

## Pampering — and inner peace

In Sedona, half a dozen new retreats keep things fresh in Arizona's land of vortexes, hot tubs and spa treatments.

By DAVID FERRELL  
Special to The Times

**V**ISITORS to Arizona's high desert quickly exhaust their superlatives. Once they get beyond "stunning," "awe-inspiring" and "the artwork of God," many stumble trying to articulate how they feel amid the red cliffs and wind-sculpted rocks.

"There is a definite energy here," says Steve Segner, who opened a 12-room inn here two years ago. "You just feel something's different. When you're looking up at 300-million-year-old cliffs, it puts things in perspective."

Whether it's the energy vortexes that psychics claim to have found here or just the overwhelming beauty of the place, Sedona has a powerful allure. It drew the 57-year-old Segner for good.

He sold his Los Angeles-based pet food company and his home in Pasadena and immersed himself in building one of Sedona's distinctive new resorts. El Portal — crafted of adobe, flagstone and salvaged bridge trestles — is one of half a dozen such luxury retreats that have opened here in recent years, ranging in size from intimate to immense.

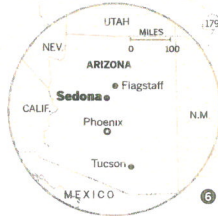
Two hours north of Phoenix and at an elevation of 4,300 feet, Sedona combines elements of the stark desert with the pines and deciduous trees of the Coconino National Forest. Greater Sedona is part artists' colony, part sportsmen's paradise and part New Age mecca. About 17,500 people live here; 3 million more visit each year.

So although no one can say Sedona has been newly discovered, it has continued to boom even as hotel development has slowed in other parts of the U.S.

In Sedona's coveted uptown area, Amara Creekside Resort is trading on its almost incomparable views. It faces craggy cliffs that feature two of Sedona's most identifiable formations — Lucy Rock and Snoopy Rock — which evoke surprisingly vivid silhouettes of the Peanuts characters.



1. Adobe Grand Villas
2. Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa
3. Hyatt Píñon Pointe
4. Amara Creekside Resort
5. El Portal
6. Hilton Sedona Resort & Spa



Los Angeles Times

### Harmonic convergence

#### GETTING THERE

**From Southern California airports.** America West, Southwest and United offer nonstop flights to Phoenix. Restricted, round-trip fares begin at \$98. America West also has connecting service to Flagstaff. Fares from \$158.

**Driving from Phoenix.** It is 116 miles to Sedona on Interstate 17 north. Flagstaff is 30 miles from Sedona via Arizona 89A. From Los Angeles, it is about 480 miles to Sedona.

#### WHERE TO STAY

**Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa,** 2250 W. Highway 89A, Sedona; (866) 312-4111 or (928) 203-4111, [www.sedonarouge.com](http://www.sedonarouge.com). Weekdays from \$169; weekends from \$199.

— DAVID FERRELL

Sedona Rouge, a few miles west, emphasizes the enticements of its spa. Built near the imposing flanks of Thunder Mountain, the 77-room resort opened just five months ago. Its contemporary — some might say spartan — look is accented with hints of antiquity; huge olive-oil vessels stand near the pool, hot tub and fire pit.

Sedona Rouge caters to stressed-out executives and others trying to escape the lower deserts. "What we're finding is that the Phoenix people are coming here to get out of the heat," spa director Toni Nurnberg says. "It's 10 degrees cooler in Sedona."

The drawback to the higher altitude is that it steals moisture from the skin. The spa at Sedona Rouge has countered by replacing the standard salt in its body wraps with white or brown sugar, which is less drying, Nurnberg says. One of the spa's exfoliating treatments involves a custom sugar and honey blend, followed by a foaming bath of coconut milk.



El Portal Sedona

**RED ROCK COUNTRY:** The sculpted scenery of Arizona's high desert is a huge draw — 3 million people visit Sedona each year. The town draws artists and outdoorsy types, as well as those seeking some psychic energy.