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Welcome to the new and improved Arizona Meetings & Events.

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What’s exciting in the world of Arizona hospitality news.

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Creative cuisine abounds at these indie chef-driven spots around the state.

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Meet the city’s most creative, offbeat settings to meet, dine and mingle in.

Adventures in Northern Arizona
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Touring Tucson
This southern city offers history, delectable dining and luxe properties to impress your attendees.
Makeover Magic

Welcome to the 2018 edition of Arizona Meetings & Events! I’m so excited to share our brand-new look with you, which includes a refreshed logo, new departments and features, and an overall revamp of the magazine’s look. I’m grateful to the talented designers we worked with to convey our modern feel to you, the readers we serve and aim to please.

Although I’m not a meeting planner by trade, I always appreciate a well-thought-out event, convention or meeting. The best types of events are ones that make me feel encouraged, insightful and thoughtful about the work I’m trying to accomplish every day. (Kind of what a great meeting is supposed to do, right?) And in this issue we cover all kinds of ways in which the meetings and events industry in the state has continued to evolve and provide fresh insight, ideas and trends.

Be sure to peruse all of the new departments we’ve introduced, like Word of Mouth, where writer Katherine Adomaitis takes us on a culinary tour of eight indie chef-driven spots throughout the state—which also happen to be great for a group. Seasoned “brain-based leadership” instructor Molly Rose Teuke shares five concrete ways you can implement goals in her Personal Development column—and actually follow through with accomplishing them. It’s one of the best and most approachable articles I’ve read in a while on the topic!

In every issue we’re also bringing you Where It’s At, a shorter feature on a cool destination in the state to bring a group; a Tech Trends column on the latest in meetings and events technology; a Planner Tips piece with great takeaways on how to make your meetings better; and a First Person profile on an inspirational leader in the industry. For the 2018 edition I had the honor of interviewing Sam Fox, the incredibly down-to-earth yet immensely successful founder of Fox Restaurant Concepts.

Please enjoy this edition, and be sure to email me at Shayna@ntmediagroup.com with any suggestions or comments you have about Arizona Meetings & Events. I look forward to hearing from you!

Shayna Mace, Editorial Director

FROM THE EDITOR

INDUSTRY UPDATES

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE: CREATING SECURE EVENTS

After last October’s shooting in Las Vegas at the Route 91 music festival, event security is once again at the forefront of event planners’ minds. So how can you ensure that the meetings and conventions you work on are safe and secure? Writer Ronnie Garrett interviewed some experts in the field to lend some insight on what planners can do to factor in safety measures for their events. Read this online exclusive at azmeetings.com.

OPENING SOON

The brand-new Hampton Inn & Suites Phoenix Downtown is opening its doors in May 2018. This downtown property will have 210 guest rooms and suites and 580 square feet of meeting space. Located adjacent to the new downtown Arizona State University campus and close to CityScape Park, Talking Stick Resort Arena and Chase Field, it’s also across the street from a Valley Metro Rail stop. Visit http://hamptoninn3.hilton.com and type in “Phoenix” in the search area for more information.

MEET OUR NEW WEBSITE

Our magazine isn’t the only thing that got a makeover—so did azmeetings.com! Read all of our great content anytime, plus peruse articles from back issues. And did you know we send out a monthly e-newsletter? It’s full of industry updates, hospitality sector events and interesting reads from the magazine. If you’re interested in subscribing, please visit azmeetings.com and click on the “Subscribe” link.
We set goals every day. Most of them are immediate and easily achieved: fix a great dinner, be on time for the quarterly sales meeting, call mom. Some are near-term: finish the annual report on time, plan a friend's birthday party—also pretty easy to achieve. For the most part, we know what to do and how to do it, and we have an external motivation for getting it done.

Then there are the long-term goals: save enough to buy a house, learn a new language, create a stronger business or social network, or maybe that old standby, get fit. Some of these goals we achieve with ease, while others become perpetual dreams that we eventually give up on.

How can we get better at getting what we want in life? Setting and achieving goals is an artful blend of common sense and science. Here are five best practices.

**BE SPECIFIC**
It starts with defining precisely what you want. Sounds simple, yet it's where many of us go wrong. How much is "enough to buy a house?" Does "learn a language" mean learn basic travel phrases, or do I need to be fluent? What, exactly, do I mean by "fit?" The likelihood of success diminishes if we can't adequately define what success means.

Quantitative goals are easy: "Save $40,000 over the next 7 years." "Run a marathon (26 miles)." Qualitative goals are trickier, because you need a reference point. You might say, "I want to converse with ease when traveling in a foreign land." Sometimes, a simple one to 10 scale can help. "I'm at a two on the fitness scale today and I'd like to be at a nine." Our brains are like search engines. Once we input a specific phrase (the goal), our brain will begin searching for ways to make it happen.

It's also helpful to be clear on the time frame, because it lends urgency. Most of us are pretty good at cutting ourselves slack, and that's not helpful in goal pursuit. A timeline keeps us on track.

**MAKE IT A CHOICE**
Goals are easier to achieve when they mean something to us—when they have emotional clout. If you're pursuing a goal because someone else wants you to do it, it's important that you find a way to make it meaningful to you. If your doctor told you to improve your fitness—well, we know where that's likely to go. But if you get that message and decide you want to be around to play with your grandchildren, it becomes more meaningful.

When you set a goal, ask yourself "Why?" Repeat the question, peeling off the layers until you find a reason that sparks something in your heart. Making the goal into something you choose to pursue, with an outcome that energizes you, increases your likelihood of success.

**CHUNK IT INTO A MANAGEABLE PLAN**
We increase our chances for success when we break goals into smaller chunks. Saving a down-payment size sum can feel impossible, but putting $100 into savings every week or trimming your dining-out budget by 20 percent this month might seem more doable. Chunking allows you to see how you'll achieve the goal, step by step, day by day, which helps you stay motivated.

Chunking also lets you focus on the behaviors within your control. Perhaps you can't give yourself a promotion, but you can undertake the professional development that will make it easier for someone else to promote you. If your goal remains out of reach, consider what new behaviors might get you closer. Confucius wisely suggested that when a goal seems unachievable, you're better off adjusting the action steps than changing the goal.

**SORT OUT THE IF-THEN**
Believing you can achieve your goal is essential to your success—but it's not enough—not by a long shot. When you focus on the power of your optimism and confidence and ignore the potential distractions and upsets you're likely to encounter, you sabotage your success.

Heidi Grant, author of Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals, says studies suggest that when we believe that achieving a goal will be a piece of cake, it increases the odds of failure. "Not only is visualizing ‘effortless success’ not helpful, it’s disastrous,” she says. “It is a recipe for failure.” We need to be realistic so we won’t give up at the first setback.

Grant recommends thinking through all the things that could derail you and writing them down. Then think through (and write down) how you will overcome those challenges. If you’re trimming your dining-out budget to save for a down payment and your friends invite you to an...
expensive restaurant, how will you respond? Imagining how this scenario might play out increases the odds it will end in your favor. You might picture yourself suggesting an alternative restaurant that’s more in your budget. Or if your intention is to get more fit and a friend suggests going to a movie at the same time you’d planned to be at the gym, how will you respond? Picture yourself countering that you’d prefer to take a walk together. If you haven’t worked out an if-then scenario, you’re more likely to simply give in to the temptation or distraction in the moment.

When you do go off the rails—as we all do sometimes—don’t beat yourself up over it. Give yourself permission to let it go and refocus. A formidable body of research suggests that guilt is a poor motivator. Guilt leaves you more likely to continue goal-sabotaging behavior instead of getting back on track.

NARROW YOUR FOCUS TO THE EVERYDAY WINS
When you commit to everyday actions and behaviors that lead to incremental progress, you gain traction. When you set a large goal—say you’ve set your sights on running a 10K—the pace of progress can feel frustrating. When you focus on the fact that you’re running every day and increasing your stamina by 1K every third week, you’re more likely to remain motivated and keep up the momentum.

There’s another side to that, though. When you look back at how far you’ve come, it’s easy to give yourself permission to slack off. Celebrate the ongoing wins, and at the same time, acknowledge how far you have to go. Be honest with yourself as you monitor your progress; it will help you stay motivated to choose behaviors that will get you to your goal. As Grant notes in her books, when you are able to see the discrepancy between where you are and where you want to be, your brain will work hard to close the gap.

CEMENTING SUCCESS
Most of our goals are more achievable than we know. With a few tweaks to how you approach your goals, you might be much closer than you realize. As Thomas Edison famously said, “Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

Molly Rose Teuke teaches the Get Your Brain On Your Side course at Nicolet College and delivers brain-based leadership training for the NeuroLeadership Institute, a global leader in the performance arena. She also hosts a weekly classical music program and a monthly audioblog called BrainWaves on WXPR-FM.

Surrounded by the beauty of the desert, your event will be unforgettable with an option of open-air pavilions, scenic courtyards, intimate gardens and historic locations for day or evening meetings or receptions.
The world's most cutting-edge conferences use streaming video to engage in-person and remote attendees before, during and after the event. That means meeting planners are required now more than ever to create content strategies that encapsulate ROI, metrics, engagement and more.

Companies and associations like Salesforce, Lanyon, Citrix, VMware, Autodesk and the Professional Convention Management Association are already streaming their educational conferences, product launches and town hall meetings to the world. And as technology has gotten smaller, easier to use and more affordable, the AV portion of how to capture video at a conference or meeting is the easy part. What takes strategic thinking is what a company does with all of the captured content.

Take Citrix, for example. To extend the life of the hundreds of hours of content presented every year at Citrix Synergy, the company's annual education event, it created Citrix Synergy TV. By livestreaming the keynotes and breakout sessions, Citrix turned the in-person event into an online, live and on-demand destination that lives beyond the conference. Citrix captured more than 100 conference sessions from 10 different rooms and created an online experience with a registration portal, live chat and a custom video showcase. Citrix typically gets 5,500 attendees on-site, and in 2016 the captured content received more than 100,000 views.

Conference content like that can be used throughout the year to promote future events, generate revenue (by turning sessions into online courses), attract new members or customers and uncover interests and trends from viewers. The possibilities are endless.

With the right plan in place, it's easier than you think to get the most out of your experience at your next event. Consider these four proven ways to make event video work for you.

1. IF YOU'RE GOING TO STREAM SOMETHING, START WITH YOUR CONFERENCE.
Not only is it the most relevant content, it's the most comfortable for your speakers. Your speakers don't have to do anything different, and your attendees will appreciate having the option to watch live or on-demand on their smartphones and revisit important content post-event. And if cost is a factor, start small with just your keynotes or main speakers and expand in future years.

The Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer's (SITC) annual meeting is where the cancer immunotherapy community meets in person for scientific exchange, education and networking. SITC 2017 was its largest annual meeting to date with over 3,500 attendees, and for the first time it created a live online conference experience. Online attendees could watch highly-anticipated sessions online. All of the cutting-edge science discussed at the event lives in an online, secure video library for attendees to access. Plus, anyone who watched the sessions could receive continuing education credits.

2. PLAN YOUR VIDEO CONTENT STRATEGY.
Recording conference content with video broadens your reach to new audiences around the world, boosts member retention and brand recognition, generates revenue with online certification programs and gives you marketing content to promote year-long.

One company that's doing just that is CME Science, a business that streams continuing medical education conferences for radiologists. After a conference, it turns that captured content into on-demand webinars and CME courses, reaching many more physicians by providing the option to complete CME courses online.

3. KEEP THE CONFERENCE EXCITEMENT GOING YEAR-ROUND.
Events never really have a start or end date if you stream them. Plan a rolling-thunder approach for your content with your customers or members. Share videos related to event topics throughout the year in marketing campaigns. It keeps people coming back and bridges the gap between one event to the next.

Video can feed your content marketing and social media strategies for up to a year. You can repurpose educational sessions into webinars, turn customer interviews into case studies and revive your e-newsletters and blog posts by embedding videos. Just make sure you include a call to action, such as a link to register for your next event.

4. USE VIDEO DATA TO PLAN FUTURE EVENTS.
Video analytics give you heat maps showing what parts of the video were viewed the most, helping to inform your conference content for the next year. Use ongoing and timely viewership data to better understand topic interest and presenter effectiveness.

Don't just look at clicks, though. Look at who is watching, how long they watched and what they watched. That will help plan your next conference by seeing what speakers and topics were the most popular. Perhaps the ones who were really popular online should be invited back to present in a bigger room the following year.

Rob Lipps is the executive vice president of Sonic Foundry, maker of Mediasite Video Platform. Lipps leads the company's global sales organization including oversight of domestic, international and channel sales. He holds more than 20 years of sales leadership, business development and emerging market entry expertise in the technology and manufacturing sectors.
During the 1800s, Prescott served as the territorial capital of Arizona, bolstered by an economy that included mining and ranching. Phoenix, though, some 90 miles to the south, eventually became the state’s capital. And Prescott? It’s capitalized on its territorial past, mild mountain climate and a walkable downtown historic district to become a magnet for visitors, bustling with shops, galleries, restaurants and bars. In fact, Expedia’s viewfinder travel blog has named Prescott one of its “hottest travel destinations for 2018.” The town—with a population of about 42,000—is also a great place to host small-to-medium meetings and events.

THE VENUES
Prescott has 1,300-plus hotel rooms, ranging from B&Bs set in charming Victorian houses to national hotel chains. Among hotels with meeting space, the Prescott Resort and Conference Center, a ridgetop property, is the largest with 160 rooms. Sweeping views of the city, Southwest décor and a casino on property, (thanks to its location on Yavapai tribal land), are just some of the highlights. Near downtown’s central historic Courthouse Plaza—Prescott’s popular outdoor gathering spot—Hassayampa Inn boasts a restored 1920s ambiance, 67 rooms, a vintage elevator and a fireplace-warmed lobby. Also off the plaza, Hotel St. Michael dates to the early 1900s and offers 70 rooms plus a first floor filled with shops, galleries and a bistro.

Other uniquely Prescott venues include the Plaza View Ballroom, the second floor of a vintage department store that overlooks the Courthouse Plaza, and the Elks Theatre, a former opera house restored to its 1905 theatrical splendor and updated with state-of-the-art meeting space.

THE OUTDOORS
A great part of Prescott’s appeal is its setting at the edge of pine-filled Prescott National Forest and other open space, which means access to outdoor adventures. Dozens of miles of hiking, mountain biking and equestrian trails spiral out from the city, including popular ones like the view-grabbing trek up and around landmark Thumb Butte and Peavine National Recreation Trail, which slides by Watson Lake and the much-photographed Granite Dells, a series of dramatic...
lakeside boulder outcroppings. During warmer months, kayak and canoe rentals are available at several of the small lakes that dot the Prescott landscape.

THE CULTURE
Prescott has been the site of an annual summer rodeo since 1888 (hence its official moniker, the World’s Oldest Rodeo), but there’s also culture beyond bucking broncos. Sharlot Hall Museum, named for its benefactor, preserves historic structures that tell the story of the region’s past, while the Phippen Museum honors the work of George Phippen and other Western artists. Near Lynx Lake, the 80-acre Highlands Center for Natural History focuses on the flora and fauna of central Arizona with gardens and special programming (and it doubles as an event venue).

THE SHOPPING
What’s a meeting or event without being able to buy a little souvenir to slip in a carry-on? It’s easy to spend hours browsing Prescott’s shops and galleries for art, fashion, home accessories, antiques and collectibles. A few must-shops are Peregrine Book Company, a cavernous indie book store with author events throughout the month and a sizable section devoted to graphic novels; and the fragrant Spice Traveler, a great place to score Himalayan Pink salt, galangal root and annatto seed, not to mention basics like cinnamon and dill.

THE FOOD AND DRINK
Prescott’s historic downtown district is dotted with locally owned restaurants (many of which are happy to accommodate groups) offering everything from organic, vegan cuisine to Mexican dishes to steaks. The town also has a boozy past—Whiskey Row, a block of swinging-door saloons across from the Courthouse Plaza, dates to the 1800s and is a must-see pilgrimage for selfies. Newer adult-beverage purveyors include breweries, Thumb Butte Distillery and even Superstition Meadery—all great places to toast the charms of Prescott.

Katherine Adomatis is an Arizona-based freelance writer who covers travel, food, lifestyle and design for local, regional and national publications. Her favorite places in the state include the Grand Canyon, Sedona, Prescott and Saguaro National Park.
GOOD FOR A GROUP

These spots around the state won’t disappoint for creative cuisine that’s tailor-made for group outings.

By Katherine Adomaitis

GREATER PHOENIX

If you’re looking for a more specialized approach to your next event at a restaurant, consider taking your crew out for a meal at one of Arizona’s acclaimed, chef-driven indie restaurants. Here are some celebrated, foodie-friendly eateries that can accommodate groups of eight or more and are available for buyouts.

FAT OX
Chef Matt Carter’s newest concept in Scottsdale is a sleek, airy indoor/outdoor setting with a menu riffing on classic Italian cuisine. Start with made-to-order tableside Caesar salads, then progress to house-made pastas like squid ink pappardelle, or, for meat lovers, the 25-ounce dry-aged prime Porterhouse. The Italian-centric wine list is also sure to please.

ilovefatox.com

OCOTILLO
Housed in an architecturally striking building with desert landscaping in midtown Phoenix, Ocotillo has become a popular neighborhood hangout with its comfy dining room and numerous patio spaces. Chef Walter Sterling and his team deliver an ever-changing menu that trots the globe with dishes like duck egg tagliatelle, a halal burger and wood-fired beef ribs made with an mole espresso BBQ sauce.

ocotillophx.com

QUIESSENCE
Set in the midst of The Farm at South Mountain in Phoenix, an agrarian compound of restaurants and gardens, Quiessence is located in a rambling ranch house with cozy patios. Chef Dustin Christofolo incorporates local produce and products into an evolving menu that might feature pistachio soup, salad plucked from the garden and Cornish hen served with fried herbs and edible flowers. Libations include craft cocktails and Arizona wines.

qatthefarm.com
SEDONA

MARIPOSA LATIN INSPIRED GRILL
It’s easy to be dazzled by views of Sedona’s fabled red rocks from within this elegant, contemporary restaurant and its generously sized patios. But chef Lisa Dahl—who helms several other Sedona restaurants—reels you back in with dishes like grilled Spanish octopus, empanadas, Ecuadorian-style shrimp ceviche, plus steaks and chops. The Wine Spectator-lauded wine list includes selections from Argentina, Chile, Spain and Portugal.
mariposasedona.com

TUCSON

MAYNARDS MARKET & KITCHEN
Occupying part of a still-active, historic train depot, Maynards features a fast-casual marketplace and dinner restaurant, helmed by chef Brian Smith, all linked by a capacious patio. The dinner menu has an old-school, East Coast vibe, with steak tartare, oysters, celery bisque and pan-roasted duck. Manhattans and martinis seem appropriate here, but note that house wines are Arizona blends.
maynardstucson.com

DOWNTOWN KITCHEN + COCKTAILS
James Beard Award-winning chef Janos Wilder literally wrote the book on new Southwest cuisine (Janos: Recipes and Tales from a Southwest Restaurant), and his latest, art-filled urban concept spans the globe with tastes like African yam and peanut soup, duck rillettes tartine and crayfish-flecked ma po tofu. His adjacent The Carriage House, a renovated historic brick building, is available for larger groups.
downtownkitchen.com

THE COTTAGE FARMHOUSE FRENCH BISTRO
After several years of leading downtown Flagstaff’s food-centric rebirth, chef Scott Heinonen—who helms several other Sedona restaurants—reels you back in with dishes like grilled Spanish octopus, empanadas, Ecuadorian-style shrimp ceviche, plus steaks and chops. The Wine Spectator-lauded wine list includes selections from Argentina, Chile, Spain and Portugal.
thecottageflagstaff.com

ROOT PUBLIC HOUSE
Chef Dave Smith set out to support local farmers, ranchers, vintners and brewers with this downtown restaurant, set in a historic storefront with a minimalist vibe. The Southern-tinged menu features dishes like Hoppin’ John, shrimp and grits, and pecan-smoked spare ribs. Grab a craft cocktail and head to the rooftop patio (a great group spot) for views of Flagstaff’s landmark San Francisco Peaks.
rootpublichouse.com

FLAGSTAFF

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rootpublichouse.com
As meeting and event attendees become more health-conscious, crave nutritious foods and request meetings that don’t require sitting for hours at a time, meeting venues and planners alike are working hard to incorporate health and wellness components into their offerings.

According to the recent “Wellness in Meetings and Incentive Travel Study” by the Incentive Research Foundation, 87 percent of planners polled said wellness is a critical focus for their company when planning events, and more than 90 percent of corporate planners were “personally enthusiastic about wellness.”

According to Harold Fehr, director of catering and conference services at Boulders Resort & Spa in Scottsdale, “today’s meeting planners have seen it all, so it’s increasingly more challenging to create fresh, new wellness experiences that will help to inspire and energize attendees. By adding healthy eating options, it keeps attendees well-fueled and at their physical best.”

The Boulders offers a variety of corporate wellness programs to enhance their meeting capabilities and is the perfect way for companies to invest in their teams’ wellbeing. Amenities include wellness lectures, personal training and even spa gift cards that are awarded to further encourage wellness. Vickie Loucks, the spa’s certified nutritionist, has even customized a program for busy executives: it includes a tailored weight loss, life coaching and a brain health program that includes specific exercises to improve the activity of both sides of the brain.

Beyond that, the Boulders’ expansive 5,400-square-foot organic garden offers meeting guests a venue where they can indulge in healthy, fresh aperitifs prepared with just-picked plantings from the garden, which also serves as a venue for sunset dinners, organic wine tastings and tours with the Boulders’ master gardener. The “Enlightened Garden Lunch” allows meeting guests to enjoy a midday meal in the garden, while chefs conduct organic cooking demonstrations and interactive classes.

According to Julie Garber, director of sales and marketing at the resort, “Meeting guests that participate in our wellness programs—and indulge in healthy eating during their stay—have reported significant improvement in self-awareness, creativity and renewed energy. We have seen a high percentage of return groups that specifically request a wellness component as part of their meeting agenda.”

FOOD AS FUEL
Meeting planners are incorporating wellness aspects into their programming by choosing healthy food items on their menus and providing options for group members to get some exercise. For instance, at the Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North, they have seen an uptick in meeting planners who are choosing nutritious breakfasts.

“Meeting planners are choosing healthier options to help keep their attendees both happier and more focused during their meetings,” says Alexandra Van Leer, conference service manager at Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North. “Many guests try..."
to stick to their diet and exercise routines when they travel, and by selecting these options, meeting planners are helping them feel better. Some companies are trying to instill their company culture when away from the office. If wellness is important there, it’s important to them here, too.”

Rather than heavier breakfast items and pastries, the Four Seasons’ spa breakfast menu features fresh juices, fruit, yogurt, granola, apple-flaxseed muffins, salmon flatbread, oatmeal, scrambled egg whites and chicken-apple sausage.

For snacks, consider offering natural choices. This can be as simple as substituting granola for cookies and coconut water for soda, or creating a “superfoods break” with homemade smoothies, super grains and antioxidant shooters.

“All groups are looking to include health-inspired menus—not only as a way to address growing dietary trends but also to ensure they are fueling their meetings by providing fresh, clean meals that keep their attendees energized and focused,” says Lindsay Curry, corporate director of sales for the Enchantment Group.

A creative “healthy eating” team-building activity could also feature a mini breakout session with a nutritionist, followed by a team building activity whereby attendees split up in small groups and use various ingredients to compete for the healthiest and tastiest break snacks. They then present and vote on best break foods created by each group.

Even cocktails can be thoughtfully incorporated into the overall wellness picture. The Boulders offers a popular meeting program called the Mixer Mixology, which gives meeting guests the opportunity to craft their own cocktail concoction with a bevy of garden fresh aromatics and herbs snipped from the resort’s own organic garden. Supervised by the resort’s resident mixologist, the program is a perfect ice-breaker, vibe-enhancer and conversation-starter for meeting groups, offering a welcome twist to the requisite pre-dinner cocktail hour, or post-meeting mixer.

“Due to the increasing use of these wellness offerings by meeting planners when planning programs with us, we believe they are well-received by guests,” Van Leer says. “It seems that the more a guest can keep to their diet and exercise plans when traveling, the happier they are.”

REFRESH AND RECHARGE
The tricky part about adding a wellness activity is finding the time to incorporate it into a meeting or event. But that’s the goal of getting everyone to meet out of the normal office environment—to “hit the reset button” and recharge. Allowing time in the morning or afternoon for attendees to relax at a group yoga/meditation class or a group bike ride helps everyone bond, collaborate and come into the next meeting with their blood pumping and ideas flowing. From 15-minute nature hikes to meditation sessions and geocaching, Arizona resorts have helped plan healthy breaks and team building activities, with an emphasis on outdoor activities.

The Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale offers meeting planners healthy menu options (one is super foods-focused) as well as spa treatments, fitness classes and desert hikes to their attendees. The resort is adjacent to Pinnacle Peak Park, which has a well-maintained and popular hiking trail accessible from the property. Resort staff can direct meeting-goers to try out fitness hikes or their Zen Hike, a stroll that incorporates yoga stops along the way.

“All of our wellness options are fully customizable to the group’s needs,” the Four Seasons’ Van Leer says. One popular option lately has been the Four Seasons’s Spa Tapas, in which guests are able to participate in small samples of treatments—chair massages, anti-aging hand treatments, foot massages—when they check in for their program.

“It gets the whole program off on the right foot,” Van Leer says. “I’m also seeing a lot of our programs organize private yoga classes or hikes in the early morning so their attendees have the option of working out with colleagues if they choose to.”

WORKING IN WELLNESS
The power of holistic approaches to reducing stress can’t be overstated—especially for on-the-go workers. We all know that travel can either be restful or burdensome—and the latter is not typically associated with vacations, but with business travel. Fortunately, organizations are paying more attention to employee health as studies show the benefits of doing so, and it’s changing the dynamic of today’s meetings.

Enchantment Resort, set amidst the natural beauty of Sedona, is an ideal location for a productive, yet wellness-focused meeting. In addition to more than 13,000 square feet of indoor meeting space, the resort offers abundant wellness offerings to revitalize and inspire a group. The property’s intimate destination spa offers enriching and unique services and treatments, including various energy-focused and mindfulness workshops, Native American-inspired therapies, and fitness and nutrition counseling. Your group may want to try out a group breathing exercise, meditation session or take an outdoor active break here. This year as a meeting add-on, Enchantment started offering outdoor, movement-inducing breaks, including Woga, a signature activity combining walking and yoga. Exploring the resort grounds, this class stops at scenic points in the canyon to engage in nature-inspired yoga postures.

“ROI is hugely important to every company and organization investing in meetings and executive retreats,” says Enchantment’s Curry. “To spend the time and resources to gather associates in an inspirational environment but not pay mind to those individuals’ productivity during the event simply does not make sense.”

Maura Keller is a Minneapolis-based writer and editor who frequently writes about meeting and event topics.
The finest way to elevate your next business meeting is to improve your next meeting venue. And a surefire plan to leave your coworkers wanting more is to host your event at one of Arizona’s spectacular golf resorts, many of which offer more than just hitting the links. The state’s top resorts are making stark overall improvements to enhance your meeting experience—outside of the course.

A Resort-Ready Meeting Experience

Arizona’s top golf properties offer more than just par-for-the-course amenities.

By Glen Turk

The finest way to elevate your next business meeting is to improve your next meeting venue. And a surefire plan to leave your coworkers wanting more is to host your event at one of Arizona’s spectacular golf resorts, many of which offer more than just hitting the links. The state's top resorts are making stark overall improvements to enhance your meeting experience—outside of the course.
Meetings and events have always been a top priority at this celebrated Marriott resort. So much so that a bold renovation project is currently underway that will have the Valley buzzing. In June 2018, the JW Marriott Camelback Inn will put the finishing touches on a state-of-the-art conference center. The space will be highlighted by the new 15,000-square-foot Paradise Ballroom, along with an additional 20,000 square feet of outdoor and pre-function spaces. The ballroom will be customizable, with adjustable walls that create up to eight distinctive meeting spaces. In total, the resort’s impressive event facilities will now be at 128,000 square feet.

Outside of the Paradise Ballroom are the venue’s brand-new Sonoran, Paradise and Outdoor Terraces that will overlook the resort’s vibrant gardens and Camelback Mountain and provide a surreal setting for both small and large-scale functions.

GOOD TO KNOW: The guest rooms are Southwest chic and options range from standard double and king bed rooms, to one-bedroom casitas and bilevel suites, up to a deluxe pool suite, with a private pool and views of Camelback Mountain. camelbackinn.com
THE PHOENICIAN
The Phoenician’s new Camelback Ballroom is the architectural showpiece at the state’s premier AAA Five Diamond luxury resort. At a cost of $40 million dollars, the 45,000-square-foot, multi-purpose indoor meeting space creates a destination of unmatched style and versatility. The ballroom can be divided into seven distinct meeting areas and is complemented by a veranda that’s ideal for breakout sessions and receptions. The room is nestled at the base of Camelback Mountain, which will lend an unforgettable, scenic edge to any conference or meeting.

GOOD TO KNOW: In January 2018, The Phoenician began a 10-month redesign of its golf course, which will be transformed from 27 down to 18 holes under the direction of renowned architect Phil Smith. Preferred availability will be offered to Phoenician guests at other nearby partner courses. thephoenician.com

TPC SCOTTSDALE & THE FAIRMONT SCOTTSDALE PRINCESS
Looking to meet in the shadows of the greatest party on the PGA Tour? Then your group needs to reserve a spot at The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess and the adjacent TPC Scottsdale. The resort offers many non-traditional golf events designed to appeal to meeting-goers of all ages. Guests can try their hand at glow-in-the-dark target golf; try Sips and Tips, where golf pros run contests and give instruction with drinks and hors d’oeuvres included; and play the world-famous, par-three 16th hole, complete with grandstands and pumped-in crowd noise.

The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess also has six pools, four restaurants and a four-mile walking trail that surrounds the entire property, with stunning views of the golf course.

GOOD TO KNOW: La Hacienda, chef Richard Sandoval’s culinary joy, is a must-dine experience after your meetings are concluded for the day. fairmontscottsdale.com

SHERATON GRAND AT WILD HORSE PASS
If a large portion of your meeting guests are flying into Phoenix, then the Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass is the ideal locale. The idyllic property is located close to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, and is a short drive to downtown Phoenix. The resort offers 150,000 square feet of indoor conference space and event venues are named after Sonoran Desert animals and local mountain ranges such as Scorpion, Roadrunner and Akimel.

The resort was designed to be an authentic representation of the Gila River Indian Community’s heritage and culture. A simple walking tour of the property shows off the architecture, design, art and legends of the Pima and Maricopa tribes.

GOOD TO KNOW: Even though the property’s Whirlwind Golf Club is only 15 miles from the airport, you’ll feel completely removed from society during a round on either the Cattail or Devil’s Claw courses. wildhorsepassresort.com
WE-KO-PA RESORT & CONFERENCE CENTER
We-Ko-Pa’s scenic location is only minutes north of downtown Phoenix. Meeting-goers will be surrounded by epic views of the Red Mountains and Sonoran Desert, and at the same time enjoy modern meeting amenities.

Their 25,000-square-foot Wassaja Conference Center offers a wide array of meeting spaces, and can host up to 2,000 guests at a time. And when the meetings are over, We-Ko-Pa truly shines, thanks to its first-class amenities such as desert Jeep rides, horseback riding, two championship golf courses and the adjacent Fort McDowell Casino.

GOOD TO KNOW: Most golf aficionados name the courses at We-Ko-Pa as two of the nation’s best: both the Saguaro and Cholla courses have been honored on Golfweek’s Best Resort Course List several times. wekoparesortandconferencecenter.com

JW MARRIOTT PHOENIX DESERT RIDGE RESORT & SPA
As the second largest luxury resort in Arizona, the JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge Resort & Spa knows how to host a large meeting or event. 241,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space graces the property, which also includes seven dining experiences, four acres of exceptionally landscaped pools, five tennis courts and two championship golf courses. And, this AAA Four Diamond resort is ideally located where Phoenix meets Scottsdale, with easy access to the Loop 101 freeway.

GOOD TO KNOW: After your meetings are over for the day, relax at Marriott’s first Revive Spa, with 41 treatment rooms designed to refresh and rejuvenate guests. marriott.com

BOULDERS RESORT & SPA
This Sonoran Desert-inspired resort is known for its innovative team-building activities. Take their Dine & Dash endeavor, which begins with the resort’s signature cocktails to start the festivities. Then, each meeting participant is paired up and assigned a golf cart and are given a cryptic clue which leads them on a discovery hunt throughout the property.

The adventure takes meeting guests to various scenic spots that include elevated tee boxes with extraordinary rock formations, cascading waterfalls and the unique Promise Rock, offering panoramic vistas of the valley below. Each stop showcases a bevy of tasty appetizers, foraged-fresh salads from the resort’s Organic Garden and mouthwatering entrees prepared by the resort’s traveling culinary team. Then, as the sun sets on the horizon, desserts and after-dinner drinks are served on the 19th green with live entertainment.

GOOD TO KNOW: The Boulders is home to two championship courses that are open to resort guests. Both courses are built into the desert foothills and offer breathtaking panoramas of nearby Black Mountain. theboulders.com

HILTON SEDONA RESORT AT BELL ROCK
For on-point meetings, the Hilton features over 20,000 square feet of meeting space, two ballrooms and four new state-of-the-art executive meeting rooms. And during breaks or after hours, there’s never a lack of team-building activities to do here: shopping, dining, hiking, mountain bike trails, championship golf—even drifting through turquoise skies on a hot air balloon ride. Group adventure planning and hiking advice are available on-site at The Hike House or in the main lobby. The resort is also home to the Sedona Athletic Club & Eforea Spa.

GOOD TO KNOW: Looking for a cool experience while on their golf course? The Hilton is one of a few resorts that rent out GolfBoards, an easy-to-ride electric vehicle that will make your round memorable. Golfers of all ages can now “Surf the Earth” from shot-to-shot in a way that feels like snowboarding or surfing. hiltonsedonaresort.com

THE LODGE AT VENTANA CANYON
It’s been said that Sedona has the power to inspire the mind and exhilarate the spirit. With that in mind, where else would you rather go to have your next meeting? Just 90 minutes north of Phoenix and two-and-a-half hours from the Grand Canyon, The Lodge at Ventana Canyon features over 7,000 square feet of flexible, indoor meeting space that can accommodate groups of 10 up to 120. The resort is a semi-private retreat, with only 50 suites and 36 holes of championship golf. The property itself is expansive, with over 600 acres of desert preserve at your group’s disposal.

GOOD TO KNOW: The third hole at the resort’s Mountain Course is one of the most photographed holes west of the Mississippi. The scenic par-three is tucked into the Santa Catalina Mountains and plays across a canyon of cacti. Even if you don’t play the game, it’s well worth the time to view its splendor. thelodgeatventanacanyon.com

Sedona Area
JW MARRIOTT TUCSON STARR PASS RESORT & SPA

The goal of any great meeting experience is to engage the participants through unique activities. When those activities are authentic to the region and educational at the same time, you’ve struck meeting nirvana. And the JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort & Spa shines in this arena, with their imaginative hands-on cooking class and “libation education” tequila gatherings.

Guests and attendees can select and prepare their own infusion ingredients in the classes, which vary seasonally and are sourced from the on-property Primo organic garden or from local farms. The resort’s tequila master can work with class sizes of 40 people up to 500. Event planners can even have a tequila education station set up at a reception for one-on-one conversations with the tequila master and tastings.

GOOD TO KNOW: The site for the Starr Pass Golf Club was personally selected by then-PGA tour commissioner Dean Beaman. In 1991, Phil Mickelson became only the fourth amateur golfer to win a PGA Tour event, claiming the Tucson Open title at Starr Pass. marriott.com

Glen Turk has been the senior writer and editor of Midwest Golfing Magazine since 2005 and has been fortunate enough to play golf in 33 different states, including Arizona.

CASINO DEL SOL

If you’d like to host your meeting at a casino for after-hours fun, then Casino Del Sol is calling your name. Besides the immaculate gaming setting, their conference center is ideal. The 19,000-square-foot Grand Ballroom can accommodate corporate events from 30 to 1,800 guests, and their 8,000-square-foot pre-function space is the perfect location for receptions and breaks. The resort also has more than 100,000 square feet of flexible indoor/outdoor space that includes a conference center terrace, pool deck and gazebo.

GOOD TO KNOW: The championship golf course is named Sewailo, which means “land where flowers grow.” The course was designed by Notah Begay III, a Navajo who has made his name both as a player on the PGA Tour and as a commentator on NBC and the Golf Channel. casinodelsol.com

WHEN YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE VERY BEST

Troon Golf® facilities in Arizona are as diverse as the Southwest itself, each with a unique vision and infused with the impeccable quality that is the Troon Golf hallmark. Representing the best in service and hospitality, the Troon Golf Arizona collection includes The Westin Kierland Golf Club (pictured), Whirlwind Golf Club at Wild Horse Pass, Boulders Resort & Spa and many more. Experience Troon Golf in Arizona for yourself.

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GROUP ACTIVITIES

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aerogelicballooning.com

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**Antelope Canyon Tours**
22 S. Lake Powell Blvd.
Page, AZ 86040
928.645.9102 • 866.645.9102
antelopecanyon.com

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480.945.2881 • 866.455.1601
aoa-adventures.com
info@aoa-adventures.com

Since 1997, AOA has been the premier provider of guided adventure tours, team-building events, and bike rentals in the Phoenix area. AOA emphasizes a fun, safe, educational, and exciting adventure experience from start to finish, utilizing high-end equipment and professional guides. Single-day tour activities explore the natural Sonoran Desert by hiking, biking, kayaking, rafting, or stand-up paddle boarding. Tours and teambuilding events can accommodate groups of all sizes. AOA also offers multi-day guided cycling, hiking, and backpacking adventures across the Southwest.

**Arizona Outdoor Fun Adventures & Tours**
35972 S. Black Canyon Hwy
Black Canyon City, AZ 85324
602.400.2445 • 877.249.8020
info@arizonaoutdoorfun.com
arizonaoutdoorfun.com

YOU are the driver on our guided Sonoran Desert tours, which combine the thrill of off-roading with the convenience of having a guide lead the way. Navigate winding mountain trails, learn about Arizona’s history and wildlife, or try target and skeet shooting at our private range. We specialize in group tours, and with the largest fleet of ATVs/UTVs in Arizona, we can accommodate 150 riders. Post-tour, cater a desert feast and enjoy the Arizona sunset while your guests rave about an epic desert adventure.

**Arizona Renaissance Festival**
12601 US 60
Gold Canyon, AZ 85118
520.463.2600
renfestinfo.com

Consider the 30th Annual Arizona Renaissance Festival for a unique and fun-filled venue for your event! The Festival is a medieval amusement park, a 13-stage theater, a 30-acre circus, an arts and crafts fair, a jousting tournament and a feast—all rolled into one non-stop, day-long travel adventure! Walk through our gates to be transported back to a simpler more jovial time. February 10 – April 1, 2018 – Saturdays, Sundays and Presidents’ Day Monday.

**South Mountain Environmental Education Center**
10409 S. Central Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85042
602.914.4301
smeec.org

With the backdrop of South Mountain and the foreground of Phoenix's skyline, South Mountain Environmental Education Center offers the perfect desert setting for your next event. From corporate meetings, parties and retreats to weddings and social celebrations, the Center's indoor and outdoor venues including accessible mountain trails will provide a unique atmosphere for your guests. Make your reservation today and experience the Sonoran Desert in a whole new way!

**Stellar Adventures**
602.402.0584
stellaradventures.com

Tame the rugged Sonoran desert landscape on a Hi Hummer, M1009 Blazer/Jeep or guided ATV/UTV adventure! Test your marksmanship with the Stellar Shooting Experience or try our Night-Vision or Stargazing excursions. Corporate team-building, off-premise catering & bar packages are also available. Serving the Valley of the Sun since 1997.
Goodbye run-of-the-mill venue options, hello invigorating meeting spaces—these Phoenix spots offer creative, offbeat settings to meet, dine and mingle in.

By Kristine Hansen
Phoenix’s reputation is shifting away from sprawling golf and spa resorts and deeper into hip, artsy neighborhoods. Nowhere is this truer than in downtown Phoenix, anchored by the Phoenix Art Museum, a new crop of hotels, condo projects dotting the skyline and a satellite Arizona State University campus (the mothership is in Tempe, a suburb of Phoenix). And fresh off a major expansion within the last decade, the Phoenix Convention Center is poised to retain its position as a top venue in the Southwest but also cater to groups eager to latch onto the region’s buzz, all within a short walk.

Art galleries and hip cafés serving coffee and bistro-type fare are short strolls from event spaces, and downtown’s First Friday event is a showcase of the area’s new personality through exhibit openings, street performers and live music. Most of these venues are on Roosevelt Row.

Light-rail lines connecting travelers to and from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport are even more enticing for meeting planners as downtown Phoenix evolves from a car-reliant culture into an urbanized area the likes of Los Angeles and Dallas—two other Southwest cities currently with thriving downtown cores.

FOUND:RE PHOENIX

This 104-room boutique hotel on Central Avenue, open since late 2016, is known for its innovative art—and all of it is for sale. (This includes a cheeky mural of Burt Reynolds sporting Britney Spears’s hair, on display behind the check-in desk.) An event space called The Gallery on the street level serves as an art gallery, showcasing some of the Southwest’s best visual artists, and can host parties up to 200 people, or be divided in half for groups between 30 and 100. The Studio, another space, holds 40 guests and can be opened to the outdoor pool area. Match Restaurant & Lounge’s outdoor dining space contributes to the burgeoning streetscape, and the bar in front of the open kitchen is one of downtown’s most sought-after reservations. The menu pulls in ingredients from local farms to create entrees such as crispy pork belly with sweet and sour butternut squash at the open-all-day dining venue. Cocktails in the spacious lobby are a sweet spot for groups to launch an event, surrounded by artwork and conversation-style seating.
THE CROFT DOWNTOWN

While catering to many brides and grooms particularly because of its photo-worthy whitewashed exposed-brick walls, crystal chandeliers and concrete floors, The Croft’s industrial-artsy vibe can also work for a corporate event. It’s one of downtown Phoenix’s newest event spaces, open since 2015 in the Warehouse District. Owned and managed by Angela and Mark Karp—who know the Phoenix events scene through their event-planning business, Angelic Grove—the 10,000-square-foot space can hold up to 300 guests. The raw, industrial space perfectly frames views of downtown Phoenix which are stunning by day and by night. A group could begin a function with drinks on the elegant cocktail patio, with its twinkly string lights, living room-style furnishings and succulent wall. Fire pits can be brought in for chilly nights. Three more event spaces at The Croft offer even more flexibility, including the 1,000-square-foot Angelic Grove for meetings or breakout sessions, the 5,000-square-foot Cheshire (which can accommodate a dance floor and buffet tables) and The Abbey (its 3,000 square feet can easily connect to The Cheshire).

PHOENIX ART MUSEUM

As the largest fine art museum in the Southwest with a collection of more than 18,000 pieces of art, the Phoenix Art Museum’s downtown perch has evolved into a hub for events since its 1959 opening. Groups can book meetings in six different spaces, including a 300-seat theater or an intimate 2,500-square-foot gallery within the 285,000-square-foot museum, which has seen many expansions over the years. These include the 2006 additions of a sculpture garden, a modern art wing, updated lobby and expanded store. The largest event space is the 6,600-square-foot Cummings Great Hall, which seats 400 for a meal or 800 for a cocktail reception. The slightly smaller Greenbaum Lobby is just as glitzy, marked by Josiah McElheny’s glowing “Last Scattering Surface” sculpture as well as sunset views come dusk. The smaller 4,345-square-foot lobby space (flaunting sculpture-garden views) as well as Singer Hall (the newest venue, open since 2011) are two other options for groups.
It’s time to expect more from your meeting space. Experience our dedicated service partners, a full-service tasting kitchen and more than 900,000 square feet of flexible space that promises to be anything but conventional and always eventful.

Plan on more. phoenixconventioncenter.com | 800-282-4842

PHOENIX CONVENTION CENTER
Since opening in 1972, the Phoenix Convention Center on North Third Street has welcomed groups for events, meetings and shows, particularly those on a large scale. Currently spanning 24 acres—seven more than when it debuted—the center underwent a three-phase, $600 million expansion between 2006 and 2008. It now totals three buildings, labeled South, North and West. In the South building are two exhibit halls adding up to 82,000 square feet plus a ballroom and 18 meeting rooms. Two ballrooms, totaling 502,500 square feet of exhibit space and 81 meeting rooms are in the North and West buildings, which are connected. Many groups, especially large groups, like to book the convention center because it affords attendees the opportunity to squeeze a little fun into their stay nearby, such as catching a Phoenix Suns game at Talking Stick Resort Arena or an Arizona Diamondbacks game at Chase Field. Dozens of restaurants and performing-arts venues (like the Orpheum Theatre) are within a quick walk, too.
RESIDENCE INN PHOENIX DOWNTOWN AND COURTYARD PHOENIX DOWNTOWN
This dual hotel project—within a 19-story tower at Luhrs City Center, shouldered by two restored 1920s-era towers—debuted in May at the corner of Madison Street and Central Avenue. In addition to 320 hotel rooms, there is 6,000 square feet (spanning six spaces) between the two buildings dedicated to hosting meetings. Up to 270 people can fit in one of the Residence Inn's spaces, with their two Encanto rooms combined providing the largest option. The property is ideal for companies hosting a training, as suite-sized rooms at the Residence Inn are set up for extended stays, with full kitchens and a daily breakfast buffet included in the room rate.

SPACES ONE RENAISSANCE TOWER
Riding the wave of co-working spaces trending around the country, Spaces One Renaissance Tower opened in One Renaissance Tower last December. Dubbed Arizona's largest co-working space, the nearly 40,000-square-foot office space is linked to a company in Amsterdam. It's a great spot for intimate brainstorming workshops or for leaders to meet off-site with meeting rooms, several desks and a 3,000-square-foot business club (the club is available to members only for an additional charge). Memberships to Spaces One Renaissance Tower start at $209 per month.

EVENTS ON JACKSON
Existed red brick walls, towering loft ceilings and retractable garage doors that open to the outdoors (perfect for spring and fall in the desert) makes Events on Jackson a popular venue to book. The 23,000-square-foot space was once a produce warehouse and now has a solid second chapter in the city's Warehouse District. A bar can be set up to host drinks and the outdoor courtyard features a living wall of grass. For events that include keynote speakers, panelists or performers, two "green rooms" are handy.

While based in Milwaukee, Kristine Hansen has fallen in love with Phoenix since visiting for the first time in 2006, followed by numerous trips, and loves to sip coffee at Lola in downtown Phoenix.
Alexi’s Grill & Catering
3550 N. Central Ave., #20
Phoenix, AZ 85012
602.279.0982
alexisgrillphx.com

Alexi’s Grill is conveniently located in midtown Phoenix. Renowned for their efficient business lunch and intimate dinner seating, Alexi’s is the perfect environment for any occasion. Specialties include Alaskan halibut, rack of lamb, veal chop, filet mignon and other dishes customized for your group. Enjoy continental Italian with a Southwest twist, fine dining inside or al fresco on the spacious patio. Alexi’s offers private dining areas for small groups or full restaurant buy-outs. Full service catering is also available.

Aunt Chilada’s
7330 N. Dreamy Draw Dr.
Phoenix, AZ 85020
602.944.1286
auntchiladas.com
catering@auntchiladas.com

Nestled in the shadow of the Squaw Peak Mountain, Aunt Chilada’s is truly an historic landmark with personality all its own. Constructed in the 1890s from desert stone and railroad ties, the original building served as a supply depot and general store for the mercury miners passing through the Dreamy Draw. Today, it not only carries on that century old tradition of heartfelt Southwestern hospitality, but also dishes out the finest Mexican food this side of the border. The meeting and banquet facilities are as unique as her colorful past accommodating up to 650. Inside, select from four distinctive settings including our hand-carved fountain or stone fireplace or relax on one of our three patios which include Bocce ball and our famous Palapa bar. Whether it is a corporate meeting, or a group of friends, your guests will have the opportunity to enjoy the festive atmosphere and quality of service.

Old Town Tortilla Factory
6910 E. Main St.
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
480.945.4567
oldtowntortillafactory.com

Built from a historic 75-year-old adobe home in the charming art district of Scottsdale, Old Town Tortilla Factory captures timeless charm and a distinct atmosphere that exemplifies the essence of the Southwest. A firewater patio—along with a world-renowned tequila bar, which offers 100 premium tequilas—lends itself to being the perfect place to accommodate your large party needs. Offering Southwest cuisine with Sonoran influences starring house-made tortillas, seductive salsas and sauces, and specialties. During the winter months, patio heaters keep the patio at spring-like temperatures. During the summer months the patio is cooled with a state-of-the-art mist system.

Rustler’s Rooste
8383 S. 48th St.
Phoenix, AZ 85044
602.431.6407
602.431.6473
russlersrooste.com

If you want an authentic Arizona location for your next roundup, look no further than Rustler’s Rooste. Only the Rooste can accommodate 30 to 1,500 guests in a spectacular mountaintop setting. Whether you choose a scenic outdoor patio, the spacious Crystal Barn (complete with a stage and dance floor), or the novel Branding Iron Room, you’ll find the Rooste offers a big helping of western hospitality and an eye for detail.

The Stockyards Restaurant
& 1889 Saloon
5009 E. Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ 85034
602.233.3738
stockyardssteakhouse.com

Meet Arizona’s Original Steakhouse! The Stockyards Restaurant and 1889 Saloon is known for its premium hand-cut aged steaks, prime ribs, wild game, poultry and seafood. For over 70 years, this independently owned and operated landmark restaurant has celebrated the colorful history and characters of Arizona’s cattle industry. You will still find consistently excellent dining and a genuinely friendly atmosphere in this authentic piece of Arizona’s past. Private dining rooms available, excellent choice for groups.

Tonto Bar and Grill
5736 E. Rancho Manana Blvd.
 Cave Creek, AZ 85331
480.488.0698 opt. 2
ontobaranandgrill.com
EC@ontobaranandgrill.com

Experience a truly iconic Arizona property rich in lore, elegance, and Southwestern charm. Tonto is located on the historical grounds of Rancho Manana, which was built in the early 1940s. The restaurant is surrounded by stately saguaros, palm, date and olive trees, with the ridge of the Tonto National Forest looming in the distance. Our chefs meld Southwestern and Native American ingredients cooked over a mesquite wood-fire and served in a creative, stylish presentation.
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paradisevalley.doubletree.com
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Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa
5700 E. McDonald Dr.
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
480.607.2350 • 800.245.2051
sanctuaryaz.com/meetings
109 casitas and suites / 7,000 sf meetings

Hilton Scottsdale Resort & Villas
6333 N. Scottsdale Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85250
480.946.7750
scottsdale.hilton.com
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Talking Stick Resort
9800 Talking Stick Way
Scottsdale, AZ 85256
talkingstickresort.com
866.877.9897
496 rooms / 100,000 sf meetings

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DoubleTree Resort by Hilton Paradise Valley is an enclave of towering palms, lush foliage and sparkling fountains just north of historic downtown Scottsdale. In addition to flexible meeting space, the resort features two refreshing pools, lighted tennis courts, a health club, practice putting greens and all rooms provide generous work areas and many amenities.

Nestled in the heart of Scottsdale, the newly renovated Hilton Scottsdale Resort & Villas is surrounded by spectacular golf, world-class shopping, and endless entertainment options. Relax in the luxury of 45 new lavishly appointed two-bedroom villas featuring full kitchens and private patios. The resort boasts beautifully appointed guestrooms and suites, spa and fitness center. Dining options include the Blue Fire Grille and Fleming’s Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar.
Desert Botanical Garden
1201 N. Galvin Pkwy.
Phoenix, AZ 85008
480.941.1225
dbg.org/facilityrental

The spectacular surroundings of the Desert Botanical Garden are ideal for unique and beautiful events with breathtaking sunsets and unmatched charm. Whether your guest list is large or small, the Garden is the perfect place for your event. Choose from open-air pavilions, scenic courtyards and historic settings for day or evening use. With its Southwestern appeal, this enchanting location is the natural choice for your event.

Mesa Convention Center
263 N. Center St.
Mesa, AZ 85201
480.644.2178
mesaconventioncenter.com

Celebrating 40 years, the Mesa Convention Center, located in the heart of downtown Mesa, Arizona, is the largest meeting and event space in the East Valley. Situated on 22 acres, the facility features 19,000 square feet of exhibit space and an additional 19,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. Fifteen meeting rooms offer a wide variety of sizes and configurations, and our experienced and friendly staff is here to assist in making your event a success.

Phoenix Convention Center
Sales Department
100 N. Third St.
Phoenix, AZ 85004
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Adventures in Northern Arizona

Wow your group with eye-popping vistas, exciting activities and even exotic animals.

By Christine Loomis
You can get “same old” anywhere. A ballroom, meeting space, tired ice-breakers and banquet food can all equal a humdrum gathering that won’t do much to keep attendees engaged or provide memorable experiences.

If an out-of-the-box meeting is the goal, choose an out-of-the-box destination. Northern Arizona is just such a place. It offers a sense of adventure, a glimpse into America’s wild past and landscapes that humble and inspire. It’s also home to a collection of venues and curated experiences that are anything but same-old.

RIVER TO RIM AND BEYOND
The mother of all “out-of-the-box” venues, Grand Canyon National Park provides inspiration galore and a setting that can’t be replicated. It’s a one-of-a-kind experience for small and medium-size groups, but it challenges planners in several ways.

Room rates at the South Rim are set by the National Park Service, but not every lodge takes groups. Lodging in the West Rim is on Hualapai Tribe land, so rates are set by them or a management company. Still the park easily delivers that unmistakable wow. While the National Park Service isn’t in the business of developing singular corporate experiences, local destination management companies are—including inside the park.

Heather Husom, general manager of Hello! Arizona, a Scottsdale-based DMC, has a slew of ideas that provide wow and then some for groups. One experience proposed for a small corporate team meeting combines rafting through the Grand Canyon with lodging near and at the canyon, as well as private flights between venues.

Groups can start in Flagstaff or Sedona, depending on the setting and amenities desired. Then they’re transported to Peach Springs, Arizona, via private flight, to embark on a 40-mile rafting trip on the Colorado River through lower Granite Gorge. While 12 miles of that stretch is rapids and adrenaline rush, most is a scenic float through one of nature’s most spectacular efforts. The day includes a moderate hike to a waterfall followed by lunch on the riverbank. From there, attendees fly via helicopter to check into cabins perched on the West Rim of the canyon. The evening includes impressive sunset views and dinner overlooking the glass-floored Skywalk, also managed by the

Where to Stay

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK: Maswik Lodge North and South, the park’s main group lodging, offer a total of 250 rooms.

WILLIAMS: The 297-room Grand Canyon Railway Hotel offers 800 square feet of meeting space.

FLAGSTAFF: Newly renovated, the 247-room Little America Hotel features 13,000 square feet of meeting space. In addition to 183 guest rooms, DoubleTree by Hilton has two restaurants and 6,243 square feet of meeting space.

PRESCOTT: The 160-room Prescott Resort & Conference Center includes 16,000 square feet of meeting space. Hassayampa Inn, a boutique option, has 67 guest rooms and 12,000 square feet.

SEDONA: Hilton Sedona Resort at Bell Rock features 221 guest rooms and 20,000 square feet of function space. Enchantment Resort, with 218 guest rooms and 13,000 square feet of space, sits on 70 acres.
Hualapai Tribe. In the morning, there’s time to see Eagle and Guano points before flying out of the canyon and on to the next Arizona adventure or conclusion of the program. 480.949.9592, hello-dmc.com/destinations/phoenix-scottsdale.

Groups can also stay in the park and join available adventures, such as an overnight at Phantom Ranch, accessed via mule ride or hiking (maximum of 20 people). Mule rides, available on the South Rim year round, include three-hour Canyon Vistas rides, and there are many options for hiking at the rim and below.

MEETINGS IN MOTION
Is it the destination or the journey? On Grand Canyon Railway, it’s both. Between the Williams Depot and the national park lie 65 miles of pines, prairie and lofty peaks. When you travel it via train, it is nature uninterrupted, sweeping vistas of the American southwest framed in the windows of the historic train. The ever-changing canvas might include glimpses of grazing antelope and elk or birds of prey soaring above the trees. The trip takes about two hours and 15 minutes, allowing groups time to meet, bond and relax; ditto on the return. The Railway can accommodate up to 80 in a coach car, 50 in first class. First class passengers receive a continental breakfast on the way up and snacks on the return. Alcoholic beverages are available for an additional cost. 800.843.8724, thetrain.com.

BEARS & BIRDS
Also in Williams is Bearizona. In addition to resident wildlife, which visitors can view on foot, from their own vehicles or via park bus, Bearizona’s 6,000-square-foot Canyonlands Restaurant is a remarkable venue designed with soaring canyon walks and ancient ruins that evoke the majesty and history of the southwest. A two-story covered deck overlooks the jaguar exhibit with its 25-foot waterfall.

Groups of up to 150 (50 per bus) can arrange a Bearizona after Dark private Wild Ride Bus Tour at sunset, when many park animals are particularly active. These are the only open-air vehicles allowed in the drive-through area, giving photographers their best shot at cool photos. Animals that might be seen on the 45-minute tour include bears, wolves, bison, Rocky Mountain goats and big horn sheep. After the tour, guests can gather at Canyonlands for drinks and hors d’oeuvres and experience an animal meet-and-greet with head trainers. Ask about birds of prey educational shows, including free-flight demonstrations. 928.635.2289, bearizona.com.

PERSONAL BEST, INNER COWPOKE
Time your meeting for early July to take part in Prescott’s Frontier Days, where you come face-to-face with the wild heart of the Old West. Sign up for the infamous Boot Race on Whiskey Row, with heats for all age groups. Leave your pricey running shoes at home—
WATER, WINE & MIND
Among the many things that pair well with wine is outdoor adventure. Verde Adventures offers that exact sublime combo on its three-hour Water to Wine Tour. Attendees float down the Verde River in inflatable kayaks, experiencing the natural rhythms and beauty of the Arizona landscape near Sedona. A few riffles add excitement but this is kayaking almost anyone can do. The float is followed by wine tasting at a local vineyard, just off the water where Oak Creek and the Verde River meet. Consider a designated driver for the group. 877.673.3661, verdeadventure.com.

If you’re bringing your own mind-illuminating presentation to Sedona, pair it with a venue that will set the experience apart, such as city-owned Posse Grounds Pavilion. Designed to inspire, the pavilion, for day use only, offers festival-style seating for up to 300, a stage, parking, restroom facilities and panoramic views of Sedona’s famed red rocks. 928.282.7098.

In Prescott, groups could work with Visit Prescott on a mind-body adventure that begins with yoga and concludes with a hike at Watson Lake, about four miles from downtown, among the boulders of the Granite Dells. 928.777.1259, visitprescott.com.

EXTREME MEASURES
For groups committed to physical and mental challenges to facilitate team bonding or see who in a team rises to the top ready to lead, a challenge course is just the thing. Flagstaff Extreme Adventure Course takes groups (minimum eight) high above Coconino National Forest on a course with more than 70 elements including eight zip lines. These are active, strenuous experiences so participants must be physically able. In addition to the courses, groups can add on meals, ground-based guided team building and fun co-branded take-away items. 888.259.0125, flagstaffextreme.com.

For another adrenaline-pulsing airborne experience, groups can soar with Predator Zip Lines over Out of Africa Wildlife Park, above lions, tigers, wolves, hyenas, bears, leopards and giraffes. The zip line and park, located in Camp Verde, about 30 minutes from Sedona, sit in the heart of northern Arizona’s wine country (keep that in mind for a post-zip calm-down). The company works with corporate groups on retreats and/or team building and can accommodate up to 200 on the zip-line tour. Restrictions apply, so ask when you book the team adventure. 928.567.9947, predatorzipline.com, outofafricapark.com.

in this race you sprint in cowboy boots! Afterward, your group can head to what is touted as The World’s Oldest Rodeo, a tradition since 1888. However you did in the boot race, here’s your chance to watch authentic cowpokes successfully put their boots to work riding, roping and wrestling (steers, that is).

COSMIC CONTENT
The centerpiece at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff is the 4.3-meter, $53 million Discovery Channel Telescope, and that’s just one of the things that makes this a venue for groups seeking a memorable setting. Consider a private 90-minute evening program, which costs $300 for up to 50 participants and runs only on Sundays after 5 p.m. Well worth integrating into a meeting itinerary, the experience includes a multimedia presentation and exclusive access to the telescopes for viewing (weather permitting). The observatory also has a one-hour daytime group program. 928.233.3280, lowell.edu.

Christine Loomis has written extensively about travel, food and meetings for national and regional online and print publications.
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Touring Tucson

Why this southern city is a can’t-miss for meeting planners, offering loads of history, delectable dining and luxe properties to stay at.

By Ron Bernthal

Once a quiet Southwestern cowboy and ranching town, downtown Tucson has transformed itself over the past decade into a vibrant and diverse urban center where high-tech startups, new restaurants and hotels, revitalized neighborhoods and a gleaming Sun Link streetcar line have attracted thousands of young entrepreneurs, award-winning chefs, imaginative designers and ambitious university students who all want to be part of this metamorphosis in the desert.

Of course, while Tucson embraces the modern age, the city’s rich cultural history can still be seen (and heard) in a unique Mariachi mass, held each Sunday morning at the beautiful 19th-century St. Augustine Cathedral at 8 a.m. Residents and visitors flock to the restored 1920s-era Rialto Theatre and the iconic 1930s Fox Tucson Theatre for shows and concerts, and to the Hotel Congress, opened in 1919, for dinner and cocktails. Many of Tucson’s historic buildings have been beautifully restored and offer ideas for creative meetings and group functions.

Large American cities have dominated the media’s “Best City” lists for decades, but Tucson, with a metro population of 980,263, is “out-besting” even the nation’s biggest cities in some of the rankings. In 2017 Tucson was named as one of the Top 50 Meeting Destinations in the U.S. by Cvent; #7 U.S. Best Weekend Getaways by U.S. & World News & World Report; #7 Destinations on the Rise by TripAdvisor; a Top Best Winter Trip Destination 2017 For the Food in National Geographic; and one of the Best Cities for Recreation by WalletHub.
RESORT-READY
The 428-room El Conquistador Tucson, A Hilton Resort, located on more than 50 acres north of Tucson in Oro Valley and tucked against Pusch Ridge, offers spectacular views and new, completely renovated guest rooms and public areas. The multimillion-dollar renovation encompasses all areas of the property including indoor/outdoor amenities, guest rooms, gardens and new wildlife and nature viewing programs. The redesigned main Desert Springs pool has a larger pool deck with additional sunning areas and several outdoor firepits for poolside mingling after dark.

The property offers 100,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor meeting space, including the 11,000-square-foot executive conference center. The resort caters private dining functions, but also offers Epazote Kitchen & Cocktails, where the menu boasts tasty dishes such as ceviche, steaks, seafood and more, made with ingredients sourced from local vendors and farmers.

The 398-room Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, also coming off of major renovations and resort enhancements, provides planners with 37,000 square feet of flexible function venues, unique outdoor spaces like the 22,000-square-foot Coyote Corral and two sizable ballrooms (10,000 and 8,875 square feet), multiple boardrooms, plenty of creative banquet menu possibilities and two championship Tom Fazio-designed golf courses. The resort’s Flying V Bar & Grill offers the flavors of the Sonoran Desert with boldness and creativity—take the fried calamari rubbed in pasilla chile and served with a sweet orange glaze, or the diver scallops served atop a creamy polenta made with butternut squash, mushrooms and purple cauliflower.

With just 128 guest rooms, groups at the Omni Tucson National Resort can feel like they own the place. It has nearly 11,000 square feet of event space with eight meeting rooms, and the indoor ambience is intimate and serene, while the outdoor amenities offer unique opportunities for a Southwestern experience, from a traditional Tucson-style barbeque at the Mesquite Corral to team building and private fitness and meditation classes in one of the gardens, with views of the Santa Catalina Mountains. At the resort’s Bob’s Steak & Chop House that overlooks the golf course, the menu is filled with fresh, local ingredients straight from nearby farms and ranches.

At Primo, located inside the 575-room JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort & Spa, guests can order from the wine bar menu, dinner menu or just nibble on appetizers from the daily happy hour menu. As part of the venue’s 80,768 square feet of event space, the 12,000-square-foot Ania Terrace can handle 2,000 for a reception and 640 for dinner, complete with views of the mountains of Saguaro National Park, the resort’s golf course and the lights of Tucson below. Additionally, the resort offers 14 event rooms, 26 breakout rooms, and expansive spa, golf and dining facilities.

DINING AND DRINK
Some of the newer dining venues in the city are proving quite popular for small groups and private events. Anello Pizzeria opened in the trendy Warehouse Arts District in 2017 and serves wood-fired, hand-tossed pizza made with fermented natural sourdough and fresh ingredients.

Culinary Dropout also opened in 2017 just north of downtown. The 20,000-square-foot indoor/outdoor space, with 12,000 square feet of enclosed seating for about 400, has a full dining room and bar, an outdoor gaming area and a 150-person private dining and event space. The menu features comfort food and gastropub fare and cocktails, including provolone fondue, 36-hour pork ribs and fried chicken drizzled with honey. On most nights there’s live music.

Another uniquely-named venue is the Martin Drug Company Restaurant and Lounge, which moved into a historic downtown space in early 2017. The new restaurant is named for the original family-owned-and-operated business, Martin Drug Co., which was Tucson’s first soda fountain, general store and pharmacy.
that occupied the space from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. The new Martin Drug Co. serves classic cocktails and sophisticated American-Southwestern comfort food. The space features an interior open-air courtyard and an outdoor patio.

For craft beer lovers, Old Pueblo Brew Tours offers a mobile artisan craft beer journey through some of Tucson’s best breweries. Participants meet at a designated brewery and are shuttled by van during the tour. Brewery participants include the established Borderlands Brewing Co. and newbie Dillinger Brewing Co.

MiAn Sushi & Modern Asian Cuisine is an upscale Asian bistro and bar that opened in March 2017 on the ground floor of the nine-story Tucson Electric Power headquarters. The modern 5,000-square-foot restaurant seats 160 diners inside and 120 on the patio. The menu features a non-traditional array of sushi, noodles and Chinese fusion.

Other new eateries include the beautiful and bright Bird Modern Provisions & Bar, which serves new interpretations of Southern dishes like deviled eggs, fried green tomatoes and creamy grits. Jackson Bar + Eatery, hiding in a strip mall on Tucson’s far northeast side, makes everything from scratch on its menu—down to the flatbreads and ranch dressing. Its location attracts local and out-of-town golfers from nearby courses with dishes like the black truffle burger and dry-rubbed hangar steak.

Meeting planners can now book the Sand-Reckoner Tasting Room for private functions. Located downtown in a converted loft space that doubles as an art gallery, the high ceilings, minimalist decor and rectangular layout give this wine bar a big-city vibe. The venue (that only serves Sand-Reckoner) is affiliated with Sand-Reckoner Vineyards in Wilcox, located at 4,300 feet elevation, about 80 miles east of Tucson. The tasting room or the Wilcox winery makes for a nice group experience.

REFRESHED AND RENEWED

Tucson offers many full-service, meeting-and-group focused resorts relatively close to downtown, or just outside the city limits. Although new and upgraded downtown properties are offering meeting planners new options, the dining, spa, golf and space amenities of the mountain resorts still attract much of the incentive and large group business.

Renovation and expansion projects are underway at the 287-room DoubleTree by Hilton Tucson Reid Park, including 25,000 square feet of meeting space, two restaurants and all guest rooms, with completion expected in fall 2018.

Tucson’s newest downtown hotel, Marriott’s AC Hotel Tucson Downtown, opened in fall 2017. The new hotel features 136 rooms, a pool and poolside bar, a restaurant, a fitness center, a 200-space public parking garage, and nearly 6,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor. The hotel’s amenities for business travelers and small groups include a business center and catering services for corporate meetings, training sessions or presentations.

The 120-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Tucson Paloma Village completed a $3 million renovation of its guestrooms and public spaces in 2016. The hotel is seven miles from the University of Arizona and 15 miles from Tucson International Airport.

Fly the Friendly Skies

One of the new pleasures of flying into Tucson International Airport has nothing to do with the airport’s on-time record (most flights are on time, thanks to the almost always sunny and dry weather). It’s because the city has almost completed spending its $28 million Brighter TUS project to improve the terminals and overall passenger experience at the airport. A Brighter TUS is comprised of three projects: a Solar Project, Terminal Optimization Project and the addition of new food and beverage vendors.

The remodel includes repurposing underutilized space in the ticketing lobby for expanded security checkpoints and adding new composure areas beyond the new checkpoints for seating and airside views for passengers after security. Concourse spaces which were used for security checkpoints now have new retail shops, food and beverage outlets, business centers and children’s play areas. New carpet and patterned terrazzo flooring has been installed throughout the terminal, and new solar panels capture the ever-present Tucson sun for added sustainability.
The hotel features 2,700 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space, on-site catering, spacious suites, complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast and a complimentary evening reception that includes drinks and snacks daily. Other amenities include a heated outdoor pool, business center and fitness center.

For small executive retreats, the new Aravaipa Farms Orchard & Inn is a country-style boutique property featuring farm-to-table dining and hiking in nearby Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. The venue opened in 2017 in Mammoth, about an hour from downtown Tucson. The 46-acre property re-established fruit orchards and vegetable gardens that provide fresh produce for on-property meals. It has a swimming pool, a working garden and casitas and bedrooms that can accommodate small groups up to 20 people.

**GROUP-READY ACTIVITIES**
The trendy Mercado San Agustin, a public marketplace, offers live music, a farmers’ market and shopping events amid an array of interesting boutique businesses and food venues. The Agustin Kitchen is a busy restaurant specializing in New American and classic French cuisine with an emphasis on locally-sourced products like southern Arizona beef, olive oils, breads, flour and cheeses.

Corporate groups can visit the University of Arizona’s Biosphere 2 and get a behind-the-scenes look at this amazing complex that’s three football fields long. Under 6,500 panes of glass is a rainforest, coastal fog desert marsh, a million-gallon ocean and other environments, all at 4,000 feet elevation at the base of the Santa Catalina Mountains, about 50 minutes north of downtown.

Arizona’s oldest visual arts institution, the Tucson Museum of Art and Historic Block, finished a $750,000 renovation resulting in an expansion of the museum’s Art of the American West collection, with works by artists that currently live or have lived in the American Southwest.

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, founded in 1952, is one of the nation’s leading outdoor living museums, featuring more than 230 animals and 1,200 varieties of desert plants. The Museum is located in Tucson Mountain Park adjacent to Saguaro National Park (west) and works with planners on special group events.

Ron Bernthal is a freelance print and broadcast journalist specializing in the hospitality industry.
Planners can certainly pick one of the ordinary places to have their meeting. A city everyone has seen, another overly familiar hotel; that’s one way to do things. Or you can get off the beaten path and make a choice to get a little out there: Tucson.

Tucson has incredible resorts with meeting space galore, but here they’re tucked into the foothills of the mountains that surround the city, creating backdrops for your events that you won’t believe. Plus, there are unique places to have off-site events—from team-building at a luxury spa, to an opportunity to experience a little of the Old West at a guest ranch.

Why did USA Today include Tucson in a list of cities emerging as a “top pick for biz meetings”? It’s about the power of connection: the essence of what makes Tucson special. Not just the surprising affordability of holding a meeting in Tucson, but the connection between a planner and the Visit Tucson staff going the extra mile to make your event spectacular. This connection is evident in the fact that eight of ten meeting planners choose Tucson after a site visit; the connection between your attendees and the living, breathing desert.

When it’s time to get beyond the ballroom to find a place that provides the opportunity to relax and re-energize, with at-your-fingertips luxury at CFO-pleasing value and a spectacular variety of properties to choose from, Tucson shouldn’t be just among USA Today’s top picks, but among savvy meeting planners as well.

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Number of hotel rooms: 15,000  Largest room block: 575
Largest meeting facility: 205,000 sq. ft.
Largest exhibit facility: 90,000 sq. ft.
Airport: Tucson International Airport (TUS)

DRIVING DISTANCE FROM
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Your restaurants always seem to be ahead of the curve. How do you forecast trends?

We were an early adopter of fast-casual pizza with a concept called Sauce in 2005. Then we partnered with Dr. Andrew Weil and opened a place called True Food Kitchen and set the trend for healthy eating on a more national scale. We’re always looking at what’s on trend, what’s new, how can we do it better and how can our guests enjoy it a little differently. Because things change quickly today and our organization needs to be able to adapt.

What trends will we see in restaurants coming up in the next five years?

We’ll continue to see healthy eating. Off of True Food Kitchen we spun off a brand called Flower Child, which is our healthy fast-casual place. It checks a lot of the boxes of the trend: healthy, more affordable and quick and convenient.

You’ll see technology … like mobile orders and food delivery services continue. It’s trying to solve the issue of what’s our most valuable commodity—and that’s time.

Another big trend happening today are three-meal-a-day restaurants. We have The Henry, which serves breakfast, lunch, dinner, brunch on weekends, drinks, has private dining, and has a fast-casual coffee bar. So it acts in many different ways. These restaurants with “personalities” become neighborhood gathering spots.

Restaurants with singularly-focused items will also grow, like restaurants that just serve chicken or certain ethnic foods.

How does FRC work with event and meeting planners to craft a unique experience at your restaurants?

It’s not one thing—it’s several things. It’s the personality of the spaces we’ve curated; [they’re] not your traditional banquet rooms. We have many different types of cuisine, so there are many different things we can do. If guests have special dietary needs like food allergies or are gluten-free—we’re able to execute a lot of those special requests in the moment. [And guests are] coming to a place that has multiple options—they can come to one of our restaurants before an event, work on their computer, go to the private dining function, have a drink and come back out and play corn hole or watch sports. Some of our places have really become neighborhood gathering spots.

You’ve been a semifinalist 11 times for various James Beard Awards over the years—how does that feel?

It’s great recognition for our people—our chef team, our managers and our hourly people. How well we execute our restaurants is why we get recognized. It’s a great honor and to be recognized by your peers in the industry is uniquely exciting, and I cherish it all of the time.
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