

Tucson weekend getaway

By **DAVID R. LANDAU**
FOR THE TRIBUNE

As the holiday season gets closer and closer on the calendar and preparations for family events start to take shape, it is important to find the time for a quick getaway.

However, with thoughts of holiday budgets, any getaway would need to be quick, inexpensive and fun. No true getaway should include more time traveling than relaxing and activities nor should it put too much strain on the wallet.

Tucson fits the bill perfectly for a pre-holiday getaway. The drive to Tucson is long enough to feel like you are getting away, yet not so far that conversation runs out.

My girlfriend and I opted to stay at the comfortable and affordable Doubletree Reid Park. We chose the hotel for a show that was being offered there as well as its proximity to Reid Park. Arriving well before check in, we stretched our legs walking around Reid Park, which is just across the street from the hotel.

Our room provided a stunning view of the Santa Catalina Mountains that provides Tucson its signature backdrop and our first destination: Sabino Canyon.

We took the short drive to the scenic canyon, which is very accessible. There are trams available that let everyone experience the sheer cliff walls and interesting rock formations regardless of their ability or inclination to hike.

It's a fun feeling being an "armchair adventurer" as you ride the tram deep into the canyon, admiring the streams, pools and massive boulders that dot the scene. The tram stops at intervals allowing visitors to get out walk around. For those interested in mountain trails, these stops provide a great jumping off point; we could see hikers high up in the canyon along Telegraph Trail.

That night at our hotel we purchased tickets for a unique magic show, Carnival of Illusion which is playing exclusively at the Doubletree weekends through May 2011. The show is inspired by the parlor shows of old, where magic was performed close up in people's homes. The intimate venue adds to the parlor feel. Carnival of Illusion performers Susan Eyed and Roland Sarlot are masters of the craft, combining dance, humor, and storytelling for a very entertaining show. Tickets sell out quickly so it's best to buy in advance.

The next morning we were ready for our final stop on our getaway. Reid Park Zoo is a compact, well maintained zoo and a real pleasure to visit. An opportunity to get up-close and personal with giraffes is a highlight.

As we drove back we discussed how much we packed in to one overnight trip. With a little planning, a relaxing and fun getaway is in reach. The key is often to choose a destination that is just far enough and stay close to the attractions you want to see. Just don't wait until the holiday guests start arriving.

AZ Tourist News publishes quarterly across the southwest United States and online at aztourist.com.