



Visitors to Tucson can expect the unexpected from a city of natural wonders

Tucson is a hidden gem for those looking to enjoy an action-packed getaway while also reaping the rewards of stunning southwestern vistas.

The Arizona city, well-known for world-class golf courses, has mountain ranges surrounding its metro area that provide a natural playground for visitors of all ages and physical skill levels.

The Santa Catalina Mountains, bordering the eastern edge of the city, boast Mount Lemmon, the range’s highest peak with an elevation of approximately 9,200 feet. Here, you’ll discover the cozy community of Summerhaven, equipped with log houses, cabins, a general store and hiking trails. With a temperature typically 30 to 35 degrees cooler than what you’ll find at the base, the winter season is ripe for skiing and snowboarding.

The beauty of the land is so awe-inspiring that a free app was developed to help educate interested hikers on the

area they’ve set out to explore.

“It’s an hours’ worth of background in terms of how the mountain ranges in Tucson were formed,” says Brent DeRaad, President and CEO of Visit Tucson. “There are seven different life zones you go through from the ground all the way up to the top. It’s perfect for people wanting to listen to the history as they go from the floor of the desert all the way up to the top of the mountain.”

Although the Catalinas may be considered the city’s most popular mountain

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Tucson, in the Great Sonoran Desert of Southern Arizona, is a special place. Distinctive not only from the rest of Arizona, striking though the state may be, it is unlike anywhere else in the world. It looks different and it feels different. And, the lifestyle – la vida – is, at its best, magnificent. In this transfixing, lush and largely untouched environment, you’ll find The Ritz-Carlton Residences, Dove Mountain.

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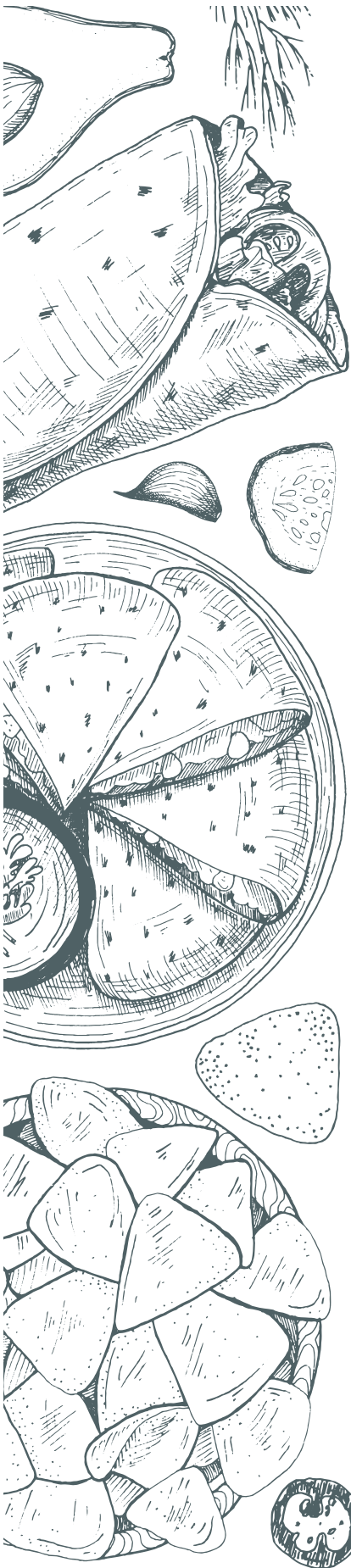
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Special Advertising Feature

desert DELICACIES

Tucson may be well-known for its stunning desert sunsets, but foodies should take note: the city’s restaurant scene is as colorful and tantalizing as its breathtaking physical landscape.

Over the past decade, the Southwest metropolitan gem has experienced a culinary revitalization of sorts, with the rise of Downtown Tucson as a highly desirable dining destination. So much so that in December 2015, Tucson was the first location in America to be designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a “Creative City of Gastronomy.”

The honor was awarded, in large part, for Tucson’s rich agricultural history, not to mention its inspired food culture and innovative uses of locally grown fare. The city proudly boasts an impressive number of locally owned eateries.

The UNESCO distinction isn’t the only aspect of the area’s culinary scene that sets it apart. While many cities find their restaurant turnover steady, with patrons always looking for the next big thing, Tucson appears to have found a way to celebrate both the old and the new.

“For some time, there were restaurants that stood alone, and now whole breeds of restaurant scenes have grown up around them in the last five to 10 years,” says Carson Mehl, a Tucson native and Vice President of Cottonwood Properties. “The old-school restaurants have bred new groups of restaurants and created neat little scenes.”

Tucsonans have welcomed newcomers from hip pizza joints to Mexican fine-dining restaurants to balance the area’s myriad of family-owned establishments. The area’s local hotels have also embraced the culinary movement, with Tucson’s Canyon Ranch serving a menu of organic and unprocessed food and The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain offering some of the region’s freshest sushi.

And much like the rest of the country, Tucson is heavily embracing the food truck revolution.

“Just about every vacant lot in town has a food truck in it on weekends, serving everything from Tucson’s famous Sonoran hot dogs and tandoori chicken, to pho and Texas barbecue,” says Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry. “Many of the most successful trucks have opened brick-and-mortar restaurants to great acclaim.”

On the subject of casual dining, visitors to Tucson would be remiss if they didn’t try the city’s local delicacy — the aforementioned Sonoran Hot Dog.

“Everything — from the bun to all of the different condiments that go on these bacon-wrapped hot dogs — is unique,” says Brent DeRaad, President and CEO of Visit Tucson. “No one wants to know how many calories are in them, but they’re incredibly tasty.”

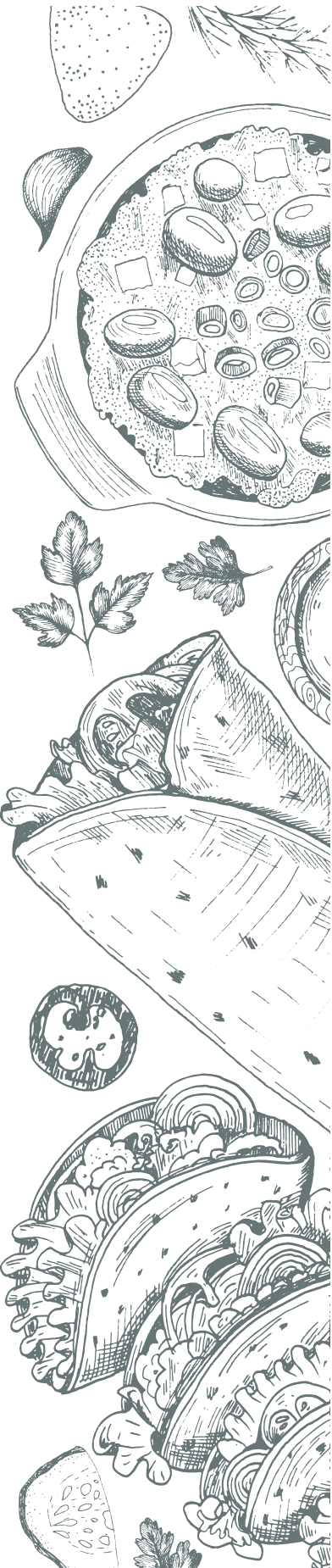
With all of this talk of food, one is bound to feel parched, and the area has thirsty visitors covered locally as well.

“One thing that surprises people is that in southern Arizona we actually have a wine country that’s been very popular,” DeRaad says. “It’s in a very small community near the Mexican border called Sonoita.”

Here you’ll find a bevy of wine producers, releasing a wide array of varietals from refreshing Grenache Rosé to crisp Sauvignon Blanc.

Spirits are also covered with Tucson’s own local whiskey, an award-winning beverage with a distinctly southwestern taste.

With outstanding locally sourced food and drink, perhaps Huckelberry sums it up best: “Tucson has truly entered a gastronomic golden age.”



PHIL MOTTA

Sweeping desert views abound at The Residences at The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain.

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range, locals love the Tortolita Mountains, which means “little turtle dove” in Spanish.

“What’s cool about hiking in the Tortolitas is the miles of really neat trails for every different type of hiker — from something casual to something strenuous,” says Carson Mehl, a Tucson native and Vice President of Cottonwood Properties. “The best part about hiking in the Tortolitas is that you can bring your dog. That’s unique as far as hikes go versus the rest of the mountains you can hike in Tucson. There are amazing boulders, mountains and 360-degree panoramas.”

If breathtaking views are your thing, but hiking is not, Tucson has you covered. The city’s hot air balloon scene is unlike anything you’ll find elsewhere.

“You can go on these hot air balloon flights, get a really cool view of the desert and cover a lot of ground,” Mehl says. “You’re not so high that you can’t see what’s underneath you.”

Visitors can pair aerial views with heart-pounding action at one of Tucson’s zip-line attractions. This unforgettable experience allows thrill seekers to see the

“You can go on these hot air balloon flights, get a really cool view of the desert and cover a lot of ground.”

Sonoran desert scenery and wildlife from an outrageously different perspective.

Of course, for those who prefer to keep their feet planted firmly on the ground, there’s the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

“It’s a combination of museum and zoo,” DeRaad says. “You’re going to find a wide collection of desert animals there, but also, in terms of desert plants, pretty much everything imaginable. We always highly encourage people to check that out, especially if they’re interested in the Southwest.”

Tucson is also home to one of the longest urban multiuse paths in the U.S., perfect for runners, pedestrians and cyclists who want to safely see the city.

“The Loop is 131 miles long, built atop the soil-cement banks of the valley’s major rivers and streams,” explains Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry. “Most of the path dips under roads and highways so you can ride, run or walk the entire 131 miles — and cross major streets fewer than five times.”

With so many options for both the adventurous and inquisitive, Tucson will change your preconceived notions about the desert. This city, for one, is hardly barren of anything, least of all excitement.

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