

Spa getaways in Scottsdale

A view from [Kara Williams](#)

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Spa, Luxury, Bachelor/Bachelorette Party, Arizona, All the Girls, Adults Only

Sampling some of the most sublime spa experiences in Scottsdale, Arizona

With more than 25 upscale resort spas and day spas, Scottsdale, Arizona, and the nearby communities comprise a Mecca for those seeking rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation in the desert. This area, east of [Phoenix](#), has been on my shortlist of places to go for spa-oriented getaways forever. Sadly, although I live only a 90-minute plane flight away, I never have managed to make the trip happen

Despite work deadlines, volunteering commitments, and mom duties this fall, I finally decided to take the plunge and book a trip that centers on pampering. Once I hit the ground in Phoenix, I'm not cutting any corners when it comes to getting buffed, wrapped, rubbed, and steamed: I'm hitting five different spas in five days. All told, I'll experience more than a dozen hours under the hands of talented massage therapists and aestheticians in the name of research. My goal is to help you determine the best Scottsdale spa experiences for your next trip to Arizona's Sonoran Desert. I hope to relax along the way, too.

I'm not entirely checking out, though; I'm determined to keep up my wellness kick with morning hikes, fitness classes, and nutritious eats during my five days in Scottsdale. I imagine my days will revolve around indulgence in a number of different forms.

And I'll fill you in on all of it. Through dispatches over the course of the next week (or so), I'll report here on my solo stay in Scottsdale. I'll follow up later with more detailed blog posts on my overnight stays, sublime treatments, and most memorable meals. Stay tuned!

Friday, October 3: Going Big at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess

“That’s the Cadillac of treatments!” exclaimed an employee at the [Fairmont Scottsdale Princess](#), when I told her I’d booked the two-hour Havasupai Falls Rejuvenation service at the resort’s [Willow Stream Spa](#). The plan was to kick off my “five treatments in five days” extravagance with something, well, extravagant. I picked a winner.

First, while I lay on thick towels on a massage table in a dimly lit room, a massage therapist, named David, exfoliated my dry, high-altitude Colorado skin with desert salts and clay infused with pine, sage, chaparral, and arnica essential oils. Then, I showered off the grit, and slid into a toasty warm bath filled with foaming salts. (Like a true pro, David made sure I always felt “plenty covered” moving from table to shower to bathtub.)

While lying in the tub (again, private parts covered with hand towels as needed) David stood by, keeping my forehead cool with ice-cold washcloths, and spritzing my face with cucumber water. I felt like a cherished princess or beloved Cleopatra, only without the feeding of the grapes.

Bath time was followed by a full body massage with thick shea and jojoba cream. My treatment ended with the crème de la crème: David drizzled a thin stream of safflower, avocado, and sunflower oil on my forehead and massaged it into my hair. During this finale, I lost all track of time. I dozed. I grinned. I didn’t want David’s gentle, nurturing touch to end.

When it did end, I still had plenty to experience in the 44,000-square-foot spa. Not only does the spa feature a co-ed, outdoor waterfall feature and terraced pool area solely for spa guests, but each of the women’s and men’s locker rooms is outfitted with a steam room, Swiss shower, hot and cold plunge pools, eucalyptus inhalation room, and sauna. More perks: cocktails by the pool, healthy smoothies, and nutritious salads, wraps, and burgers. If I hadn’t had dinner plans, I likely would still be making myself at home at this truly lovely and expansive spa setting.

Saturday, October 4: Healthy Day at the Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia

The grounds at the [Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia](#) evoke sunny Andalusia, with antiques from Spain, orange trees, towering palms, and giant pots filled with brightly colored

flowers. Outdoor pools, restaurants, bars, and an exquisite Moroccan-themed spa mean that guests who want to relax in a bucolic setting really don't have to leave the property for days.

If it weren't for nearby Camelback Mountain beckoning me to climb it this morning, I likely wouldn't have set foot off the grounds for 24 hours. This sandstone rock formation, just a 15-minute walk from the resort, played a big role in my perfect day of exercise and pampering at the Omni Montelucia.

Camelback Mountain. While the Omni Montelucia offers US\$25 guided hikes at 7 a.m. on weekends, I opted to climb Echo Canyon trail on my own. Alas, I didn't get to the trailhead until 8:45 a.m., when many (smart) locals were already descending, finishing up their outdoor exercise before the desert temperatures really started to rise. The 2.4-mile round-trip trek is incredibly steep, with metal handrails drilled into especially treacherous inclines. The reward after hiking an hour to the summit: fantastic 360-degree views of downtown Phoenix and surrounding mountains.

Pool time. Guests at the Omni Montelucia can kick back at the Kasbah Pool, where upbeat music is piped in, or the adults-only Oasis Pool, which has a mellower vibe. After devouring a huge plate of kale and quinoa salad served poolside, I dozed on a lounge chair under an umbrella at the Oasis Pool. Pure bliss.

Joya Spa. This is no average hotel spa. The dimly lit, 31,000-square-foot facility is decked out in Moroccan décor: painted tiles, curly wrought-iron railings, and sumptuous red couches. I tried the signature Hammam bathing ritual, which included a full-body exfoliating scrub (yes, another one), followed by a hot-cold journey to stimulate circulation. For this second treatment, I sat on a tiled lounge, lay down in a steam room, got five gallons of chilly water dumped on my head during the "cold deluge" rainshower, soaked in a whirlpool, and rested in a sauna before receiving another cold deluge. To top off my stint in the spa, I had the 80-minute Joyambrosia Signature Massage with an oil blend derived from the Queen of the Night cactus. My massage therapist, Abby, took care to spend extra time on hike-weary calves. More bliss.

Prado Restaurant. I celebrated the end of my ideal day at the Omni Montelucia with a glass of red wine al fresco at the main restaurant, Prado. I ordered the Harvest Squash Salad with pistachios and pomegranate seeds, Chilean Sea Bass with roasted carrots and beets, and a

hearty serving of dense-with-crispy-crust sourdough focaccia bread. When my friendly server suggested a dessert of Dulce de Leche Bread Pudding with homemade whipped cream and caramel drizzle, I said yes. Healthy living is all about balance, right?

Sunday, October 5: Too Cool for School at the W Scottsdale

With burlesque dancers in the Living Room lobby lounge; weekend pool parties and DJ dance mixes on the WET Deck; sexy, curved purple couches in guest rooms; and trademarked Whatever/Whenever concierge service that promises to transform guests' "dreams into reality... as long as it's legal," the [W Scottsdale](#) is hip, contemporary, and oh-so irreverent. This high-rise downtown Scottsdale hotel isn't designed for visitors who take themselves too seriously. Even the hotel elevator feels like a party when an entire wall of lights flashes different colors as you ascend floors.

The [Bliss Spa](#)—a day spa found in W properties across the country (and in a number of standalone locations around the world)—is similarly modern, with white walls and shelves lined with Bliss-branded products in ever-present robin's-egg-blue packaging. Bliss, too, has a cheeky vibe: the shower tile in the locker rooms looks like real grass (I did a double take, thinking I was about to step on turf). Another surprise: The playful array of snacks in the small relaxation lounge included cheese and crackers, cucumbers, and.... delectable, fudgy, one-bite brownies. Still more chocolate is given to guests after treatments; I got a YORK Peppermint Pattie along with a business card from my aesthetician, Jeni.

My hour-long Fabulous Facial at Bliss soothed parched skin and included a couple of unexpected extras: a calf and foot massage, and a hydrating and lifting mask that actually covered my eyes. That was an odd sensation, having my eyeballs essentially sealed shut by the mask "paste" that became a peel-off solid, while Jeni gently rubbed my shoulders, arms, and hands. Still, when it was all said and done, my face felt and looked dewy, with no more dry patches. Mission accomplished.

Monday, October 6: Find Your Zen at the Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain

Thai massage also is known as assisted stretching. I call it the lazy man's yoga. During Thai massage, instead of holding yoga poses while standing, lunging, or squatting, you lie down on a

table and someone else stretches, rocks, and shifts your limbs for you. Sounds great, right? Indeed, it is.

That's why I booked the spendy Luk Pra Kope treatment at the Asian-influenced spa at [Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain](#). This signature, two-hour service includes not only a thorough foot bath, but also assisted stretching combined with warm herbal poultices pressed, rolled, and massaged into the skin to help soothe weary muscles.

At the onset of the treatment, I was skeptical it was worth the US\$295 fee. My toasty foot bath felt good, but the exfoliating lime and the detoxifying clay made my calves and feet itch afterward, enough so that I (politely) asked my therapist to lotion my extremities to calm the skin. Later, I felt chilled during the table treatment, due to the ever-present air-conditioning in Scottsdale in the early autumn months. I requested a blanket placed on whatever body parts weren't being worked on. Sharon, my experienced therapist, was kind to put a heated compress under my neck to help keep me warm, too.

As soon as I settled into the Thai massage (during which I was dressed in loose pants and a top, which were provided for me), I promptly zoned out and let Sharon do the work. At one point, I was face-down, and she was straddling my back, using her knees to put pressure on my tight glutes. At another point, she pulled on my ankles while her feet put some serious pressure on my hamstrings.

Sharon's expert kneading and pressure soothed my sore muscles that were aching from hiking and gym workouts. All the while, I just lay there and concentrated on breathing all the soreness out (i.e. I really didn't do anything). A post-treatment stint in the spa's steam room, and a few minutes in the spa's outdoor meditation garden, and I felt like a new woman. And a nap.

Tuesday, October 7: Immersed in the Desert at Four Seasons Scottsdale

A 30-minute drive north of downtown Scottsdale, the [Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North](#) sits in the heart of the high Sonoran Desert. The resort is surrounded by saguaro cacti, rolling hills, giant boulders, and, my favorite, Pinnacle Peak Park, which is home to a moderate hiking trail accessible directly from the luxury property. I got in 90 minutes of hiking before I even checked into my spacious king casita with in-room fireplace and balcony that backed right up to

rock formations and those quintessential, big ol' cacti. To this Colorado girl accustomed to the high-altitude jagged Rocky Mountains, I loved being dropped into the middle of cowboy country Arizona.

Another thing to love about Four Seasons Scottsdale: The on-site restaurant Proof, an “American canteen,” that harkens back to yesteryear along Route 66 with milkshakes from an old-fashioned soda fountain; servers dressed in checked shirts and cowboy boots; and comfort food including chicken and waffles, shrimp po'boys, chopped salad topped with unexpected popcorn.

To wrap up my Scottsdale spa-capades (thanks, [Trip Styler](#) for the brilliant moniker), I spent the late afternoon indulging in two brand-new treatments at the Four Seasons Scottsdale spa. The treatments focus on encouraging a good night's sleep and improving skin quality overnight. The 80-minute Dream Weaver Massage includes guided relaxation and long kneading strokes that draw energy away from the body to promote restfulness. The subtly scented “I Dream” massage oil features lavender, ylang ylang, and vetiver, and take-home bath salts included those same calming scents. My second facial of the week (note to self: for my next spa bender, one deep-cleansing facial is plenty for not upsetting sensitive skin) included ultra-hydrating “night drops” serum and thick night cream to restore skin overnight.

I'm certain from head to toe my skin has never been so lubed, nourished, and moisturized as it has been during my indulgent “five spas in five days” experience. I'm definitely not complaining. While I may never again replicate this exact routine, you can bet I'll keep sampling new and different spa services no matter where I travel. And with still at least 20 other top-notch spas in [Scottsdale](#) I've yet to see, I have a feeling I'll be back in the Phoenix area soon.