

Things to Do in Scottsdale, Arizona

Butterfly Wonderland

Nestled in the heart of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Butterfly Wonderland is a state-of-the-art facility that houses a tropical rainforest, which is home to thousands of butterflies from around the world. The facility also features several galleries with interactive insect exhibits, a modern theater that screens educational movies such as Flight of the Butterflies, and educational laboratories for community-based workshops and nature programs. Butterfly Wonderland is one of the top Scottsdale attractions. A family-friendly gift shop is the perfect place to find a memento, while a cozy café serves light meals, snacks, and beverages throughout the day.

500 E. Via de Ventura, Scottsdale, Arizona, Phone: 480-800-3000

Downtown Scottsdale

Get a taste of what Scottsdale has to offer with a visit to the city's Downtown area.

This historic corner of the city is packed with an array of souvenir shops, fashion boutiques, award-winning restaurants, vibrant bars, and other forms of entertainment, all within easy walking distance of one another.

Explore great art galleries on fun-filled and informative Art Walks held every Thursday evening, visit Scottsdale's most celebrated public artworks by taking an easy hour's walk through downtown, or learn about the history of the region on a self-guided walking tour, taking in the Little Red Schoolhouse, the Rusty Spur Saloon, and Cavalliere's Blacksmith Shop. If you are wondering what to do in Scottsdale today, this is a great place to start exploring.

Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art

The Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art presents an outstanding collection of contemporary art, architecture, and examples of design from around the world. Situated on a beautifully landscaped park in the middle of downtown Scottsdale, the museum offers nine to twelve rotating exhibitions per year that keep visitors on trend with what is happening in the world of art, architecture, and design.

The museum also provides exciting programming in the genres of music, dance, performance, literature, and film, as well as educational opportunities and learning experiences in the form of workshops, classes and lectures, arts activities, guided tours, and slide presentations for all ages.

7374 East Second Street, Scottsdale, Arizona, Phone: 480-874-4666

McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale, Arizona

The McDowell Sonoran Preserve is the gateway to the Sonoran Desert and features one of the most diverse environments on earth. Spanning over 30,000 acres and unfurling along the eastern edge of the city, the McDowell Sonoran Preserve has more than 100 miles of trails and no less than six trailheads to explore and enjoy.

Visitors to the Preserve can enjoy an array of outdoor activities, including hiking, mountain biking, wildlife and bird watching, and guided rock climbing and off-roading tours. Each of the six trailheads provides expansive views of Pinnacle Peak and the Valley, and the Bajada Nature Trail offers a variety of games and activities en route for children of all ages.

18333 N. Thompson Peak Rd, Scottsdale, Arizona, Phone: 480-998-7971

Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts

The Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts is one of the premier performing-arts halls in the country that showcases a diverse range of theater, music, dance, comedy, and film from around the globe. Designed by Arizona architect Bennie Gonzales, the 1975 adobe-inspired building is the base for hundreds of events that entertain and inspire audiences on an annual basis, from live performances and educational programs to major festivals and community celebrations. The center also features artistic displays, including a radiant glass sculpture by Kana Tanaka entitled Spirit of Camelback, and it is the setting for the award-winning Scottsdale Arts Festival.

Located in the heart of the city's artistic district, the center is a short walk from Scottsdale's Old Town

The Scottsdale Xeriscape Garden at Chaparral Park

The Scottsdale Xeriscape Garden at Chaparral Park is a National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat that features over 7,000 plants and 200 species. Fed by a vast underwater reservoir, the expansive 5.5-acre garden was established to protect and preserve regional plant species and provide an educational resource to raise awareness about local plant species and sustainable landscaping using reduced water usage.

Visitors to the garden can move around easily, following clear signage and an interactive plant guide that highlights the facts about the low-water-use plants and trees and water harvesting. The guide also gives excellent tips for caring for desert landscapes.

SE corner of Hayden & McDonald Road, Scottsdale, Arizona, Phone: 480-312-3111

McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park

McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park is a unique railroad park dedicated to displaying the history of the railroad. Located on the corner of Scottsdale and Indian Bend Roads, the park is home to a one-of-a-kind Model Railroad Building that spans 10,000 square feet and houses a 15 in (381 mm) gauge railroad, four model railroad clubs, and a Magma Arizona Railroad locomotive.

An interactive railroad museum boasts a variety of objects and artifacts related to the railroad industry along with an array of exhibits, including the Roald Amundsen Pullman Car, the Merci Train, and the Model Railroad. The park features several playground and picnic areas in which to relax with the family, and visitors of all ages are welcome to enjoy a charming antique carousel.

7301 E. Indian Bend Rd, Scottsdale, Arizona, Phone: 480-312-2312

Southwest Wildlife Conservation Center

Southwest Wildlife Conservation Center rescues and rehabilitates injured wildlife and releases them back into the wild, and it provides a sanctuary for orphaned animals native to Arizona. The center also provides education on the importance of nature and wildlife, as well as the role they play in our world. The center is home to a range of animals, including black bears, bobcats, coyotes, jaguars, mountain lions, Mexican grey wolves, and porcupines, among others. Visitors to the center can enjoy Walk with Wildlife tours through the facility and learn more about these fascinating animals. The center hosts several onsite educational programs, including Walk with Wildlife, Sunrise Nature Tour, Full Moon Tour, and Discovery Day, as well as several community-based outreach programs like PAWS.

27026 N. 156th Street, Scottsdale, Arizona, Phone: 480-471-9109

Scottsdale Historical Museum

Located in the historic 1909 Little Red Schoolhouse, the Scottsdale Historical Museum chronicles the history and cultural heritage of Scottsdale and the Southwest through a fantastic collection of photographs, artifacts, exhibits, and displays.

Permanent exhibits in the museum include The One Room Schoolhouse, which shows how a one-room school might for eight grade levels have looked in the 1800s through the 1900s and the Winfield Scott Exhibit, as well as a variety of changing exhibits related to the history of the region.

The Scottsdale Historical Museum is open Wednesday through Sunday, and group tours and guest speakers are available and can be booked in advance.

7333 East Scottsdale Mall, Scottsdale, Arizona, Phone: 480-945-4499

Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West

Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West celebrates and showcases the history of the West and everything related to it, including its heritage, cultures, and varying environments. The museum was established to explore the challenges of the modern world through looking back at history and learning from past achievements.

It accomplishes this goal by providing a range of interpretive artworks, interactive experiences, and exciting events. Located in Downtown Scottsdale, the Museum of the West features galleries housing permanent and traveling exhibitions; a one-of-a-kind, multi-sensory, and multimedia theater/auditorium that showcases the work of Western artists through a variety of performances and shows; and an intimate Sculpture Courtyard where visitors can relax, refresh, and reflect on an ever-changing array of sculptural exhibits amongst exotic desert surroundings.

3830 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale, Arizona, Phone: 480-686-9539

Octane Raceway, Scottsdale, Arizona

Octane Raceway is full-time indoor/outdoor racing venue that offers casual and competitive kart racing for all ages. A Scottsdale entertainment landmark and popular tourist attraction, Octane Raceway features a third-mile track, which winds indoors and outdoors and has European electric race karts that travel up to 45 mph with zero emissions.

Visitors can simply walk in, register, and race, and their race is scored in a Fastest Lap format – the driver with the best lap time wins the race. Octane Raceway also caters private and special events such as corporate and team building events and birthday parties, and it has features such as private event rooms, a Trackside Bar & Grill, and several other entertainment facilities, including a Pit Crew Challenge, bowling alley, a games arcade, and billiards.

Chocolate Tour of Scottsdale

Explore the sweet side of Scottsdale on a guided walking tour that visits all the town's best chocolate destinations. These "chocolicious" tours head to a variety of chocolatiers and local shops throughout the Downtown area where chocolate-lovers will have the opportunity to learn about the history of this confectionary and how the products are made and sample varieties of the world's most popular treat.

Feast on truffles, hot chocolate, ice-cream, cupcakes, and other baked goods made with or from chocolate and meet the owners and chocolate-makers of some of Scottsdale's best chocolate stores, while at the same time soaking up the wonderful ambiance of this vibrant town.

Old Town Scottsdale Farmers Market

The Old Town Scottsdale Farmers Market is a vibrant local market situated on Brown Avenue that features a variety of locally grown produce and specialty foods. The market offers a broad range of farm produce from organic and pesticide-free vegetables, fruit, and herbs to natural beef, pork, chicken, and free-range eggs, milk, and local cheeses.

Freshly baked bread and other goods are available, including Amish friendship bread, artisan bread, and homemade muffins, cakes, and pies, as well as handmade jams, piccalillis, and tamales. The family-friendly market also offers fun-filled, food-related events throughout the season, including the Edible Education Series where cooks and chefs share their tips, tricks, and techniques for inspired cooking.

3806 N. Brown Ave, Scottsdale, AZ, Phone: 623-848-1234

Desert Splash Adventures

Desert Splash Adventures offers scenic flights over the Sonoran Desert, Roosevelt Lake, and Lake Powell. Operated by Island Air Express, Desert Splash Adventures provides discerning guests with an exclusive and unique desert adventure experience from the comfortable cockpit of a Cessna Caravan Amphibious Seaplane.

Highly experienced commercial bush pilots, who are based in Alaska in the off season, fly the planes, and they guarantee absolute safety throughout the journey. Conveniently located near the Scottsdale Airport, an executive lounge provides a luxurious space to relax before the flight, which takes you over some of Arizona's most dramatic, breathtaking landscapes, ending in an exhilarating water landing on Roosevelt Lake or Lake Powell.

Desert Splash Adventures also offers a range of other adventures ranging from gourmet brunches on a private island to canyoneering in the magnificent rock formations of the Sonoran wilderness.

15115 N Airport Drive, Landmark Aviation (FBO), Scottsdale, AZ, Phone: 877-588-8819

Fiesta Bowl Museum

Located in the corporate offices of the Fiesta Bowl in central Scottsdale is the [Fiesta Bowl Museum](#). Stop in during a weekday to see college football trophies and exhibits relaying the history of the Fiesta Bowl organization, its volunteers, and the games. The museum is free to all football lovers and a great place to go to view all the teams' helmets in one place.

Swim with the Dolphins at Dolphinaris Arizona

Scottsdale is also home to [Dolphinaris Arizona](#) where you can meet and greet bottlenose dolphins up close. A variety of packages are available, some that even put you in the water with these remarkable sea mammals. Or book a land option if you do not want to get wet. Either way, you will learn about dolphins, their ecosystem, and the measures we can take to protect and preserve them in the wild.

Odysea Aquarium in Scottsdale

In central Scottsdale, highly visible from the Loop 101 Pima Freeway in Central Scottsdale, the Odysea of the Desert Aquarium is a 35-acre entertainment destination that opened in Fall 2016. Odysea Aquarium incorporates about 200,000 square feet of aquatic entertainment and education. Located in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, the two-level, state-of-the-art facility can accommodate thousands of visitors every day. The aquarium is arranged in a manner that affords great views of creatures from a large variety of the earth's oceans, seas, and rivers, with the purpose to "educate and inspire guests about aquatic life and conservation." Visit the inhabitants of ecosystems such as deep ocean, coral reefs, rivers, and lakes—both freshwater and saltwater environments.
9500 E. Via de Ventura, Scottsdale, AZ 85256

Odysea Mirror Maze and Laser Maze

The Odysea Mirror Maze is an attraction in Scottsdale where people of all ages can come to have fun going in and out of the mazes.

Mirror Maze

The mirror maze is the more traditional of the two types of mazes here, where participants enter a windowless area and try to maneuver through the mirrors to find the path to freedom. Look for the butterflies along the way! There are several different light modes used in the Mirror Maze.

Laser Maze

Have you seen *Mission Impossible* or *Ocean's Eleven*? Then you will remember that the main characters had to sneak through all kinds of laser beams pointed in different directions to reach their target. That is exactly what the Laser Maze is like at Odysea. There are different levels of expertise, and the goal is to get through -- without touching the lasers -- in the shortest amount of time. This maze is great for competitions between friends or siblings. Phone: 480-270-6200

Scottsdale Trolley Tour

Hop a two-hour free guided tour on the [Scottsdale trolley](#), where you'll learn about the city's different districts, including Old Town Scottsdale, Craftsman Court, the Civic Center area, the Scottsdale Arts District. During the tour, the city's history and architecture come alive, as well as the town's important historical people. Ask questions of your tour guide who is there to help you figure out where to eat, where to buy souvenirs, and maybe even where to take a nearby afternoon hike.

Scottsdale Art Walk

Every Thursday night of the year (except for Thanksgiving) Scottsdale's art gallery scene comes alive after dinner with open doors and special showings. Stroll the streets of downtown to enjoy artists' receptions, openings of shows, and demonstrations. And it is free—unless you fall in love with a piece and decide to take it home.