

# TRAVEL

**TIME TO GET AWAY**

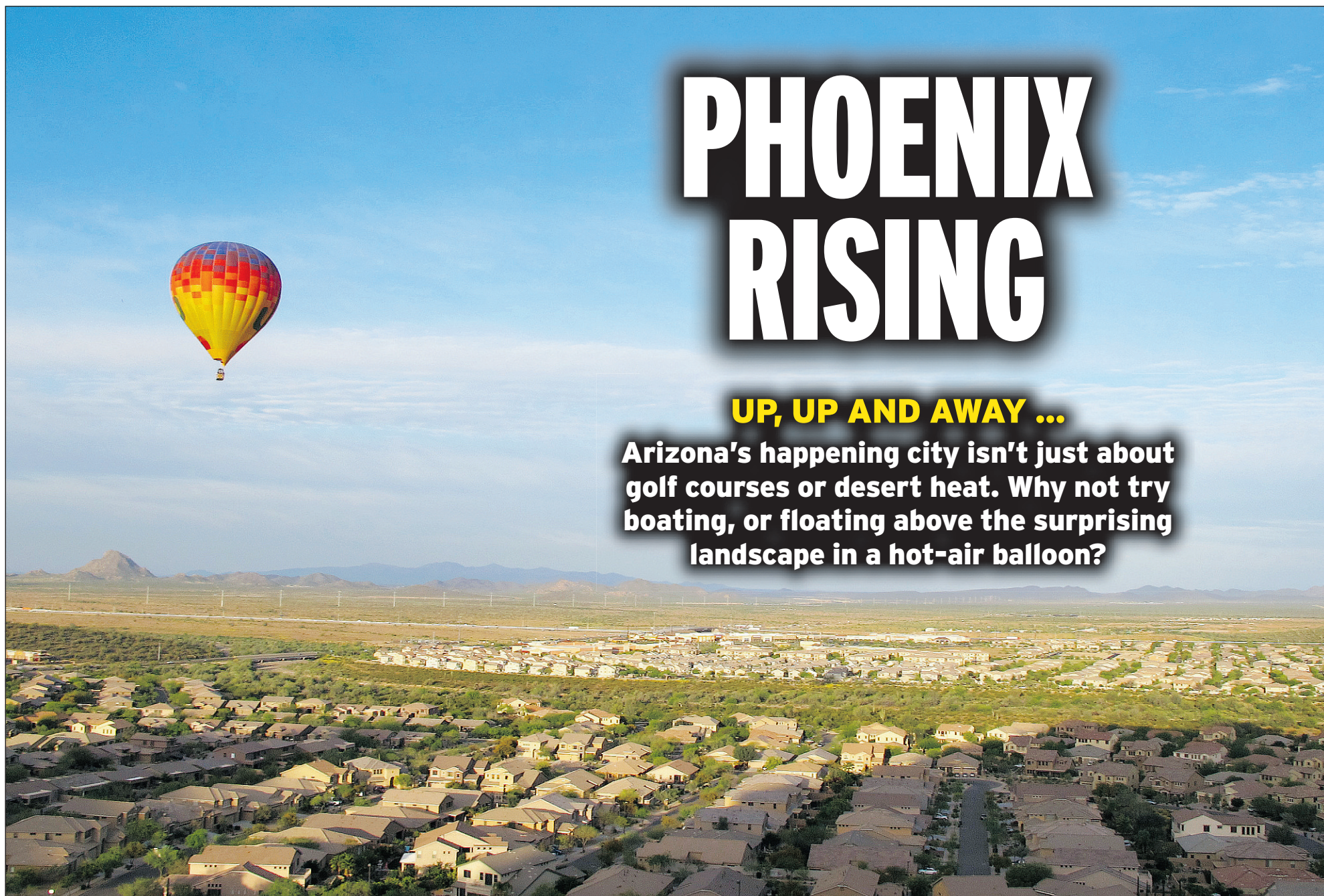
CARALYN CAMPBELL (EDITOR) • 604-605-2784 • cacampbell@sunprovince.com | TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2010

A25

## PHOENIX RISING

**UP, UP AND AWAY ...**

**Arizona's happening city isn't just about golf courses or desert heat. Why not try boating, or floating above the surprising landscape in a hot-air balloon?**



Check off an exhilarating hot-air balloon ride from your bucket list in Phoenix ... a little scary, but worth it.

BY MHAIRRI CUTHBERT  
ARRIVALSTRAVEL.COM

Phoenix is typically equated with snowbirds and golf, given the area's 200-plus courses and oodles of retirees who head south for the winter; however, America's sunniest metropolis offers more than an afternoon on the greens, or rousing game of bridge.

After five days of basking in the desert heat, we are excited to share our new found love for this happening city, which is destined to please the X and Y generations.

Boasting over 310 days of annual sun-

shine, Phoenix is best visited October through April; for those who can weather the scorching summers, there are fantastic specials available.

With so much sunshine, Phoenix is ideal for outdoor adventures. For adrenaline junkies, a Hummer tour or hot air balloon ride is an incredible way to experience the ecologically diverse desert. After much debate we put our fears aside to float more than 1,500 metres above ground in a basket with Hot Air Expeditions. Although somewhat terrifying, the peaceful ride with outstanding panoramic desert views surpassed our expectations. After checking

one more item off our bucket list, we noshed on a delicious al fresco champagne breakfast – apparently mixing acute fear with exhilaration stimulates the appetite.

There are also six lakes near Phoenix for water sports and swimming. Lake Pleasant, the second-largest lake in the area, is only a 45-minute drive and offers boat and toy rentals through the marina. Anyone looking for a beach party can take the 3.5 hour drive to Lake Havasu, which is renowned for Spring Break-style festivities.



Lush manicured greens and an abundance of cacti welcome you to Phoenix. — PHOTOS BY CURT WOODHALL

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# At sunset, the partying gets serious

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The sport teams alone are enough to lure the guys to Phoenix, with eight professional franchises plus the Arizona State teams to choose from. Every March the city is jammed for Spring Training, and if you think Canucks fans are passionate, head to a Coyotes game where the insane sound system and cheering crowd compete for the highest decibel level. The Coyotes Stadium in Glendale is part of Westgate City Centre; a high-energy complex with shops, funky restaurants and packed bars that overflow into a street party.

Grab your purses ladies, as Phoenix might have coined the phrase 'shop till you drop', with its full spectrum of retail therapy. Days, and dollars, can be happily spent wandering through the shopaholic heaven known as Scottsdale Fashion Square, the largest mall in the

Southwest.

Or, how about Biltmore Fashion Park and the trendy Mill Avenue district in Tempe?

Foodies will delight and savour in the full spectrum of cuisine ranging from signature southwest dishes to exotic international fare. Our favourite dining experience was a culinary tour of Old Scottsdale with Arizona Food Tours.

Over the three-hour walking tour, we munched on juicy burgers at The Rusty Spur and other southwest favourites including Pig in Pudding (a tasty concoction of corn polenta, chipotle pulled pork, cheese and dried cranberries) at Cowboy Ciao, one of Scottsdale's most popular eateries. Other fabulous finds in Old Scottsdale are Petite Maison, a stylish, intimate French bistro, and Arcadia Farms, a household name for over 20 years in farm-to-fork style cuisine.

When the sun goes down Old

Scottsdale transforms itself from quaint and artsy to 'the place to be'. Sexy lounges, moody wine bars and bumping clubs, such as Suede, Martini Ranch, Pussycat Lounge and Geisha A Go Go, are packed with partygoers until the wee hours.

With over 500 hotels in Phoenix, choosing can be difficult. For a girls' or guys' weekend, The W hotel in Old Scottsdale mixes chic with cheeky and offers a party atmosphere. While the lavish Hyatt Gainey Ranch, featuring ten pools, nine restaurants, a golf course and incredible spa, is perfect for a swanky couple's getaway

The short flight, dry heat, incredible eats, first-class accommodations and endless activities have won Phoenix a place in our hearts, and permanently dispelled the myth of it being a city for retirees.

*Mhairri Cuthbert is a Vancouver-based travel writer at Arrivals.*

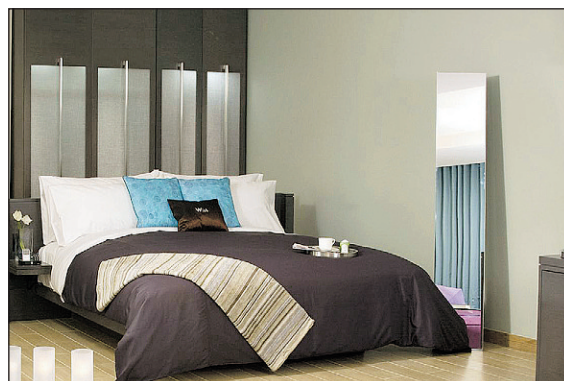


A breathtaking desert sunrise is perfect for a hot-air balloon ride.

### If you go

<p><b>Sports:</b> Phoenix Coyotes NHL Hockey Team: <a href="http://coyotes.nhl.com/">http://coyotes.nhl.com/</a></p> <p><b>Play:</b> Hot Air Expeditions for Hot Air Ballooning: <a href="http://www.hotair-expeditions.com/">http://www.hotair-expeditions.com/</a> Lake Havasu Tourism for boating: <a href="http://www.golakehasasu.com/">http://www.golakehasasu.com/</a></p> <p><b>Dine:</b> Arizona Food Tours: <a href="http://www.arizonafoodtours.com">www.arizonafoodtours.com</a></p> <p><b>Spend:</b> Scottsdale Fashion Square: <a href="http://www.fashionsquare.com">www.fashionsquare.com</a> Biltmore Fashion Park: <a href="http://www.shopbiltmore.com">www.shopbiltmore.com</a> Mill Avenue District in Tempe: <a href="http://www.millavenue.com">www.millavenue.com</a></p>	<p><b>Party:</b> Suede: <a href="http://www.suedeaz.com">www.suedeaz.com</a> Martini Ranch: <a href="http://www.martini-ranchaz.net">www.martini-ranchaz.net</a> Pussycat Lounge: <a href="http://www.pclaz.com">www.pclaz.com</a> Geisha A Go Go: <a href="http://www.geisha-agogo.com">www.geisha-agogo.com</a> Westgate City Centre: <a href="http://www.westgatecitycenter.com">www.westgatecitycenter.com</a></p> <p><b>Stay:</b> W hotel, Scottsdale: <a href="http://www.starwoodhotels.com">www.starwoodhotels.com</a> Hyatt Gainey Ranch, Scottsdale: <a href="http://scottsdale.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp">http://scottsdale.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp</a></p> <p><b>General Info:</b> Phoenix Tourism: <a href="http://www.visitphoenix.com">http://www.visitphoenix.com</a></p>
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Feeling a bit prickly? Don't worry! There's no shortage of interesting cactus photos to take in Arizona. — PHOTOS BY CURT WOODHALL.



The W Hotel mixes chic with cheeky, with a party atmosphere to boot.

*Travel Getaways Guide*

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