

Meeting in Arizona



A Great Place for Meetings and Events!

Credit: Visit Phoenix

The Magnificent Mix of Desert and Mountain Beauty Draws Groups Year After Year

By Mark Rowh

There's no question that Arizona is a great place for meetings. Whether corporate groups gather in Scottsdale, Phoenix, Tucson or another locale, the diverse meeting and incentive hotels and resorts attract professional meeting planners and attendees alike.

Perhaps nowhere else in the country rivals Arizona for its combination of desert and mountain beauty. The state can be a real change of pace, especially for meeting participants from the coasts or the nation's heartland.

The region's rich history, combining the early days of Spanish colonization with Arizona's later place in the mythos of the American West, offers much appeal to visitors. Meeting planners also benefit from access to a number of top-flight destination management companies as well as the information and services offered by the region's convention and visitor bureaus.

Credit: Saguaro cactus at sunset in Scottsdale. © MattSuess.com

Arizona Beckons



Credit: The Phoenician

The Casita Lawn at The Phoenician, which is currently undergoing enhancements.

“Arizona is a great destination for meetings,” says Stacy J. Weber, CMP, meeting and event manager at Moss Adams LLP, a Seattle-based business consulting firm. “You have the ease of airlift into Phoenix, the abundance of hotels, resorts and offsite venues, and of course, the great weather.”

For the past three years, Weber has coordinated her firm’s annual leadership meeting at the Royal Palms Resort. She also planned a department-level retreat at The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa in Scottsdale.

“What’s interesting about Arizona is that you always feel a sense of place,” she says. “In some big cities around the country, you almost feel like you could be in any major city, with a few landmarks. But Arizona feels unique and special, and you’re surrounded by the beauty of the desert.”

“I am a huge fan of meeting in Arizona,” says a director for conference planning from an organization in the Washington, DC, area. “You can count on the weather being warm and sunny, which seems to improve the mood of my attendees every time and takes the stress out of planning outside events and travel snafus. There are countless beautiful resorts to choose from and all seem to have world-class golf.”

Among other venues, she has coordinated meetings at two standouts in Tucson — Loews Ventana Canyon Resort and The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa.

“Between site selection trips and meetings, I’ve visited Tucson and Phoenix over 20 times, and I always learn something new,” Reilly says. “It’s a beautiful destination, loaded with gorgeous vistas, lovely weather and friendly locals who love sharing their knowledge and passion for the region.”

Properties Galore

Assuredly there is a plethora of properties from which to choose: Greater Phoenix alone, which includes Glendale, Scottsdale, Tempe and Mesa among its 20 incorporated cities, offers about 450 hotels and resorts with more than 62,000 guest rooms and an array of meeting spaces, according to Megan Doyle, spokesperson for Visit Phoenix.

Kelli Blubaum, spokesperson for Experience Scottsdale, adds that visitors get a great deal more than they anticipated.

“They’re always surprised by the desert and how lush and beautiful it is,” she says. “It’s never what they expected.” Meeting attendees also tend to be surprised by the variety of resort offerings, from smaller historic hotels to grandiose resorts with expansive meeting facilities.

“Because of the diversity of our resort portfolio, we see a high number of repeat groups who come back year after year for a unique Scottsdale experience,” she says.

One popular factor is the region’s accessibility. Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, which is located just 15 minutes from Scottsdale and within easy driving distance of a variety of meeting destinations, serves more than 43 million passengers a year from more than 80 domestic and 20 international destinations.

With 300-plus days of sunshine annually, Arizona’s weather is especially appealing to planners who can confidently schedule outdoor events. And the unique desert setting adds to the experience, especially for the many attendees who meet in Arizona for the first time.

“We call the Sonoran Desert a blooming desert because of how vibrant the colors of the plants, flowers and cacti can be,”

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Scottsdale Experiences

Fort McDowell Adventures boasts three unique venues for events and corporate meetings. Nestled on 25,000 acres of pristine Yavapai country with stunning mountain vistas, breathtaking sunsets, full-service food and beverage, and entertainment and activities, they can accommodate groups of 10 to 2,000 for a true Western adventure.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West, Scottsdale's only National Historic Landmark, is another option for a corporate dinner or reception. It's where America's greatest architect entertained his rich and famous guests. Set on a 491-acre Sonoran Desert Preserve in the foothills of the McDowell Mountains, Taliesin West offers companies a distinct and distinguished venue to celebrate its accomplishments, assuring guests an unforgettable evening. Taliesin West can fete up to 120 guests as well as smaller, more intimate gatherings.

Rainbow Ryders Hot Air Balloon Company boasts 30 years of experience offering safe hot-air balloon rides. Experience Scottsdale and Phoenix from this unique perspective with rides available every morning at sunrise — weather permitting. Or enjoy Arizona's breathtaking sunsets and views of the Sonoran Desert during a balloon flight. After landing, groups enjoy a celebratory toast with a light continental breakfast.

The award-winning Arizona winery **LDV Winery** is located in downtown Scottsdale. Groups will find handcrafted, estate-grown Rhone-varietal wines by the glass or bottle at the tasting counter or on one of the beautiful patios onsite. The vineyard and winery are located in the Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona. A plate of "little bites" pair with the wine, and unique gifts, Arizona food products and fine art from Arizona artists are available for purchase.

Topgolf is a popular venue and activity for corporate groups because it works for golfers and those who have never even held a golf club. The 65,000-sf Topgolf venue features three levels of semi climate-controlled golf bays containing fans with misters and heaters. They have event options for groups of 10 to 1,200 ranging from a small boardroom, large banquet rooms, a rooftop terrace, a lower lounge with two billiard tables, a shuffleboard, and access to Xbox games, single level buyouts, and full buyouts. Club rentals are free and golf clubs are available at each bay. At night the sky lights up with dynamic light shows. The venue also arranges live entertainment, interactive DJs, dancing, casino-style fun, live bands, photo booths, more than 230 flat screens and more.

A Taste of Old Town Scottsdale by Arizona Food Tours takes groups to many of the most celebrated locally owned establishments in the area including The Mission, Cowboy Ciao, Malee's Thai Bistro, AZ88, Su Vino Winery and more. Their lunch tours, happy hour tours and progressive dinner tours run all year round and start at \$54 per person.

Blubaum says. "It's also the home of the iconic Saguaro cactus, which you can only find in the Sonoran Desert."

The favorable weather supports a variety of amenities and activities, says Carmela Lizzo, president and CEO of Camelback Adventures in Scottsdale. With more than 32 years in the hospitality business, Camelback Adventures is one of the leading Destination Management Companies in the Scottsdale/Phoenix area. Along with fine dining, shopping and a diverse cultural climate, she recommends the area's premier golf courses and outdoor adventures such as hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and rafting.

"There are so many options available, from a dinner in the desert to hot-air ballooning to museum exhibitions of Native American arts, heritage and history," she says. Lizzo also touts escapades such as jeep rides, hiking and other outings for adventuresome attendees.

"Our cookouts are particularly well received, as many attendees are amazed by the gorgeous sunsets, the towering cactus and the amazing views," Lizzo says. "It's an experience that is completely unique to Arizona and often, the highlight of their stay in the Southwest."

Dan Gibson, spokesperson for Visit Tucson, affirms that the weather and desert beauty are prime attractions, but also points out that his city and the state in general have strong appeal to those planning corporate meetings.

"Planners love the culture here, the opportunities to get out of the ballroom and the service our properties and Visit Tucson staff provide," he says. He points to attractions ranging from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, the vibrant downtown, impressive cultural opportunities and creative culinary options.

With so many choices for meetings, several properties are enhancing their appeal with additions or renovations.

At the Phoenician in Scottsdale, a variety of renovations will be completed in public areas this summer. They will include a redesign of the main lobby, pool complex, retail shops and eateries. A full rebuild of the resort's spa should be completed by the end of the year.

This follows the addition earlier this decade of a 45,000-sf ballroom complex to complement the existing 64,000 sf of indoor meeting space. A 15,000-sf ballroom can be subdivided into seven separate function spaces.

The resort's grand ballroom has more than 20,000 sf of space, and the main building features 26 breakout rooms sized from 365 sf to 1,037 sf. A multimedia theater accommodates up to 600 meeting attendees and supports both teleconferencing capabilities and a computerized audience interactive response system. All told, more than 80,000 sf of total interior meeting and event space is available.

Also in Scottsdale, The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa offers more than 200,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space including 41 meeting rooms. New developments at the resort include guest room enhancements such as larger flat-screen televisions, bedside charging stations for mobile devices and a guest room door-locking technology that will allow guests

to unlock doors with their smartphones, as well as a new indoor/outdoor space ideal for up to 12 participants.

Meeting space includes four ballrooms, with the majority of meeting space situated in a central location across two levels within the resort's main building. Adjacent to the facilities are two upscale shopping, dining and entertainment centers.

At the Royal Palms Resort and Spa in Phoenix, a multimillion-dollar design refresh is planned for this summer. The upgrade will include all of the property's 119 guest rooms as well as selected meeting and event spaces. The work follows recent improvements to the resort's event lawns, pool and lounge area, and landscaping. The latest changes will play on the natural backdrop of desert earth tones and wood architectural elements in supporting the overall character of a majestic estate.

Located on nine acres at the foot of Camelback Mountain, the resort features more than 20,000 sf of meeting space. Convenient to Scottsdale, Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and the Camelback financial corridor, Royal Palms offers a business setting with a variety of attractions for meeting participants from golf to swimming.

Extensive renovations also have been seen at Tucson's Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, where a multimillion-dollar remastering of guest rooms, meeting space, lobby, fitness center and spa was completed in 2016.

Along with 398 guest rooms, the resort features 37,000 sf of

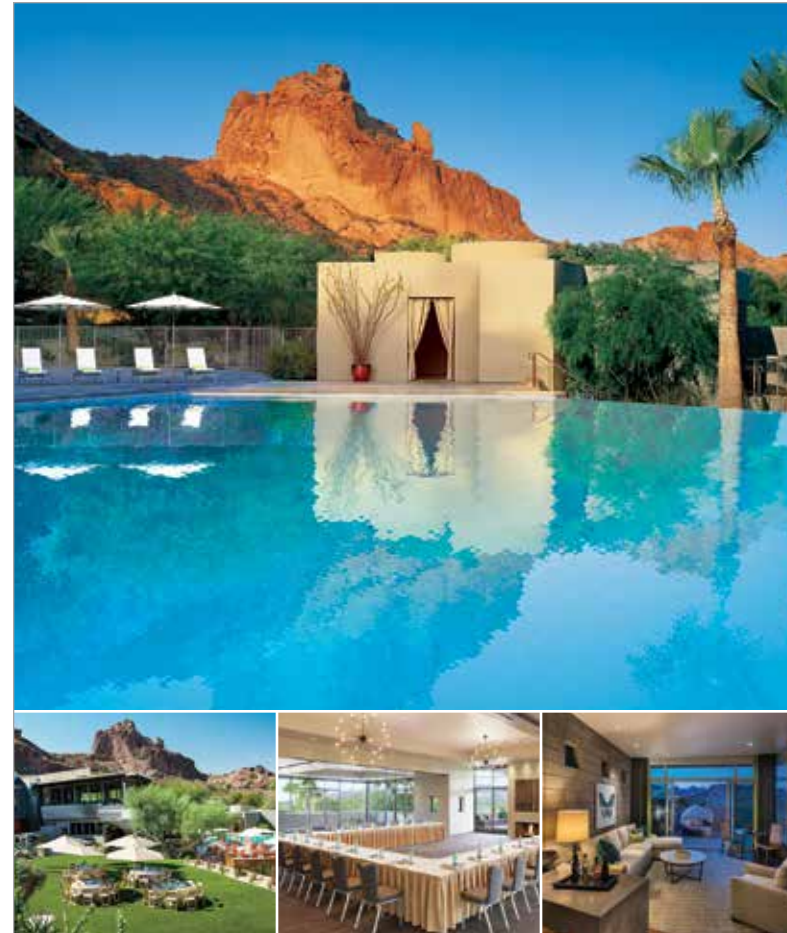


The Northern Sky Terrace at The Westin Kierland Resort and Spa.

indoor function space and nearly 40,000 sf of outdoor space. An 8,875-sf ballroom is divisible into seven sections with a 6,689-sf foyer, and a smaller ballroom (3,139 sf) can be divided into three sections. Several smaller rooms also are available, as is another ballroom measuring 10,800 sf and an 8,000-sf outdoor patio.

Facilities include a glass-enclosed, 2,000-sf room with city and mountain views, and five different parlors ranging from 728 sf to 1,008 sf. Offering special appeal to guests are nature and hiking trails that include an 80-foot-tall natural waterfall.

The Arizona Biltmore, a Waldorf Astoria resort in uptown Phoenix, offers more than 200,000 sf of indoor and outdoor



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Phoenix Experiences

The Phoenix Art Museum is the Southwest's largest fine art museum, which features a collection of contemporary work and global masterpieces. Complementing the museum's galleries of fine art and objects from Asia, America, Europe and beyond are rotating exhibitions such as Samurai: Armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection.

Camelback Mountain is a hiker's paradise. The panoramic view from the "hump" of this iconic landmark, named for its resemblance to a kneeling camel, is worth scaling its two tricky trails, Echo Canyon and Cholla. Hikers gain 1,200 feet in elevation to the summit, which looks out over the city and Phoenix Mountains Preserve.

The **DeSoto Central Market** combines boutique eateries including Walrus & the Pearl oyster bar, DCM Burger Joint, a foodie-friendly Southern kitchen called the larder + the delta, Adobo Dragon Mexican-Asian fusion, Tea & Toast Co. serving coffee, tea and pastries, and RADish, the masters of salad and fresh pressed juice, along with a deco-era bar and abundant gathering space inside the historic DeSoto building in the heart of downtown Phoenix.

The Orchard is the perfect spot for business dinners, private events and outings. Luci's, the restaurant at The Orchard, features an energetic, eclectic vibe in an open, airy space that blends elements of an original Phoenix ranch house with clean, modern touches.

The Farm at South Mountain provides picturesque views along with its farm-to-table dining at one of its three restaurants. An array of programming includes yoga, cooking demonstrations and more.

Goat Yoga (yes, it really reads Goat Yoga) is therapeutic and helps relieve the daily stresses of life. Participants can find their center through yoga and play with goats at the same time.

The Newton is the place to read, dine, gather, shop and host events. A mixed-use concept housed inside Phoenix's former (but iconic) Beef Eaters building, the Newton is home to the Phoenix location of Changing Hands Bookstore, Southern Rail Restaurant, Southwest Gardener and Christoforo Schermer Consulting. It also is an event venue, with three private event spaces available for private events and parties.

Bitter & Twisted Cocktail Parlour is a stylish eatery boasting innovative bar bites and a hip drinking space. With its world-class, award-winning cocktail program, Bitter & Twisted is the place to go for some good eats and impeccable drinks.

The **Musical Instrument Museum (MIM)** showcases more than 6,500 musical instruments and objects, and music of cultures from around the world and more displayed in MIM's Geographic Galleries using a state-of-the-art guidePORT audio system, along with high-resolution video screens.



The Tucson Lobby Bar at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort.

event space. The two largest ballrooms recently have been renovated with aesthetic and technical upgrades. They include the 24,576-sf Frank Lloyd Wright Ballroom, which is complemented by almost 11,000 sf of prefunction space.

Also available is the 14,904-sf McArthur Ballroom. Featuring an additional 6,400 sf of prefunction space, the facility can be divided into several smaller spaces.

The resort's conference center features more than 25,000 sf of space with an array of function rooms and venues. Choices range from an 11,000-sf ballroom to small private boardrooms, all served by a fully equipped business center.

Other facilities include rooms serving 400-500 guests, a patio accommodating 300 participants and a terrace suite with room for 50 people.

Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa, situated 8 miles north of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, offers 109 guest rooms as well as an upscale setting for business meetings. Facilities include a 3,204-sf ballroom with banquet seating for up to 220 guests, a wraparound terrace, breakout rooms and two boardrooms accommodating from 12 to 20 guests.

In addition, eight private mountainside estates provide change-of-pace venues for social and business gatherings. They include game rooms, private pools, tennis courts and secluded patios.

Outdoor spaces include a patio accommodating up to 200 guests, as well as poolside and terrace options handling up to 150 persons each. And an indoor/outdoor venue dubbed

Credit: Loews Ventana Canyon Resort



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Tucson Experiences

Tucson champions the vibrant, chef-focused cuisine (featuring two James Beard Award winners) downtown, the variety of international dining options, and their incredible Mexican food. In addition to a number of food awards, Tucson also received recognition from UNESCO as one of six Creative Cities in the United States and the only one selected for Gastronomy. The city was selected for "our region's rich agricultural heritage, thriving food traditions and culinary distinctiveness." Tucson has an incredibly unique mix of cultural influences reflected in their food, from the Sonoran hot dog's cross-border origin story to historic wheat brought here by Spanish missionaries and the fruit of the prickly pear cactus showing up in our local craft beers.

Thriving downtown Tucson is home to dozens of talented chefs, such as Janos Wilder, attracted by the city's famed heritage produce (from dates and prickly pears to beans and chiltepin chiles) and flourishing local gardens.

MiAn Sushi & Modern Asian Cuisine is an upscale Asian bistro and bar that has opened in downtown Tucson on the ground floor of Tucson Electric Power company's nine-story headquarters on the Sun Link Streetcar route. The nearly 5,000-sf restaurant has a sleek, modern look and seats 160 diners inside and 120 on the patio.

Old Pueblo Brew Tours is open in Tucson and offers a "mobile artisan craft beer journey through the best breweries the Old Pueblo has to offer." The new suds-tasting tours are currently scheduled on Saturdays and last 4-5 hours with 3-4 stops. Guests meet at a designated brewery and are shuttled by van during the tour. Tours are booked online.

The Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Resort opened an 18-horse stable on its 500-acre property in the Santa Catalina foothills on Tucson's northwest side. Guests and members of the public can take advantage of wrangler-guided trail rides, horseback riding lessons, carriage rides, hay rides and trail-side cookouts. Discounts are available for groups, and packages can be customized with sunset rides, camping trips and other adventures.

The **Tucson Botanical Gardens** has been ranked among the recipients of the 2017 "Top 10 North American Gardens Worth Traveling For" Garden Tourism Awards.

The planetarium theater at the **Flandrau Science Center & Planetarium** on the campus of the University of Arizona, was completely renovated and includes new seats, a new seating layout, enhanced lighting and a new acoustic wall treatment.

Although the Sonoran Desert may be known for its dry climate, the Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez) and the stingrays that flow through it are critically important and the primary reason the Sonoran Desert has been named the "lushest desert on earth." Visitors are able to create their own moments with these captivating creatures at the **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's** new Stingray Touch experience, which opened last year.



Massage with a view at Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa.

the Praying Monk accommodates 60 guests for dinner or 100 people for a cocktail reception.

At Tucson's Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain, planners can take advantage of 20-plus meeting rooms and three outdoor lawn locations. A 9,000-sf ballroom is supplemented by several 500-sf meeting rooms. Activities for groups include "Volunteering" experiences, post-dinner hikes, nighttime golf, geocaching and cooking classes.

An attractive feature is the resort's relationship with nearby Cayton's Restaurant, allowing groups to rent the restaurant and its large patio, which can hold nearly 300 people. With a 20-foot-high ceiling and one-ton wrought iron chandelier, copper flume fireplace and circular shape, the Cayton's Kiva room accommodates groups of 10 to 50 guests, while another section handles 30 to 80 people. Many visitors find the unobstructed and sweeping view toward the west especially memorable.

The Westin La Paloma in Tucson offers 64,000 sf of indoor meeting space along with patios and covered decks for outdoor functions, not to mention golf courses and five swimming pools. Along with 27 meeting spaces, it has 487 guest rooms. The resort accommodates groups as large as 2,000 attendees.

Located 20 minutes from the Phoenix and Scottsdale airports, Talking Stick Resort offers 113,000 sf of indoor and outdoor event venues along with 496 guest rooms. Open-air breakout rooms offer a distinctive experience for meeting attendees, and a grand ballroom accommodates up to 2,000 guests. The resort's conference center can be configured into as many as 12 meeting rooms. For groups of up to 650, a theater features a large stage, production-quality lighting and

theater-style seating with private booths and tables. It's suitable for both keynote speakers and live entertainment.

The Omni Tucson National Resort has 128 guest rooms and eight meeting rooms with 10,500 sf of event space. A 2,900-sf ballroom divisible into two salons features a terrace with a scenic venue for outdoor receptions, meals or refreshment breaks. Another ballroom has 2,650 sf of space. Several salons are located convenient to the reception area. The resort's gardens are available for teambuilding programs, fitness/meditation classes and other outdoor activities against the backdrop of the desert and the Santa Catalina mountains.

Some 45 minutes from Tucson International Airport and 13 miles from the Tucson Convention Center, the 428-room Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort handles a variety of corporate events. It offers two 11,000-sf ballrooms as well as a separate 11,000-sf executive conference center, with total meeting space topping 100,000 sf.

The Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia has 293 guest rooms along with more than 27,000 sf of indoor meeting space and 75,000 sf of outdoor space. Conference venues



Wild, Wild West street performers in Tombstone.

include 14 breakout rooms and two private dining rooms. Indoor space includes two ballrooms and 11 other meeting rooms, while outdoor venues range from 1,000 sf to 32,000 sf. Inspired by Spain's Andalusia region, the resort offers a Spanish motif complemented by modern luxury accommodations.



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'Meet Your Million'

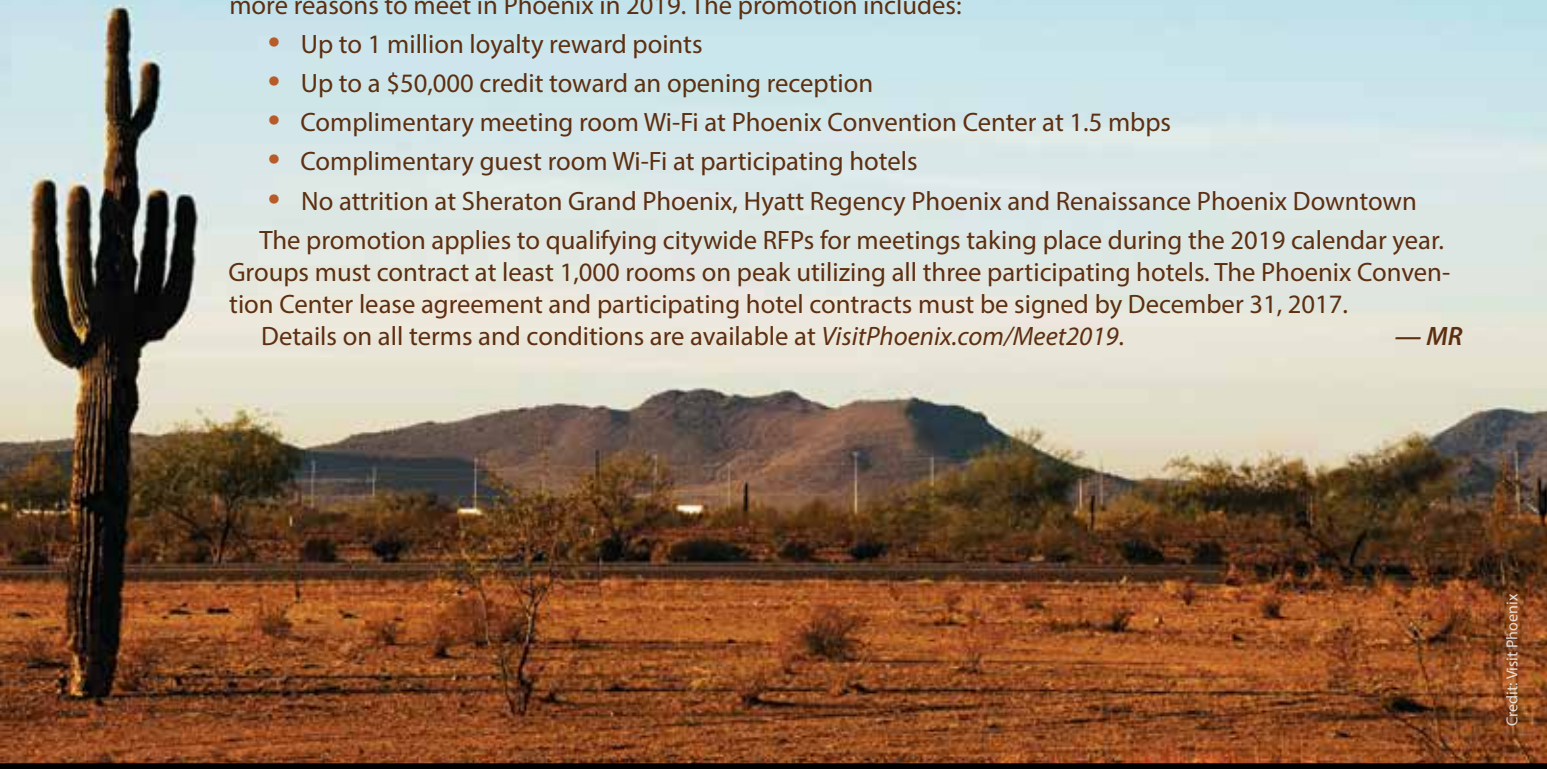
Visit Phoenix announced its new "Meet Your Million" promotion, which offers meeting planners 1 million more reasons to meet in Phoenix in 2019. The promotion includes:

- Up to 1 million loyalty reward points
- Up to a \$50,000 credit toward an opening reception
- Complimentary meeting room Wi-Fi at Phoenix Convention Center at 1.5 mbps
- Complimentary guest room Wi-Fi at participating hotels
- No attrition at Sheraton Grand Phoenix, Hyatt Regency Phoenix and Renaissance Phoenix Downtown

The promotion applies to qualifying citywide RFPs for meetings taking place during the 2019 calendar year. Groups must contract at least 1,000 rooms on peak utilizing all three participating hotels. The Phoenix Convention Center lease agreement and participating hotel contracts must be signed by December 31, 2017.

Details on all terms and conditions are available at VisitPhoenix.com/Meet2019.

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At Mountain Shadows, guests have access to 12,500 sf of indoor meeting space and 25,000 sf of outdoor event space accommodating events for up to 500 people. A 4,500-sf ballroom features a wall of retracting glass that opens to an attractive terrace (also 4,500 sf). Meeting rooms are equipped with 75-inch televisions, roll-down projection screens and wall-mounted iPad reader boards. Distinctive attractions include a 10,000-sf putting green and an overlook deck.

The Scottsdale Plaza Resort features 21 meeting rooms and 40,000 sf of event space in a single dedicated area. A 10,080-sf ballroom is supported by a 4,256-sf convention foyer and 58 breakout suites. An executive lodge boardroom and 10 ex-

ecutive lodge suites also are available, as well as a tented pavilion, cypress court and roomy courtyard for outdoor events.

At the Wigwam in Phoenix, 45,000 sf of indoor meeting space includes 25 separate meeting rooms. A 10,800-sf ballroom accommodates up to 500 dinner guests, while another ballroom handles up to 300 attendees. Another facility includes a built-in stage, 15-foot-tall ceilings and an al fresco terrace. The rooms are supplemented by 55,000 sf of outdoor space featuring 10 gardens and event lawns

Tucson's Casino Del Sol, operated by the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, offers nearly 20,000 sf of meeting space accommodating groups of up to 2,000 people. The 10-story property includes an 18,000-sf ballroom offering a variety of configurations, two smaller meeting rooms and an executive boardroom. Complementing the meeting spaces are Las Vegas-style gaming options such as bingo, slot machines and table games, live entertainment and other activities ranging from golf to swimming.

The 50 meeting rooms at the Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch offer a total of 60,000 sf of event space. A 10,000-sf boardroom, divisible into five sections, seats 1,000 guests theater-style. Two other rooms, each measuring 6,084 sf, are divisible into three sections per room and hold 505 people theater-style. Three boardrooms range in size from 300 sf to 700 sf.

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The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain.

Credit: Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain

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