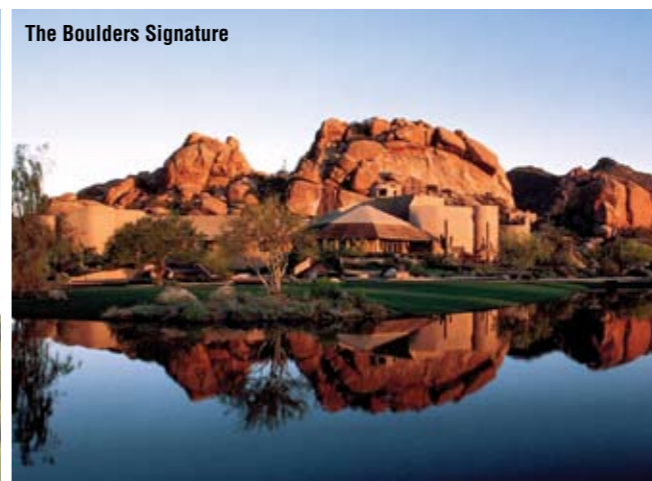
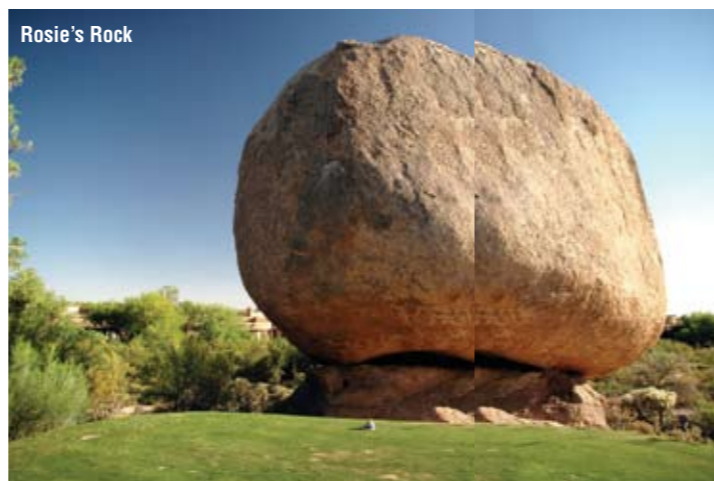
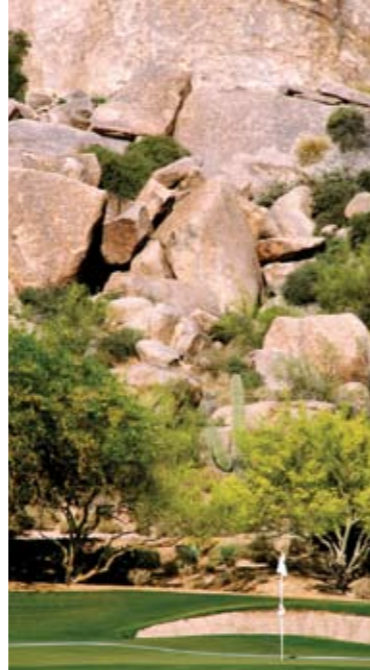


THE BOULDERS RESORT & GOLDEN DOOR SPA

Dramatic rock formations, in the beautiful Sonora Arizona Desert drapes like a hardened robe around the Boulders Resort and Golden Spa in Carefree, right outside the Scottsdale city limit. As part of the Luxury Resorts family, Boulders lends its name from the 1,300 acres of preserved desert foothills that is home to 12 million-year-old granite boulders. ROSANNE ZINNIGER pays a visit to the Southwest. BY ROSANNE ZINNIGER



The philosophy behind architect Bob Bacon's design here was not only to keep the land and terrain in a natural state, but to also build the lodge, spa, villas and casitas around the boulders and create building designs that would blend with the desert colors and scenery that reflects the Native-American sense of place so visitors will notice the beauty of nature, rather than buildings.

Sidled alongside this magnificent man-made desert resort are two 18-hole golf courses designed and built by Jay Morrish back in 1984. Boulders Golf Club, with the North and South courses, offers a

be able to play a better game of golf. So, I help them achieve a more consistent ball strike by working with them on the driving range then I take them to the course to work on their game and confidence. It ends up being a more personalised experience for the guest, and they ultimately feel better about their game."

OUT ON THE FAIRWAYS

What set these courses apart from the rest in Arizona are the natural boulder formations within the surrounds and its design makes a point to integrate with the natural terrain. There are also very few

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The once Native-American spiritual ground has retained its rustic austerity as many of the areas are preserved among rugged beauty dotted with colorful flora and cacti. The Boulders Resort and Golden Door Spa offers 160 Southwestern-styled guest casitas and 60 private villas that are tucked into the natural boulder terrain.

Debi Bridges, the public relations executive here offers some insights, “The Boulders is quintessential Arizona. The resort was planned and built around the natural terrain with great care, and landscape was not transplanted nor was any of the terrain removed. Because of this fact, this is really the only resort that has left the area so Arizona, and has an understated elegance in the casita placement to create an exclusive desert hideaway.”

And she meant every word she said, as service here is personalised and genuine. Once onsite, the resort has an all-inclusive fee that covers the use of four pools, eight tennis courts, fitness, tips, valet, and shuttle service throughout its premises as well as to nearby shopping at El Pedregal.

membership, so play is alternated daily. For example, on one day, guests will play the South course while members play the North, and the next they will be swapped, and so for visitors, it is important to plan for at least two days of golfing.

For those who do not play on a regular basis, a one-, two-, or three-day golf clinics are available at the golf academy. Director and past European Tour professional, Donald Crawley, started the Boulders Golf Academy in 2003 and brought with him years of experience both as a player and teacher. (He once had over 40 golf schools, and is originator of the “Golf Simplified” technique which has been published in video form)

Crawley is also director of instruction for John Jacobs Golf Schools, and has been recognised by Golf Magazine as one of the “top 10 teachers in America.” Crawley explains his ‘Golf Simplified’ philosophy as such: “Most people do not have the time to play or practice during a normal work week, so when they come to me, they want to

houses near the course, and those close by blend in with the desert color. One of the few courses in America that you can play year-round, they are maintained to the highest quality and the grasses are always in good shape.

The Boulders South course is one of the more picturesque of the two, especially the front nine, as rock formations help sculpt the course. At every turn, you cannot miss the spectacular views and the abundance of flora and wildlife throughout the course terrain. Signature holes on this course are definitely holes 5, 6 and 7.

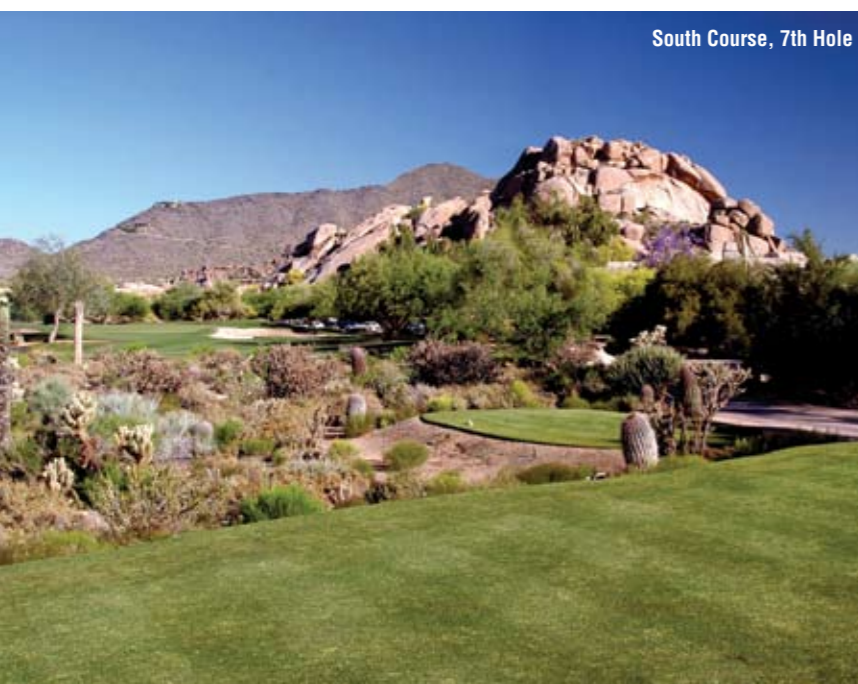
Hole 5, a par 5 at 545 yards, is a dogleg right with bunkers both sides of fairway and each side of the green. Driving here is tricky, with arroyos guarding the fairway, and once on, there are trouble spots to negotiate. Play to the green is framed by magnificent boulders balancing on top of each other called “Boulders Pile”, which may be a little distracting once you turn the bend to ascent up the green.

Hole 6, which is a par 4 at 355 yards, is exceptionally awesome at the tee shot due to elevated tee boxes with carry over a cart path and water to the right. With a dogleg right fairway, it is pertinent to keep left a bit, especially when water lurks starboard. Rounding the bend, you will then have a 135-yard straight approach to the green. However, beware of bunkers to the front and right but otherwise, it is pretty ho-hum from here.

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The 7th is a par 3 at 187 yards, and is not only a challenging hole, it is also very scenic with yet another view of a balancing boulder that looks like it is going to fall. Called "Rosie's Rock", named after the founder of the resort, Rusty Lion, the challenge comes with the drive over wide desert arroyos and small boulders, with bunkers from left to right approaching the green. If you can manage to land on the green, then the putt to the pin is a breeze!

Although the South Course is considered more challenging due to narrower fairways, the North Course is probably closer to playing in a desert than



South Course, 7th Hole

the other. With its own unique beauty and challenges of similarly well-placed bunkers with sneaky arroyos, there are some memorable holes on here, most of which are quite surprisingly, par 3s.

Like the sixth, a par 3 at 142 yards, which proves to challenge perception and skill off the tee. Large bunkers are strategically placed in front, to the left, and behind the green, so accuracy is very important.

Hole 14, another par 3 at 183 yards, is a picturesque hole that contains a large pond that stretches alongside the hole. For those playing the longest yardage, your tee shot must either carry to the left or straight over the water to land on the green. Landing shy will leave you on an incline toward the water or in the water, and shots right, left and behind, will leave you in bunkers.

Finally, the 17th is a spectacle to behold! A long 220-yard par 3 over desert arroyos, it is as nerve wrecking as it is gorgeous. Along the way, trouble represents itself in the form of a sand trap with a boulder, and sometimes an errant drive will hit it. Once past trouble though, it is but a stroke to the pin.

BACK IN THE SPA

The Boulders is also very well known for their award-winning Golden Door Spa. The original Golden Door Spa in Escondido, California was patterned after ancient Japanese sanctuary practices. From the architectural design of the building to the treatments



Golden Door Spa Entrance



Couples massage



The Scottsdale Fashion Square shopping mall

and philosophies, the Spa is all about the fusion of the east and west.

What sets this spa apart from others around the world is the unique treatments offered and the exceptional blend of Japanese influences in healing methods. The Spa building is strategically set against the 12 million-year-old boulders and designed with catering to the guest in mind. The Golden Door Spa facility houses 24 treatment rooms, movement studio, meditative garden, organic herb garden that feeds the Spa Café, and labyrinth which is the path to the yoga studio, tea room, full-service salon, swimming pool, Pilates studio, fitness centre, and separate men's and women's locker rooms with sauna, steam, watsu pool and couple's suite.

Indulge in their unique treatments such as 'Needle and Stone', performed by combining acupuncture and hot stone massage to target particular problem spots in the body. The therapist will conduct an interview before treatment begins to talk through which areas in the physique needs soothing. While relaxing, it also rejuvenates the body, as acupuncture releases 'chi' for better blood flow. It is advisable to drink lots of water to rehydrate after any treatment, especially in this desert environment. There is also a cup of Golden Door Potassium Broth offered that will surely better any chicken soup one can find.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

For a little change in scenery and activity, just walking distance from the resort is the El Pedregal shopping

area with unique boutiques and an array of dining, including the Spotted Donkey, specializing in Mexican cuisine Those looking for more mall-type shopping can get their fix with a short drive into Scottsdale. The Scottsdale Fashion Square shopping mall is the largest mall in the Southwest. Looking for culture and excitement? Take a desert jeep tour of the Southwest or explore the nearby Apache Trail with 'Detours of Arizona', and there are "free" Thursdays (10am-8pm) at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art.

After a day of activity, dine on exquisite Southwestern cuisine right back at the Boulders' signature dining room, Latilla. There are organically grown herb-infused dishes that include fresh duck, beef and seafood. With all herbs grown onsite and the freshest local ingredient choices, each dish is an explosion of wonderful flavour, either at Latilla or their casual dining room, Palo Verde.

Even in-room dining options are made with the same quality of ingredients and care. Offsite dining and nightlife is also available at Scottsdale with the Kazimirez World Wine Bar with over 3,500 wine labels to choose from. Then venture to the Jade Bar at the Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain for a beautiful panoramic view of Paradise Valley, and indulge in an exotic drink and relax by their uniquely designed fire bowl on the patio.

One visit to the Southwest and Boulders will likely be enough to ensnare the most discerning of travellers. 📍

www.theboulders.com