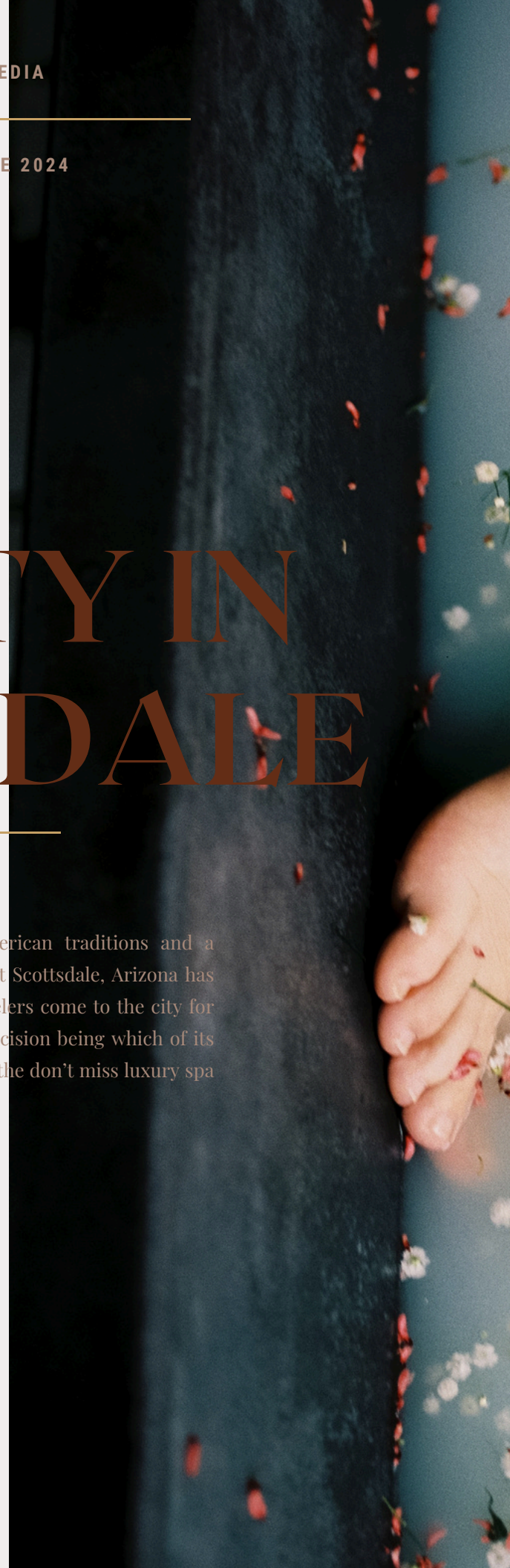


SPA-RTY IN SCOTTSDALE

BY: DENA ROCHÉ

With healing desert ingredients, Native American traditions and a general laid-back lifestyle, it's no surprise that Scottsdale, Arizona has the most spas per capita in the country. Travelers come to the city for sun, fun and relaxation, with the only hard decision being which of its many spas to enjoy. Thankfully, we've curated the don't miss luxury spa spots for your next trip to the Valley of the Sun.







WESTIN KIERLAND AGAVE SPA

PHOTOS: JEFF ZARUBA

This spring, the Agave Spa at the Westin Kierland Resort in North Scottsdale unveiled its recent facelift. The renovated spa features a new co-ed relaxation room and an enhanced luxury treatment menu that I was excited to try.



I started my spa day at the hotel's new restaurant, **Faro & Brag**, which has an extensive Eat Well selection on its modern Mediterranean menu. My husband and I decided to make a meal of several of the Eat Well starters including a refreshing seafood crudo, heirloom tomato and burrata salad and hummus stacked with sumac cucumbers and olives.

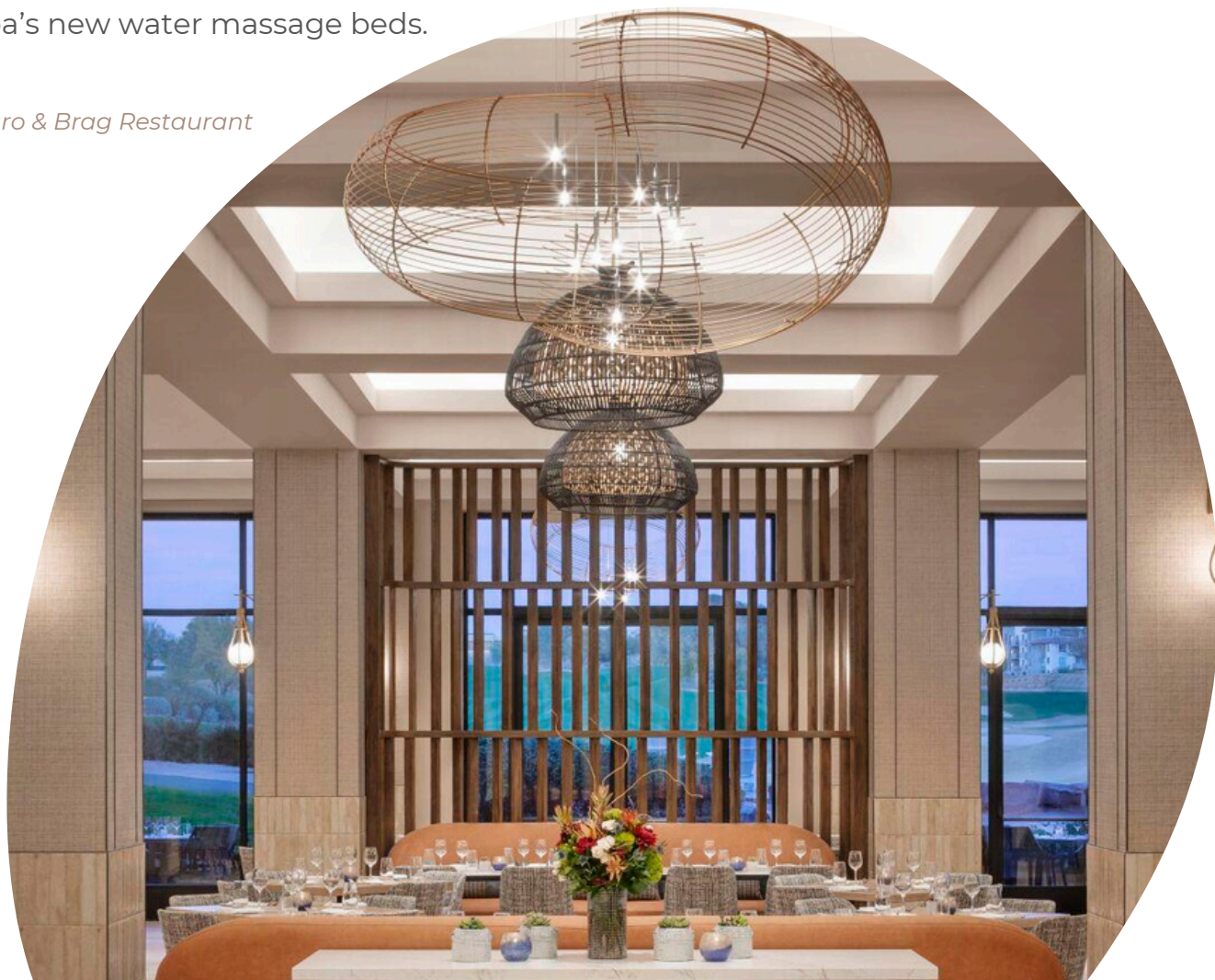
Once checked into the spa I relaxed on a chaise in the new relaxation room until my therapist Hilary came to collect me for my 70-minute Agua Sol Journey. The treatment can be done solo or as part of a couple's package. The service is centered around the spa's new water massage beds.

The beds induce total relaxation by cradling the body and soothing the mind. When paired with the ocean wave soundtrack in the room it's a very integrated experience.

As I sink into the waterbed and start to unwind, I'm wondering why the waterbed craze of the 1970s didn't take off, though I'm skeptical that Hilary will be able to do any deep tissue work the way you would on a standard massage table.

The treatment begins with me inhaling an aromatherapy mixture designed to promote relaxation.

Faro & Brag Restaurant





Tequila Treatment Room

As I breathe in the lavender-based scent, Hilary begins using her hands and hot stones to perform a soothing effleurage massage.

I'm lulled into that space between awake and sleep until I flip over and learn that there was no need to worry about deep tissue work as Hilary uses strong pressure to encourage the chronic knots and trigger points in my back to relax.

The water beds can also be used in the Westin's new Comfort Touch

Therapy service, specifically tailored to cancer patients. Special certified massage therapists perform this restorative treatment.

Guests who have experienced it on the water tables say that the surface alleviates pain in ways a traditional table does not.

After my service, I decided to continue to relax at the spa's pool. The tranquil pool is much quieter than the main resort pool with its water adventure park geared towards kids. It's a perfect spot for a beach read.

THE PHOENICIAN

The Phoenician Resort & Spa brought luxury resorts to Scottsdale when it opened in the 1980s, so it's no surprise that its spa is still one of the Grand Dames on the town's spa scene today.

The three-story, 24-room spa debuted in 2018 as part of a massive property renovation. The spa is airy and calming, done in whites and neutrals with gold art accents everywhere.

Since wellness is more than luxury treatments, I started my spa escape with aerial restorative yoga, one of several daily fitness classes. Dirty little secret, I don't really like yoga, but I love aerial yoga. I've done classes where the acrobatic moves were so playful I felt like a five-year-old on the playground, and practices like this one where I felt my muscles finally release some tension, and my mind let go of everyday stresses. During the class the silks let me move deeper into positions than normal yoga, and you've never experienced a true Shavasana until you're cocooned in the silk and gently swaying. This was the first time I enjoyed the mind/body restoration that yogis swear by.

*Spa Lobby (R)
Athletic Club (Far R)*





Spa Lobby



*Spa Lobby (R)
Athletic Club (Far R)*

A STANDOUT FEATURE OF THE PHOENICIAN IS ITS ROOFTOP POOL.



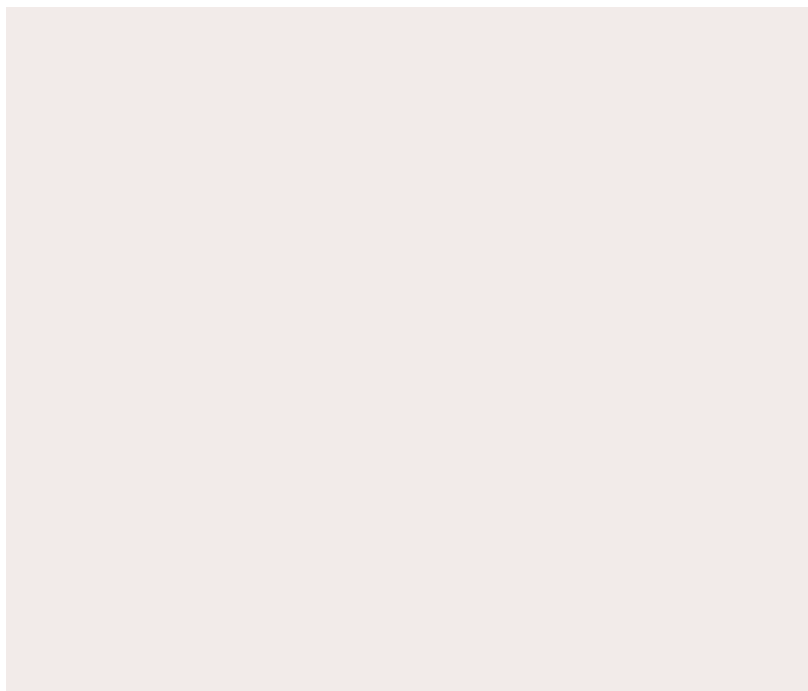
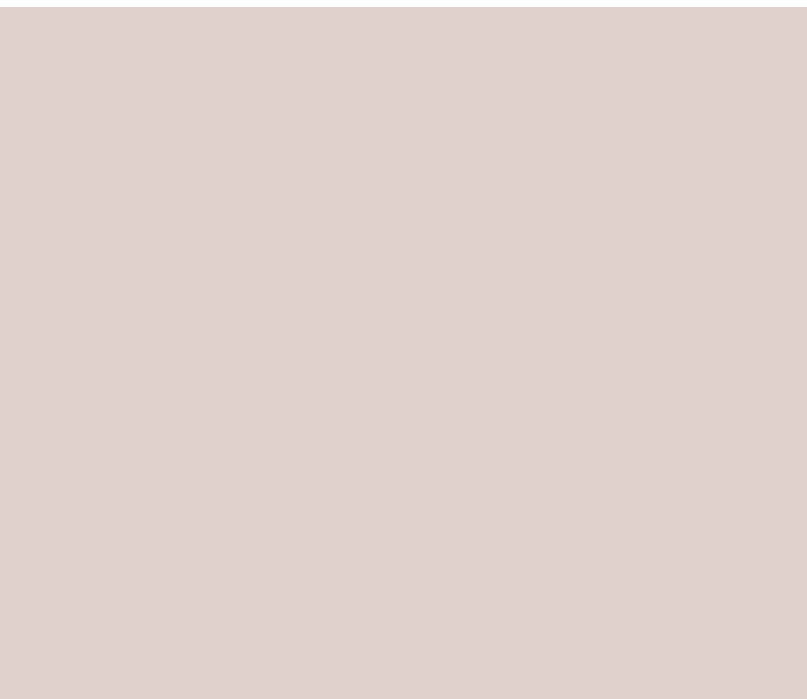
A standout feature of the Phoenician is its rooftop pool. From here you get a view of iconic **Camelback Mountain** while relaxing in a chaise or cabana. It's the perfect place to enjoy a post-treatment glass of Gruet bubbles or in my case, a lunch of grilled Pacific Shrimp kabobs.

For my spa service, I decided to give my desert skin some love with the Phoenician's **Finest Facial**, one of the spa's signature treatments. The facial uses products from Biologique Recherche. I recently discovered this brand after a good friend raved about how its products worked wonders on her melasma. Hoping to fade a stubborn dark spot on my cheek I've been using its cult P50 lotion at home.

The facial starts with my therapist accessing my skin and choosing (no surprise) products designed to hydrate. The facial uses precise massage techniques and cold methodology to maintain the active ingredients of the products. The cold helps drain and firm the skin, but coupled with the strong air conditioning in the spa, made me ask to have the heat on the bed turned to high.

*Pool / Camelback Mountain (L)
Men's Vitality Pool (R)*





After the service, I enjoyed a glass of French lemon ginger tea and a treat of dark chocolate covered coconut in the tranquil quiet room..

Pre-Treatment (T)

Treatment Room (M)

Post-Treatment Lounge (B)



FOUR SEASONS RESORT SCOTTSDALE

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS



Nestled against Pinnacle Peak in far North Scottsdale, the Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale feels like an oasis in the city. The property is beautifully landscaped with desert floral and fauna, and affords stunning views of the city and the mountain.

The resort boasts one of my favorite fine dining restaurants in the city, **Talavera**, but for lunch I headed to the more casual **Proof**. Proof feels like a luxury spin on a classic American country bar. Instead of Budweiser, the patrons sip craft bourbon and dine on elevated comfort fare like the sinfully addictive pretzel knots, brisket blended burgers and pilsner battered fish & chips.

This being a spa day, I opt for the smoked beet salad with grilled shrimp (and the pretzel knots, shhh). The menu also includes unique Southwest items like the vegan smoked huarache made with beets instead of beef. If the weather cooperates sit on the expansive patio to enjoy the view.

While the spa at the Four Seasons is smaller than those at the Westin and Phoenician, it offers interesting treatments like the Nopal Massage. As an Arizona resident, I learned early on to steer clear of touching a cactus, so the thought of using cacti paddles in a massage is counterintuitive, to say the least. It's hard to get a more local treatment than this, so I put on a brave face and head into the treatment room.

My therapist Nicole showed me the cacti paddles floating in a bath of hot water. She explained that the leaves have all the prickly parts removed and that it's the inside of the Prickly Pear cactus that she'll use on my skin, similar to a hot stone massage. The cactus is a true wellness powerhouse due to its high antioxidant, vitamin and mineral content. Coupled with the Prickly Pear oil used, Nicole assured me it would be like receiving an aloe vera kiss.

Hmmm...





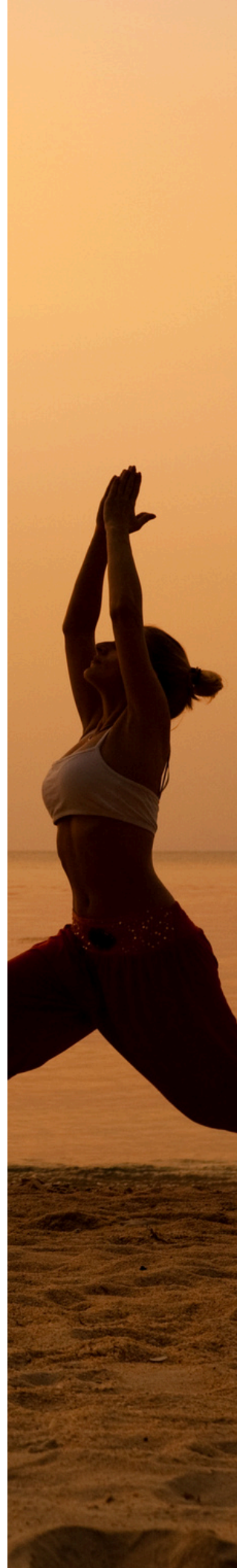
With a bit of trepidation, I crawled onto the massage bed. I relaxed with the first stroke of the cactus paddle. Much to my surprise it felt super soft against my skin, and I could smell the aloe vera. Throughout the service, Nicole alternated languid sweeps of the cactus with more targeted, deeper massage work done with her hands. After the massage, I was given Prickly Pear cactus water, which contains all the antioxidants of the cactus and is supposed to aid in digestion.



I capped the day with the Soul and Sound class. It combines a small amount of yoga with sound therapy. The different vibrations made with the sound bowls help reduce stress and anxiety, lower pain, and improve sleep. The sound bath was a perfect way to seal in the relaxation of the day.



With so many outstanding luxury spas in the area, no trip to Scottsdale is complete without a day of pampering. Pair it with a round of golf, a desert hike, shopping and the local restaurant scene and it's a vacation you won't soon forget.



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Dena Roché views the world of wine through a travel-inspired lens.

As both a wine writer and educator, she brings the essence of wine to life by sharing the stories of various regions, their wines, and the vintners behind them.

Having explored over 35 wine regions, Dena holds a Level One Sommelier certification.

She was honored as a 2024 Fellow of the Wine Writers' Symposium, and her work has appeared in both print and online international wine and lifestyle magazines.

Residing in Phoenix, Arizona, she conducts Vin Roché wine and travel classes.

In her engaging and interactive wine tastings, Dena takes your palate on an extraordinary journey, from small chateaux in Bordeaux one month to savoring Chenin Blanc in Cape Town the next.

With Dena, a glass of wine is your passport to the world.

