

Best of Our Valley 2011: Stay & Play

Written by Sarah Rice

Whether you're thinking a staycation is in order or you're planning to get outta town, here are the prime places to Stay & Play.



Best Relaxing Resort Pool and Best Lobby Bar

JW Marriott Camelback Inn Scottsdale Resort & Spa

Soak up some rays at your choice of two heated swimming pools at JW Marriott Camelback Inn Scottsdale Resort & Spa and hide away in your own personal cabana oasis. Others love to catch up with old friends and forget about a stressful day with a signature margarita at the R Bar. Voters couldn't help but be drawn to the social and Southwestern lodge environment, complete with exceptional cocktails, mouthwatering appetizers and an unbeatable atmosphere. 480.948.1700, www.camelbackinn.com.

Best Casino Second-Year Winner

Gila River Casino-Vee Quiva

For two years in a row, Gila River-Vee Quiva has been voted the go-to casino in the Valley. The casino that never sleeps allows guests to experience a total rush with more than 800 slot machines, a 500-seat bingo area, poker and blackjack rooms and fabulous fare. www.wingilariver.com.

Best Resort, Best Party Resort Pool and Best Resort Dining

Hotel Valley Ho

This retro-chic resort is located in the heart of Old Town and boasts three category wins this year. Hipsters can't resist lounging at the OH Pool Bar and basking in the fabulous sun-drenched cabanas. Foodies can be found unwinding at Trader Vic's for happy hour and enjoying the masterful art of Polynesian cuisine. Plus, live acoustic soul tunes make the trendy atmosphere every Friday and Saturday night. 480.248.2000, www.hotelvalleyho.com.



Photo by Bill Timmerman

Best Museum

Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art

Bringing the best contemporary art from around the world to Scottsdale, SMOCA also offers a variety of learning programs and special events. Viewers are able to lose themselves in a sea of ever-changing exhibitions as well as Store @ SMOCA's impressive selection of gifts. 480.874.4666, www.smoca.org.

Best Bowling Alley

AMF Christown Lanes

Whether guests want a place to relax with friends and family or a hot spot to party all weekend long amid booming music, swanky lighting and great food, AMF Christown Lanes will bowl them over. 602.249.1715, www.amf.com/christownlanes.

Best Concert Venue

Mesa Amphitheatre

Nosebleed seats without a view? Not here. Get your money's worth and experience some of your favorite acts—like The Black Keys and Blues Blast 2011—with spacious tiered lawn seating where everyone has a stellar sight of the stage. 480.644.2560, www.mesaamp.com.

Best Day Trip

Sedona

Red Rock Country is the perfect one-day getaway. All before dusk, visitors are able to experience the escapism of a vacation (after only a short drive!) with majestic views of the city, incredible art and cultural opportunities, and diverse eateries.



Most Luxe Accommodations

The Ritz-Carlton, Phoenix

The Presidential Suite at The Ritz-Carlton, Phoenix is the definition of opulence. With mountain or city-skyline views, separate living and dining rooms, personal concierge staff, California king-size featherbeds, granite and marble baths, a jetted bathtub and even a baby grand piano, every detail is fit for royalty. 602.468.0700, www.ritzcarlton.com/phoenix.

Best Dog-Boarding Facility

Sonoran Desert Pet Resort

Also known as a pet sanctuary, Sonoran Desert Pet Resort includes dog (or kitty) condos, sweet suites and an indoor dog park that will make Fido's stay almost better than yours. With a large emphasis on health, cleanliness and safety, Sonoran Desert Pet Resort offers only the best for your four-legged friends. 623.551.5299, www.sdpetresort.com.

Best Movie Theater

Harkins Theatres

With 30 locations in five states, including the Valley's IMAX and Cine Capri centers, Harkins boasts award-winning popcorn, plush seats and even daycare centers. www.harkinstheatres.com.

Best Travel Web Site

Expedia.com

Leaving on a jet plane? Expedia.com is the top tool to find the best prices on flights, car rentals, hotels and vacation packages all in one location. www.expedia.com.