Together, Phoenix and Scottsdale provide a powerful meetings/incentive combo thanks to the prolific infrastructure upgrades and world-leading golf, spa and cuisine. We checked in with the Greater Phoenix CVB and a few Starwood Hotels & Resorts to get a feel for the big picture in the Valley of the Sun.

Phoenix, the fifth largest city in the United States, is currently experiencing a radical renaissance with new projects like the chic mixed-use CityScape project and The Westin Phoenix Downtown (11,000 sq ft of meeting space). The art-filled Phoenix Convention Center has expanded to 900,000 sq ft of event and meeting space. And attendees can now jump on the recently debuted light-rail system that connects all that meeting space to a slew of new options for dining and entertainment.

“Downtown Phoenix is a big surprise for those who haven’t come to the city in a few years,” says Douglas MacKinnon, Director of Communications for the Phoenix CVB. “It’s also become a center of good food where you can enjoy short breaks to day-long competitions.”

Even the convention center has eschewed the usual shrink wrap/fast food lobby fare for a food court that features some great local restaurants.

GREAT SCOT!

Come sunset, the haunting sounds of Scottish bagpipes reach out across the greens of the Kierland Golf Course, part of Scottsdale’s 4-diamond, 730-room Westin Kierland Resort & Spa. The hotel just finished work on an additional 21,000 sq ft of meeting space, upping their total to 208,000.

The Scottish theme is in full evidence at the Kierland Golf Club’s Brittlebrush Bar & Grill. Headed by Chef de Cuisine Graeme Blair, the menu offers a tour de force of Scottish and English pub fare with a modern twist: think short rib stuffed with swanky cabanoss; an 11-court Tennis Garden; and a 2-acre Cactus Garden where you can see Sonoran Desert beauties up close. There’s also a 22,000-sq Ft Centre for Well Being for fitness, enlightenment and spectacular spa treatments, like the Desert Serenity Scrub, Wrap & Massage.

On top of all that, over $25 million worth of art is sprinkled throughout the resort. This year, The Phoenician is fresh from a $70 million “master plan” remodel.

“The $40 million Cameback Ballroom is the culmination of this project,” says Denise Saccom, Director of PR. “We now have over 120,000 sq ft of indoor/outdoor meetings and event space, but the resort doesn’t feel like a convention hotel.”

Victoria Evans, National Sales Manager, explains that, “Basically, we’re not compromising anybody’s experience. The meeting facilities are all contained on one level, with their own satellite check-in points and their own porte-cochere. It’s key for us that each type of guest have their own space, so you won’t have to wander past a meeting room in your bikini to get to the pool.”

CULTURE CARETAKER

“The Pima and Maricopa tribes have been extending their hospitality to visitors since the days of the Gold Rush,” says Ginger Sunbird Martin, Cultural Concierge at the 4-diamond, 500-room Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, located in the Gila River Indian Community. The colorful decor incorporates tribal culture into every detail, giving guests a true reference and appreciation for the Native American way of life.

For example, Aji Spa (one of the top seven spas in Arizona) incorporates Native culture into group events. Within the 150,000 sq ft of indoor/outdoor space, Ginger also incorporates Native culture into group events.

“We’ve worked with groups on typical teambuilding projects like building bikes—then we have them give those bikes personally to kids waiting in the next room who’ve never even seen a bike,” she says. “We offer groups the opportunity to get involved in community programs... Over 50 percent of them participate because they see this is a great place to do something for the better good. The experience of being on a reservation only adds to the event and gives it authenticity. The Southwest isn’t canned: It’s a true experience.”

Greater Phoenix CVB: visitphoenix.com
Scottsdale CVB: meetingscottsdale.com
The Westin Kierland Resort: kierlandresort.com
The Phoenician: thephoenician.com
Sheraton Wild Horse Pass: wildhorsepassresort.com

Opposite: Westin Kierland Resort & Spa
Below top: The Phoenician
Below bottom: Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa

ARIZONA

Tasting the sunset with a blood-orange Komatke martini. Within the 150,000 sq ft of indoor/outdoor space, Ginger also incorporates Native culture into group events.

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