

Castle Hot Springs



It is not very often in life when you get to go somewhere so magical, so unique that it leaves a lasting impression. Fortunately, for my birthday celebration, my sweet spouse arranged a visit to Castle Hot Springs. The kudos actually goes to my son who made us aware of this amazing destination (even though he lives in Washington, DC) based on this [Wall Street Journal article](#).



History

Only 50 miles north of Phoenix, nestled in the Bradshaw Mountains, Castle Hot Springs opened in 1896 and was a wintertime retreat for Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Pews, Astors and Carnegies. The WSJ states, “It’s like a tornado picked up a five-star resort and dropped it in the middle of a desert valley”. Tycoons and captains of industry would take a Pullman car and then a long stagecoach ride to stay for the season.



Rich in history, Castle Hot Springs gets its name from the mineral-rich thermal waters running beneath the property. The healing properties of these waters, which flow at a rate of 200,000 gallons per day would take “frail boys and girls and develop them into robust manhood and womanhood”. John F. Kennedy recovered here for several months after his combat injuries, as this also served as a military rehabilitation center after World War II.



Photo from Castle Hot Springs website

In 1976, a devastating fire destroyed the main lodge at the resort and the resort lay dormant for the next 40 years.

Fortunately, a local businessman and his wife purchased the property in 2014 and spent millions of dollars bringing it back to life. Their 5 year “passion project” on this 210-acre parcel is now my birthday experience! Dubbed the cousin to [Blackberry Farm](#) in Tennessee, this all inclusive resort has 32 rooms. Expansion plans are anticipated.



Lake Pleasant is nearby

What makes this idyllic retreat so appealing, is that it is so hard to get to. The hotel sits at the end of an unpaved 7 mile road, which is subject to flash floods. But when you arrive, the scene is breathtaking.

Farm to Table



Ian, head farmer

I love to garden and the gardens at Castle Hot Springs provide a large percentage of the food for the guests. Taking the farm tour from Ian, the head agronomist, is a lesson in new varieties and experimentation. Ian plants different types of fruits, vegetables and herbs producing fresh results at every meal. Striving to grow the most unique and diverse ingredients, the garden is more like his laboratory.



At the end of the tour, we sample the vegetables~some completely new hybrids grown only here at Castle Hot Springs.



Even the bartenders go out and pick fresh herbs to garnish their beverages, while creating a beautiful, fragrant display

at the bar.



Fava bean plant stem used as a straw

Unique touches, like using the stalk of a fava bean plant as a straw, is what makes this place so special.

Activities and Adventure



Hiking the Yavapai trail to Crater Canyon

Naturally, there is a plethora of hiking trails. The rocks rise like a cathedral in the Bradshaw Mountains. The air is so clean and clear.



Wells Fargo cave

With a long and illustrious past, we visit the Wells Fargo cave~where the money was kept and guarded from bandits.



Aerial of the hot springs

From horseback riding to helicopter tours, there are many activities to choose. We did archery, Wild West shooting of replica guns from the 1800 and 1900s. But the star of the show is the hot springs. Three pools with varying temperatures are nestled in the rocks above the resort. And without the typical rotten-egg smell most often associated with hot springs.



Even though we only stayed two nights, this adventure is filled with rest and relaxation. There is something sacred about this secret location. A 90 minute massage is also responsible for starting this birthday celebration off correctly!



I cannot say enough about the staff. You can tell from their demeanor that everyone loves working in this environment. We did feel both welcomed and pampered~just perfect.

What made this location so unique is all the history, the trailblazing spirit of the owners over time and now the Watts family has revitalized an important part of Arizona history. Experiencing it is indeed the best of birthday gifts.

Happy Tuesday! I have a very busy week in store as we are expecting our son to visit with six of his friends. Nothing better than a household full!

Mary

Special thanks to the staff that made our stay at the Castle Hot Springs memorable:

Bevin~you need to write the Bodacious Beverages by Bevin book

Ryan and Josh~thanks for being patient with my ambidextrous shooting

Eric, Robert, Amber, Shane and Sarah~thanks for making each meal memorable

Marcin~thanks for the lemon slice tutorial

Bradley~for the archery and transportation

Christy~such powerful and therapeutic hands

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