

action

# GET OUTSIDE

By Jenny Quill

STEP OUTSIDE THE NORM AND SEE THE REAL ARIZONA.

Taking advantage of Arizona's outdoor environment is one major reason why so many people flock to the Grand Canyon State. According to a survey conducted by DK Shifflet and Associates for the Arizona Office of Tourism, Arizona had 29.1 million overnight visitors in 2005. (That statistic accounts for both residents and non-residents on business and leisure trips.) Of those, 45 percent participated in some form of outdoor activity, whether they went hiking or biking, fishing or visiting state parks.

In fact, Arizona's state and national parks are among the top tourist attractions in the desert with many visitors checking out at least one or more. Topping that list is the 277-mile long Grand Canyon National Park, which had nearly 4.5 million visitors in 2005 thanks to its jaw-dropping beauty and convenient proximity to Phoenix. There are a number of ways to see the canyon: Hike into the interior on one of the Corridor trails, raft the Colorado River, camp along the South Rim or drive the perimeter to stop at the various outlooks.

The second most visited natural attraction is Saguaro National Park, located just outside of Tucson. The park is home to a large forest of giant saguaros (the quintessential Southwest cactus that can grow up to 50 feet tall and can live for hundreds of years) as well as numerous hiking and biking paths. South Mountain Park in Phoenix is another notable destination. It's the largest municipal park in the country with 58 miles of trails for hiking and biking that range from easy to very difficult. Slide Rock State Park in Sedona has a handful of easily accessible trails, including Pendley Homestead Trail, Slide Rock Route and Clifftop Nature Trail; and Coconino National Forest hiking trails are also nearby. Best of all? After you're done hiking, you can take a dip in the creek.

Arizona's greatest outdoor advantage, though, is that you don't have to go very far to reach it. In the center of Phoenix, Camelback Mountain (look for the giant red hump) attracts locals and visitors alike to its two trails—Summit Trail (Echo Canyon) and Cholla Trail. Not far from Camelback is another popular option: Piestewa Peak. The top of the 2,608-foot mountain can be reached via the immensely popular Summit Trail, which is rated moderate to difficult. In North Scottsdale, Pinnacle Peak Park offers a 1.75-mile hike (one way) with great views of the surrounding area as well as areas for rock climbing. Ask the hotel concierge about any of these hikes, and you'll be pointed in the right direction.

But before you head off property, make sure to explore the resorts' very own walking trails. JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa in Tucson is surrounded by the 50,000-acre Tucson Mountain Park and has several trails for hiking and biking on the property. The trailheads are located by



the resort's entrance, adjacent to the Hashani Spa. JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa has walking paths that begin at Revive Spa and head out into the urban desert. And Camelback Inn, A JW Marriott Resort & Spa has hiking access to Mummy Mountain, which towers above the resort.

To help you get your outdoor fix, all JW Marriott Resort & Spa properties can arrange tours and rentals for on- or off-property use. Guests at Desert Ridge Resort can rent bikes through the Tennis Center, which offers comfort-riding bikes. With 24 hours' notice, guests can request mountain bikes or other specialty bikes as well. The Tennis Center generally directs guests to Horse Lover's Park for quick jaunts, which is part of the Reach 11 Recreational Trail located down the street. You can also rent bikes at Starr Pass and at Camelback Inn to explore the resorts' natural surroundings—just ask the concierge.

Those who are more comfortable viewing nature on four wheels can book Hummer tours, which venture into the Four Peaks area, or Jeep tours, which take guests through the Cave Creek and Spur Cross areas in the north Valley. The resort also works with several companies that can fly or drive you to the Grand Canyon or Sedona and arrange van, airplane or helicopter tours of both destinations.

When you've done all the biking, hiking and jeep touring you can handle, there are still more ways to explore Arizona's great outdoors. Ask your concierge to get creative, and she might arrange a horseback tour of the Wild West, a hot-air balloon ride for sight-seeing or a rock-climbing/rappelling class. There's really no limit until you set one. JW



## GREEN THUMB

Besides setting up shop in the most scenic of surroundings, these tree-hugging JW Marriott properties have made their own backyards as green as can be. Take a moment to visit these on-site gardens.

**Desert Botanical Garden:** Amid JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa's 316 acres lies a true botanical garden featuring 20,000 plants and cacti, many of which are labeled so you'll know just what you're looking at. Walk the 1/3-mile Discovery Trail through the garden, and you won't miss a thing.

**Organic Garden at Primo:** At JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa, there's a not-so-secret herb garden located next to the patio at Primo restaurant. This beautiful, green space is more than just pretty—Primo chefs visit the garden daily in order to pick fresh herbs for their dishes.

**Greenery Galore:** Nearly every inch of the 125 acres at Camelback Inn, A JW Marriott Resort & Spa has been converted to gardens that set a lush backdrop for weddings and casual strolls alike. A full time horticulturalist and a staff of 40 are required to keep the gardens as green as can be.

