



Exploring Scottsdale . . . **52**  
72 Hours in St. George . . . **63**

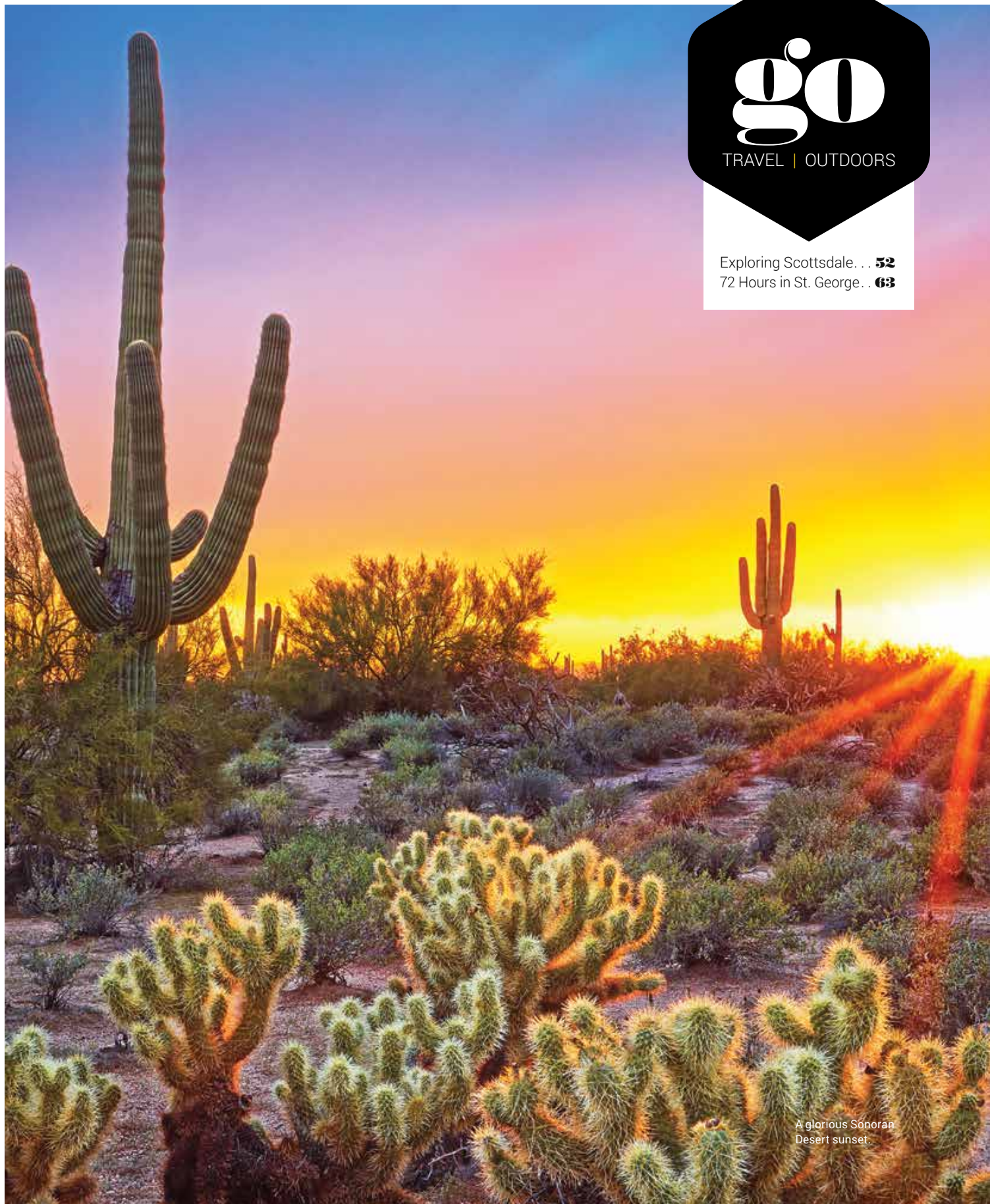


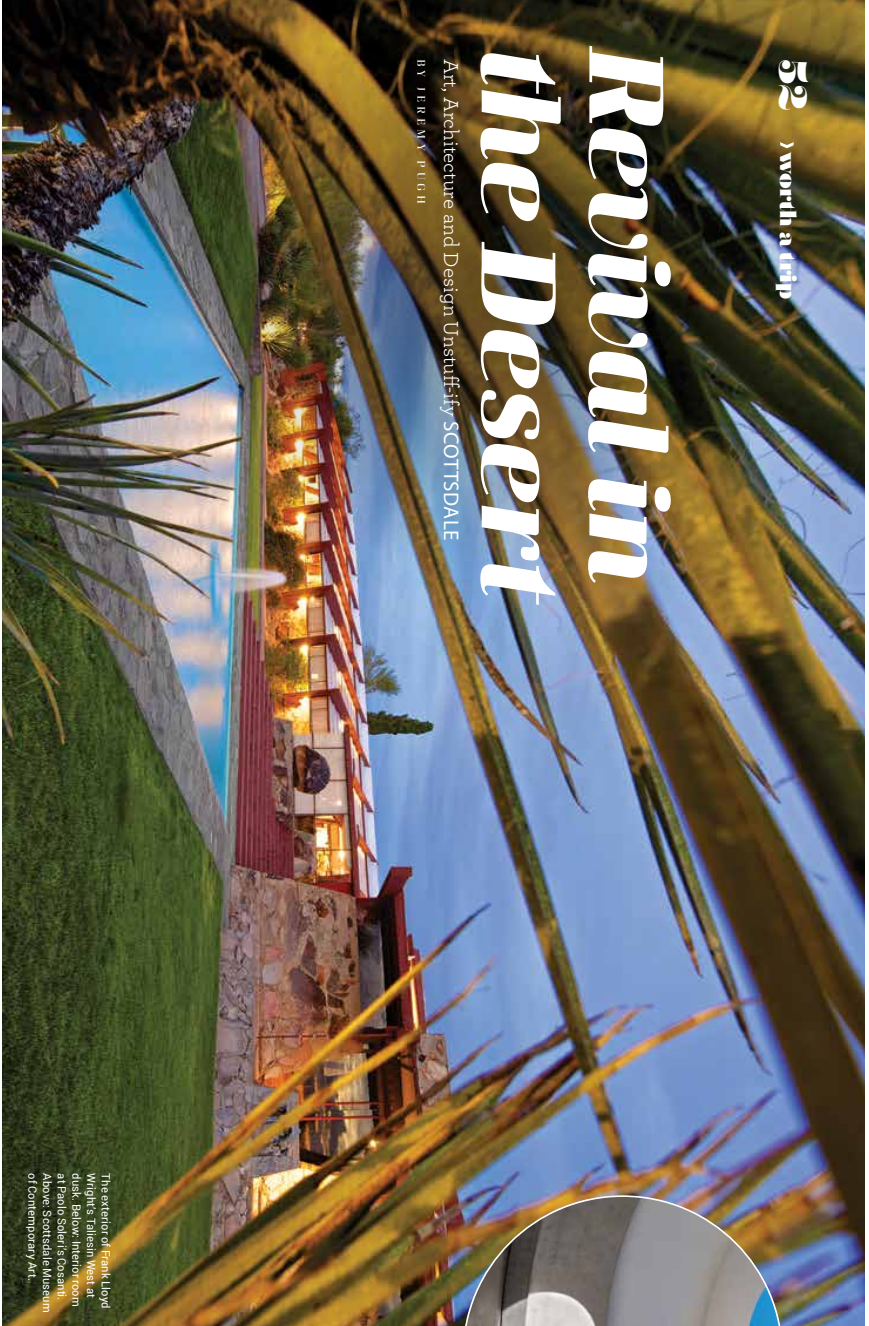
PHOTO MATT SEIJS

A glorious Sonoran Desert sunset.

# Revival in the Desert

Art, Architecture and Design Unstiffify SCOTTSDALE

BY JEREMY PUGH



The exterior of Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West at Paolo Soleri's Cosant. Above: Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art

**Scottsdale, Arizona** is Phoenix's posh neighbor, dotted with gated communities, resorts, spas and fancy hotels. While Arizona in general remains best known for retirees, snowbirds and a particular brand of Don't Tread on Me conservatism, a new generation is taking up residence in the area, drawn there not for golfing but for art, architecture and design. These design nerds are taking note because of the legacy of two giants of architecture—Frank Lloyd Wright and

Paolo Soleri. The two rivals represent a yin and yang of design philosophies. Their apprentice compounds—Wright's fastidious Taliesin West and Soleri's chaotic Cosant—are magnets for a revival in interest in the area's older homes and buildings, especially mid-century projects from the 1940s to '60s. Scottsdale's stuffy reputation is giving way to a second look from a younger generation and the cooler fall weather makes for the perfect time to explore the new scene.

## Taliesin West: Frank Lloyd Wright's Legacy

Frank Lloyd Wright came to Arizona where he could work in peace and train his apprentices. He built **Taliesin West** (named in concert with his Wisconsin workshop, Taliesin) in what was then the middle of nowhere—26 miles from Phoenix. Wright and his students built everything at Taliesin West by hand using

PHOTO (TALIESIN WEST) TALIESIN WEST

PHOTOS: (MUSEUM) AN PHAM FOR EXPERIENCE SCOTTSDALE; (COSANT) RYAN CORDWELL FOR EXPERIENCE SCOTTSDALE

materials that could be harvested from the surrounding desert all the way to the end of working with, instead of against, the terrain. "There were simple characteristics silhouettes to go by, tremendous drifts and heaps of sunburned desert rocks were nearly to be used," Wright said. "We got it all together with the landscape." Today Taliesin West



still trains architecture students in Wright's methods, which, in a tradition dating back to the school's earliest days, requires students to live in a tent in the desert and design and build their own desert shabers to live in. Wright was a madman for order and this National Historic Landmark is a marvel of thoughtful design and building. Not a blade of grass is out of place. The site offers tours daily. 12621 N. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd., Scottsdale, [franklloydwright.org/taliesinwest](http://franklloydwright.org/taliesinwest)

## Wright's Rival

If Frank Lloyd Wright was a madman for order, Paolo Soleri was just plain a madman. Although his reputation has recently been tarnished by posthumous allegations of sexual abuse, Soleri's work remains an important part of design history. The Italian architect student came to Taliesin West in 1946, to study among Wright's

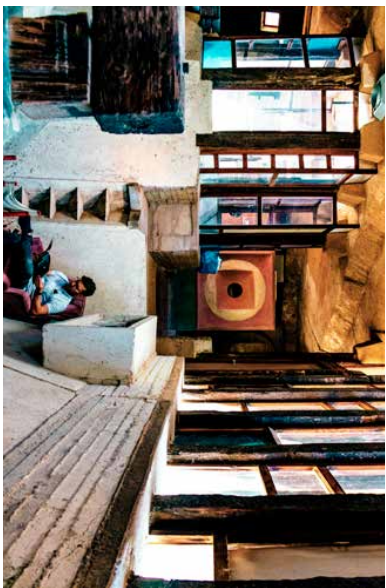
apprentices. But his wild nature, manic energy and boundary-pushing designs didn't mesh with the monastic environment at Taliesin. He was also challenging Wright on the national stage, winning exhibitions in New York and making the cover of the *Rolling Stone* of architecture, *Architectural Digest*. And, although there is no definitive account of why Soleri was expelled from Taliesin West, Claire Carter, the curator at **The Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art** (7374 E. Second St., Scottsdale, 480-872-4666, [scottsdalemuseum.org](http://scottsdalemuseum.org)), who has studied Soleri's career extensively, believes the Italian's splashy success in New York was a threat to Wright's near-dominance of the American architectural scene. "Soleri was brash,

cocky and his work was getting notice in important circles," she says. "I suspect that went to Mr. Wright's liking." Whatever the reason, Soleri left Taliesin for Italy in 1950. He could not, however, just let things lie. He returned to Arizona in 1956 to establish his own rival school and workshop, which he called **Cosant** (6433 E. Doubletree Ranch Rd., Paradise Valley, 480-348-6145, [cosant.com](http://cosant.com)). Cosant remains a working workshop where apprentices fire Soleri's Cosant Bells, elaborate bronze or ceramic wind chimes, to help fund the continued work on Soleri's masterpiece Arcosanti (see sidebar). Where Taliesin West is all right angles (Wright angles?), Cosant is wild and organic. He pioneered a technique of building up

huge mounds of desert silt, covering them in concrete and digging out the dirt, leaving behind a dome structure that inspired George Lucas' design of the Skywalker Ranch in the opening scenes of *Star Wars*. Tours daily.

## Play

Now it's time to enjoy the desert, specifically the Salt River. Yes, A River. **The Salt River** flows past the cities of Mesa, Tempe and Scottsdale, then south of downtown Phoenix, and is a haven for wildlife. Birds, river otters and herds of wild horses find their way to the flowing water and a kayaking trip is a riot of desert life. Book a tour with **Arizona Outback Adventures** (866-465-1601, [arizonaoutbackadventures.com](http://arizonaoutbackadventures.com)). Or spend a day hiking in the **McDowell Sonoran**





Stand up paddle boarding on the Salt River with Arizona Outback Adventures

of wine after 8 p.m. For a taste of Old Arizona, visit **The Mission** (3815 N. Brown Ave., Scottsdale, 480-636-5005, [themissionaz.com](http://themissionaz.com)) in Old Town Scottsdale. Try the Malbec-braised short rib and chorizo porchetta. For an exciting dining adventure, find yourself in the Sonoran Desert with **Cloth and Flame** (480-428-6028, [clothandflame.com](http://clothandflame.com)) which sets up pop-up restaurants amid the saguaro cacti.

Fastidiously renovated in the now-retro decor that is so chic, it's chic again. Take your wife there, please. For even more throwback, visit the **Hermosa Inn** (5532 N. Palo Cristi Rd., Paradise Valley, 602-955-8614, [hermosainn.com](http://hermosainn.com)) Handcrafted in the 1930s by cowboy artist Lon Megargee as his residence and art studio, this hacienda with its 34 guest casitas is like staying at Hopalong Cassidy's house. If boutique-on-top-of-boutique style—with a dash of the artisanal, is more your bag—consider the **Bespoke Inn** (3701 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale, 844-861-6715, [bespokeinn.com](http://bespokeinn.com)). Bespoke Inn shares a courtyard with **Virtù** (480-946-3477, [virtuscottsdale.com](http://virtuscottsdale.com)), a James Beard-nominated, chef-driven restaurant.

Stay

At the foot of Camelback Mountain lies **Mountain Shadows** (5445 E. Lincoln Dr., Scottsdale, 480-624-5400, [mountainshadows.com](http://mountainshadows.com)), once the resort to the stars who came to escape the flashbulb paparazzi. In the interim, the resort fell into disrepair but its new heyday has arrived.



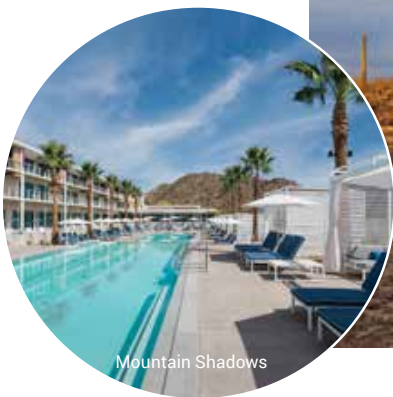
A desert sunset with Cloth and Flame

collaborations with local farmers, FnB highlights a different Arizona growing region every four weeks. For a marriage of food and architecture (and more wine) try **Postino** (4821 N. Scottsdale Rd., Scottsdale, 602-428-4444, [postinowinecafe.com](http://postinowinecafe.com)). Postino's owners find mid-century modern commercial buildings (think banks, post offices) and turn them into restaurant spaces. Also, their happy hour is bananas—\$5 glasses of wine and pitchers of beer before 5 p.m. and \$20 for a board of bruschetta and a bottle

**Preserve** (18333 N. Thompson Peak Pkwy., Scottsdale, 480-312-7013, [mcdowellsonoran.org](http://mcdowellsonoran.org)). The preserve is nearly 36,000 acres of permanently protected land, an area larger than the cities of Tempe and Paradise Valley combined. For more art and culture, take a walking or bike tour of the **Scottsdale Public Art Program** ([scottsdalepublicart.org](http://scottsdalepublicart.org)), a diverse collection of 70 permanent and 30 temporary artworks.

Dine

Scottsdale's dining scene has mirrored the town's artistic revival. Take for example, **FnB** (7125 E. 5th Ave. #31, 480-284-4777, [fnbrestaurant.com](http://fnbrestaurant.com)) a haven of local food and local wine. Yes, Arizona has a growing wine industry. Helmed by James Beard Award finalist Chef Charleen Badman, known for her



Mountain Shadows



SOLERI'S UTOPIAN DREAM: ARCOSANTI

Seventy miles north of Phoenix lies Arcosanti, an ongoing endeavor to build one of Paolo Soleri's fantastic cities of the future. Soleri drafted plans for hundreds of cities. Published in his book, *Arcology*, a term he invented, commingling the words "architecture" and "ecology." He began construction in 1970 and acolytes still journey to Arcosanti to join intensive five-week-long workshops where they study Soleri's work, techniques and continue the city's construction. [arcosanti.org](http://arcosanti.org)

PHOTOS: (PADDLE BOARDING) ARIZONA OUTBACK ADVENTURES; (MOUNTAIN SHADOWS) MOUNTAIN SHADOWS; (CLOTH AND FLAME) JEREMY PUGH