

This Iconic Arizona Wellness Resort Will Welcome Guests for the First Time in 43 Years so You Can Detox Like a Vanderbilt

Closed since 1976, Castle Hot Springs, Arizona's first luxury resort, will reopen Oct. 7 after major renovations.

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PHOTO: COURTESY OF CASTLE HOT SPRINGS

You can now stay at the same rustic, luxurious retreat where celebrities, dignitaries, and affluent families once traveled for relaxation and rejuvenation. Castle Hot Springs is located in the Sonoran Desert about an hour's drive from Phoenix, an easier trip today than during the early 20th century when the likes of the Vanderbilts, Astors, and Wrigleys bathed in the resort's thermal hot springs.

Guests today will be able to enjoy horseback riding, hiking, and exploring the 210-acre property along with the healing powers of the natural hot springs that have attracted visitors beginning with the Yavapai and Apache who journeyed there for medicinal purposes. Wellness experiences like yoga and meditation, dining on healthful meals with fresh seasonal produce, and stargazing in the resort's dark skies will be part of the experience as well.

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The adults-only (16 and older) resort encompasses 32 luxurious accommodations that include the three-bedroom Historic Cottage, a magnificently restored dwelling that dates back to the early 1900s. In addition, there are 12 hillside bungalows, 17 sky view cabins, and a main lodge. A farm, greenhouse, and orchard ensure the freshest vegetables, fruits, and herbs with menus that change with the available ingredients. The aptly named signature restaurant, Harvest, will serve a “harvest of the day” cuisine, and guests are welcome to participate in gathering crops to be used in their own meals.

Phoenix business couple Cindy and Mike Watts acquired Castle Hot Springs in 2014 and set out to restore and recreate the wellness retreat originally built in 1896. In addition to its time as a playground for wealthy visitors, the resort served as a military rehabilitation center during World War II. Future president John F. Kennedy spent three months at Castle Hot Springs recovering from his wounds.

“The unique history of Castle Hot Springs was the catalyst for the current development,” Mike Watts said. “The property had been immensely popular in the early 1900s, primarily for the natural and abundant hot springs in a location with mild temperatures most of the year.”

The cistern-fed pools are the hottest non-volcanic natural springs in the world, and the therapeutic minerals in the waters have made this a destination for generations. “This oasis is like no other. It provides guests with an opportunity to connect with nature and enjoy its restorative qualities,” Watts told *Travel + Leisure*.

A stay at Castle Hot Springs is ideal for visitors seeking a digital detox in the resort's natural setting near the Bradshaw Mountains. There are no televisions in the guestrooms, and Wi-Fi service is limited. The 12 Spring Bungalows, set on a hillside surrounded by palm trees, are equipped with gas fireplaces and oversized soaking tubs filled with water from the hot springs. The starry sky will be all the entertainment needed. The 17 Sky View Cabins, with breathtaking mountain views, also feature outdoor tubs, authentic Mission-style furnishings, and expansive wood decks with telescopes for stargazing.

Nightly rates start at \$1,200 and include three meals and activities. The resort, open from October through May, is accessible by automobile or helicopter, about 50 miles from Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport.