



Beach life in Barbados

 The beachfront Butterfly Beach Hotel on the south coast of Barbados is just 12 minutes from the airport and close to the town of Oistins, which offers shopping and great dining, including the famous Oistins Fish Fry every weekend. It is also close to the lively St Lawrence Gap resort area with its nightclubs. Sunway has a week there, room only, including flights on September 14 from €1139pp. See [Sunway.ie](#)

A Huelva good cruise deal

 Thomson has a late cruise deal from Majorca to Morocco on June 14, full board from €869 including flights. The Thomson Majesty cruise ship's Moorish Delights trip also calls in to Huelva, Spain, Tangier, Morocco, then Almeria and Alicante, and back to Majorca. See [thomsonholidays.ie](#)

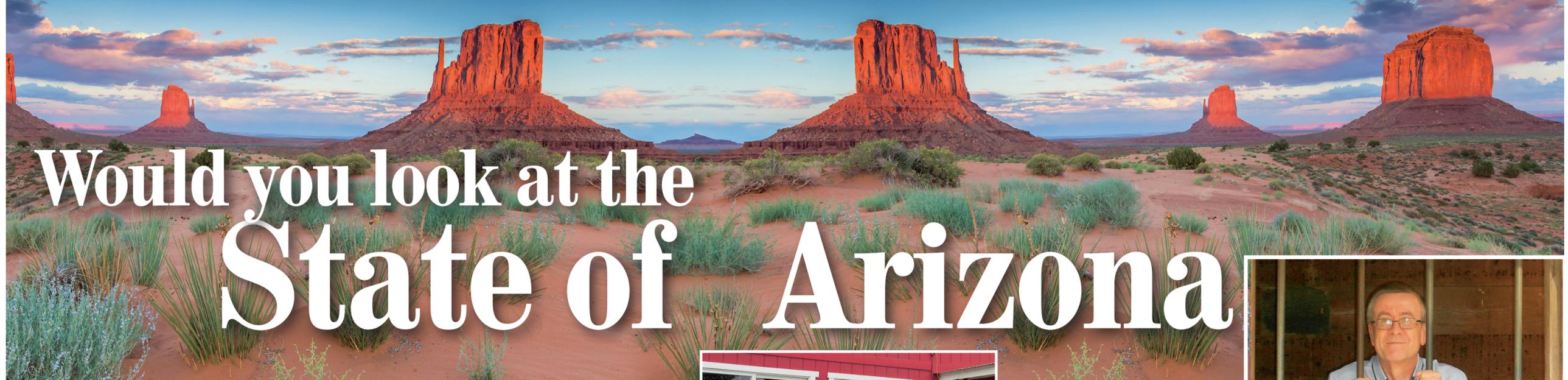
Ibiza for families

 Party island Ibiza has a quieter side suited to families. Picturesque Port des Torrent on the west coast takes things at a leisurely pace, but also has two waterparks and two golf courses. The Holiday Village Seaview Ibiza has a chilled-out beach scene and a high-speed waterpark. There is also a sky-high Aerial Adventure course, as well as a Kids' club and entertainment programme. Falcon has a week all-inclusive on July 14 at the Seaview Ibiza, for €3799 for two adults and a child, or 2+2 for €4239. See [falcon.ie](#)



Music dream in Nashville

 Deirdre Grant has been to Nashville 100 times, and has been leading music tours to the States for 30 years for stars like Daniel O'Donnell, Jimmy Buckley and Philomena Begley. This October, she will be joining country music TV star Phil Mack on a tour from Branson and Missouri, to Memphis and Nashville. Phil will be on hand to entertain during the trip. Starting on October 13 and returning October 22, the price of €2499 includes flights from Dublin, travel, hotel accommodation with breakfast and attractions and tours. See [touramerica.ie](#)



Would you look at the State of Arizona

THE signature dish in a restaurant owned by legendary shock rocker Alice Cooper in the Arizonan state capital of Phoenix is a 22-inch hot dog. Known as the Big Unit, it is the perfect metaphor for this region in the southwestern corner of the States.

Arizona is three-and-a-half times the size of Ireland, with a population of six-and-a-half million – the majority of whom reside in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area, where film director Steven Spielberg spent his formative years.

Phoenix has a proud sporting tradition, hosting three major sporting franchises; the Arizona Cardinals NFL team, the Phoenix Suns basketball side and the Arizona Diamondback baseball squad. During the spring, the city is a mecca for baseball fans as many of the top teams in the US use it as their base for pre-season training. And Phoenix has hosted the Super Bowl on three occasions.

While southern Arizona - which shares a 389-mile border with Mexico - has a desert-like climate with very hot summers and mild winters, northern Arizona has more moderate summer temperatures and significant snowfalls in winter. There are ski resorts around the cities of Flagstaff, Alpine and Tuscon, and the locals like to boast that Arizona is one of the few US states where it is possible to ski on a mountain in the morning and on a lake the same day in another part of the State.

Arizona is synonymous with the Grand Canyon, one of the great natural wonders of the world, but there is much to see and appreciate elsewhere, as I discovered on a whirlwind eight-day visit.

First stop was Scottsdale, dubbed the West's Most Western Town in the 1950s. It is now a hub of luxury spas, restaurants and golf courses - and there is a decent chance of encountering Mr Cooper. Now 68, he is city's best-known adopted son and golfer.

Exhausted after a long flight, we were revitalised after a visit to the spa at the Marriott Camelback Inn. Then, leaving the city behind, we travelled to the Fort McDowell Native American reservation for a spectacular horseback trek through the Sonoran desert, encountering wild mustangs and a baby bald eagle.



Horse power
In the small towns outside Phoenix, you'll step back in time to cowboy era

Phoenix nights and desert days - the home of the Grand Canyon is a thrilling destination, by **Sean McGoldrick**

Arizona has a burgeoning wine-making industry. The bulk of the grapes used are grown on the slopes of the Chiricahua Mountains in the south eastern part of the State. LDV Wine Gallery in downtown Scottsdale is an award-winning winery where visitors can pop in to sample top tipples and learn about the wine-making process there.

Music fans, head to the Musical Instrument Museum on the outskirts of Phoenix, which has 5,000 instruments on display, including some used by Elvis Presley and John Lennon.

The world-famous Heard Museum features more than 40,000 fine artworks depicting the history of the native American tribes, and a thought-provoking exhibition on the controversial policy



HARD TO SWALLOW: Phoenix native Alice Cooper with a Big Unit, a 22-inch hot dog

by the US authorities to 'Americanize' the native people by forcibly removing children from their families and sending them to boarding schools.

Afterwards, relax with a tequila sunrise mixer in the Arizona Biltmore, an Arizona landmark resort since opening in 1929, when it was crowned the Jewel of the Desert. It has hosted every US President since Herbert Hoover.

Leaving the metro area behind, we headed upstate, stopping first in the town of Wickenburg, which still resem-



TOE-TAPPING: Music at Blazin' M Ranch



STUFF OF LEGEND: The Brunswick bar at The Palace

bles how it looked at the beginning of the 1900s. The Desert Caballeros Western Museum features a series of stunning bronze cast sculptures created by Frederick Remington, depicting scenes from the Wild West. It's truly fascinating.

So too is the Robson's Ranch and Mining Camp, 20 miles outside Wickenburg. Surrounded by one of the largest Saguaro cactus forest in the Arizona (best viewed from the church) it also features many examples of the native Apache artwork known as petroglyphs.

The mine closed down before the start of World War II, but since then successive owners have assembled an eclectic collection of antiques, ranging from Model T motor cars to a horsedrawn Amish carriage dating back to the 18th Century, and a first edition Mark Twain.

Further north is mile-high Prescott, Arizona's original Territorial Capital. Surrounded by the largest stand of Ponderosa Pine in North America, it has a four-season climate - there was a spectacular thunder storm during our visit.

Boasting five lakes and 450 miles of trails, it is an ideal location for outdoor adventures. Be warned though: don't overdo the exercising as it takes the body some time to adjust to being 5,000 feet above sea level.

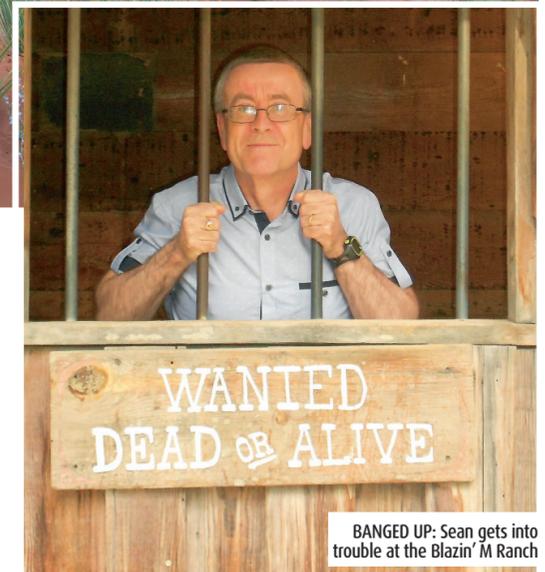
A spot of lunch in the historic Palace Restaurant and Saloon on Whiskey Row should be top of your list. In the 1800s, it hosted Wyatt Earp, his brothers, Virgil and Morgan, and Doc Holiday. But Irish pub-goers would best relate to the story concerning a fire in the saloon in 1900. The Palace customers interrupted their drinking just long enough to carry the ornately-carved Brunswick bar across the street to safety. There they continued drinking while the fire raged.

Just a block away is the historic Hasayampa Inn. Opened in 1927, the hotel, which is on the National Register of Historic Places in the US, has hosted an A-list of guests, including Tom Selleck, Kim Basinger and George W. Bush. Check out the vintage manually-operated elevator and the hand-painted ceiling in the lobby. And just for good measure, the building is reputed to be haunted.

Next stop is Verde Valley, and picturesque town of Cottonwood, another of Arizona's hidden gems. A four-hour trip on the Verde Canyon Railroad from the old mining town of Clarkdale to the Perkinsville ghost ranch is a must. You will see the red rocks of Sedona and, if you're lucky, you might spot a bear down in the canyon.

We rounded off the trip with a dinner (traditional cowboy fare) and a show at the Blazin' M Ranch. The cowboys (and girls) love to entertain y'all with hilarious poetry and serious toe-tapping music that'll get you off your seat.

The best time to visit Arizona is springtime as temperatures in the southern parts of the state can soar to 40+ degrees during the summer months, but if you don't mind the heat, hotel prices plummet during that time of the year. Regardless of the time of the year, get to Arizona and scratch it off your bucket list. +



BANGED UP: Sean gets into trouble at the Blazin' M Ranch



TRANSPORT: By horse through the hot Sonoran desert, and by rail on the Verde Canyon railroad



SUNSET SIPPING: At the LDV Wine Gallery

Getting there..
 ● America As You Like It has a seven-night fly-drive to Arizona; two nights at the Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak, Phoenix, two nights at the JW Marriott Camelback, Scottsdale, one night at the Best Western Rancho Grande, Wickenburg, one night at the Iron Horse Inn, Cottonwood and one night at the Marriott Springhill Suites, Prescott from €1675pp. Price is based on two people sharing and includes inclusive economy car hire and return Aer Lingus flights from Dublin via Boston. Call 020 8742 8299 or visit [www.americaasyoulikeit.com](#). To plan your trip, visit [www.visitarizona.com](#)

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