

Best Places to Live 2011

Written by Written by Melissa Larsen

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Whether you're an urbanite-at-heart looking for a luxe high-rise or seeking a quiet, amenity-filled life at an incredible master-planned community, AFM presents the 10 best places to call home in the Valley.



YES, MASTER

From golf greens to on-site spas, these posh master plans offer resort-quality living and awe-inspiring abodes.

Power Ranch: Southeast Valley

Last year, Money Magazine named Gilbert one of the top 100 places to live in the United States. With thriving family-friendly communities like Power Ranch that call Gilbert home, the distinction is certainly no surprise. Two lakes, where residents are invited to take part in catch-and-release fishing; various picnic ramadas with barbecues; 27 parks; pool areas that include a shallow pool, a splash pad and flower showers for little ones; and plenty of playgrounds, volleyball and basketball courts puts Power Ranch on the map for young families. With more than 5,000 homes planned in 11 distinct communities, Power Ranch is far from a cookie-cutter neighborhood. www.powerranch.com

Price Tag: \$120's to \$235's

SNEAK PEEK:

- Focus on family
 - Kid-friendly amenities include several pools and playgrounds
 - More than 5,000 homes in 11 communities
-



Mirabel: North Scottsdale

Situated at 3,000 feet, Mirabel residents feel on top of the world. Rightfully so, as the North Scottsdale community offers state-of-the-art amenities to complement its selection of single-family homes and custom homesites. The 34,000-sq.-ft. Desert Lodge Clubhouse is a go-to for dwellers seeking fine or casual dining, spa and salon services, a round of tennis and some r-n-r in the resort-worthy pool. Plus, the Tom Fazio-designed course is suitable for all golfers. (The course offers prime panoramas, to boot.)

www.mirabel.com. **Price Tag: \$1 million to more than \$5 million**

SNEAK PEEK:

- Offers sumptuous seclusion
 - Access to Tom Fazio-designed golf course
 - 34,000-sq.-ft. amenity-laden clubhouse
-



Encanterra Country Club: Southeast Valley

Families as well as those wanting an age-qualified residence are all welcome at the 745-acre Encanterra Country Club in San Tan Valley. Encanterra offers two residential options: the more than 2,400 homes at Encanterra or Trilogy at Encanterra, a 55-plus community. Regardless of the Encanterra address, residents get to enjoy La Casa club facility, the neighborhood's pièce de résistance. There, residents are invited to dine, spa and swim in the club's exceptional 60,000-sq.-ft. quarters. www.encanterra.com. **Price Tag: from the \$170's (Encanterra Country Club); from the \$140's (Trilogy at Encanterra)**

SNEAK PEEK:

- High-class clubhouse designed by Bing Hu
- Neighborhood spa, dining and swimming
- Age-qualified and family-friendly living options

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Rosewood at DC Ranch: North Scottsdale

In the heart of Scottsdale's DC Ranch is the exclusive, elegant Rosewood neighborhood, a 34-home gated enclave. With eye-popping mountain views, a variety of architectural styles, innovative floor plans and located within walking distance of the DC Ranch Country Club, it's not surprising that Rosewood at DC Ranch is 70 percent sold out. What's more, the neighborhood also has an eye on the environment, satisfying Scottsdale's Green Building requirements for sustainable development. www.rosewoodhomes.com. **Price Tag: high \$500's to \$900's**

SNEAK PEEK:

- Away from city noise but close to upscale shopping and dining
- Eco-friendly building practices
- Exclusive, gated community

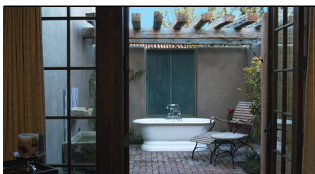


Blackstone at Vistancia: Northwest Valley

Though Vistancia is known for its incredible golfing, residents in the Blackstone community, located within the Peoria master plan, will tell you the 540-acre gated community has a whole lot more to offer. Guests at The Hacienda clubhouse can indulge in gourmet dining or take a trip to the wine cellar and spend some time swirling and sipping in the tasting room. To get a dose of fresh air, Vistancia has 3.4 miles of walking trails as well as playgrounds, parks and plenty of open space. To round out the community is a selection of abodes from T.W. Lewis, K. Hovnanian Homes and Rosewood Homes as well as custom homesites. www.blackstonecountryclub.com. **Price Tag: from the low \$100's (homesites); from the \$300's (homes)**

SNEAK PEEK:

- Proximate to Lake Pleasant
- Nearly four miles of walking trails
- Wine cellar and tasting room at clubhouse



Silverleaf: North Scottsdale

Silverleaf is desert living at its best. Though the luxury community is located in the canyons of the McDowell Mountains and surrounded by the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, just as much gorgeousness is found within Silverleaf's residences and homesites. The newest addition to the community's portfolio is the previously stalled Sterling at Silverleaf, a collection of villas, estates and luxury condominiums; Sterling's single-family detached villas are currently in their first phase of development. Among the world-class amenities at Silverleaf are the 50,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse with stunning Mediterranean architecture and an adjoining spa and the par-72 golf course. www.silverleaf.com. **Price Tag: \$300,000 to \$5 million-plus (homesites); \$1 million to \$10 million (homes)**

SNEAK PEEK:

- Tom Weiskopf-crafted golf course
- Encompassing 8,300 acres and featuring up to 736 residences
- Surrounded by McDowell Sonoran Preserve

UP WHERE WE BELONG

If you're a city slicker wanting a high-rise (or mid-rise) to call home, here are four of the Valley's hottest condo addresses.

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One Lexington: Midtown Phoenix

One Lexington is adding even more sparkle to the Phoenix skyline. The haute high-res comprises one-, two- and three-bedroom dwellings as well as posh penthouses, all of which offer top-notch fixtures and finishes. Custom Italian cabinetry, large walk-in closets and marble showers can be found in all the One Lexington residences while some units even boast bamboo flooring. Those who call one of these Phoenix condos home also have access to the on-site heated pool, a state-of-the-art fitness center and have concierge service at their fingertips. www.onelexington.com. **Price Tag: from the low \$200's (two-bedroom units); from mid \$500's (penthouses)**

SNEAK PEEK:

- Convenient access to light rail
- Minutes from CityScape and Downtown sporting and cultural events
- Impeccable fixtures and finishes



Safari Drive: Downtown Scottsdale

Waterfront living in the desert isn't easy to come by, but that is what Scottsdale's Safari Drive offers its residents. (The mid-rise is located near the Arizona Canal.) Though its design is cutting-edge and contemporary, Safari Drive has quite the history: it was built on the site of the Safari Hotel, a hot spot that was frequented by the A-list in the 1950's and 60's. If its back story won't woo buyers, Safari Drive's variety will as 29 different floor plans are available for purchase. Recently, plans for Phase Two, featuring 160 units in two buildings, were submitted to the Scottsdale Planning Commission. www.safaridrivescottsdale.com. **Price Tag: \$399,500 to \$699,500**

SNEAK PEEK:

- Walking distance to Old Town nightlife
- Near endless shopping and dining at Scottsdale Fashion Square
- Contemporary design with interesting history



The Landmark: North Scottsdale

Scottsdale's The Landmark, near Kierland Commons, proves that vertical living can be very luxurious. Residents of The Landmark have access to Kierland Golf Course and the property's 5,800-sq.-ft. clubhouse, including the fitness pavilion as well as massage and steam rooms. The pool and spa area is also a popular see-and-be-seen spot, with its party-ready barbecue ramada. Within the climate-controlled wine cave, oenophiles are invited store and enjoy their sips. Apart from all the posh perks of living at The Landmark, residents know they are living in an eco-friendly structure thanks to energy-efficient appliances, low-emitting materials and other green measures. www.landmarklifestyle.com. **Price Tag: \$300's to \$3 million**

SNEAK PEEK:

- *This*close to shopping and dining at Kierland Commons
- Near spa-ing and golfing at Westin Kierland Resort & Spa
- On-premises wine cave



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Optima Camelview: Downtown Scottsdale

Residents of Scottsdale's Optima Camelview are living green, both because of the community's eco-friendly design elements (it was awarded the Silver LEED Certification) and due to its verdant parklike setting. Optima adds greenery to the desert with its large private garden terraces—always a source of eye candy for those driving along Scottsdale Road. To match its high-end interiors are the community's resort-style amenities, like an indoor swimming pool, outdoor putting green, racquetball/basketball courts, fitness and business centers, party room with catering kitchen and private underground parking. www.optimacamelview.com. **Price Tag: \$350,000 to \$1.8 million**

SNEAK PEEK:

- Dining at POSH is mere steps away
- Stunning green garden terraces
- Resort-style pool and putting green

If You Build It...

Are you now inspired to build your dream home? Years

ago, the Valley was chock-full of hundreds of homebuilders. Today, there are less than 25. To get the job done (and done well), turn to one of these AFM-approved Valley builders.

Argue Custom Homes Known for his incredible large-scale homes, Tom Argue was chosen to build the most massive home in Arizona (more than 100,000 square feet, actually). www.arguecustomhomes.com.

Brimley Development 2011 Best of Our Valley Winner Brett Brimley is currently working on some major home projects in the Arcadia area and has been in business for more than 15 years. www.brimleydev.com.

Desert Star Construction Jerry Meek is recognized as the builder of choice in Paradise Valley thanks to his portfolio of amazing home projects. www.desertstarconstruction.com.

Forté Homes Forté Homes has been successfully building pre-priced custom homes for more than 15 years. Though not complete custom builds, homeowners are allowed modifications and beautiful homes at a great price. www.fortehomes.com.

Sage Luxury Homes Sage Lentz promises to finish homes on time and on budget. The company, which provides architecture, construction and interior design for luxury homes, has plenty of Arcadia and Paradise Valley builds under its belt. www.sageluxuryhomes.com.

Salcito Custom Homes This family-owned custom builder is dedicated to detail, and owner Anthony Salcito is arguably one of the hardest-working builders in the Valley. The company is currently building more homes in Silverleaf than any other. www.salcito.com.