

Arizona

By Karen Brost

Ask any native Arizonan what made their state famous, and they'll tell you it's the five Cs — cattle, cotton, citrus, copper, and climate. But now there's a sixth "C" that keeps the spotlight shining on Arizona as brightly as the desert sun — corporate meetings.

You'd think that a meeting destination that's already blessed with an abundance of stunning desert landscapes, luxury resorts, and year-round golf would be content to rest on its laurels. But there are always creative new ways and places to hold meetings here. And any planner worth his or her salt (or margarita salt, as the case may be) will find it worth checking them all out.

Sedona

The magnificent red rock country of Sedona is an easy two-hour drive north of Phoenix. Anyone who has ever experienced the area's breathtaking scenery knows that you hardly need an excuse to go back, but here's one anyway. The 77-room Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa opened last year, provides a new option for meetings and executive retreats.

To set itself apart from traditional Southwestern architecture, the new resort has been designed to reflect Moorish and Spanish Mediterranean influences from 11th century Andalusian Spain. High-speed wireless Internet service is available throughout the resort, and

more than 7,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor function space is available, including an executive board room and a 50-seat outdoor observation deck.

Sedona's clear night skies are ideal for stargazing, and the Sedona-based company Evening Sky Tours can personalize the experience for each group. The company's experienced professional astronomers use high-powered telescopes and binoculars to guide guests on an unforgettable tour of Sedona's starry nights. If viewing conditions permit, Evening Sky Tours can even set up its equipment at the group's host hotel.

As a meeting destination, Arizona has an amazing way of taking a good thing and making it better all the time. In fact, the amount of repeat business that the resorts experience shows that many planners have the same opinion that Lissa Malley shared. "I would go back in a heartbeat."
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