



Mira Vista Has a Storied History as Arizona Film Location

By Pete Williams AANR Staff Writer

With its storied history, upscale hotel rooms and condos, and a breathtaking Arizona desert landscape, Mira Vista Resort attracts nudist vacationers from across North America. From any spot on the Tucson property, there are breathtaking views of Sombrero Peak, the Santa Catalina Mountains, the Tucson Mountains, and Mount Lemmon.

Though the developed portion of the 30-acre resort takes up just four acres, the property seems larger, buffered as it is by undeveloped land. Dozens of species of birds flock to the property, along with rabbits, roadrunners, and javelinas—small wild-pig like herbivores. “We’re always going to have that rural desert atmosphere close to the edge of the mountains,” says Suzanne Schell, who along with her husband Wayne purchased the property in 2006 and converted it to nudist status. “The views that you see are never going to change.”

Since buying the property, the Schells have made a number of improvements to an already high-end retreat, most notably the addition of 38 condos that rank among the most luxurious in the nudist industry with granite countertops, oversized tile floors, and upgrades throughout. Many condo owners use their properties as full-time or primary residences, bringing a sense of community to the 300-member resort, which has a history as colorful as the dazzling red and orange landscape that seems to light up at sunset.

The property dates back to 1852, when it served as a stagecoach stop on the Butterfield Line, originally a mail delivery/passenger line running from St. Louis to San Francisco. Today, the bar is housed in the original stagecoach stop structure, which retains its authentic lava stone

construction, including the original stone bathtub. During the 1930s, the era of the modern dude ranch, the old Butterfield stop was renamed “Saguaro Vista Guest Ranch.” Because many old Westerns were filmed at nearby Universal Studios-Tucson, actors such as John Wayne, Greta Garbo, Cary Grant, and Katharine Hepburn, stayed at Mira Vista. Twelve of the original suites built at the time still stand and have been updated for Mira Vista’s guests. The original well is now the jacuzzi. In the 1980s, the Suzanne Somers Institute for the Effects of Addictions on the Family was founded for families affected by alcoholism. The actress/author opened a shelter for abused women on the property within the operations of Saguaro Vista Guest Ranch, providing a safe haven for women and children coming from abusive households. The property was sold in 1997, and the new owners returned it to its previous grandeur as a guest ranch, renaming it La Tierra Linda—“the beautiful land”—and spent \$1 million in renovations. The property underwent further renovations in 2004 when the resort underwent new ownership and was renamed Coyote Moon Health Resort and Spa, which closed late in 2005. The Schells, longtime owners of Laguna del Sol near Sacramento, recognized the nudist potential of the property, which is convenient to shopping and local attractions but situated in a rural desert area protected from high-density development. Tucson often is rated with communities like Boulder, Colorado, and Austin, Texas, among the country’s best mid-sized cities to live. Like Boulder and Austin, Tucson is anchored by the University of Arizona and the thousands of students that make the city home give the area a hip, energetic feel. Tucson also is a virtual paradise for anyone who enjoys hiking, cycling and the greater outdoors. As a nudist destination, the Mira Vista amenities are top-notch. The restaurant is furnished with Southwest décor and offers mountain views in every direction. The pool complex features a large heated swimming pool, a 40-foot long conversation pool, and water volleyball pool. In the midst of the complex is a ramada where visitors can get out of the sun while still enjoying the open-air feel.

Schell, long one of AANR’s most active club owners, said she’s proud to support AANR through the government affairs challenge, the proceeds from which go to AANR’s program that combats anti-nudist legislation. “The most important thing AANR does is to monitor and react to legislation through government affairs,” Schell said. “Even though we have a hard-working staff and volunteers, there are times AANR needs to engage the services of a lobbyist or attorney and you need to have those funds available.”

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