

Exclusive enclave at the Phoenician

Luxury resort's new Canyon Suites exudes boutique-hotel feel



Mark Vinciguerra

By Stephanie Paterik
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The Phoenician had everything a traveler could want. Almost.

There are 654 guest rooms, nine swimming pools, two golf courses, one tennis court and several fine-dining options fanning out over 250 immaculate acres at the base of Camelback Mountain.

But today, a growing number of business and leisure travelers are opting for small, secluded boutique hotels where the service is personal and prying eyes are scarce. That's why the Phoenician is debuting the Canyon Suites, a remodeled building it is dubbing a "boutique hotel within a hotel."

General Manager Mark Vinciguerra persuaded the owners to sink \$5.5 million into 40 suites and 20 rooms, housed by what used to be called the Canyon Building, separated from the rest of the resort. The suites quietly reopened in February, and the resort will unleash a marketing blitz in the coming weeks.

This signals a new strategy for massive resorts that want to compete in a boutique world. Travelers increasingly want to be cloistered, and large hotels are willing to spend big bucks to give them what they want.

"There's such demand for these small boutique properties," Vinciguerra said. "Ten years ago, you were out and about on your vacation. Now, most leisure travelers want to relax."

Serenity and relaxation

Many analysts point to Sept. 11, 2001, as a turning point in travelers' psyches. Where once people prized fun and adventure, now they want serenity and relaxation.

The Canyon Suites redesign speaks to that. The decor is elegant and soothing, with aqua, sage and purple tones inspired by the desert fauna. This is not over-the-top boutique hotel chic; it may actually be in style next year.

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Separated from the rest of the resort, the Canyon Suites has its own lobby, check-in, concierge and swimming pool.

A chauffeured Mercedes waits at the porte-cochere for guests who need a ride to the spa or mall. Staff members know guests' names when they arrive and record their preferences and mood.

A sommelier hosts wine tastings in the lobby in the evenings. Coffee and tea are served to guest rooms on silver trays in the mornings. Turndown service comes with artisan water and chocolates.

In exchange, guests pay \$75 to \$225 more than the Phoenician's standard suite rate. A standard room at the Canyon Suites tonight costs \$880, a suite is \$1,800 and a presidential suite is \$5,700, which includes all the resort's amenities. In the slow summer season, prices will start at \$535.

Alfred and Temma Kingsley of New York spent the past month vacationing at the Canyon Suites. The secluded canyon building has been the couple's favorite getaway for a decade.

On this trip, they were pleasantly surprised with the transformation.

"I love it. What's not to love?" Temma Kingsley said. "You just feel like they're



here to meet your every need."

Temma added that she likes the intimate surroundings, especially for a long vacation.

"It's the quietness," she said. "The other side (of the resort) is great if you're here for a couple days and want to access everything at your fingertips."

The couple was whisked to their room the moment they arrived, treated to an array of exotic fruit and found themselves poolside within an hour.

When asked if it was worth the higher price tag, Alfred Kingsley paused.

"I would say so, for the lack of bother," he said. "When you get away, you don't want to be bothered with nitpicking things. Certain things weren't included that were annoyances before."

On past trips, the Kingsleys had to pay extra for amenities like the fitness center.

Business amenities

Vinciguerra hopes to lure Fortune 500 companies to the suites in addition to well-to-do leisure travelers. His team created a futuristic boardroom to that end.

Computer monitors pop up from an impossibly long mahogany table. There is an electronic white board, where pre-

senters can doodle with virtual markers right onto the computer screen.

The room is rigged with theater-quality sound. And a tech butler is at guests' beck and call.

Guest rooms are high-tech, too, with no fewer than three flat-screen TVs in the suites, iPod-adaptable stereos and high-speed Internet.

Dan Tavrytzkyvice is president of sales and services for the Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau. He said small business groups like to take over an entire hotel and make it their own.

Some of them may still opt for a stand-alone boutique hotel, he said. Others might prefer the Canyon Suites so they can indulge in privacy but also take advantage of a big resort's amenities.

"They can experience the buzz of being in a large-resort atmosphere or just retreat back to the Canyon Suites," Tavrytzkyvice said. "The ability to add a boutique experience at a high-level resort with the reputation of the **Phoenician** shows some great insight on their behalf."

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At the Canyon Suites

If you have the financial wherewithal to pay \$880 or more a night, you'll get the following:

- A chauffer with a S550 Mercedes Benz.
- Nightly wine tasting and hors d'oeuvres with a sommelier.
- Coffee and tea served on a silver tray every morning.
- A selection of 400 newspapers from around the world.
- A seasonal chef's amenity in the room. Right now: New Zealand apricots.
- Turndown service with Tao water, a brand that means "to be silent."
- Bose stereos with iPod adaptors.
- In-room fax machines.
- Three flat-screen TVs per suite: one in the living room, bedroom and bathroom.
- Access to a techie boardroom, with pop-up computer screens and digital white boards.
- A pool reserved for you and 59 other rooms.
- The main resort's amenities, including fitness center and spa.
- Personal ambassadors who will arrange tee times and print boarding passes for you.
- Workers will draw a bath for you in the evening with a variety of bath salts.
- Twice daily housekeeping tailored to your schedule.
- Clothes pressed within two hours.
- Complimentary phone calls, wireless Internet, valet service and fitness-center access.

