



# WHERE'S Nadia?

*Travel blogger Nadia El Ferdaoussi (@Nadia\_DailySelf) is an expert on the most Insta-perfect destinations around the world...*

## THIS MONTH: ARIZONA

**T**ravel to the United States is down and I'm one of those tourists who was avoiding heading Stateside. But, I made a mistake. America is a massive country, you don't scratch the surface until you veer in from either coast. In this case, no need to go too far though. Arizona shares a border with California, so makes a nice multi trip destination. The Grand Canyon State is famous for its National Parks and has the most National Monuments of any state in the US, making it one of the most scenic places in all of America to visit.

We started our trip in Scottsdale, close to Phoenix Airport. Staying at the uber cool Hotel Valley Ho, the best preserved mid-century hotel in the country, is like stepping into an old Hollywood hideaway, except with all the mod cons.

AOA Adventures picked myself and friend Grace up early for a hike in the McDowell Mountains in the Sonoran Desert. Now you could go alone, but go with the pros who carry extra water and snacks for you, ferry you there and back and fill you in on everything from the Saguaro cactus to the little critters to watch out for.

Some down time was in order after all that walking and the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess probably has the best spa area I've ever seen and most attentive staff. Book in for a detox wrap and chill out at the rooftop pool after. Bliss!

Dinner at The Mission in Old Town Scottsdale is a must. We devoured table-side guacamole and skinny margaritas, need I say any more? Wrap up the night by stepping back in time into the Rusty

Spur Saloon, where the bar man sings country favourites while serving your drinks.

Sedona was up next, home of the famous Red Rock State Park. Take a Pink Jeep Tour to get off the beaten track and explore the magnificent rocks up close, but make sure you're back in town for sundowners.

The best seat in

Sedona is on the patio of Mariposa Latin Grill where you can watch the sun set and the moon rise while eating delicious ceviche and empanadas.

We took the scenic route to Flagstaff the following day stopping to enjoy the view at Oak Creek before arriving at the Arizona Snowbowl. It's a ski resort during the winter, but you can take the scenic chair lift to one of the highest peaks in the state all summer long. Bring layers, it gets chilly up there! Walnut

Canyon National Monument was next, make sure your camera is charged for the unbelievable views you'll witness.

Arriving early to the Grand Canyon Airport the next day, we took our first ever helicopter tour and first glimpse of the mile deep canyon while Lenny Kravitz's 'Fly Away' played through our earphones. Seeing it by air is a must, but by ground is essential. We drove in to the park then took the bus to Hermits Rest for the very best view of sunset with not another soul to be seen.

I could easily have spent another few weeks in Arizona, it's got it all!



### HOW TO GET THERE:

Fly with Aer Lingus via Chicago or Boston, or via London then direct to Phoenix Sky Harbour from €569 return. Visit [www.aerlingus.com](http://www.aerlingus.com) for more details

### WHERE TO STAY:

Scottsdale - [hotelvalleyho.com](http://hotelvalleyho.com)  
Sedona - [sedonarouge.com](http://sedonarouge.com)  
Flagstaff - [flagstaff.littleamerica.com](http://flagstaff.littleamerica.com)  
Grand Canyon - [grandcanyonsquire.com](http://grandcanyonsquire.com)

### BEST FOR:

There's something for everyone on this trip, whether it's adventure lovers, foodies, sun worshippers or family fun. Couple, friends and kids will all enjoy Arizona. There is a lot of walking involved in the National Parks, so bear this in mind.

### DON'T MISS:

The Grand Canyon Papillon Helicopter Tour