

Phoenix

By Abbie Kozolchyk

Friday

3 p.m. | Hit the ground strolling

Phoenix has a rep for serious hiking. Ease in among the red rock buttes of Papago Park, a short drive from the airport, where trails sprawl over 1,200 acres. Start with a few minutes' walk to the Hole in the Rock, a natural chamber, where your views will include the palm-fringed fishing lagoons that Arizona's first governor, George W.P. Hunt, commissioned to create employment during the Depression. (He's buried inside the gleaming white pyramid you'll spot atop a nearby butte.) Walk or drive the mile or so to the park's Desert Botanical Garden (entry, \$29.95); inside, the quarter-mile Sonoran Desert Nature Loop Trail reveals towering saguaros, spindly ocotillos and squat barrel cactuses. Elsewhere in the garden, see the soaring septuagenarian Mexican cardon cactus, as well as the first Fernando Botero exhibition to open after that Colombian artist's death last September (through March 31).

5 p.m. | Dine with epic views

Which side of the table to sit on? At Théa, a rooftop restaurant that opened in January at the new Global Ambassador hotel, one view gives you the golden-hour gorgeousness of Camelback Mountain, the city's tallest peak and unofficial geologic mascot that looks -- yes -- a bit like a kneeling camel. The other gives you the sun setting over the skyline. The correct answer: Swap seats at least once with your dinner partner. Plan to share dishes, too; many are gloriously rich. Think flatbread with black truffle, ricotta and Parmesan cream (\$24), spaghetti with fried zucchini and Parmesan in a butter-infused sauce (\$26) and Basque cheesecake with vanilla cream and candied Luxardo cherries (\$13). If reservations are tight, head to the bar areas for more casual seating, but no less serious feasting.

7:30 p.m. | Catch a concert

Home to thousands of instruments from around the world, the Musical Instrument Museum in northern Phoenix also has a singular, 300-seat theater where performers may choose to play instruments from the museum's collections if there's a meaningful and workable fit. (The pianist Jason Moran, for one, performed on a piano here last summer that his hero Thelonious Monk had composed on decades earlier.) Concert tickets, from \$24 to \$125. Two museum spaces remain open to concertgoers during the evening shows, the Orientation Gallery and Guitar Gallery, where highlights include an almost 12-foot-tall octobasse (picture a cello on steroids) and what is believed to be the world's oldest full-size guitar, a 16th-century beauty made in Portugal. If there's no Friday night concert, a great alternative in the Roosevelt Row neighborhood is the Nash Jazz Club, named for Lewis Nash, a local drumming legend whom you can often see here (many shows are free; others start at \$10).

Saturday

7:30 a.m. | Summit a mountain

Climbing the 2,700-foot Camelback Mountain, which rewards with 360-degree views of the city, desert and

mountains, is hard work. The three-mile out-and-back Cholla Trail is the easiest route, but is still rated "extremely difficult" by the Phoenix parks department and requires a lot of scrambling up rocks. For a scenic challenge that involves just a bit of scrambling, consider the approximately two-mile out-and-back Summit Trail up Phoenix's second-tallest mountain: Piastewa Peak, about 10 minutes' drive from Camelback but more secluded feeling, with more views of pure wilderness. Alternatively, the Judith Tunnell Accessible Trail offers ample room for mobility devices along an approximately mile-long series of paved and gently graded loops through the desert of South Mountain Park and Preserve, with trailside drinking fountains, benches and shaded shelters.

10:30 a.m. | Refuel at a farm

The Farm at South Mountain, about 10 minutes south of downtown and lush with seasonal crops, defies preconceived notions of how deserts look and act. The farm's Morning Glory Café stuffs outstanding (and enormous) breakfast burritos with eggs, roasted beets, sweet potatoes and other goodness that's sourced a few yards from the kitchen (\$15.95). While you're waiting for your order to be prepared, roam the gardens, visit the chicken and duck pens or browse the farm's Botanica Shop for Arizona-made pantry staples and perhaps a can of prickly-pear cactus water (chilled and sweetened).

12:30 p.m. | Visit two museums

Scarcely half a mile apart, two art institutions are debuting major exhibitions this month. At the Native art-dedicated Heard Museum, "Maria & Modernism" (through July 28) aims to give the ceramist Maria Martinez, who is known for sleek, black-on-black pottery and died in 1980, her rightful place among American Modernists. Her influence on contemporary artists is on display, too: See the photograph of a lowrider meticulously detailed in black-on-black motifs by the New Mexico artist Rose Simpson, who named it after Martinez (tickets, \$22.50). At the Phoenix Art Museum, check out "Barbie: A Cultural Icon" (through July 7), where 250 or so vintage Barbies -- not least, the original one -- play perfectly to the times. A companion exhibition, "The Power of Pink," is curated from the museum's extensive fashion archives. The showstopper: a 1982 Valentino dress of pink silk crepe with sequins and dyed feathers. Admission, \$28 on Saturdays.

3 p.m. | Snag a rare concert tee

Roosevelt Row, a mural-splashed downtown neighborhood known for its galleries, cafes and bars -- one doubling as a video arcade -- is also an exceptional place to shop. For starters, there's Antique Sugar, a vintage store that represents every decade from the 1890s to the aughts. Look up to see delicate flapper dresses suspended alongside chandeliers and rainbows of crinoline flounce. Even the casual concert-tee shopper will have fun here. At Made Art Boutique, small-scale pieces by Arizona artists include delicate charms by Gilded Sun Studio, stoneware by Crooked Tree Ceramics and embroidered mini canvases by the store's owner, Cindy Dach. At Phoenix General, a clothing and lifestyle store, browse house-brand merch (the black-and-white rattlesnake hoodies are especially eye-catching), Arizona-sewn cherry-red gingham tanks and locally made soap.

4:30 p.m. | Take a taco tour

Less than three hours from Mexico, Phoenix serves every imaginable kind of taco. Spend a few hours tasting some of the best, all within a short drive of one another. Start with the Native Taco (\$11) at the Fry Bread House in

the Melrose district, where beans, cheese and lettuce turn transcendent inside hot, pillowy fry bread. Share one or get the kiddie size (\$5.75). Barrio Café has perfectly crisp potato taquitos (\$5) served only during happy hour (ends 5:30 p.m.). Also share the chiles en nogada (\$29.75), a stuffed pepper dish made here with deliciously unorthodox touches (almonds, shallots, cranberries). Over at the new Huarachis Taqueria, kitschy-pink décor may suggest a lack of seriousness, but the expertly prepared tongue-and-short-rib tacos (\$6 each) tell a different story. Finish at the nearby Cocina 10, a restaurant and music venue in a 1917 garage, where you can snack on barbacoa tacos (\$5) while taking in an R&B, Latin or indie rock show (admission often free, or starts at \$10).

Sunday

8:30 a.m. | breakfast in the past

The 95-year-old Arizona Biltmore -- a hotel that spent much of its early life owned by the Wrigleys, of chewing gum and baseball fame -- has long attracted presidents, dignitaries and stars. Yet one figure looms largest over the property (now a Waldorf Astoria Resort): the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who consulted on the design. Though his student Albert Chase McArthur was the architect of record, Wright's influences remain. Grab a map from the concierge and check out Wright's signature textile block style (essentially large, ornate bricks) across the property; mystical-looking sprite sculptures designed for one of his Chicago projects, now replicated on the Biltmore's lush grounds; and the lobby's luminous stained-glass rendering of his "Saguaro Forms and Cactus Flowers" drawing. Then treat yourself to lemony cream cheese pancakes (\$23) by the fireplace at the hotel's McArthur's restaurant.

11 a.m. | Make a pilgrimage

To delve deeper into Wright's local legacy, drive about half an hour into the Scottsdale desert to Taliesin West, his secluded, light-filled winter home and work space set on almost 500 acres in the foothills of the McDowell Mountains. Snoop around his desk, where casually strewn are his 1956 blueprints for the first floor of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in that unmistakable nautilus spiral. Also see the "American Icons" exhibition (through June 3) -- a look at the parallel and intersecting lives of Wright and the artist Georgia O'Keeffe, who were born 60 miles apart, met once, corresponded for years and were chronicled separately by the same photographer. Book an hourlong self-guided audio tour, from \$39 (first start time, 11:20 a.m.). There are also 90-minute guided tours, from \$49 (first start time, 10 a.m.).

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