



Wickenburg

WHETHER YOU'RE ROLLING IN FOR A DAY OR RELAXING FOR A WEEK, WICKENBURG IS THE PERFECT PLACE FOR YOUR INNER COWBOY TO SADDLE UP.

Great Escapes Wickenburg



Clockwise from top: early morning horseback ride; Wickenburg's main drag; couples massage at the Rancho de los Caballeros spa; a suite at Rancho de los Caballeros **Opposite page:** downtown Wickenburg

TWO VOTES. THAT'S ALL Wickenburg needed in 1866 to become the territorial capital. Just two more votes. Instead, Wickenburg remained a true Western boomtown, flourishing from its silver-, copper- and gold-mining efforts. In fact, the town is named after its most successful miner, Henry Wickenburg, who discovered Vulture Mine and the \$30 million in gold it sheltered.

Together with other miners, Wickenburg residents helped settle the area in 1863 and get the town incorporated by the early 1900s. Thanks to the mostly underground Hassayampa River, they found the soil to be rich and fertile, not dry and dusty like most Western frontiers. Still, the town is marked with memories typical of the wild, wild West: Indian wars, rampant lawlessness, hangings and a devastating flood in 1890 all foreshadowed the town's demise.

With the tough cowboy spirit the town still embodies, Wickenburg continued to grow, and today it sits on the outskirts of Phoenix as one of the most quaint, family friendly towns in the state. Whether you're taking a weekend jaunt to rummage for antiques or an extended stay to find your inner cowboy/girl, there's plenty in Wickenburg to whet your appetite for all things Western.

So dig out that bola tie (it was invented here, after all) and saddle up the family for an unforgettable vacation.



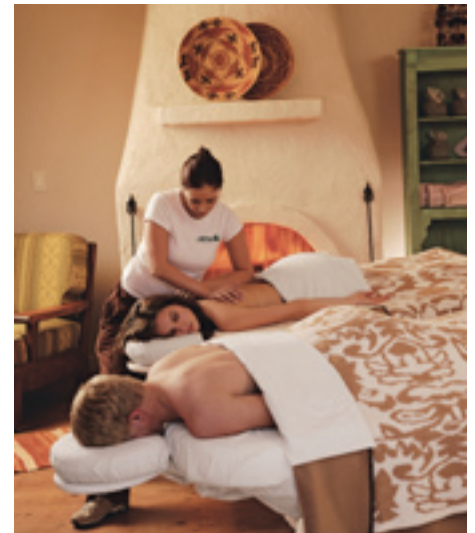
Stay and Play

Anyone who's wild about Wickenburg will tell you that a trip to this town just isn't complete without a stay at the casual, comfy Rancho de los Caballeros.

The resort is gearing up for its 62nd season, and when it opens October 16, hordes of couples and families will flock here to explore the desert, enjoy myriad outdoor activities and chow down on three hearty meals per day (included in your room rate).

Families who come here do so for generations, probably due to the fact that you can do so much without ever having to leave the resort. As part of your stay at the ranch, you can choose from horseback riding, golf, tennis lessons, hot air balloon rides, trap-and-skeet shooting, guided nature hikes and bird-watching expeditions. And those are just the daytime activities; nighttime plays host to cowboy cookouts under the stars, line dancing and live music in the lounge, and marshmallow roasting for the kids.

The ranch is very kid-friendly, offering a full host of children's activities through the Caballeros Kids' Program, which allows parents to enjoy some quiet time while staff keeps your little ones busy. (Individual baby



sitters also are on hand for guests.)

If you've come for relaxation, not recreation, the ranch spa is a must. Just a short jaunt from your suite, the spa offers numerous desert-inspired body treatments sure to soothe your summer-scorched body. For the ultimate spa sampler, book the Desert Labyrinth Ritual. This four-hour experience starts with a stroll through the onsite labyrinth, followed by tea service, a Hohokam massage, a Desert Pearl facial and an invigorating mani-pedi (\$325).

Even curling up with a good book is indulgent here. The Southwest-inspired suites are adorned with cozy Mexican furnishings, Saltillo tile, Kiva fireplaces and spacious patios that offer picture-perfect panoramas of more than 100 miles of surrounding desert. If you can't unwind here, you may need professional help.

And if you need a bit of hand holding when planning your stay at the ranch, there



From left: The Mandolin Store's custom mandolins and guitars; a heaping strawberry sundae at Chaparral Homemade Ice Cream

are plenty of affordable packages available during the season, which runs through early May. (Check *sunc.com* for current rates and packages.)

Walking Wickenburg

Known for its clean air, cool temperatures (compared with the Valley) and wide open skies that would make Montana jealous, Wickenburg is a simple town that offers simple pleasures.

A stroll along its main strip will lead you past plenty of Western-décor stores, art galleries and antique shops, all of which are bordered by authentic hitching posts left over from the town's cowboy-rich past.

Shopping gems abound here as well. The Mandolin Store, for instance, sells gorgeous handmade mandolins and guitars. Even if you're not in the market for one of these beauties, it's worth stopping by to check out owner Dennis Vance's craftsmanship.

Other "can't miss" include the Desert Caballeros Western Museum for a visually stunning history lesson on the Southwest, and a performance at the renowned Del E. Webb Center for the Performing Arts (whose upcoming season runs November 1 through April 8).

On a more seasonal basis, kids and adults will delight in lantern-lit walking tours of Wickenburg's supposedly haunted surroundings this fall. Upcoming community events include the annual Fiesta de Septiembre (September 5) to honor the town's Hispanic heritage and the Fly-In and Classic Car Show on October 10.

If all you do while in town is pop into the retro Chaparral Homemade Ice Cream shop for a scoop of sherbet, or join the masses at Anita's Cocina for some of the best chile rellenos in the state, you won't be sorry.

Scratch that. There's one more must-do item on your Wickenburg itinerary.

A River Runs Through It

A river runs *under* it would be more precise. For most of the 100 miles it meanders through the desert, the Hassayampa River flows underground, leaving only pockets of pristine riparian areas that, at times, resemble mere streams or puddles.

Still, a visit to the Hassayampa River Preserve rewards with peaceful hikes through lush surroundings and plenty of opportunities to spot native wildlife, which includes bobcats, javelina, and scores of colorful birds and rare raptors. Stop by the preserve's visitor center for educational tips on the area, then set out along one of the river bed's easy trails, which guide you through soaring cottonwoods, wilting willows and mighty mesquites. Docent-led walks also are available through the visitor center and are highly recommended for those who enjoy insightful commentary along the way. (Call 928-684-2772 for more information.)

You may be surprised by how verdant the floodplain actually is, but then again, Wickenburg is full of surprises.

—Ashlea Deahl can be reached at adeahl@citieswestpub.com.

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The Basics

Elevation 2,071 feet
Temperatures September: 96/60; October: 86/48; November: 74/38



Sleep & Stay

Rancho de los Caballeros
 1151 S. Vulture Mine Road, Wickenburg
 928-684-5484 or 800-684-5030, sunc.com.
 Call for current rates; the 2009-2010 season runs October 16 through early May.



Eat & Drink

Anita's Cocina
 57 N. Valentine St., 928-684-5777

Chaparral Homemade Ice Cream
 45 N. Tegner St., 928-684-3252



Activities & Shopping

Del E. Webb Center for the Performing Arts
 2001 W. Wickenburg Way, Ste. 3,
 928-684-6624, delewebbcenter.org.
 The 2009-2010 season runs November 1 through April 8.

Desert Caballeros Western Museum
 21 N. Frontier St., 928-684-2272,
westernmuseum.org

Hassayampa River Preserve
 The Nature Conservancy Visitor Center
 49614 N. US Highway 60, 928-684-2772.
 The center is open through September 16, Friday to Sunday, from 7 to 11 a.m. (trails close at 10:30 a.m.); September 17 through mid-May, Wednesday to Sunday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (trails close at 4:30 p.m.)

The Mandolin Store
 869 W. Wickenburg Way, 928-684-0212,
themandolinstore.com



Information

Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce
 216 N. Frontier St., 928-684-5479,
wickenburgchamber.com