



# Miraval



*Courtesy Miraval Arizona*

## At a Glance

Set on 400 acres adjacent to Catalina State Park in Tucson, Arizona, this destination spa is easy-going and fun.

## Indagare Loves

- Morning hikes right from the property into the Arizona desert, with views of the Santa Catalina Mountains
- Relaxed approach to a destination spa: food is plentiful and delicious, wine is allowed and all activities are optional.
- The stunning and spacious Retreat Suites, each featuring a wall of windows that opens onto a large private deck with a plunge pool.
- The huge range of daily activities, from biking to spirit work to unique spa treatments

# Miraval Review

When Miraval opened in 1995, its mission was to bring mindfulness and “life in balance” to its guests. Just being in such a serene setting goes a long way. Spread across 400 acres in the Arizona desert, about a one-hour drive north of Tucson, Arizona, the property is beautifully landscaped, with multiple pools, a fountain, shaded pathways, and lots of places to sit outside and linger by the burbling stream that meanders through its center. At the heart of the resort is the main building, with an indoor/outdoor restaurant and a pretty interior courtyard; just beyond is the spacious spa. Adding to the relaxed charm of the place is the warm and friendly service and the convenience that everything is included, so there is never a need to sign chits or tip anyone.

One of the main draws of Miraval is the enormous range of classes and excursions, including outdoor adventures such as hiking, biking and horseback riding. A typical day might have 35-40 scheduled activity options (two or three per hour), ranging from fitness and wellness (yoga, meditation, Pilates) to more esoteric interests like beekeeping or Ayurveda. There are also cooking classes, nutrition talks and photography instruction. Many guests choose to start the day with a brisk two-hour group hike straight from the property into Catalina State Park. The knowledgeable guides stop every mile or two to share insights on the landscape and point out rare saguaro cacti. Also popular is the challenging ropes course, which has a zip line, free fall and tightrope walk. While most excursions are open, some need to be booked in advance (and may have an associated fee). Our advice: as soon as you confirm your trip, work with the Indagare team to select your top picks for treatments and activities, as the most desirable ones may book up 4-6 weeks in advance.

The trip leaders and practitioners at Miraval are excellent and many have been with the property for a decade or more. The resort is particularly known for spirit work and healers. For instance, the highly regarded workshop “It’s Not About the Horse” is an exercise in facing your fears, led by cowboy Wyatt Webb, a remarkable character who is like a cross between Tony Robbins and a psychic. I found his workshop transformational, as did the other members of my group, many of whom were crying during the experience. I particularly loved Miraval’s signature spa treatment, Vasudhara, in which one receives a Thai massage while floating in a pool blindfolded. It was incredibly transporting and relaxing.

One of the highlights of Miraval is the food, which is creative, fresh and abundant. Breakfast and lunch offer both buffets and à la carte options, with a wide variety of vegetables, salads and lean proteins. Dinner is à la carte and may include dishes like fish tacos or roasted pork with berry compote. Despite everything being healthy, it

would be hard to lose weight here, as there are so many treats available at all times of the day, including a grab-and-go smoothie bar with pre-made drinks, snacks, fruit-and-nut bars and yogurt parfaits.

The 118 guest rooms are located in casitas, which are scattered around the property. The lower category rooms, though comfortable, feel a bit corporate, but are quite reasonably priced. Suites are much more attractive. If budget permits, it's definitely worth the splurge for one of the stunning new Retreat Suites, which feature 15-foot ceilings, a full kitchen, and a wall of windows that opens up to a patio with a great plunge pool. With the breeze flowing through and the mountain views beyond, it's tempting to want to stay there all day, but you would never want to miss out on exploring the beautiful Arizona landscape.

## Who Should Stay

Miraval is much more flexible and has a broader appeal than a typical destination spa and could just as easily be a fun couples weekend away as a wellness retreat. While the crowd is more women, there are plenty of men who go. It is not going to be a good fit for someone looking for a boot camp experience, because it is so relaxed, and it might prove challenging to lose weight there because the food is delicious and plentiful.

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*- Eliza Harris on June 18, 2018*

