

Valley Insider's Guide

Written by Compiled by Melissa Larsen

Tuesday, 01 June 2010 15:21 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 June 2010 17:10

With more than 200 combined years of Valley living, these prominent locals know the best things to see and do around our state. We asked for a few of their favorites—and though it was hard for them to decide—here's what they had to say. (Be on the lookout for little-known Valley gems to try this summer.)



McDowell Sonoran Preserve

One of my favorite spots in the Valley is the Sunrise Trail in the **McDowell Sonoran Preserve**. The trail can be accessed from the Lost Dog Wash Trailhead at 124th Street south of Shea Boulevard, but I prefer the trailhead at 145th Street and Via Linda. From this side, the trail goes through one of the most beautiful canyons in the Valley with lush wildflowers, chollas, saguaros and spectacular views of Phoenix, Scottsdale, Fountain Hills and the Preserve. The two-mile hike to the saddle is a great workout and moderately difficult. For a little extra kick, there is a .2-mile relatively steep climb to the summit. If you plan ahead and park a car on either end of the trail, you can continue on the approximately two-mile trail back to Lost Dog Wash Trailhead. After this invigorating hike, a trip to **Greasewood Flats** for a burger and tequila is always in order!" —*Kathy Duley of Duley-Jones Gallery and 26-year Valley resident*



Taggia at FireSky Resort & Spa

"Most of our favorite things to see and do in the Valley are close to where we live. We live at the **Optima at Camelview** in Scottsdale. It's like living in a trendy boutique hotel! It's green, lush and tropical—like living in the jungle. It's environmentally friendly and has all the great amenities that you would expect from a five-star hotel. Best of all, it's within walking distance to lots of great places to eat, see and do. We ride bikes along the canal; we walk to **Harkins Camelview 5** movie theater to see independent films; and we relax with a glass of Champagne while playing board games on the terrace at **Taggia at FireSky Resort & Spa**. All without ever getting into the car! If we do drive, we like to play bocce ball at the **InterContinental Montelucia Resort & Joya Spa**. They've got a beautiful lawn court with gorgeous views of Camelback Mountain." —*Paola Embry, sommelier at Christopher's Restaurant and Crush Lounge and 20-year Valley resident*



Stinkweeds

1. **Hollywood Regency Vintage** filled with vintage accessories, clothes and treasures. Plus, their seasonal things are absolutely one-of-a-kind; some of my favorite seasonal goodies are from here.
2. **The Farm at South Mountain** This is the perfect place for people who don't have time for a vacation. It's only eight minutes from Downtown Phoenix, and it has acres of lawns, pecan trees, gardens and some of the most delicious restaurants.
3. **Stinkweeds** is the best place in town to find new music. Check their Web site (www.stinkweeds.com) to find out when they have free live concerts on the patio.
4. **Small Wonders Map** is made up of amazing local businesses. It's a great resource for people trying to get out of the mall and into something more unique. They can be found at frances or many other businesses around the Valley. I promise you'll find a rich community you never knew was there.
5. **The Murphy Bridle Path** in Central Phoenix is truly a treasure to have right here in town. I walk my dog under the tree canopies as often as I can.

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—Georganne Bryant, owner of Phoenix's frances and smeeks and 23-year Valley resident



Scottsdale's Old Town Farmer's Market

As author of 'Dine Out Phoenix,' eating out is one of my favorite past times. When I'm in the mood for sophisticated comfort, I head to **FnB** and sit at the cozy bar where Chef Charlene Badman cooks right in front of me. Passionate about freshness and flavor, her secret weapon is locally grown, organic ingredients. For quick, inexpensive and casual [fare], the tiny counter-service eatery, **Aloha Kitchen**, is one of my faves. A must-try is the insanely delicious Hawaiian plate special (Kalua pig with cabbage), available on Wednesdays and Saturdays. I can never go wrong when meeting friends at **Postino Winecafé** for happy hour and bruschetta. And when I'm in the mood to cook, I head to **Scottsdale's Old Town Farmer's Market**. Fresh produce, local cheeses, baked goods and cooking demos with celebrated local chefs—a great way to spend a Saturday morning. To work off all the calories, hiking **North Mountain** several times per week is essential. But for a longer hike, **Pinnacle Peak** has won my heart with its dramatic views of the desert. And then there is retail therapy—so many places, so little time! Check out fashion icon Robert Black's vintage clothing shop, **Fashion by Robert Black**, to find real treasures that he has shopped around the world to collect."

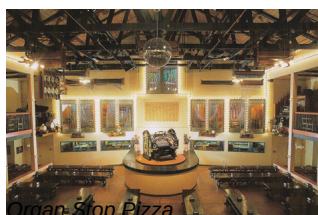
—Pam Swartz, author of "Dine Out Phoenix: Where to Eat from Chic to Unique" and "Arizona Getaways for the Incurably Romantic: 45 Sensational Destinations for Lovers" and 32-year Valley resident



McDowell Mountain Ranch Park and Aquatic Center

When the temperatures reach triple digits here in the Valley, I pack a picnic for my family and head over to the City of Scottsdale's newest water park, The **McDowell Mountain Ranch Park and Aquatic Center**. For \$4 a person, we can spend most of the day cooling off on the waterslide, lying in a tube on the lazy river, jumping off diving boards, swimming in the lap pool, playing a game of water basketball or splashing with the kids in the beach-entry play area. In the evenings, my husband and I love to take advantage of the special dining offers in the Valley during the summer. One of our favorites is **Eddie V's** (located in DC Ranch). During the summer, they offer all-night, every-night happy hour. I believe parents deserve to stay refreshed during the summer as well.

When we can't take another minute of the heat, we spend time inside at **AZ on the Rocks**. This is an indoor, air-conditioned rock-climbing gym. No membership is required; you can just walk in and try it out. For a small fee, you can rent all the rock-climbing gear you need, including shoes. The instructors are very fun, and they teach you how to safely belay and climb. They also have automatic belays if you need to take a break. It's a great workout, and the whole family can enjoy this together. Because I can burn a lot of calories rock climbing, we love enjoying the Southwest flavors that **Roaring Fork** offers. All summer long, they offer a special happy hour menu. You can also cool off your insides with one of their \$5 margaritas." —June Kleier of *Take a Hike Arizona* and six-year Valley resident



Organ Stop Pizza

"There are so many fun things to do here in the Valley with the entire family during the summer. But as an avid outdoor enthusiast and owner of a guided hiking company, I have to say that one of my favorite family activities is hiking. During the warmer summer months, one of our favorite things to do is head out to **Usery Mountain Regional Park** in Mesa for an evening hike. We love hiking the Wind Cave Trail. This area gets you away from the city lights and allows you to see a night sky full of endless stars. This is one of the first areas where our kids discovered the Milky

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Way Galaxy. To add to the fun of hiking in the desert at night, we also take along our black lights and look for scorpions and other desert dwellers that come out at night. It is great fun! Afterwards, we love to go to **Organ Stop Pizza** for dinner. The whole family is entertained by the lively music, and the food is good too.

On our hotter days, I enjoy taking the kids to the **Arizona Museum of Natural History**, also in Mesa. The museum has great interactive exhibits including actual gold panning, which can entertain the kids (and some of us adults) for quite some time." —*Tracey Epel of Take A Hike Arizona and 14-year Valley resident*



Las Noches de las Luminarias at the Desert Botanical Garden in late fall. I enjoy walking through the Garden at night, enjoying hot chocolate. It's so peaceful.

Mary Coyle's Ice Cream in Phoenix. I've lived here my entire life. My dad would tell me when he was a little boy, if he made it home from school on time, his grandmother (my great-grandmother) would give him a nickel so he could run down to Mary Coyle's and get an ice cream cone. It's been our family tradition on Christmas Eve to deliver food and gifts to needy families and, afterwards, we all meet up at Mary Coyle's for a Christmas Eve treat.

There's a great **Valley look-out spot** off Shea Boulevard just before Fountain Hills at approximately 136th Street (it's a right turn off Shea as you head east just before Eagle Mountain Parkway), and you can see the entire East Valley from there. It's quite breathtaking. —*Cara Langley's, Arizona Biltmore's assistant front office manager and former lead concierge and Valley native*

"I must have been French in another life. I love everything that reminds me of France. So it's no surprise my favorite shops to bring my clients to have everything except the aroma of fresh croissants! For the most extraordinary collection of sophisticated lingerie, gifts and bath goodies at reasonable prices, I head to **Anastasia's at the Shops Gainey Village**. It's an intimate boutique that truly looks just like a Parisian shop. There's an extensive selection of imported merchandise, and the owner always provides the ultimate in customer service. One of my favorite interior décor and accessories shops is **Vallone Design's** new warehouse tucked away in North Scottsdale. They have an enviable blend of new and antique furniture, accessories, lamps and rugs, all artfully displayed. You'll feel as though you've stepped right into a glossy magazine. Can I move in?" —*Nancy Shina, owner of SPREE! The Art of Shopping and 18-year Valley resident*

I am a huge Arizona Diamondbacks fan. I have season tickets. I own three restaurants. I spend a lot of time at **Majerle's Sports Grill**. I am a big golfer. Arizona has some of the best golf courses in the world. During the summers, I get out and play as much as I can. I belong to the **Arizona Country Club**. I also enjoy **Desert Mountain Golf Course**, **Whisper Rock Golf Club**, **Grayhawk Golf Club** and **Troon North Golf Club**—all those great golf courses. I like to hike **Camelback Mountain** and **Piestewa Peak**. —*Dan Majerle, Phoenix Suns assistant coach and 22-year Valley resident*