



## FACT SHEET

**LOCATION:**

5594 W. Wild Horse Pass Blvd., Chandler, AZ 85226  
Phone (602) 225-0100, Fax (602) 225-0300  
Reservations (888)-218-8989  
Information: [www.wildhorsepassresort.com](http://www.wildhorsepassresort.com)

Located just off the I-10 freeway on the 372,000-acre Gila River Indian Reservation, the resort is within minutes of the center of Phoenix and the East Valley and their many shopping, entertainment and recreational offerings. Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport is only 15 minutes (11 miles) from the resort.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Designed to be an authentic representation of the Gila River Indian heritage and culture, the resort will offer its guests a recreational, educational and inspirational experience never before available in a resort setting. The architecture, design, art and legends of the Akimel O'otham and Pee Posh tribes are celebrated in every detail imaginable, indoors and out. The resort is located in the high Sonoran Desert on an expanse of rugged Arizona landscape where the ancient vistas, mountains and roaming wild horses remain untouched. A unique blend of two cultures, the resort offers the quiet serenity created by the ancient sages and native tribes who found haven here along with the high-tech hotel expertise of the Sheraton brand.

**OWNERSHIP:**

Gila River Indian Community (GRIC)

**MANAGEMENT:**

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.

Bunty Ahamed, General Manager, received a bachelor's degree in hotel/restaurant management from the California Polytechnic University and an MBA in strategic marketing from the University of California, Riverside. Over the past twenty years Ahamed has held executive positions in several high-profile Arizona and California properties.

**OPENED:**

October 2002

**COST:**

\$170 million for the resort complex, not including the land.

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**ACREAGE:** Resort, including 36 holes of golf, spa and Equestrian Center, sits on 2,400 acres of the 372,000- acre Gila River Indian Reservation.

**HISTORY:** The Pima Indians trace their roots to the HuHugam (Hohokam) who farmed the Gila River Valley from 300 B.C. to 1450 A.D. The HuHugam developed an extensive irrigation system of canals, still used today, which gave birth to farming in the desert. The Pima and Maricopa tribes were hospitable and friendly, welcoming settlers and transforming a hostile territory into a temporary sanctuary...just as they continue to do now with the Wild Horse Pass Resort.

**ARCHITECTURE:  
AND DESIGN:** In conjunction with the owners' Cultural Theming Committee

Architect: Wimberly, Allison, Tong & Goo, Newport Beach, CA  
Interior Design: Henriksen Design, Venice, CA

Landscape Architect: BRW, Phoenix, AZ

Spa Architect: David Bury and Company, Ojai, CA  
Spa Design: Aparia Design, Irvine, CA

Highlights include:

- Traditional native roundhouse (Olas'ki) design is represented in the domed lobbies of the main resort, the golf clubhouse and the spa. The native tribes lived in Olas'ki abodes in the Gila River Valley of what is now the greater Phoenix area.
- Pima basket patterns, especially that of the whirlwind, provide a multitude of design elements throughout.

**UNIQUE FEATURES:**

- A 2-1/2 mile replica of the Gila River meanders through the resort grounds; scenic boat rides shuttle guests to the Whirlwind golf club and adjacent casino
- 3 Riverside pools and a 111-ft waterfall designed after the nearby Casa Grande Ruins National Monument
- Wild horses roam the surrounding desert land and are visible from the resort

**ACCOMMODATIONS:**

199 king rooms  
275 double/double rooms  
26 suites  
500 total accommodations

All rooms and suites have views of the golf course, Estrella Mountains or the Gila River meandering through the grounds.

Guestrooms showcase earth-based colors and natural elements such as cornices made from saguaro ribs. All design elements, including furniture, were carefully selected to complement the natural desert ambiance.

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The Pima and Maricopa tribes are famous for their baskets and pottery, respectively. Rooms in the resort are split into two wings, celebrating each tribe's art forms. Design motifs appearing on the comforter, headboards, tiles, etc. in the Pima rooms reflect their basket patterns while those in the Maricopa wing showcase pottery designs.

**GUEST ROOM AMENITIES:**

- private patio or balcony
- minibar
- wall safe
- oversized work desk and desk chair
- remote control color television
- two-speaker phone with voice mail and high-speed Internet access
- two robes
- bath suite with separate bath and shower
- hair dryer
- iron and full-size ironing board

**CONFERENCE FACILITIES:**

- Total of 150,000 square feet, indoors and out, accommodating groups of 10 to 2,000
- Main Ballroom: 17,376 SF, divisible into four sections – seats 1,900 theater-style
- Junior Ballroom: 7,130 SF, divisible into three sections – seats 640 theater-style
- 21 meeting rooms
- All rooms feature the names of desert animals in both the native language and in English
- Features
  - ✓ High-speed Internet access
  - ✓ Video conferencing capabilities
  - ✓ On-site audio/visual services and staff
- Outdoor venues
  - ✓ Grand lawn with seven separate venues
  - ✓ Golf Clubhouse lawn
  - ✓ Equestrian center courtyard
  - ✓ Maricopa Wells Stagesop- Western Theme Town
  - ✓ Hemapik Event Lawn
  - ✓ Wedding Riverside Lawn
- Full conference services plus a Cultural Theming Manager to assist with authentic programming and activities

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**DINING OPTIONS:**

- AAA Five Diamond, Kai Restaurant-- Chef Jack Strong incorporates the essence of the Pima and Maricopa tribes into the menu and restaurant décor. Kai, the Pima word for 'seed', will treat you with a contemporary approach to Native American cuisine in a rich yet relaxing atmosphere. James Beard Award-winning chef Janos Wilder is consulting chef.
- Ko'Sin Restaurant -- the resort's main restaurant open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It features an American and southwestern cuisine.
- Hanyo poolside bar and grill

**DINING OPTIONS continued:**

- Sivlik Grill at the Whirlwind Golf Club -- features a chop-house style menu woven with accents from the traditional Maricopa and Pima cuisine. Features stunning panoramic views of the golf course and the South and Estrella Mountains.
- Two lobby lounges -- on lower level, adjacent to an indoor waterfall, with seating around a stone fireplace; on the upper level the Kai bread-bar adjacent to Kai restaurant with panoramic vistas of the pristine desert, mountains and the wild horses that roam there.
- 24-hour room service
- Coffee bar, Vasip

**AJI SPA:**

- 17,500 square feet
- 17 treatment rooms, including rooms designed for hydro treatments and dual massages
- Fitness center
- Full service salon for men and women
- Treatments and programs will incorporate authentic Native traditions
- Named after a safe haven during battles for women and children on the Gila River Indian Reservation; symbolizes "sanctuary."

**RECREATION:**

- Whirlwind Golf Club features two on-site 18-hole courses designed by Gary Panks and managed by Troon Golf; home of the PGA Buy.com Gila River Golf Classic in October
- 1,000-acre Koli Equestrian Center with riding lessons, trail rides and special events
- Maricopa Wells Stage stop- Western Theme Venue
- Two tennis courts

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- 2.5 mile Desert Interpretive Trail
- 4 Riverside pools that include an adult pool, a sport pool and a kids pool with slide
- Wild Horse Pass Casino near resort
- Rawhide Western Town & Steakhouse

**ONSITE & NEARBY ACTIVITIES:**

- The Concierge staff will arrange for hot air balloon rides, desert jeep rides and excursions to museums, sporting events and other area attractions.
- One of the Valley's newest and most extensive upscale shopping malls, Chandler Fashion Square, is within minutes of the resort.
- Huhugam Heritage Center Casa Grande Ruins National Monument – a four-story pueblo built by the Hohokam Indians in the 13<sup>th</sup> century
- Firebird International Raceway
- Bondurant School of Performance Driving

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## GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY AND RESERVATION

### LOCATION:

Gila River Indian Community (GRIC)  
P. O. Box 97  
Sacaton, AZ 85247  
520-562-3311; fax 562-3422  
[www.gric.nsn.us](http://www.gric.nsn.us)

The largest Indian reservation in the Phoenix area, the Gila River Community comprises 372,000 acres and covers 600 square miles. Located southeast of metropolitan Phoenix, bordering Phoenix and Chandler, the GRIC is just minutes from the heart of Phoenix, 11.5 miles from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, and 70 miles from Tucson.

### ABOUT THE TRIBES:

- The population of the Pima (Akimel O'otham or River People) and Maricopa (Pee Posh) is more than 22,000.
- The Pima are known for their basketry, using all natural materials (willow shoots, cattails and devil's claw) that must be carefully selected and collected at the proper time of the year. Baskets usually have a black center, with black and white designs. One of the most popular patterns is the Whirlwind.
- The Maricopa are known for their pottery made of red clay. They use natural dyes to depict geometrical designs.
- The early Pimas and Maricopas were healthy, humble, prosperous, generous, peaceful and well known for their hospitality, and that is their legacy today.
- The Gila River, in the early days of the Pimas, was their source of prosperity. It was continually flowing and was up to five or six miles wide with a heavy growth of cottonwood, willow and arrow reeds along its banks.
- The name "Arizona" came from a Pima word "a'al-sho-shon" meaning "many springs" or water.
- The two tribes have different languages but share the same cultural values based on a sense of community – sharing resources, helping each other and their fellow man, and the law of the common good. They revere all forms of nature, including animals and birds, as a meaningful part of their lives, and they consider the surrounding Estrella and South Mountain ranges to be sacred.

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**ABOUT THE TRIBES cont.**

- Legends about creation, the making of the animals, and other earth spirits were the basis of the Pimas' education and preservation of their culture. Today, the symbol on our silver dollar of the eagle clutching a bunch of arrows in its claw is based on the ancient Pima legend of Eagleman.
- They also believe that laughter at oneself is a good way to see another's point of view, and their word is their honor.

*The smarter a man is  
The more he needs God  
To protect him from thinking  
He knows everything.*  
George Webb, Pima, 1959

**THEIR HISTORY:**

- The Akimel O'otham proudly trace their roots to the ancient Hohokam (or Huhugam, meaning "those who have gone").
- These early people farmed the Gila River Valley from 300 B.C. to 1450 A.D. and developed extensive irrigation systems by digging hundreds of miles of canals to supply water to their fields. The irrigated crops included maize, squash, lima beans, tobacco and cotton and were supplemented with the gathering of cactus fruit, prickly pear pads, cholla cactus buds and agave from the harsh desert.
- The Hohokam mysteriously vanished centuries ago, leaving behind their irrigation system of canals, a system that is still used to supply water throughout Arizona today.
- Sometime in the mid- to late- 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Akimel O'otham (Pima) welcomed into the Gila River Valley a migrating tribe that called itself Pee Posh (Maricopa), The People, from the southern Colorado River area.
- The two tribes became allies and farmers in the Gila Basin, placing great value on developing the land and utilizing water as a means to provide for community needs. They were better able to thrive than many other Indian settlements in the Southwest thanks to their irrigation system and water supply.
- The two peaceful tribes offered friendship and shelter to settlers heading west. Their welcoming nature transformed what was believed to be hostile territory into a temporary sanctuary. Their beliefs still hold true today.
- The GRIC was established by an act of Congress in 1859 and formally organized by tribal constitution in 1939.

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### THE COMMUNITY TODAY:

- The primary goal of the Community, in its development programs, is to provide a stable economic base that enhances the quality of life for all Community members and ensures economic self-sufficiency for future generations. The vision: to be self-sustaining through diversity of development projects, with the help of the Great Spirit.
- With its ancient roots grounded in agriculture, the Community continues to grow its economy with 15,000 acres of community farms, harvesting cotton, wheat, millet, alfalfa, barley, melons, pistachios, olives, citrus and vegetables. Established in 1969, the Gila River Farms was one of the first economically successful tribal enterprises.
- Independent farming operations cultivate an additional 22,000 acres of similar crops. The total agricultural product value \$25 million.
- Today, the GRIC is diversifying beyond agriculture and gaming, into industrial, retail and recreational development, i.e. Whirlwind Golf Club and the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa. The process began with the opening of the Gila River Casino in 1997.
- When the Community held the ground blessing for the Whirlwind Golf Club, the first stage of the resort development, they were greeted with a double rainbow. This rare display of nature dramatically symbolized to them that they were on the right journey.
- In addition, preserving its Indian culture through education, scholarships and intern programs is a major focus for the Community today.

### THE COMMUNITY TODAY cont.

- The GRIC re-invests revenues back into the Community to provide for its many social needs, recreational activities and cultural projects, such as:
  - Gila River Fire Department
  - The nation's first Native American Firefighters Apprenticeship Program that trains and prepares Indian youths for a variety of firefighting careers.
  - Gila River Police Department
  - Education, including a Head Start program, six elementary and middle schools, scholarship programs, and student aid for college, vocational schools and certificate programs.
  - Hu Hu Kam Memorial Hospital and the creation of a diabetes educational and prevention facility
  - "Keli Akimel" (Old Man River), in partnership with the NBA Phoenix Suns, incorporates baseball fields, a sand volleyball court, playground and skateboard facility.
  - Two Boys & Girls Clubs to promote health, leadership and education.

#### **PIMA WISDOM**

*So, go! Go ahead with what has come...  
Go through the remainder of your days  
Treating everyone fair  
That you may be treated the same.  
When you come to the road to the  
Singing and dancing grounds,  
You will have nothing to regret, knowing  
That you have done your part while here.  
George Webb, Pima, 1959*

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## ART COLLECTION FEATURES NATIVE AMERICAN ARTISTS AND THEIR CULTURE

### CONCEPT AND GOALS

- The collection of artwork and artifacts showcases the history, rich heritage and culture, and traditional designs of the two tribes (Pima and Maricopa) inhabiting the Gila River Indian Reservation.
- The artwork also represents the abundant natural beauty that surrounds the land on which the tribes live including water/river themes, the indigenous vegetation, and, of course, horses.
- All original artwork is from Native American artists and predominantly from the Gila River Indian Community. Some art was sourced from the nearby Salt River Indian Community in Scottsdale, and some from the Tohono O'odham Indians in the southern part of Arizona.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- The 13 member Cultural Theming Committee, comprised of Gila River Indian Community members, recommends every piece of artwork.
- The call for artists began in August of 2001; in addition to those that were well known in the Community, others were found through open houses for artists and by word of mouth.
- In addition to historical photography, the work of 40-50 living artists is represented, with a wide range of styles and art mediums.

### TYPES OF ORIGINAL ARTWORK FEATURED

- Watercolor on paper
- Oil on canvas
- Acrylic on canvas
- Charcoal on paper
- Pastel on paper
- Ink on paper
- Sepia toned historical photography
- Tile murals
- Ceremonial dresses, headdresses, and jewelry
- Quilts and textile pieces
- Black and white photography
- Baskets and pottery for which the Pima and Maricopa respectively are known. Traditional basket patterns include "man in the maze," squash blossom and whirlwind. Pottery features black designs on red or buff clay.
- Calendar sticks, rasping sticks, hand-painted gourds, and flutes

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### **MAIN LOBBY ENTRANCE**

- Two tile murals, 5'x5', with welcome blessings (one in the Pima language, the other in the Maricopa language) greet guests as they enter the resort.

### **LOBBY AREA (ON TWO LEVELS)**

- The ceiling dome that is the focal point of the main lobby is surrounded by a mural of ten panels, each showing a different aspect of the culture: creation, elders, youth, games, Pima singers, hunting, Maricopa singers, basket weaving, pottery making, and gathering.
- Two traditional portraits – a Pima shaman and a Maricopa dancer – hang in the lower lobby corridor.
- Behind the reception and concierge desks, seven montages represent each of the seven Community districts, showing lifestyle elements such as landmarks (Estrella Mountains), petroglyphs, dwellings, farming, the people, significant events and legends.
- Near the lobby elevators to the guest rooms, acrylic on canvas art shows eight different areas of Arizona, highlighting the diversity of the landscape, and especially focusing on the State's national parks.
- The children's activity center and niches near the Business Center I display children's art from a Community school contest. They were given themes to interpret: the Gila River, farming, and the Pima/Maricopa way of life.
- A jewelry display showing the traditional beaded coil necklaces is mounted in a shadow box.
- Traditional elements such as quilts and ceremonial dresses are featured along with paintings of baskets and pottery.

### **CONFERENCE AND MEETING ROOMS**

- The ballrooms display murals in subtle tones around the top third of the walls. The images are based on ancient figures representing music and dancing in the Main Ballroom, and baskets and pottery designs in the Junior Ballroom.
- Individual meeting rooms are each named after an animal found on the Reservation, and each room has a realistic painting of the animal after which the room is named.
- The two Boardrooms each have a two-panel piece of art depicting a "thunder" theme.

### **CONFERENCE AREA – PUBLIC SPACES**

- This area portrays the themes of ceremony, dancing, and sense of community.
- Depicted in the paintings: the Basket Dance, the Round Dance, Pima ceremonial headdresses, the music of ceremonies, the old ways of life, wild horses, farming, and desert sunset skies.
- Two pedestal cases enclose a traditional Pima headdress in one; flutes and gourds in the other.
- Built-in niches showcase contemporary and historic basketry and pottery.
- Historical photos show the old, traditional ways of life on the Reservation.

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**SIGNATURE RESTAURANT (KAI)**

- A series of watercolor paintings with images of squash, prickly pear fruit, and other various harvested products adorn the walls.
- A tile mosaic showing women with burden baskets is featured at the restaurant entrance.
- Some of the china is designed to replicate a Maricopa pottery pattern.

**MAIN RESTAURANT (KO' SIN)**

- This restaurant features a mural of a desert sunset along with colorful paintings of desert landscapes and florals.
- Artifacts are displayed: tools like mortars, seed jars, ollas, baskets, and hand-carved wooden maidens.

**AJI SPA**

- Featured on the floor beneath the ceiling domes are mosaics of desert botanicals, flowers and herbs.
- Special screens feature iron-work murals of various lifestyle and spiritual legends.
- A Pima village mural is featured in men's whirlpool area.
- Art themes include the Creation story, Metamorphosis, desert/floral images, quilts of basket patterns.

**GUESTROOMS**

- Each room shows a signature still life painting: pottery in the Maricopa wing and baskets in the Pima wing.
- Each room also features a desert landscape and a sepia-toned historical photograph.
- Hand-painted gourds, gourd rattles and calendar sticks are displayed in the Presidential Suite and the Deluxe Executive Suite.

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### LEGEND OF THE BLUE COYOTE COMES TO LIFE WITH SIGNATURE TREATMENT AT AJI SPA AT SHERATON WILD HORSE PASS RESORT & SPA

PHOENIX, ARIZ. – Native American flute music plays softly in the background while the therapist gently brushes the body, exfoliating the skin. An application of Azulene follows, to soothe, nourish and heal. While reclining in an aromatherapy steam capsule, the body is lightly coated with a sky blue “mud.” The lid of the steam capsule is then closed, and for 15 glorious minutes the senses are tantalized by the steam’s aromas and a soothing scalp massage, while the pores absorb the mud, activated by the warm steam. After a private rain shower to rinse off the mud, the therapist applies a hydrating cedar-sage oil and completes the treatment with a full body massage.

The **Blue Coyote Wrap**, a signature treatment at the new Aji Spa at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, is as cleansing an experience for the guest as it is for the coyote in the legend that inspired the treatment.

In the Pima legend of the Bluebird and Coyote, the coyote is envious of the bluebird’s beautiful blue color, so follows the bluebird’s instructions to turn his own coat blue. As this is not his natural state, he ultimately sheds the blue color and returns to his true earth color ... but more beautiful than before.

The coating and rinsing of the blue mud during the **Blue Coyote Wrap** symbolizes the body’s process of releasing toxins and tension, and returning to a natural state of tranquility, fully relaxed.

Kristi Kjar, spa director, explains that the **Blue Coyote Wrap** is a metaphor for the spa as a whole -- offering unique treatments and an environment where guests can free themselves from stress and unreasonable expectations they face daily, and return to a natural state of peace. The use of the aromatherapy steam capsule, instead of wrapping the body in plastic, is unique to the Aji Spa. Guests find it far less restricting and a much more comfortable, enjoyable experience.

#### ***Aji ... the experience***

“We have created a serene environment reflective of the values and lifestyle of the Pima and Maricopa Indians who live here – serenity, tranquility, simplicity, freedom and authenticity,” says Kjar. “In the Pima language, Aji means sanctuary, and we offer a calming “sanctuary” where our guests can indulge their spirits with truly beneficial treatments, and return to their lives refreshed and relaxed.”

Kjar stresses that each treatment has been created to address a specific need, and a great deal of attention has been paid to adding the extra touches that differentiate the Aji Spa. “For example, our

massage tables are heated, and in every massage, we wrap the feet and drape the back in warm towels after the therapist has worked on those parts of the body.”

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### *Blue Coyote Wrap – Page Two*

All treatments, whether massages, body wraps, exfoliating body treatments, facials, and fitness programs, have been created to showcase the language and philosophies of the Pima and Maricopa tribes. Choices for Thagimun (massage) include Hothai (Gila River Rock Massage), Shuhthagi (Watsu) and Heosig (Aromatherapy Massage) to name a few. Wihosha (facial) includes Tashogith (Purifying White Clay Facial) which utilizes the white clay that has been indigenous to the Gila River Indian Community for centuries; Kahagam (Bluebird Facial), a spa signature treatment; and Juhk (Aji Rain Facial).

Kjar says her wish for every spa client is to be transported from their everyday concerns and to a more balanced place. “This is the most peaceful environment, even though we’re only 15 minutes from the airport and the heart of Phoenix. When you come to Aji, you feel like you’re entering a retreat, a place where you can get away from it all and find renewal.”

Located in the Gila River Indian Community, just 11 miles from Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, the Aji Spa was inspired by the dual meaning of “Aji” in the cultures of the Pima and Maricopa tribes. In times of battle, women and children were sent to Aji, a safe haven in the mountains. Aji also refers to a sanctuary high in the world from which one can see great distances with clarity.

True to the understated lifestyles of the Pima and Maricopa people, the spa’s design and decor is simple, yet elegant. As with the entire Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort, water is a constant presence. The tribes value water as life itself -- cleansing, nourishing, refreshing. The spa features expansive vistas and an exterior courtyard with a free-form pool adjacent to the Gila River that flows throughout the resort. A stone waterfall running from floor to ceiling greets guests as they enter the lobby. Showers are designed as rain showers.

#### ***Aji ... the environment***

The overall decor features dark woods, leather couches, plush fabrics and natural desert colors of taupe, terra cotta and sage. Round corners and curves, and the placement of things in fours, such as chairs and light fixtures in the lobby, represent the cyclical nature of life. Wave patterns in the structure and design of the salon carry through the water theme.

The dome structure and shapes throughout the spa represent the historic dwellings, or Olas Ki, that provided protection from the winter elements. A traditional Olas Ki, made from arrow weed, was created by the native community and is situated in the pool area.

Artwork expressing the legends of the tribes are present in every area. The lobby features the creation story of Earth Maker, Elder Brother, Vulture and Coyote in mosaic, and a beautiful sunset painting in the dome above. The entrance to the fitness studio features five paintings and one mosaic representing the metamorphosis of the butterfly, another important symbol and story. Iron screens tell the story of the twin boys, tobacco man and corn woman. Beautiful paintings, petroglyph drawings and

basket patterns grace the floors, walls and ceilings of the spa. Pottery, sculptures and weavings are placed throughout.

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*Blue Coyote Wrap – Page Three*

The 17,500-square-foot spa has 17 treatment rooms with individual temperature controls, and includes some designed specifically for hydrotherapy, Vichy treatments and companion massages. A fitness center, full service salon, men's and women's locker rooms complete with private hot tubs and saunas, a cold plunge in the men's locker room, private and coed relaxation lounges, a full service café, retail shop, and a pool exclusively reserved for Watsu treatments, are also included.

For more information:

- **Spa** treatments and reservations, call 520-796-8416
- **Resort** rates and packages, call 602-225-0100

Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, owned by the Gila River Indian Community and located on their 372,000-acre reservation, is a total destination resort showcasing the heritage, culture, art and legends of the Pima and Maricopa tribes. Located in the high Sonoran Desert on an expanse of rugged landscape where the ancient vistas, mountains and roaming wild horses remain untouched, the resort is just 11 miles from Sky Harbor airport and the heart of metropolitan Phoenix. Resort offerings include: 500 culturally themed rooms; the 17,500 square-foot Native American Aji Spa; two 18-hole golf courses managed by Troon Golf; the 1,000-acre Koli Equestrian Center; a 2.5-mile replica of the indigenous Gila River meandering through the property; native inspired cuisine designed by James Beard Award winner Janos Wilder; over 100,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event and meeting space; and the adjacent Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass Western theme town. For more information, please visit [www.wildhorsepassresort.com](http://www.wildhorsepassresort.com).

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SHERATON WILD HORSE PASS RESORT & SPA FEATURES  
NATION'S ONLY CULTURAL CONCIERGE**

**PHOENIX, AZ** (February, 2005) – The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, located on the Gila River Indian Community, was designed to be a showcase for the local Pima and Maricopa Native American cultures. To assist guests in receiving a personal and memorable cultural experience, the resort has named Ginger Sunbird Martin as Cultural Concierge.

Sunbird Martin is Pima and was born and raised on the Gila River Indian Community. She holds a degree from Arizona State University in American Indian Studies with an emphasis in Native American water rights.

The primary role of the Cultural Concierge at the resort is to offer a tangible cultural experience for guests by providing complimentary property tours that highlight the history and culture of the Pima and Maricopa tribes that have inhabited central Arizona for more than 2300 years. Sunbird Martin's tours also interpret the significance of the many vibrant murals, pottery pieces and Native American words found throughout the resort.

In addition to her guest tours and services, Sunbird Martin's responsibilities include providing cultural orientation for all new resort staff, working with conventions and meeting planners to incorporate the Native culture into their events and serving as the liaison between the resort and the Tribe's Cultural Theming Committee, which oversees all of the resort's cultural efforts from menu tastings to uniforms to Native names for new outlets.

"What makes our resort so special and unique is how parochial we are in our endeavors to be culturally authentic," said Sunbird Martin. "It's a privilege for our People to be able to showcase our heritage and to be in control of how our story is communicated to the world."

The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa was named "One of the Hottest Destinations in 2005" by *Travel + Leisure* magazine due to its authentic cultural experience. For information on a tour with the Cultural Concierge or for reservations, call 602-225-0100 or visit [www.wildhorsepassresort.com](http://www.wildhorsepassresort.com).

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Sky Harbor airport, the resort offerings include: 500 culturally themed rooms; the 17,500 square-foot Native American Aji Spa; two 18-hole golf courses managed by Troon Golf; the 1,000-acre Koli Equestrian Center; a 2.5-mile replica of the indigenous Gila River meandering through the property, native inspired cuisine designed by James Beard Award winner Janos Wilder and the nearby Wild Horse Pass Casino.

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[www.wildhorsepassresort.com](http://www.wildhorsepassresort.com)

### **SHERATON WILD HORSE PASS RESORT & SPA: WHERE GOLFERS PLAY ALONG SIDE THE WILD HORSES THAT ROAM THE ARIZONA DESERT**

PHOENIX, ARIZ. — From the moment of arrival at the Whirlwind Golf Club at the 500-room Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, golfers experience their sport in a whole new way. Sharing the high desert landscape of the Gila River Indian Reservation, home of the Pima and Maricopa Indians, Whirlwind Golf Club reflects the guiding spirit of its Native people and the land itself on two complementary but distinct 18-hole courses. As with the resort complex, every detail of the golf club reflects this indigenous heritage – from architecture and art, to landscaping and even the ritual of golf.

Hundreds of years ago, the Pima and Maricopa people welcomed new arrivals to their land with graciousness and friendship. They shared their secrets of the desert, its plants, animals and mysterious beauty. Today, the Gila River Indian Community shares this and more in an incredibly pristine, serene golf setting, surrounded not by houses but rather by the wild horses that have roamed the land for centuries and are visible from the fairways and greens today. Upon entering the Clubhouse, guests are greeted with a domed ceiling representing the style of habitats traditionally found on the Reservation. The dome is also an architectural representation of an overturned Pima basket in the Whirlwind pattern.

Whirlwind Golf Club is managed by Troon® Golf, the world's leading luxury-brand golf course management, marketing and development company with over 140 clubs in 22 states and 10 countries. The 8,500 square-foot Whirlwind Clubhouse provides a full-service golf shop, locker rooms, the Sivlik Grill serving a chop-house style cuisine with a Native American flair, and a clubhouse bar. The practice facilities offer a duel ended driving range with plenty of targets, two bunkered chipping greens, and three practice putting greens. Whirlwind offers private and group instruction through the onsite Bird Golf Academy.

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### ***The First 18 – The Devil’s Claw***

Gary Panks designed the Devil’s Claw course, which opened in November of 2000. Panks is well known for his course designs in Arizona (The Raven Golf Club and the Talon Course at Grayhawk) and places as far away as Thailand (Burapha Country Club) and Australia (Laguna Cays Resort). With his philosophy of showcasing the beauty of the natural terrain, Panks artfully blended the regal saguaro cacti and palo verde, mesquite and cottonwood trees with native grasses and rolling terrain. Only plants that are indigenous to the Gila River and its surrounding desert were used on this 7,017-yard, par 72 course.

Covering 242 acres, with 92 acres of turfed area and 150 acres of desert landscape, Panks’ design is “challenging but fair” for players of various handicaps. According to Mike Hurd, Whirlwind Golf Club Manager, “What makes the Devil’s Claw course distinctive is its combination of fairway elevation changes, signature bunkering, and superb course conditioning. A generous amount of turf in the landing areas makes for a golf course that is painless to play, yet not necessarily easy.”

Each of the 18 holes is named after a significant legend or landmark of the Pima and Maricopa Indians. Examples include:

- ***Hole #2 – Where the Dog Spoke – Par 4***  
This hole faces the Superstition Mountains to the east. In the Pima tribe’s story of creation, there is a legend that tells of a great flood and the dog that spoke to them urging them to move higher up the mountain to escape the floodwaters.
- ***Hole #5 – Coyote Tracks – Par 4***  
The sand traps on this hole bring to mind the tracks of the indigenous animals of the desert. To this day, Pima basket makers weave coyote-like tracks into their designs.
- ***Hole #6 – Home of the Wind – Par 5***  
The Estrella Mountains to the west, known as Komatke, were formed approximately six million years ago. To the Pima, Komatke has always been the home of the wind. Whirlwinds are seen in abundance on this stretch of desert land and gave rise to the name of Whirlwind Golf Club.
- ***Hole #7 – Dragonfly Falls – Par 3***  
Many native songs speak of water. One such song tells of the loud waters of the hot springs. The oriole hears it and wonders why it’s so loud. When he explores, he finds many different kinds of dragonflies hovering over the water, and it was the flapping of their wings that made the noise.

Hole #7 is the favorite of Head Golf Professional, Peggy Chapin, “because players must negotiate both a forced carry over water and a waterfall to the right of the green.”

- ***Hole #16 – Komatke Peaks – Par 4***  
With Komatke Mountain (South Mountain range) as a striking background for this hole, the many peaks stand out from a distance as solemnly as the traditional beliefs of this Native community.

- **Hole #17 – Sanctuary “Aji” – Par 5**

During battles with warring tribes, the Aji Mountain provided sanctuary for women and children. All mountains that stand alone far from other mountains are called Aji. From the top, people can see in all directions.

- **Hole #18 – Going Home – Par 4**

This hole symbolizes the return home for the golfer. There is always a song that lets people know the festivities are over and it's time to go home. The memory of this golfing experience can best be explained in a Going Home song that says, “Our songs are ending as you go your separate ways. Take along with you the good songs that were sung here today within your hearts.”

### ***The Second 18 – The Cattail***

A second 18-hole course, the Cattail, opened in October of 2002 with the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa. The Cattail, also designed by Gary Panks, complements the Devil's Claw course and hosted the Nationwide PGA Gila River Golf Classic from 2003 through 2005. The Cattail plays to more than 7,300 yards from the championship tees, and requires golfers to navigate over and around several water features and deep canyons.

### ***Green Fees, Information and Reservations***

Green fees at Whirlwind Golf Club range from \$55 in the summer months to \$150 in the winter high season, and include climate controlled golf cart, practice balls, bag tag and yardage guide. Group rates and package information are available upon request.

For **golf reservations**, contact Whirlwind Golf Club at 480-940-1500 or visit [www.whirlwindgolf.com](http://www.whirlwindgolf.com). For **resort information**, contact Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa at 602-225-0100 or [www.wildhorsepassresort.com](http://www.wildhorsepassresort.com).

The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, Arizona's only Native American-owned luxury resort, boasts 500 culturally-themed rooms, 36-holes of Troon Golf, the Aji spa, Koli, an onsite equestrian center and the resort's signature restaurant Kai, meaning 'Seed' in Pima and featuring James Beard Award-winner Janos Wilder as consulting chef. Conveniently located 11 miles from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport on the Gila River Indian Community, the resort offers a recreational, educational and inspirational experience never before available in a resort setting. The architecture, design, art and legends of the Pima and Maricopa tribes are celebrated in every detail imaginable, indoors and out.

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## SHERATON WILD HORSE PASS RESORT FEATURES SIGNATURE RESTAURANT: KAI

PHOENIX, ARIZ. --The essence and heritage of the Gila River Indian Community enriches every niche of the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa. Native artistry pervades the resort including **Kai**, the resort's signature restaurant, where the panorama of flavors is as expansive as the views from its terrace. The brilliance behind the sophisticated menu presentations, infused with Southwestern inspiration, is Consulting Chef Janos Wilder, and the result is a unique blend of the bold, indigenous flavors and colors of the Arizona land.

### ***The seeds...***

**Kai**, the Pima word for "seed," has great relevance to the people of the Gila River Indian Community: a connection to their past, their reverence for all of nature, and the belief that the land provides them with everything they need.

### ***The chefs...***

Wilder, a James Beard Award-winner, began cooking as a teenager, working in restaurants in Northern California, throughout Colorado, New Mexico and Bordeaux, France, before opening his restaurant, **Janos**, in Tucson, Arizona in 1983. During his culinary travels, Wilder developed an appreciation for the small farmer and artisan producer and their unique products. Upon opening his own restaurant, he became one of the first chefs to promote organic produce and the use of local, indigenous ingredients.

**Kai's** Chef de Cuisine, Jack Strong, formerly at The Phoenician Resort, shares Wilder's love of the land and local culture. A veteran of upscale resorts and restaurants, Strong hails from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians in Oregon and now lives his dream of incorporating his Native heritage into his menu creations.

### ***The roots...***

Not surprisingly, Wilder approached **Kai's** menu with gusto and passion, founding his menu on the products that have historically been cultivated in the Community. With its ancient roots grounded in agriculture, the Community has more than 35,000 acres of farms growing citrus, pistachios, olives, melons, and vegetables, and even aqua farms providing striped bass and other seafood. "There is a depth and breadth of great products here, and they are the heart and inspiration of my menus," explains Wilder.

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Arizona-processed olive oil is a staple in **Kai's** kitchen as is the variety of citrus grown locally. **Kai's** menu continuously evolves to highlight and reflect the seasonal changes and bounty of local crops, such as the sweet corn, gourds and melons.

"This is *personal* cooking, evoking a sense of place," says Wilder. "It's my take on how the foods of the region, both traditional to modern, form a menu which gives both a nod to the past and a look to the future."

### ***Native and Creative...***

Using familiar entree items such as rack of lamb and beef tenderloin, Wilder blends traditional Native American ingredients with flavors from Mexico and the Southwest to create a dish that is at once earthy, yet refined. "My goal is a menu that is both familiar *and* intriguing," says Wilder.

### ***The scene...***

Kai strives to be a place where sophisticated diners will encounter exciting, unusual flavors while others will find comfort in tastes that are friendly and soothing. This vision is reflected in the décor of the handsomely elegant dining room swathed in warm desert tones with richly carved dark woods, which add warmth and sophistication to the room. Decorated with a series of watercolor paintings by Gila River Indian Community artists with images of squash, prickly pear and fruit, the Pima and Maricopa culture, including artifacts and treasures, seed jars, baskets and harvesting tools are all understatedly displayed.

**Kai** can be enjoyed in several settings. In addition to the intimate dining room, the outdoor terrace offers stunning views of unforgettable sunsets, the Estrella Mountains and the wild horses that still roam freely. The **Kai** wine room can host a group of 15, allowing aficionados to dine surrounded by the carefully selected wine collection.

### ***The Kai Bar ...***

The centerpiece of the **Kai Bar** is a "display" kitchen, or "Bread Bar," where fresh fry bread, hand-made tortillas and Kai Kones are made to order. Martinis of specialty vodkas feature Community-grown citrus and pair delightfully with appetizers of Kaisadillas, Crispy Nopalitos, Tuna Ceviche or Kai Kones.

**Kai** serves dinner Tuesday through Thursday from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m., and on Fridays and Saturdays until 10:00 p.m. **Kai Bar** is open Tuesday through Saturday from 4:30 to 11:00 p.m. For reservations, call 602-225-0100.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**The Cowboys of Rawhide’s Western Theme Park Make the Move to Indian Country at Wild Horse Pass**

Phoenix, AZ – The Gila River Indian Community has finalized the purchase of the famed Rawhide Western Theme Park in Scottsdale and is preparing to move the Park to its new location on the reservation: Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass. The construction preparations have begun on the new 90-acre site and Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass is set to open in late December, 2005.

Rawhide, one of Arizona’s top tourist attractions with more than 600,000 visitors per year, has been a staple of family fun in Scottsdale for 35 years. When the former owner decided to sell the valuable land where Rawhide was located, the historic park began accepting proposals from potential buyers. Although more than 35 potential buyers came forward, Wild Horse Pass on the Gila River Indian Community was clearly the best opportunity to allow Rawhide to continue to flourish as a destination.

Wild Horse Pass is located just 11 miles southeast of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, next to Interstate 10, offering a high visibility location and plenty of acreage for Rawhide and any additional expansion of the Park. In addition, the Gila River Indian Community have proven business savvy in the tourism industry with the success of their luxury 500-room Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, Koli Equestrian Center, Gila River Casinos and 36-hole Troon-managed Whirlwind Golf Club, all located at Wild Horse Pass.

“Rawhide is a perfect fit at the Wild Horse Pass,” said Wild Horse Pass Development Authority General Manager Dale Gutenson. “We recognized immediately that adding a Western theme park to the current resort, spa, golf and casino truly sets the Gila River Indian Community apart from any other destination in Arizona and provides our visitors with a wide array of options and activities.”

Rawhide features a multitude of activities including the famous Steakhouse with nightly entertainment, a petting zoo, desert train ride, rock climbing, Wild West re-enactments, mechanical bull, several shopping outlets, outdoor cookouts, meeting and convention facilities and much more! Future plans for Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass include the addition of a Native American Village and water ride.

“Our team couldn’t be more excited about our move to Wild Horse Pass,” said Victor Ostrow, general manager of Rawhide. “Rawhide will continue to offer our world famous attractions and atmosphere but will also have new features such as a river cruise and dinner theater. It’s a new beginning for us and the opportunities are endless.”

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**KAI AT THE SHERATON WILD HORSE PASS RESORT & SPA RECEIVES  
RARE AND COVETED AAA FIVE DIAMOND AWARD FOR 2007**

**CHANDLER, AZ** (October 30, 2006) – Kai at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa in Chandler, AZ is awarded the hospitality industry's highest rating with the AAA Five Diamond Award. Kai is the only new Arizona restaurant and one of only six in the U.S. to be added to the prestigious list, marking the first time in history for any Sheraton property to receive this exclusive award. In addition, no other AAA Five Diamond Award-winner has ever been Native American owned or operated.

Kai opened in October of 2002 with unique cuisine, coined "Native American with Global Accents" and was immediately donned a AAA Four Diamond restaurant. Executive Chef Michael O'Dowd and Consulting Chef Janos Wilder worked closely with local Gila River Farms and Gila Crossing Elementary Schools to incorporate locally grown and indigenous ingredients into the menu based on classical European techniques woven with traditional techniques of Native Elders. When Mark Sneen, Director of Food & Beverage Outlets, joined the team in 2005, a new goal was set to reach the pinnacle of all restaurant achievements, the AAA Five Diamond Award.

Kai's perceived perfection was enhanced with dozens of small but crucial details, such as Reidel Sommelier glassware, one-of-a-kind menus, each featuring a watercolor painting by a local Tribal artisan, Frette linens, cultural greetings in the traditional Pima language, temperature-controlled flatware, and many other service techniques designed to delight guests with unparalleled service and an unforgettable dining experience.

"This is truly an honor and a tribute to our entire Resort staff," said Bunty Ahamed, General Manager. "The Kai experience begins with the call to reservations and continues with the valet at the front drive and the genuinely friendly staff that you'll encounter throughout your visit. Our team works tirelessly to anticipate the needs of our guests and we're thrilled that Kai's ability to execute flawless and unpretentious service along with amazing cuisine has garnered this prestigious award and has ranked our Resort among the best in the world."

Kai is one of only four AAA Five Diamond-rated restaurants in Arizona and will celebrate with several upcoming promotions that will incorporate the precious gem. The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa also received the AAA Four Diamond Award, ranking the Resort among the top in the world with a total of Nine Diamonds.

**Kai** is open from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 5:30 to 10:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Reservations are strongly encouraged. For reservations call 602-225-0100 or visit [www.opentable.com](http://www.opentable.com). For menus and additional resort information, visit [www.wildhorsepassresort.com](http://www.wildhorsepassresort.com).

To become AAA approved and diamond-rated, hotels and restaurants undergo a thorough inspection by one of AAA's 65 full-time highly trained professional evaluators. Five Diamond establishments complete a more extensive review that includes a series of inspections and final committee review. AAA's Four and Five Diamond Awards recognize North America's finest accommodations and restaurants for their exceptional quality, outstanding customer service and first-class amenities. This year's Five Diamond winners represent less than one quarter of one percent of the 60,000 properties AAA evaluated throughout North America.

The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, owned by the Gila River Indian Community and located on their 372,000-acre reservation, is a total destination resort showcasing the heritage, culture, art and legends of the Pima and Maricopa tribes. The resort offerings include: 500 culturally themed rooms; the 17,500 square-foot Native American Aji Spa; 36-holes of Troon-managed golf; the 1,000-acre Koli Equestrian Center, the Gila River Casino and Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass.

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