground restaurant. Take a peek through the ground-level skylight, then head down three stories for a menu awash in nautical creatures. Flown in daily from Hawaii, Alaska, the Gulf of Mexico, Chesapeake Bay, Boston, Georges Bank and even New Zealand, the "market board" menu changes as owners Richard and Cindy Huie and chef Kurt Theleman source seasonal fish. Appetizers include shrimp cocktail, oysters, clams, mussels, crab cakes and other specialties. Dinner only. No elevator (not wheelchair accessible); call for special carry-out provisions.

*550 N. Hayden Rd., Scottsdale*  
[saltcellarrestaurant.com](http://saltcellarrestaurant.com), (480) 947-1963

For additional information about Scottsdale, what to see and do, and where to shop and eat, visit their website, [www.experiencescottsdale.com](http://www.experiencescottsdale.com), or call (480) 421-1004 or (800) 782-1117. 🐾

---

*Judy Colbert is the author of 100 Things to Do in Baltimore Before You Die and other travel guidebooks.*