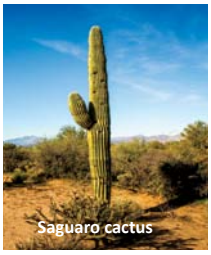
YOUR LOCAL TOUR GUIDE FOR *Phoenix*

By Kory Kilmer

Kory Kilmer of Fox Restaurant Concepts picks out some of his favorite spots to hit while in Phoenix for **RFMA 2018**

Few things are as nice as springtime in the desert. With last summer's heat long forgotten, and next summer's heat too far away to care about, March in the Valley of the Sun is all about flip-flops and shorts, dining on a patio, and getting out and about to experience everything the nation's fifth largest city has to offer.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS


Saguaro cactus

With more than 300 days of sunshine every year, Phoenix is an ideal location for outdoor recreation—and the options are endless. For the outdoor enthusiast, no trip to Phoenix is complete without a hike up **Camelback Mountain**. One of the most famous urban hiking destinations in the world, Camelback has two rugged trails that lead to the top. Hikers who are up to the challenge are rewarded with panoramic views from this natural landmark in the heart of the city.

For those wanting more of a leisurely pace for their desert exploration, **McDowell Sonoran Preserve** in Scottsdale is the largest urban preserve in the United States and offers 182 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. This is the best location in the area to experience the Sonoran Desert habitat as nature intended, including a stroll among the famed **Saguaro cactus.**

The **Apache Trail** offers a snapshot of the "Old West" here in Arizona, without ever needing to get out of your car. Completed in 1905 to accommodate the construction of the Roosevelt Dam, the 41.5-mile unpaved road takes drivers up through the **Superstition Mountains** along the Salt River, past sparkling reservoirs to Tortilla Flats (population: six). Known as "The Town Too Tough to Die," it is the perfect pit stop for a bowl of chili and a sarsaparilla before getting back on the road.

GOING ON TOUR

Taliesin West

For those interested in architecture and function, a great place to start is **Frank Lloyd Wright's** winter home at **Taliesin West.** Set against the McDowell Mountains in Scottsdale, the property was inspired by Wright's love of the desert landscape and constructed to be a part of its surroundings. The landmark is now home to the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and the School of Architecture at Taliesin and includes daily tours.

Arizona has long been a premiere destination for golfers from all over the world, so it only makes sense that it should also be home to one of the premier lines of golf equipment, **Karsten Manufacturing**. Better known as **PING Golf**, the company offers tours of its manufacturing facility, where

PING Golf Tours

visitors can see first-hand how the golf clubs, including the legendary putters, are crafted.

At the end of a long day, I recommend a self-guided exploration of Phoenix's budding brewery scene. **Arizona Wilderness Brewing,** which was named World's Best New Brewery by *Esquire Magazine* in 2014, is definitely worth a stop. However, don't overlook the old staples, such as San Tan or Four Peaks, whose original Tempe brewpub is in an old creamery built in the 1890s.

IN FULL SWING

Nothing announces the arrival of spring to the Valley of the Sun quite like the crack of the bat at **Spring Training.** Shortly after pitchers and catchers report in mid-February, the Cactus League's 15 teams prepare for the upcoming season with games played at 10 different stadiums across the Greater Phoenix area.

Though baseball has been played in Arizona for well over a century—the world's oldest baseball stadium is actually Warren Ballpark down in Bisbee, Ariz.—the Cactus League began playing in the spring of 1947, the same year that Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier.

In addition to the games, the **Arizona Spring Training Experience** and **Cactus League Hall of Fame** have exhibits and events all over town during Cactus League play, which is a great way to understand and experience 72 years of the valley's history as baseball's seasonal starting point.

Of course, baseball is not the only thing in full swing come March. More than **200 area golf courses** will be packed with golfers from across the globe. From traditional layout to desert golf, every course offers something different. For those who want to walk in the footsteps of the pros, consider a round at the **Stadium Course** at TPC Scottsdale, home of the Waste Management Phoenix Open and its infamous 16th, the rowdiest hole on tour.

Regardless of what you choose as your adventure while here in Arizona, make sure the memories are worth taking back home and sharing.

Stadium Course at TPC Scottsdale