

TOTALLY CAREFREE

The famous Arizona leisure community has a new gem attracting today's wellness-minded travelers.

BY BETH WEITZMAN





Arriving at Civana, the recently unveiled spa and wellness retreat in Carefree, Arizona, is like stepping into an entirely different realm—one where you leave stress at the door and open your mind to the experience that awaits. Founded by wellness hospitality veteran Kevin Kelly and partners, Civana is guided by overarching principals of flexibility, attainability, sustainability and innovation. Challenging guests to uncover their potential while offering them complete choice, personalized journeys are based on four main pillars: Discovery and Enrichment (think sound bath sessions, intention burning and introduction to crystals); Healing Arts/Spa (specialized facial skincare, massage therapies and spiritual classes); Healthy Cuisine (interactive smoothie and cooking demos alongside nourishment workshops); and Movement (such as guided hikes, indoor group cycle and aerial yoga). Born out of Kelly's ethos of developing wellness through oneness—a connection between the individual, the community and the natural environment—each trip is individualized to each guest. All classes and hikes are included, and guests can take as many or as few as they desire. Want to hang by the pool every day, followed by spa? No problem. Want to hit a class on the hour, every hour? That works, too. Wall Yoga followed by Angel card readings? You got it. Cocktails? Absolutely.

The town of Carefree, located in the Sonoran Desert just outside of Scottsdale, where the resort is located, was developed by K.T. Palmer and Tom Darlington via their company, Carefree Development Corp., as a leisure community. It was the early 1950s and, as the story goes, they invited all of their friends to town, tasking them with naming the streets relative to leisure. As a result, the town is home to streets such as Nonchalant Way, Slumber Street and Tranquility Lane. The area, not surprisingly, quickly beckoned celebs and wealthy business execs looking to escape their hectic city lives. During the hotel's early days, Bob Hope, Lucille Ball and Dick Van Dyke were among those who hung out in the lobby, giving it a star-studded appeal that continues today.

The resort is built upon 20 acres of land considered neutral/sacred ground—a place absent of Native American tribe settlement, wars or farming, where energy springs from the earth through what is known as a vortex. Last known as the Carefree Resort & Conference Center, the property was originally built in the 1960s, purchased and

rebranded as Civana in 2017 and officially opened in March 2018. Since then, it has undergone a \$50-million renovation to its public spaces, guest rooms, restaurants and added a new spa oasis. Meeting spaces were converted into state-of-the-art fitness, yoga, energy, movement and enrichment studios.

At the time the original hotel was constructed, a Japanese landscaper wrote the Japanese characters for the word “love” where the uniquely shaped pool now sits at the heart of the property. Terras, one of the two restaurants on site, is purposefully designed to be slightly off center, so that it harnesses the energy of the sunset. And the 176 rooms that comprise the hotel, which mostly face the outdoors with patios, are designed to allow guests to feel a connection to nature while providing for the utmost in calming comfort and convenience (luxurious beds ease you to sleep; USB and standard outlets are abundant; Wi-Fi is complementary). These are just a few ways in which the resort effortlessly mingles with its surroundings and provides for an overall sense of well-being.

The final phase of the renovation came with the debut of the two-story, 22,000-square-foot spa, which is one of the largest destination wellness retreats in the country. It features an adults-only Olympic outdoor lap pool and sun deck with healthy food and beverage options; a boutique retail shop and salon offering all-natural nail and hair services; and 28 treatment areas, including one Watsu therapy pool, two couples' treatment rooms, three wet treatment rooms (including a Vichy shower), five facial rooms and 13 massage rooms. There is also a communal area of hydrotherapy immersions—dubbed the Aqua Vitality Circuit—that includes a European-designed Kneipp hot/cold wading pool, a Tepidarium therapeutic soaking pool, a cold deluge shower and a Klafs Sanarium that transforms into five different climates: a classic sauna, warm air bath, tropical bath, aromatic bath and soft steam bath (and it's the only one in the continental U.S.). All hydrotherapy modalities are designed to help increase circulation and promote relaxation. In addition to dedicated men's and women's relaxation areas, guests can also enjoy a 1,600-square-foot co-ed lounge with an outdoor balcony and majestic vistas of Black Mountain and the Sonoran Desert sunset.

The spa menu is filled with an incredible array of wellbeing treatments from massages, facial skincare and body treatments to energy



and eastern therapies. Not-to-miss services include the Energy Aligning Chi Signature Massage—a gentle body exfoliation and sequenced 90-minute massage using 10 different aromatherapy blends. Meanwhile, the Sound of Color manicure combines positive intention and meditation with your treatment. It includes Himalayan salt gloves that actually glow, aligning your vibration to that of the earth. Optional headphones are available for a precise meditation to accompany the manicure. Reiki and the Sonoran Sea Facial are also musts.

Meanwhile, the five movement and fitness studios offer up to 18 fitness, personal growth and spiritual classes daily. Trying something new is easy, with classes such as Wall Yoga, in which participants practice traditional poses using the wall as a prop to deepen poses and promote spinal alignment; or Sound Bath, a class in which participants recline while singing bowls balance energy and improve mood. Spiritual experiences include Angel Card reading, in which messages and angelic guidance are delivered by way of a trained intuitive; astrological readings; and language of animal medicine cards (deepening and awakening innate abilities through the nature of the animal).

The large cadre of wellness experts at Civana are specifically trained to assist guests of all ages, fitness levels and health conditions. For example, private sessions can be booked with exercise physiologist Dan Zeman, who has more than 35 years of expertise helping those with cardiac and diabetic disorders. Similarly, Pickleball level II certified pro Wayne Walden is available for group or one-on-one classes. Dr. Fabio Almeida, an integrative oncologist and functional

medical physician, conducts guest lectures and consultations, in addition to operating The Center for Integrative Healing and Wellness, an independent practice at Civana. He holds retreats here every six weeks that teach cancer survivors how to live healthful lives.

Helmed by author and award-winning Chef Justin Macy, dining at Civana has health at its core, with nourishing and delicious, farm-to-table culinary creations on offer. At Terras, the resort's signature restaurant, vegetable-forward dishes that are free of GMOs, hydrogenated fats, hormones and preservatives are the main focus with locally sourced produce, grass-fed meats and sustainable seafoods on offer. Guests seeking gluten-free, grain-free, vegetarian, vegan, anti-inflammatory or gut-friendly choices also have a plethora of options from which to choose. Cafe Meto, adjacent to the spa, offers a casual indoor-outdoor setting with a largely plant-based, flavor-forward menu including quick grab-and-go items.

Nearby Civana are top golf courses, such as Legend Trail, The Boulders, Rancho Manana and Dove Valley. Restaurants also abound, including Cartwright's Modern Cuisine (an upscale restaurant serving farm-fresh, New American fare in a rustic, ranch-themed setting), The Buffalo Chip (which offers live bands, two-step dancing and even a rodeo every Wednesday and Friday night), The Grotto Cafe (known for tasty sandwiches and amazing coffee), El Encanto (a Mexican restaurant with unbeatable margaritas), Tonto Bar and Grill (overlooking Rancho Banana Golf Course), Oregono's (an Italian restaurant), and many more. civanacarefree.com

