



Destination Guide: Phoenix



Top Picks From AAA Travel Editors - Travel information you can trust

AAA Destination Guide: Official AAA maps, travel information and top picks

AAA Destination Guide: Phoenix includes trip-planning information covering AAA recommended attractions and restaurants, exclusive member discounts, maps and more.

Before it acquired its firebird affiliation, Phoenix was known in the Navajo language as *Hoozdo*. Translation: “This place is hot!” While the Navajo were referring to the area’s desert temperatures, the description suits the mythologically named city in other ways—Phoenix is one of the country’s hottest destinations for work and play.

Lying on the periphery of the Sonoran Desert, home of the native saguaro cactus, the Valley of the Sun’s natural landscape can be harsh and unforgiving. Yet it’s also hauntingly beautiful, with expanses of exotic desert vegetation, breathtaking mountains and bright rock mesas in shades of orange, red and yellow. Cultivated neighborhoods are just as lush—oases carved from stark desert. Palm and citrus trees thrive on golf courses, fuchsia bougainvillea blooms on mailboxes and walls of pink oleander line the roads.

But the landscape isn’t all that’s scorchingly spectacular. You’ll find a vivacious, lively arts scene in metropolitan Phoenix. Visit the Heard Museum for its renowned Native American exhibits or inspect masterpieces at the Phoenix Museum of Art. Enjoy a symphony or catch a Broadway show at the city’s world-class venues. And of course, *dahling*, you must visit one of those spas that everyone’s talking about.

As the Navajo say, Phoenix is hot!

Essentials

Touch scarlet cactus fruit, marvel at the iridescent wings of hummingbirds and watch butterflies touch down on wildflowers and giant saguaro cactus at the [Desert Botanical Garden](#), where you’ll find plenty of Sonoran Desert wonders to admire.

Hike to the summit of Camelback Mountain. The double-humped peak soars above Paradise Valley and Arcadia. Climbing the vertical mile up the Summit Trail, you’ll know why it’s called the “Scenic Stairmaster”—this is no casual amble (and don’t forget to bring water). At the top, scan



the spectacular panorama of the Sonoran Desert and metropolitan Phoenix.

Pamper yourself in one of the spa capitals of the world. Walking through the tranquil lobby of the [Arizona Biltmore, The Waldorf Astoria Collection](#)—with its architecture inspired by

Frank Lloyd Wright—is a great way to begin your luxurious experience. At the spa, tie on a thick robe and delight in a cactus flower wrap or a Sonoran stone massage.

Do a little shopping in [Scottsdale’s Old Town](#). The Southwestern architecture reflects the region’s blend of Wild West, Native American and Latino influences—and so do the wares. Look for silver and turquoise jewelry, handmade crafts and even cowboy duds. The area is brimming with antiques shops, piled to the rafters with unusual items like Oriental decanters, gold pocket watches and Turkish rugs.

Be a cowpoke for a day and ride a horse through Sonoran Desert country. In the foothills of [South Mountain Park](#), you can trot and canter along more than 40 miles of trails. Hire horses and guides through



Ponderosa Stables or South Mountain Stables (*see Recreation*), or contact the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Take an art walk on “First Fridays.” The giant art fair happens on Roosevelt Street just north of downtown on the first Friday of every month. Galleries and art studios stay open late, and the sidewalks are crowded with family strollers, designer-outfitted hipsters and street performers. This is a culture clash you can appreciate.

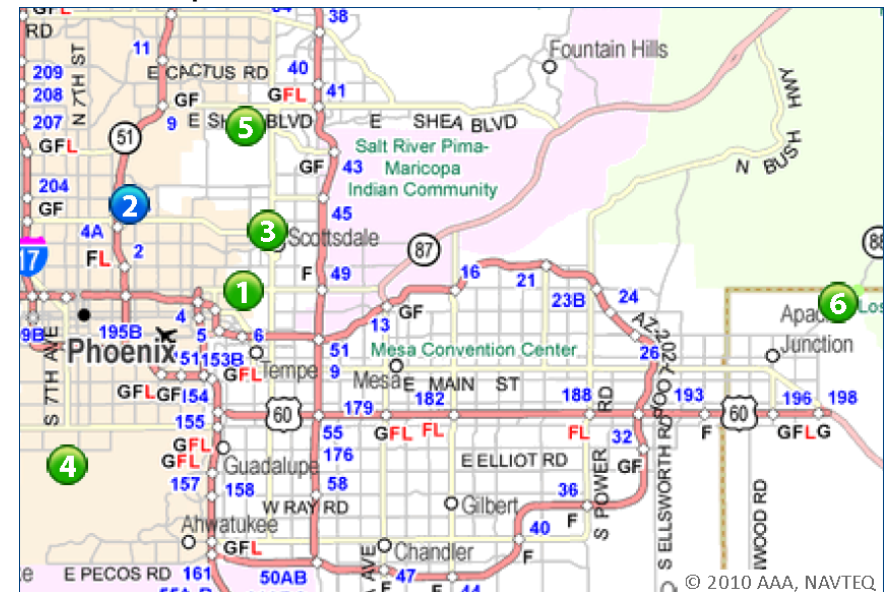
“Batter up!” If it’s March or early April, catch spring training with Major League Baseball’s Cactus League. In the autumn, check out the Arizona Fall League, a proving ground for Major League farm teams. Phoenix is a hot place for sports—this is the hometown of the NBA Suns, the NHL Coyotes, the NFL Cardinals and MLB Diamondbacks.

Hear bells at Cosanti in Paradise Valley. Paolo Soleri, an architect, sculptor and protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright, founded this site to further his organically inspired architecture. As you tour Arcosanti, observe the many spiraling, swooping edifices—there aren’t any box-shaped buildings here. Sales from the foundation’s renowned windbells support Soleri’s structural experiments, and most weekday mornings, you can watch foundry workers pour the bronze bells.

Pan for gold at Goldfield Ghost Town & Mine Tours. The first gold strike came to this once-bustling town in 1892. The gold didn’t last, but the scenery is a rich pay-off—the town perches on a hill between the breathtakingly desolate Superstition Mountains and the equally stark Goldfield Mountains. When you pan for gold, look for a telltale sparkle in the sunlight. You just might get lucky!

Up, up and away—in a hot air balloon. From high in the clouds, witness the majesty of the desert and the amazing grid organization of Phoenix (from above, it looks like a giant computer chip). The convention and visitors bureau can provide a list of companies.



Essentials Map



Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using [TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com](#)

Essentials Details - [Get additional information on AAA.com;](#)

AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)

-  - GEM Attraction offers a *Great Experience for Members*
-  - Exclusive AAA member discounts available

1. Desert Botanical Garden

1201 N Galvin Pkwy
Phoenix, AZ 85008
Phone: (480) 941-1225



2. Arizona Biltmore, The Waldorf Astoria Collection

2400 E Missouri Ave
Phoenix, AZ
Phone: (602) 955-6600

3. Scottsdale

4. South Mountain Park

10919 S Central Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85042
Phone: (602) 534-6328

5. Cosanti

6433 E Doubletree Ranch Rd
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
Phone: (480) 948-6145

6. Goldfield Ghost Town & Mine Tours

4650 N Mammoth Mine Rd
Apache Junction, AZ 85219
Phone: (480) 983-0333



Phoenix in 3 Days

Three days is barely enough time to get to know any major destination. But AAA travel editors suggest these activities to make the most of your time in Phoenix.

Phoenix and its surrounding areas comprise more than 400 square miles, so it is essential to have a car or some other form of transportation when visiting. Available parking spots are abundant outside the immediate downtown Phoenix area.

Phoenix in 3 Days – Day 1 Map



Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com

Day 1: Morning

Start your trip by communing with nature at the [Desert Botanical Garden](#) in [Papago Park](#) on the east side of town. This is where visitors really come to understand the majesty of the Sonoran Desert and Phoenix's arid climate.

Next, drive south in Papago Park and enjoy the scenery—sandstone buttes dramatically jut skyward. Stop at the [Phoenix Zoo](#) and check out all the warm-blooded species that live in replications of their own natural habitats.

Day 1 Details - Get additional information on [AAA.com](#);
AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)



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- Exclusive AAA member discounts available

1. Desert Botanical Garden

1201 N Galvin Pkwy
 Phoenix, AZ 85008
 Phone: (480) 941-1225



6. Heard Museum

2301 N Central Ave
 Phoenix, AZ 85004
 Phone: (602) 252-8840



2. Papago Park

625 N Galvin Pkwy
 Phoenix, AZ 85008
 Phone: (602) 256-3220

7. Phoenix Art Museum

1625 N Central Ave
 Phoenix, AZ 85004
 Phone: (602) 257-1222



3. Phoenix Zoo

455 N Galvin Pkwy
 Phoenix, AZ 85008
 Phone: (602) 273-1341



8. Arizona Capitol Museum

1700 W Washington St
 Phoenix, AZ 85007
 Phone: (602) 926-3620



4. Honey Bear's BBQ

2824 N Central Ave
 Phoenix, AZ 85004
 Phone: (602) 279-7911

9. Pizzeria Bianco

623 E Adams St
 Phoenix, AZ 85004
 Phone: (602) 258-8300

5. Coronado Cafe

2201 N 7th St
 Phoenix, AZ 85006
 Phone: (602) 258-5149

10. Barrio Cafe

2814 N 16th St
 Phoenix, AZ 85006
 Phone: (602) 636-0240

11. Fate 905

905 N 4th St
 Phoenix, AZ 85004
 Phone: (602) 254-6424

Afternoon

For lunch, head toward downtown where you'll spend the rest of the day. North of town, grab a spicy barbecue sandwich or some ribs at [Honey Bear's BBQ](#) or some traditional eats with flair at the cozy, hip [Coronado Café](#). Coronado's gooey cookies are famous with locals.

Now duck indoors away from the desert heat at the [Heard Museum](#), where you can view fascinating exhibits about Native American cultures and arts.

Also on N. Central Avenue, you can peruse the masters: Picasso, Rodin and Monet. Stop at [Phoenix Art Museum](#) for some high art. You'll find more than 17,000 works from many art periods, ancient to contemporary.

A little bit to the west, a visit to the [Arizona Capitol Museum](#) will definitely satisfy any history buff who wants to learn more about state's fascinating beginnings.

Evening

For dinner in the area, try [Pizzeria Bianco](#). It may take a while to be seated, but the wood-fired oven pizza is worth the wait. The wine bar next door, Bar Bianco, is a relaxed, hip spot to pass the time. If you're in the mood for "modern Mexican" try [Barrio Cafe](#). And if Asian is on your mind, don't miss funky [Fate 905](#), located in an old house. The pad Thai noodles are legendary.

Day 2: Morning

Get an early start and enjoy some desert landscape. Hike up Camelback Mountain on Summit Trail. **Note:** This is a rigorous hike, so bring plenty of water.

If you'd prefer to see the landscape from a different vantage point, try riding a horse through Sonoran Desert landscape. Horses and guides can be hired through Ponderosa Stables or South Maintain Stables, or contact the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau; phone (877) 225-5749.

For a true bird's eye view, a popular way to witness the desert's beauty is in a hot air balloon. The convention and visitors' bureau can offer referrals to approved companies.

For those who want to relax, the resorts here are top notch. Pamper yourself at the [Arizona Biltmore](#), [The Waldorf Astoria Collection](#). The tranquil lobby was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, so the

location alone might slow down your blood pressure. But don't miss a massage or facial in the spa. And you don't have to be a guest to enjoy the hotel, so if the spa isn't your thing, how about a mimosa or bloody Mary poolside?

Afternoon

After sun, salts or Sonoran desert, you've worked up an appetite. There are plenty of eateries close by. Try [Miracle Mile Delicatessen](#), a New York-style deli known for its pastrami sandwiches. Or maybe you'd prefer succulent baby back ribs or a salad at [Phoenix City Grille](#). If you want a quick bite, there's no better place than gourmet market La Grande Orange Grocery. They serve salads, sushi, thick sandwiches and eggs until 4 pm. For those who truly want authentic cuisine, head to [The Fry Bread House](#), where patrons are treated to genuine Navajo fry bread tacos.

After lunch, venture south to see one of the quirkiest buildings around: [Mystery Castle](#), which is located at the base of the South Mountains. The story about why and how the house was built is as interesting as the structure.

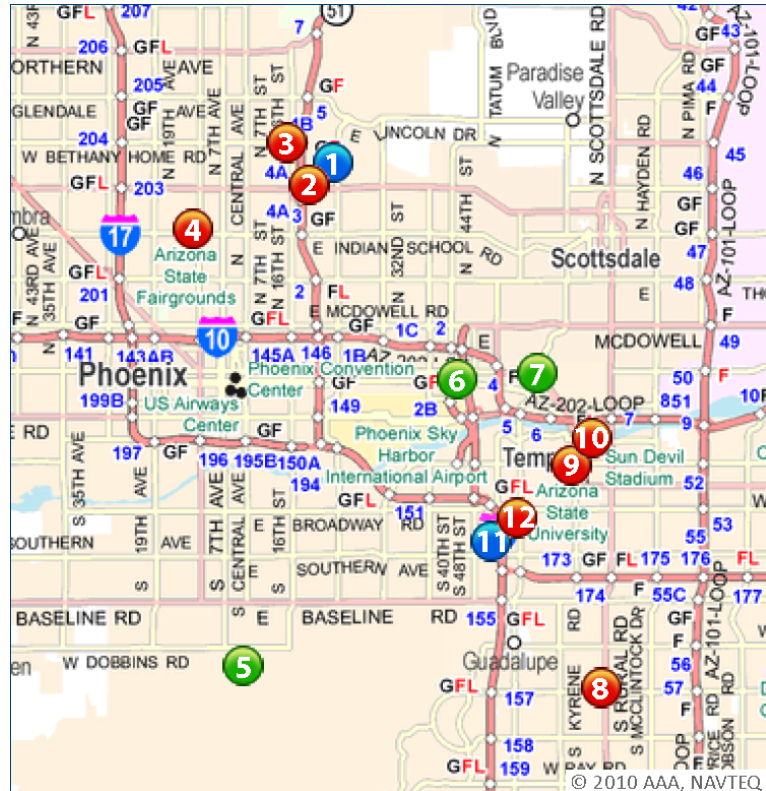
If you'd like to learn more about the area, travel east toward Papago Park (you were there yesterday) to see the [Pueblo Grande Museum](#). You'll walk among the village ruins where the Hohokam Indians lived for 1500 years. Nearby, really turn up the heat at the [Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting](#) with its fascinating in-depth exhibits about fire tools, firefighting techniques and the fireman's profession.

Evening

Most of the year, you can catch a professional sports game in Phoenix. Score some tickets to see the NBA Suns shoot from the three-point line at US Airways Center. Head out to watch the NHL Coyotes skate at the Jobing.com Arena in Glendale. Or make it to the seventh-inning stretch when you cheer for the MLB Diamondbacks at Chase Field. If it's March or April, try to catch Major League Baseball's spring training by going to a Cactus League game.

So sports doesn't cut it for you? Head to Tempe's Mill Avenue District for a night out on the town. More restaurants and cafés are located here than anywhere in Arizona. Wander the brick sidewalks and do some people-watching. Try John Henry's Continental Italian Cuisine for fabulous pastas and salads, Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant for great microbrews and burgers, or My Big Fat Greek Restaurant for tzatziki and spanikopita. Or, if you're in the mood for upscale, visit The Buttes, A Marriott Resort. The resort's Top of the Rock Restaurant is quite an experience—desert rocks jut through the dining room floor, and there are spectacular vista views. After dinner, stroll the Mill Avenue District and slip into one of the many nightclubs for some jazz or dancing.

Phoenix in 3 Days – Day 2 Map



Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using [TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com](#)

Day 2 Details - Get additional information on [AAA.com](#); AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)



- GEM Attraction offers a *Great Experience for Members*



- Exclusive AAA member discounts available

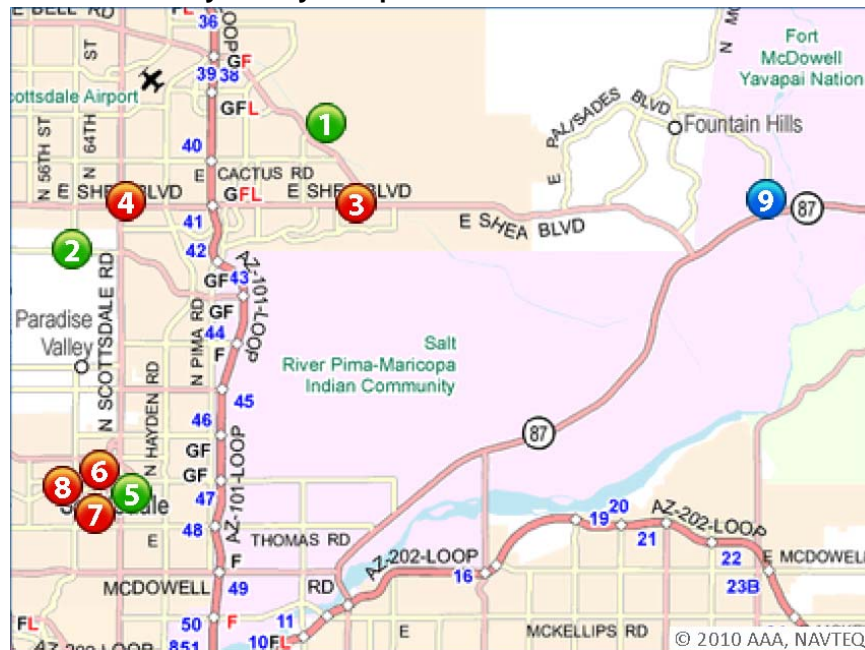
- 1. Arizona Biltmore, The Waldorf Astoria Collection** 
2400 E Missouri Ave
Phoenix, AZ
Phone: (602) 955-6600
- 2. Miracle Mile Delicatessen** 
1949 E Camelback Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85016
Phone: (602) 776-0992
- 3. Phoenix City Grille** 
5816 N 16th St
Phoenix, AZ 85016
Phone: (602) 266-3001
- 4. The Fry Bread House** 
4140 N 7th Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85013
Phone: (602) 351-2345
- 5. Mystery Castle**
800 E Mineral Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85040
Phone: (602) 268-1581
- 6. Pueblo Grande Museum**
4619 E Washington St
Phoenix, AZ 85034
Phone: (877) 706-4408
- 7. Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting**
6101 E Van Buren St
Phoenix, AZ 85008
Phone: (602) 275-3473
- 8. John Henry's Continental Italian Cuisine** 
909 E Elliot Rd
Tempe, AZ 85284
Phone: (480) 730-9009
- 9. Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant** 
420 S Mill Ave
Tempe, AZ 85281
Phone: (480) 736-0033
- 10. My Big Fat Greek Restaurant** 
525 S Mill Ave
Tempe, AZ 85281
Phone: (480) 966-5883
- 11. The Buttes, A Marriott Resort** 
2000 Westcourt Way
Tempe, AZ 85282
Phone: (602) 225-9000
- 12. Top of the Rock Restaurant** 
2000 Westcourt Way
Tempe, AZ 85282
Phone: (602) 431-2370

Day 3: Morning

Spend the day in Scottsdale, east of Phoenix. Tour the grounds and building complex at Taliesin West, the winter home of Frank Lloyd Wright. The desert sights are breathtaking.

For more fabulous architecture and interesting buildings, make your way to Cosanti in Paradise Valley. This is where in the 1950s famed sculptor Paolo Soleri began building an experimental complex of structures. Buy some wind chimes or one of the thousands of bells for sale in the gift gallery.

Phoenix in 3 Days – Day 3 Map



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Afternoon

For a lunch located close to Taliesin West, go to du Jour Restaurant, the on-campus training facility for students of the Arizona Culinary Institute. Or, in Scottsdale, down a wood-fired pizza or a hummus pita at Pita Jungle.

Get out of the middle-of-the-day desert sun and enjoy a stroll around the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art to enjoy a premier modern art collection. The museum is chockablock with seminal Abstract, Cubist and Expressionist works.

Promenade through Old Town in Scottsdale and do a little shopping in the midst of historic western architecture. This is no ghost town—there are plenty of stores and galleries brimming with clothing, arts and antiques.

Day 3 Details - Get additional information on [AAA.com](#);

AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)



- GEM Attraction offers a *Great Experience for Members*

FYI – Provided as an information only service; has not yet been evaluated

1. Taliesin West

12621 N Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd
Scottsdale, AZ 85261
Phone: (480) 860-8810



2. Cosanti

6433 E Doubletree Ranch Rd
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
Phone: (480) 948-6145

3. du Jour Restaurant (FYI)

10585 N 114th St
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Phone: (480) 603-1066

4. Pita Jungle

7366 E Shea Blvd
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
Phone: (480) 922-7482

5. Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art

7374 E 2nd St
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Phone: (480) 874-4666

6. Roaring Fork

4800 N Scottsdale Rd, Suite 1700
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Phone: (480) 947-0795

7. Malee's Thai On Main

7131 E Main St
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Phone: (480) 947-6042

8. Old Town Tortilla Factory

6910 E Main St
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Phone: (480) 945-4567

9. Radisson Fort McDowell Resort & Casino

10438 N Fort McDowell Rd
Scottsdale, AZ
Phone: (480) 789-5300

Evening

For dinner, enjoy an upscale establishment. Try the large [Roaring Fork](#), which specializes in Southwestern dishes and sauces.

If you're in the mood for a more casual meal, [Malee's Thai On Main](#) is a popular Asian eatery with great outdoor seating. The [Old Town Tortilla Factory](#) serves homemade tortillas and killer enchiladas.

Feeling lucky? Head to the [Radisson Fort McDowell Resort & Casino](#). It's a low-key, 24-hour casino, and it's a fun way to wile away the night.

Restaurants



Owned and operated by Native Americans, [The Fry Bread House](#) dishes out delightful creations, all made with “fry bread.” Navajo Indians first made this pastry after the U.S. Army gave them rations of white flour—

something they'd never seen before. This central Phoenix establishment makes fry-bread tacos filled with ground meat, cheese and beans and slathered with red or green chili sauces. For a sweet dessert try the honey-covered fry bread, served piping hot and sprinkled with powdered sugar.

[Joe's Real BBQ](#) in Gilbert smokes its own meat and chicken over pecan grill fires for an unbeatable flavor. Try the tender ribs, the barbecue pit beans (chunky with meat) and the zesty coleslaw. For dessert, there's home-made root beer and brownies. On weekends, take-out service may be faster—there's usually a line out the door—but you just might want to wait and enjoy the fun of serve-yourself eating on the outdoor patio. Locals know Joe's as a great place to take the kids.

The pizzas at [Pizzeria Bianco](#) are made to order and topped with the likes of red onion, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and Arizona pistachios. Like the pizza, roasted vegetables for the antipasto are prepared in wood-fired ovens, where chef Chris Bianco smokes his own mozzarella

each morning. This energetic and casual downtown hangout is frequented by local restaurateurs. While waiting for your table, stop at the wine bar next door.

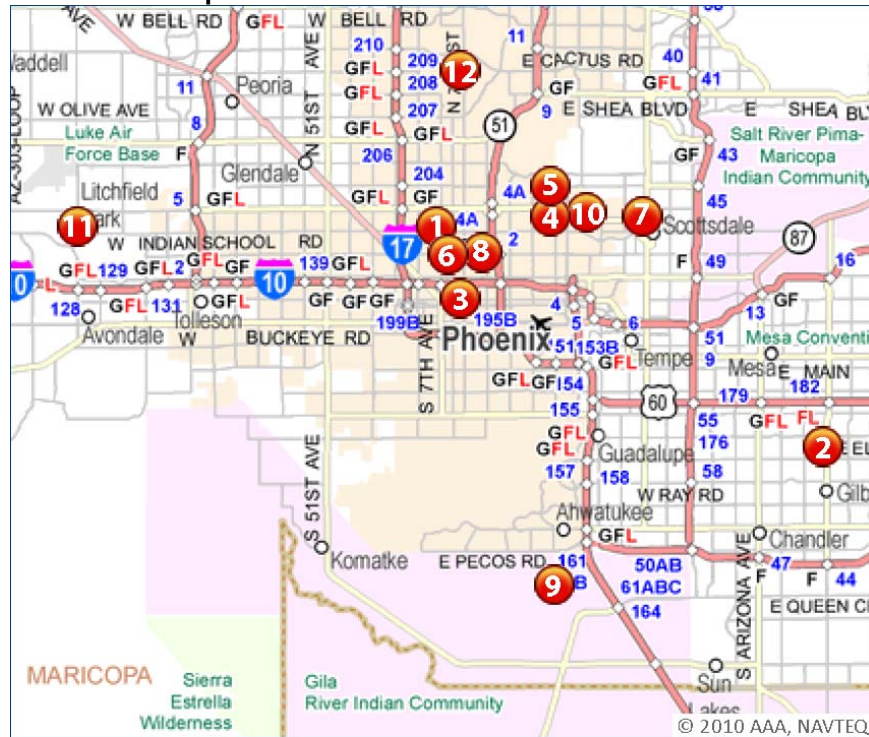
In the recycled Arcadia post office, [Postino Winecafe](#) blends Mediterranean tastes and flavors. Try the bruschetta on a serving board with toppings of roasted artichoke or ricotta with pistachios. Freshly made soups, crisp salads and panini sandwiches round out the menu. Service is relaxed, and the décor is charming—garage-style glass doors open to the sunny outside dining patio. There's always a waiting line for lunch.

At [Vincent on Camelback](#) in central Phoenix, chef-owner Vincent Guerithault prepares dishes with French flair, using fresh seafood, lobster, veal, duck, lamb, beef and Cornish hen. The wait staff works as a seamless team to provide a high level of attention and expertise in each of several intimate dining rooms. Though the sauces are French, the cuisine style is “light.” Order the dessert soufflés—they're big enough for two and worth the short preparation time.

For great steaks, a warm, friendly atmosphere and accomplished service, [Durant's](#) fits the bill. The meat is aged to perfection, and a series of “Porterhouse Club” plaques on the walls attest to all the diners who've eaten the 48-ounce Porterhouse steak in one sitting. Fresh seafood is flown in daily and includes stone crab (in season) and Idaho trout. As you're walking in from the parking area, be sure to greet the grill chef as you pass through the kitchen. Durant's has been in business for more than 50 years and is often mentioned as the best place in town for steaks; the well-trained staff strives to make every visit exceptional.

[Roaring Fork](#) in Scottsdale is ideal for any special occasion. Service is consistently friendly and accomplished, and chef Robert McGrath combines Southwestern herbs and sauces with meat and fish in unique ways; his “campfire-cooked” salmon is a signature dish. From a spectacular dessert list, the toffee chocolate pecan pie is a dieter's downfall. The warm and intimate dining rooms of this “American Western bistro” have canal views and small niches for romantic dining.

Restaurants Map



Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using [TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com](#)

“Modern Mexican Cuisine” is the theme of the [Barrio Cafe](#), where creative blends of traditional sauces enhance such dishes as enchiladas with chicken or fish grilled in banana leaf. The guacamole, made tableside with fresh avocados, spices and pomegranate seeds, may be the best you’ve ever eaten. Dessert churros are crispy cinnamon and sugar-sprinkled fritters filled with *dulce de leche* and topped with homemade vanilla ice cream—a heavenly end to any evening.

Using Arizona’s indigenous foods, chefs Sandy Garcia and Janos Wilder at [Kai](#) have created a changing menu of seasonal recipes—many featuring Native American ingredients and spices. Heirloom produce comes from ancient seeds cultivated by Southwestern tribal groups. Specialties include soup made with huitlacoche, a smoky-tasting fungus

**Restaurants Details - Get additional information on [AAA.com](#);
AAA Diamond Rating information available on [AAA.com/Diamonds](#)**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. The Fry Bread House </p> <p>4140 N 7th Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85013
Phone: (602) 351-2345</p> | <p>7. Roaring Fork </p> <p>4800 N Scottsdale Rd, Suite 1700
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Phone: (480) 947-0795</p> |
| <p>2. Joe's Real BBQ </p> <p>301 N Gilbert Rd
Gilbert, AZ 85234
Phone: (480) 503-3805</p> | <p>8. Barrio Cafe </p> <p>2814 N 16th St
Phoenix, AZ 85006
Phone: (602) 636-0240</p> |
| <p>3. Pizzeria Bianco </p> <p>623 E Adams St
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: (602) 258-8300</p> | <p>9. Kai </p> <p>5594 W Wild Horse Pass Blvd
Chandler, AZ 85226
Phone: (602) 385-5726</p> |
| <p>4. Postino Winecafe </p> <p>3939 E Campbell Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85018
Phone: (602) 852-3939</p> | <p>10. T. Cook's </p> <p>5200 E Camelback Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85018
Phone: (602) 808-0766</p> |
| <p>5. Vincent on Camelback </p> <p>3930 E Camelback Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85018
Phone: (602) 224-0225</p> | <p>11. Arizona Kitchen </p> <p>300 Wigwam Blvd
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340
Phone: (623) 935-3811</p> |
| <p>6. Durant's </p> <p>2611 N Central Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: (602) 264-5967</p> | <p>12. Different Pointe of View </p> <p>11111 N 7th St
Phoenix, AZ 85020
Phone: (602) 866-6350</p> |

that grows on ears of corn; pan-seared duck breast with prickly pear compote; and beef tenderloin with a pomegranate demi-glace. In this elegant, modern space, you’ll savor every bite.

Looking for a romantic getaway? Make a reservation at [T. Cook’s](#), where elegant high ceilings and flowing draperies create Old World ambiance. This restaurant in the [Royal Palms Resort and Spa](#) offers a selection of Mediterranean entrées, including delectable rotisserie dishes. Try the

jumbo lump crab cake served with lemon thyme butter or the house specialty, osso buco with bleu cheese risotto.

In Litchfield Park, the Arizona territorial decor at [Arizona Kitchen](#) creates an attractive, upscale backdrop for the restaurant's centerpiece—its display kitchen. Here you can watch the preparation of imaginative Southwestern cuisine in a well-choreographed dance. The *guajillo* chili-rubbed veal chop and pepita crusted ahi tuna are highlights; a memorable dessert combines the heat of *guajillo* peppers with cool homemade ice cream, served in a spun sugar bowl.

French-influenced Mediterranean cuisine isn't the only star at [Different Pointe of View](#). This restaurant at the [Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs Resort](#) sits some 700 feet above Phoenix, offering a spectacular sunset view of the valley and its sparkling evening lights. From thick and creamy soups like lobster bisque to delicate fish in savory sauces, the menu takes advantage of fresh seasonal ingredients. The award-winning international wine list is another selling point.

Attractions



In a city with dozens of attractions, you may have trouble deciding where to spend your time. Here are the highlights for this destination, as chosen by AAA editors. GEMs are "Great Experiences for Members."

Welcome to the Grand Canyon State's biggest city. Phoenix is a young town, incorporated in 1881, but that doesn't mean it's lacking in attractions. You'll find an abundance of things to do here, and the beautiful weather allows for year-round sightseeing. When planning an outing, keep in mind that the Valley of the Sun—which includes the cities of Phoenix, Tempe, Scottsdale, Mesa, Sun City and Glendale—covers an area of more than 50 miles. Traveling from one end of the expansive valley to the other can take some time, but the trip is worth it.

For a first stop, learn about the area's terrain. Take a guided tour or wander the paths of the [Desert Botanical Garden](#), set against a backdrop of ruby-colored bluffs in [Papago Park](#). With more than 50 acres of outdoor exhibits, this AAA GEM attraction boasts thousands of species of plants adapted to the dry landscape. You'll see native and exotic cacti and succulents, and during the flowering season from March to May, the bright wildflowers are especially dramatic.

While you're in Papago Park, head over to the [Phoenix Zoo](#). Forget about penguins and caribou; this place houses 200 species mostly from warm or arid environments. The creatures live in replications of natural habitats—baboons hang out in an African savanna, and huge Galapagos tortoises roam in rocky terrain. The zoo's landscaping is impressive, with tropical jungles and grasslands so real you'll forget you're in the desert.

Stroll through the [Heard Museum](#), a AAA GEM attraction that highlights the rich history and arts of American indigenous cultures. The downtown museum has more than 35,000 pieces in its permanent collection—pottery, jewelry, sculpture, textiles, hundreds of katsina dolls—but the layout is so seamless you won't feel overwhelmed. The ten exhibit galleries are thoroughly informative and serene.

Not far from the Heard, adjacent to Heritage Square, is the extraordinary glass-and-steel [Phoenix Museum of History](#). Here you can learn about the area's bygone times, from the sinking of the USS *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor to Camp McDowell. There are exhibits about Arizona pioneers, ostrich farms, rodeos, gold mines, highways, reservations—even such interactive displays as aroma-smelling barrels. After a visit here, your senses will know the city's tale.

See fire-engine red at the [Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting](#) in downtown Phoenix. This AAA GEM attraction is one of the world's largest firefighting museums, housing a vast collection of classic fire trucks. You'll see a hand-pumper dating back to 1725 England as well as classic 20th-century engines. The museum has more than 90 vehicles in all, shined and primed.

Attractions Details - Get additional information on AAA.com



- GEM Attraction offers a *Great Experience for Members*



- Exclusive AAA member discounts available

1. Desert Botanical Garden

1201 N Galvin Pkwy
Phoenix, AZ 85008
Phone: (480) 941-1225



2. Papago Park

625 N Galvin Pkwy
Phoenix, AZ 85008
Phone: (602) 256-3220

3. Phoenix Zoo Offers

455 N Galvin Pkwy
Phoenix, AZ 85008
Phone: (602) 273-1341



4. Heard Museum

2301 N Central Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: (602) 252-8840



5. Phoenix Museum of History

105 N 5th St
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: (602) 253-2734



6. Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting

6101 E Van Buren St
Phoenix, AZ 85008
Phone: (602) 275-3473



7. Arizona Capitol Museum

1700 W Washington St
Phoenix, AZ 85007
Phone: (602) 926-3620



8. Arizona Science Center

600 E Washington St
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: (602) 716-2000



9. Mystery Castle

800 E Mineral Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85040
Phone: (602) 268-1581

10. Pueblo Grande Museum

4619 E Washington St
Phoenix, AZ 85034
Phone: (877) 706-4408



11. Deer Valley Rock Art Center

3711 W Deer Valley Rd
Glendale, AZ 85308
Phone: (623) 582-8007



12. Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art

7374 E 2nd St
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Phone: (480) 874-4666

13. Pioneer Arizona Living History Village and Museum

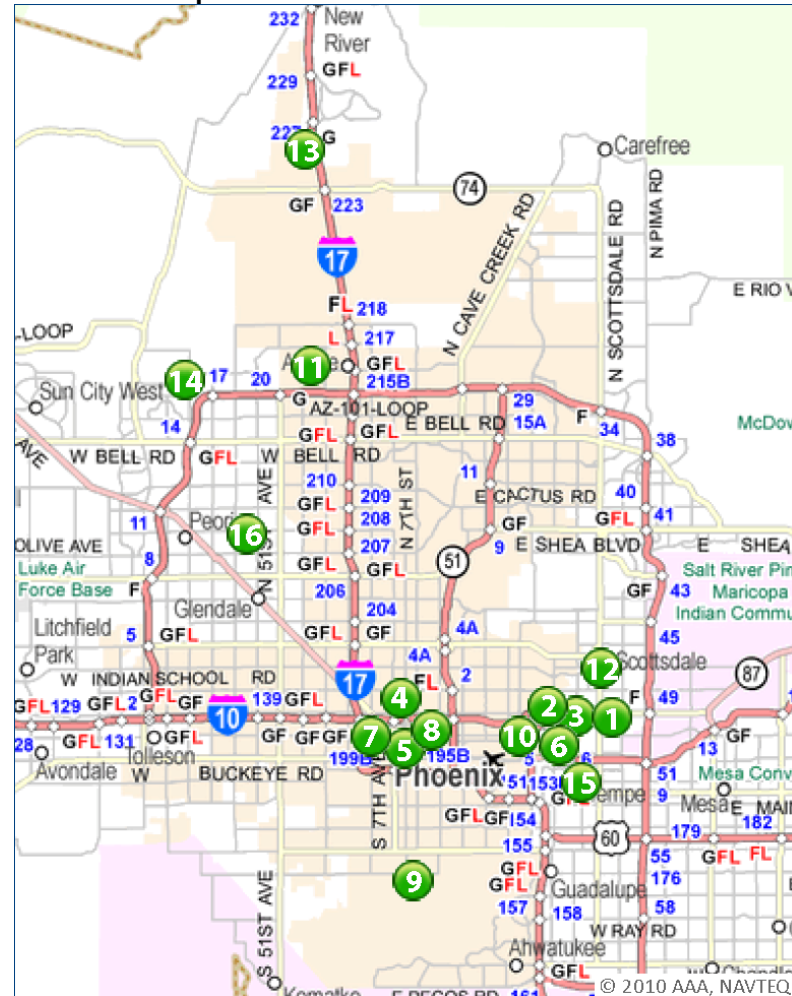
3901 W Pioneer Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85086
Phone: (623) 465-1052



14. Challenger Space Center

21170 N 83rd Ave
Peoria, AZ 85382
Phone: (623) 322-2001

Attractions Map



Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using [TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com](http://TripTik.com)

15. Arizona State University Art Museum

10th St & Mill Ave
Tempe, AZ 85281
Phone: (480) 965-2787

16. Historic Sahuaro Ranch

9802 N 59th Ave
Glendale, AZ 85302
Phone: (623) 435-0072



The Arizona Capitol Museum, another AAA GEM attraction, has a copper roof symbolizing an important state industry: mining. Inside, you'll gain an understanding of how the rough-and-tumble Arizona Territory became a state in 1912. The downtown museum no longer serves as the capitol building, but visitors can walk through former state offices and chambers and explore interactive exhibits. Artifacts include the silver service removed from the USS *Arizona* before it sailed to its fate in Pearl Harbor.

Want to find out how something works? Start your inquiries at the Arizona Science Center, which offers more than 300 hands-on exhibits explaining the world and its workings. At this educational playground you can experiment with gravity and friction, test the weather and learn about the human body and brain. There's also has a planetarium and a five-story IMAX theater. You're bound to have fun here—and learn something, too.

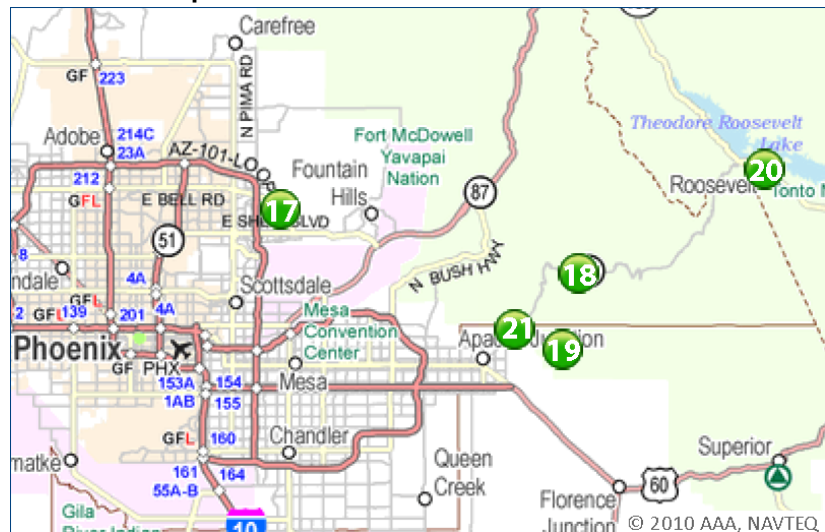
Tour the weirdest, wildest building in town: Mystery Castle at the foot of the South Mountains. An extraordinary example of folk art, this adobe and stone house is a structural jumble. Boyce Luther Gulley began building the three-story dwelling in the 1930s for his daughter, using glass

bottles and other bizarre materials—goat's milk, mortar, calcium, auto parts—to fashion crenellated turrets and parapets. The daughter for whom the castle was built gives daily tours.

Phoenix's first inhabitants are the focus of the Pueblo Grande Museum, near Sky Harbor Airport. This museum and the surrounding ruins offer a fascinating look at a vanished culture, the Hohokam Indians, who lived here for more than 1,500 years. You can walk through the ruins of a village that was mysteriously abandoned in the 15th century. The site artifacts on display are as interesting as the ruins; an outdoor trail leads to reconstructed and furnished Hohokam-style houses.



From the trail at the 47-acre Deer Valley Rock Art Center in Hedgpeth Hills, you can see more than 1,500 petroglyphs on hundreds of boulders. Some of the religiously significant petroglyphs at this sacred site were carved into the rocks more than 5,000 years ago; many animal motifs tell hunting stories. Before you start on the trail, rent binoculars to get an up-close look at these ancient and revered works of art.

Attractions Map



Get maps and turn-by-turn directions using [TripTik Travel Planner on AAA.com](#)

Attractions Details - *Get additional information on [AAA.com](#)*

-  - GEM Attraction offers a *Great Experience for Members*
-  - Exclusive AAA member discounts available

17. Taliesin West
12621 N Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd
Scottsdale, AZ 85261
Phone: (480) 860-8810



18. Apache Trail
Apache Junction, AZ 85219
Phone: (928) 467-3200

19. Superstition Mountains
Apache Junction, AZ 85219

20. Tonto National Forest
2324 E McDowell Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85006
phone (602) 225-5200

21. Goldfield Ghost Town & Mine Tours
4650 N Mammoth Mine Rd
Apache Junction, AZ 85219
Phone: (480) 983-0333



Nearby Scottsdale, on the east side of the valley, isn't the Wild West town it was a century ago. Now it's more Fifth Avenue than Five Bar Ranch, and the only wagons you'll see are S.U.V.s. The daringly designed [Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art](#) is the cream of the city's crop of art galleries. The valley's foremost purveyor of modern art displays a variety of styles—abstract, cubist, expressionist—along with quite a few works featuring cowboys and Native Americans. The Wild West lives on in Scottsdale.

On the north side of Scottsdale, visit Frank Lloyd Wright's [Taliesin West](#), where the renowned architect made his winter home. He also worked here—it's a 600-acre architectural workshop in the desert. The interiors are a fascinating study in 20th-century décor, and the buildings' facades mirror the Sonoran Desert's rough textures and brilliant colors. Because it's still a functioning school, the only way to see Taliesin is by guided tour, which is helpful in such a massive place.

See some real desert. Starting in Apache Junction, drive along the [Apache Trail](#), which was built as a road in 1905 to carry supplies to Roosevelt Dam. The route parallels an ancient footpath, looping around the [Superstition Mountains](#), home to the legendary Lost Dutchman Mine. Along the way you'll see a ghost town and gorgeous desert landscapes—windblown grasslands and vertigo-inducing cliffs and crags. The trail passes [Tonto National Forest](#) and plenty of saguaro cactus. Parts of the road are unpaved, but with careful driving, you can make it in a passenger car. (Caution: if it's raining or you're an inexperienced driver, do not attempt this part of the route).

Just a few miles northeast of Apache Junction is [Goldfield Ghost Town & Mine Tours](#), a reconstructed 1890s gold mining town. Although it's a bit touristy, the town has some out-of-the-ordinary places to see. A guided tour takes you beneath the town to the gold mine. Before descending, don't forget to look up—the views of the Superstition Mountains are awe-inspiring.

How about spending a day in the Old West? West of Cave Creek is the 90-acre [Pioneer Arizona Living History Museum](#). This is what life was like

before electricity and cell phones. Immerse yourself in simpler times as costumed interpreters go about their 19th-century routines. Pick out a bonnet in the Victorian dress shop, see a performance at the opera house where Lilly Langtry performed and gaze through a restored cabin's rifle embrasure (the structure survived Arizona's bloodiest range war).

Do some imaginary space traveling at Peoria's [Challenger Space Center](#). At this Smithsonian Institution educational center, you can become a pilot in the center's Technology Flight Deck, sit in a mission control room modeled after the Johnson Space Center or walk through a mock spacecraft that simulates the interior of the International Space Station. You can also watch Starlab Planetarium shows and learn how to use a telescope.

In Tempe, the home of Arizona State University, is the [Arizona State University Art Museum](#), part of the Nelson Fine Arts Center. Its galleries display crafts, prints and contemporary and Latin American art, with American masterworks by Georgia O'Keeffe, Edward Hopper and Frederic Remington. The museum's architecture, dramatically angled with a purplish face, is widely regarded as a work of art itself.

A great way to conclude your visit to the area is to experience the beginnings of the Valley of the Sun. Many of its communities were founded as agricultural centers, and at Glendale's [Historic Sahuaro Ranch](#), you'll learn about this farming heritage. The ranch's towering date palms, parading peacocks and restored farmhouse evoke the late 19th century. Touring the site's original buildings and 17 acres of fruit trees and rose plots, you'll discover the roots of modern Phoenix.

Events

In addition to its many cultural and historic landmarks, this destination hosts a number of outstanding festivals and events that may coincide with your visit. GEMs are "Great Experiences for Members."

What's New Year's without a little college football? Even if you're not into pigskin or you can't score tickets to the [Tostitos Fiesta Bowl](#) at The

University of Phoenix Stadium, you can catch all the bowl events leading up to the big showdown. The annual [Fort McDowell Fiesta Bowl Parade](#) in Tempe is one of the country's largest. It proceeds down Central Avenue on New Year's Eve and includes marching bands from around the country, gussied-up horses, lavish floats and A-list celebrities. Before the kick-off there are other bowl events, including a golf tournament and a block party on New Year's Eve.

On the first weekend in March, the [Heard Museum Indian Fair and Market](#) brings together the finest Native American artists in the Southwest. You'll see pottery, carved Kachina dolls, baskets, jewelry, photography and paintings—along with talented musicians, drummers and feather-costumed dancers. Be sure to try the fry bread and posole stew. This is a powwow you're sure to love.

During March, mosey on over to the [National Festival of the West](#) in Scottsdale. If you're looking for Western-themed fun, it's here: cowboy and Western music, cowboy poetry, movies, exhibits of Western lore, horse shows, an axe-throwing contest and hundreds of vendors hawking Western wear. You'll also taste some fine vittles at the chuck-wagon cook-off.



Spring brings syncopation, scat singing and slide guitars to the [Gibson Jazz & Blues Festival](#). The shady lawns in Glendale's town square are the perfect spot to tap your toes to Latin jazz and soulful blues.

The Valley of the Sun knows how to put on a party for Independence Day, and the [Fabulous Phoenix 4th](#) lives up to its name. Enjoy live entertainment by top stars, amusement rides, a fun zone for kids and lots of food. The party wraps up with a spectacular fireworks display near Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza.

After a long, sizzling summer the heat finally breaks in October, just in time for [The Arizona State Fair](#). Whether you favor livestock shows, carnival games, live tunes, handmade quilts or homemade jellies, you'll

love this kind of old-fashioned fun. The grandstand is home to rodeos, a Wild West show and motocross competitions. Ride the Ferris wheel, test your skills at the shooting gallery or visit the Home Arts Building to see if you concur with the judges' blue ribbon choices.

The bratwurst's steaming, the accordion's jamming and the tap's open at Tempe's annual [Old West Oktoberfest](#). Knockwurst and potato latkes are on the menu at the Bavarian Beer Garden, where guests wash down meals with a stein of their favorite brew. Sitting is verboten, so oompah into the night to lively polka melodies.

In December, 2.5 million lights transform the [Phoenix Zoo](#) into a holiday wonderland. [ZooLights](#) features fantastic creatures and light sculptures, including an 18-foot-long rattlesnake and twinkling monkeys in the trees. For holiday shopping, don't miss the [Pueblo Grande Indian Market](#) in Steele Indian School Park. One-of-a-kind crafts by more than 500 top artisans make perfect gifts for friends and family.

For 22 nights during the holiday season, you can experience Christmas lights the old-fashioned way at the Desert Botanical Garden's [Las Noches de las Luminarias](#). A Southwestern Christmas tradition, luminarias are sand-weighted paper bags holding a candle, and they're typically spaced along walkways and rooflines. In the botanical garden, thousands of luminarias light the paths and cast a radiant glow on beautiful desert flora. Stroll the garden and enjoy musical entertainment, and sip on a glass of wine or warm cider to keep the December chill at bay.

Things to Do

Shopping

Shopping in Phoenix can be diverse and exciting. Dolls, Native American handicrafts, jewelry, rugs, and Western fashions are only a few of the temptations. Such shopping malls as Metrocenter, 9617 N. Metro Pkwy. W., and Paradise Valley Mall, 4568 E. Cactus Rd., incorporate innovative architecture with a colorful array of shops.

Malls and centers include the Arizona Center, at 400 E. Van Buren between 3rd and 5th streets; Arrowhead Towne Center, 7700 W. Arrowhead Towne Center; Biltmore Fashion Park, 2470 E. Camelback Rd.; Desert Ridge Marketplace, Tatum Boulevard and SR 101 Pima Freeway; Desert Sky Mall, 7611 W. Thomas Rd.; and Town & Country Shopping Center, 2021 E. Camelback Rd. Anchor stores include Dillard's, JCPenney, Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue (Biltmore Fashion Park only) and Sears.

For shoppers interested in a bargain, the Park 'n' Swap, 3801 E. Washington, offers garage sale-style shopping on 54 acres; Indoor Swapmart, 5115 N. 27th Ave., also offers bargains. Northwest of Phoenix is The Outlets at Anthem at 4250 W. Anthem Way.

There are many Native American handicraft stores that sell everything from jewelry to Navajo rugs. Among the best in Phoenix are the Heard Museum Shop, 2301 N. Central Ave., and Gilbert Ortega's, at several locations including 122 N. 2nd St. In Scottsdale Native American handicrafts are sold at Atkinson's Herman Indian Trading Post, 3957 N. Brown Ave.; Gilbert Ortega's, 7237 E. Main St.; and Grey Wolf, 7239 E. First Ave.

Sports and Recreation

Phoenix's mild winters make it an all-year sports paradise. For spectators the winter months mean horse racing at Turf Paradise from October through early May; phone (602) 942-1101. Dog racing at Phoenix Greyhound Park takes place daily all year; phone (602) 273-7181.

Note: Policies vary concerning admittance of children to pari-mutuel betting facilities. Phone for information.

In spring baseball arrives as the Milwaukee Brewers begin their training at Maryvale Baseball Park, (800) 933-7890; and the Oakland Athletics at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, (602) 495-7239. Other teams with spring training sites in the Phoenix area include the Colorado Rockies at Hi Corbett Field in Tucson, (520) 327-9467; the Los Angeles Angels of

Anaheim at Tempe Diablo Stadium in Tempe, (480) 350-5205; the Chicago Cubs at Hohokam Stadium in Mesa, (480) 964-4467; the Kansas City Royals and the Texas Rangers at Surprise Recreation Campus in Surprise, (623) 222-2222; the San Diego Padres and the Seattle Mariners at Peoria Sports Complex in Peoria, (623) 773-8700 or (623) 773-8720; the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Chicago White Sox at Camelback Ranch in Glendale, (623) 302-5000; the Cleveland Indians at the Goodyear Ballpark in Goodyear, (623) 882-3120; and the San Francisco Giants at Scottsdale Stadium in Scottsdale, (480) 312-2580. The Arizona Diamondbacks, 2001 World Series champions, play ball at the retractable-roofed Chase Field, 401 E. Jefferson St. in downtown Phoenix; phone (602) 514-8400.

The US Airways Center, 201 E. Jefferson St., is the site of many of Phoenix's sporting events. It is the home court of the NBA Phoenix Suns basketball team November through April; phone (602) 379-7867. The WNBA's Phoenix Mercury take over the arena's court May through August; phone (602) 252-9622. September through April, the Jobing.com Arena, 9400 W. Maryland Ave., is the home of the Phoenix Coyotes, the city's National Hockey League team; phone (480) 563-7825.

Professional football is played in Glendale, where the NFL Arizona Cardinals take the field at The University of Phoenix Stadium, 1 Cardinals Dr.; phone (602) 379-0102. The Tostitos Fiesta Bowl football classic at the stadium is a January highlight.

National Hot Rod Association drag racing as well as dragboat racing are at Firebird Raceway, about 8 miles south of Phoenix at Maricopa Road and I-10; phone (602) 268-0200. Indy cars, NASCAR stock cars and trucks, and Grand Am sports cars race at Phoenix International Raceway; phone (623) 463-5400.

Licensed drivers can experience race car driving at Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving, I-10 and Maricopa Road; phone (480) 403-7600 or (800) 842-7223.

A round of golf in a panorama of mountain peaks and blue skies entices not only Arizona residents but visitors too. Golfing is a year-round activity in Arizona. There are more than 325 golf courses in the state, both public and private, appealing to all levels of proficiency. Phone (866) 865-4653 to reserve a tee time at any of the more than 120 Phoenix courses.

Phoenix courses include Club West, (480) 460-4400, 16400 S. 14th Ave.; Encanto, (602) 253-3963, at 2775 N. 15th Ave.; The Foothills, (480) 460-4653, at 2201 E. Clubhouse Dr.; Maryvale, (623) 846-4022, at 5902 W. Indian School Rd.; Papago, (602) 275-8428, in Papago Park at 5595 E. Moreland St.; Phantom Horse, (602) 431-6480, at 7777 S. Pointe Pkwy.; The Pointe Golf Club at Lookout Mountain, (602) 866-6356, at 11111 N. 7th St.; and Stonecreek, (602) 953-9110, at 4435 E. Paradise Village Pkwy. S.

Golf courses in nearby Mesa include: Dobson Ranch, (480) 644-2291, at 2155 S. Dobson Rd.; Red Mountain Ranch, (480) 985-0285, at 6425 E. Teton Cir.; and Superstition Springs, (480) 985-5622, at 6542 E. Baseline Rd.

Courses in Scottsdale include: Marriott's Camelback, (480) 596-7050, at 7847 N. Mockingbird Ln.; Marriott's Mountain Shadows Resort, (480) 905-8999, at 5517 E. Lincoln Dr.; McCormick Ranch, (480) 948-0260, at 7505 E. McCormick Pkwy.; Starfire at Scottsdale Country Club, (480) 948-6000, at 11500 N. Hayden Rd.; TPC Scottsdale, (480) 585-3600, at 17020 N. Hayden Rd.; and Troon North, (480) 585-5300, at 10320 E. Dynamite Blvd.

Other area courses include: Gold Canyon, (480) 982-9449, at 6100 S. Kings Ranch Rd. in Apache Junction; Hillcrest, (623) 584-1500, at 20002 N. Star Ridge Dr. in Sun City West; The Legend at Arrowhead, (623) 561-0953, at 21027 N. 67th Ave. in Glendale; Ocotillo, (480) 917-6660, at 3751 S. Clubhouse Dr. in Chandler; We-Ko-Pa, (480) 836-9000, at 18200 East Toh Vee Cir. in Fort McDowell; and The Wigwam Resort, (623) 935-3811, at 300 E. Wigwam Blvd. in Litchfield Park. In Tempe are ASU-Karsten, (480) 921-8070, at 1125 E. Rio Salado Pkwy.; and Ken McDonald, (480) 350-5250, at 800 E. Divot Dr.

Tennis courts open to the public are plentiful at several high schools and park areas, including Encanto Park, 15th Avenue and Encanto Drive, and Granada Park, 6505 N. 20th St. The Phoenix Tennis Center, (602) 249-3712, at 6330 N. 21st Ave., has 22 lighted courts and reasonable rates; reservations are accepted.

The valley's beautiful desert country lends itself to horseback riding. The Ponderosa and South Mountain Stables, (602) 268-1261, at 10215 S. Central Ave., offers trail rides.

Trails for hiking and biking are plentiful. A favorite hike is the 1-mile scenic trek to the summit of Piestewa Peak. Formerly known as Squaw Peak, the peak was renamed in honor of Lori Piestewa, an American servicewoman and Hopi who was killed in combat during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

The Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department, (602) 262-6861, operates a number of parks; some have municipal swimming pools. Saguaro Lake and Canyon Lake offer water skiing, boating and **fishing**. The Salt River is popular with tubing enthusiasts. Salt River Tubing and Recreation, (480) 984-3305, rents tubes and also provides shuttle-bus service along the Salt River.

For the shooting enthusiast, the Ben Avery Shooting Range, (623) 582-8313, 25 miles north of Phoenix off I-17 exit 223, offers pistol, rifle and archery ranges and trap and skeet fields.

The suburb of Tempe boasts inland surfing at Big Surf, (480) 947-7873; and ice skating at the Oceanside Ice Arena, (480) 941-0944, at 1520 N. McClintock Dr.

Hot air balloon rides over the metropolitan area and the Sonora Desert are available through several companies. Balloon rides average 1 hour and are usually followed by a champagne brunch. Many companies operate October through May, but some offer flights year-round. Prices range from \$145 to \$225 per person. Companies include: Aerogelic Ballooning, (480) 247-7813 or (866) 359-8329; Hot Air Expeditions, (480)

502-6999 or (800) 831-7610; and Unicorn Balloon Co., (480) 991-3666 or (800) 755-0935. Soaring is available at Turf Soaring School, (602) 439-3621, at 8700 W. Carefree Hwy. in Peoria.

Performing Arts

Phoenix's rapid growth has been cultural as well as industrial. The following theaters present a mix of classic and contemporary drama: Herberger Theater, (602) 252-8497, 222 E. Monroe; Phoenix Theatre, (602) 254-2151, 100 E. McDowell Rd.; Stagebrush Theater, (480) 990-7405, 7020 E. 2nd St. in Scottsdale; and TheaterWorks, (623) 815-7930, at 8355 W. Peoria Ave. in Peoria. Arizona's professional state theater group, the Arizona Theater Co., (602) 256-6995, performs at the Herberger Theater, 222 E. Monroe, during its October to June season.

The historic Orpheum Theatre, (602) 262-6225, at 203 W. Adams St., was originally built for vaudeville acts and movies in 1929. Scheduled to be condemned, the city bought the theater and in 1997 reopened it as a 1,400-seat performing arts center. Free guided tours of the Spanish Baroque Revival building are available; phone (602) 534-5600.

For music and dance lovers, the Arizona Opera, Ballet Arizona and Phoenix Symphony offer performances throughout the year. The symphony performs in the striking Symphony Hall, Phoenix Civic Plaza, 225 E. Adams St.; phone (602) 262-7272.

Cabarets, special concerts, big-name entertainment, shows and lectures are presented at the Herberger Theater, (602) 252-8497, 222 E. Monroe; the Maricopa County Events Center, (623) 544-2888, 19403 R.H. Johnson Blvd. in Sun City West; and the Grady Gammage Auditorium, (480) 965-3434, on the campus of Arizona State University at Mill Avenue and Apache Boulevard in Tempe.

Other special performance areas include US Airways Center, (602) 379-7800, 201 E. Jefferson St.; Arizona Veteran's Memorial Coliseum, (602) 252-6771, 1826 W. McDowell Rd.; Celebrity Theatre, (602) 267-1600, 440 N. 32nd St.; Cricket Pavilion, (602) 254-7200, 2121 N. 83rd Ave.;

and the Dodge Theatre, (602) 379-2800, 400 W. Washington St. In Mesa are the Mesa Arts Center, (480) 644-6500; and the Mesa Amphitheater, (480) 644-2560, 263 N. Center St.

Insider Info

The Lost Dutchman Mine

Just outside Phoenix, the Superstition Mountains loom with possibility—if you believe the legend of the Lost Dutchman Mine. According to the lore of Western movies and books, the Superstitions horde millions in unmined gold. The cache is elusive; no one has found the mysterious mine in more than a century. Undeterred by previous failures, prospectors continue to scour the forbidding peaks and basaltic rock, hoping for the ultimate payday: the Dutchman's gold by the buckets full.

The legend itself is based on a few facts; the rest is up for grabs. Jacob Waltz, a German prospector known as the "Dutchman," emerged in Phoenix during the 1870s with a saddlebag of high-quality gold. Waltz boasted he had found a rich gold vein—but he steadfastly refused to reveal its whereabouts in the Superstition Mountains.

Back then, few ventured into the Sonoran Desert and the dangerous, inhospitable Superstitions. If heat or thirst didn't kill you, the Apaches would—trespassing was forbidden in this sacred terrain. In the midst of so much danger, Jacob Waltz somehow defied the odds and struck it rich. And he returned to the barren mountains countless times to add to his golden stash.

After living a long, quiet life, Waltz died in 1891. Legend has it that before he passed away, he whispered cryptic clues about the mine's location to his caretaker, Julia Thomas, who later found gold under his bed. Finally convinced by the tale, she followed the old man's directions, as did thousands of others. Every gold-panner has come up empty, and many have died mysterious or gruesome deaths. After all this time, Waltz's gold remains lost.

The name is a misnomer, of course—the mine is lost, not the Dutchman—and naysayers abound. Geologists doubt that the

Superstitions even contain gold. Did Waltz really find his treasure in these hills? Or was it a hoax? It doesn't really matter. The Lost Dutchman Mine lives on as an enduring—and fascinating—legend of the Southwest.

You can visit these legendary mountains and judge for yourself; Lost Dutchman State Park is at the foot of the Superstitions, 30 miles east of Phoenix. The summer heat can be dangerous, so plan your trip for the cooler months. And keep a sharp eye out for zealous gold prospectors.

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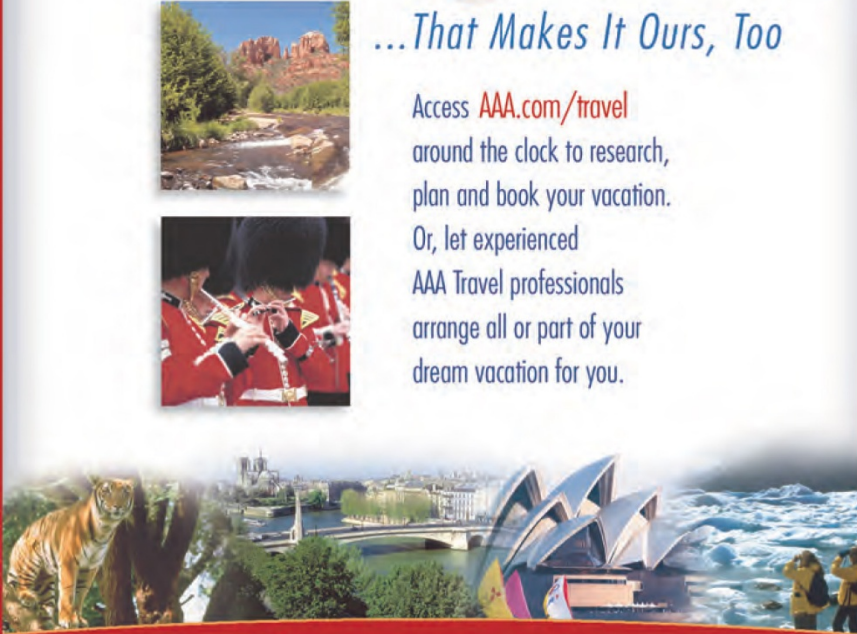
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