

NORTHERN ARIZONA

10 LOCALS TELL
YOU WHERE TO GO,
WHAT TO EAT, &
HOW TO FIT IN

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What to Eat, & How to Fit In



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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is for people who want to see another side of Northern Arizona.

To explore the main attractions, certainly, but also find the hidden-away trail that most first-time Grand Canyon visitors overlook. To discover that there are slot canyons you can access without an official guide. And to know ahead of time that the even things we think of as biodegradable won't biodegrade in the desert (so don't toss your apple cores on the hiking trails).

In other words, this book is for people who want to get under the skin of a new place. Who want to rent apartments and live in local neighborhoods. Who want to eat in tiny restaurants full of locals in the know. Who want to deepen their experience of this wild, beautiful part of the United States.

Think of this as a supplement to your traditional guidebooks. Use those for their handy place histories, lists of local hotels (if that's your style), and restaurant pricing charts. And then use this to go deeper—to figure out how to find the most colorful craft markets, the most delicious restaurants, and that hidden-away canyon just outside the city.

Getting excited? Me too. (Just wait till you read some of these interviews!)

Now, a little orientation:

This book is split into 10 interviews (okay, just kidding, it's actually 12...there was just too much good stuff that I couldn't bear to cut an interview) with people who live and work all over Northern Arizona—from Sedona to Flagstaff to the Grand Canyon itself. Many have lived in their cities and towns for decades. Some were born and raised in the region. And all of them love showing travelers the best their place has to offer.

Throughout the book, below each person's name, you'll see a short bio designed to help you understand his or her background. If you are passionate about food, look for someone

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whose short bio includes “foodie” or “chef.” If you’re a culture lover, look for a culture lover. And so on and so forth.

Many of the interviewees are also tour guides, artists, business owners, or bloggers. Watch for web addresses under their interviews if you’d like to learn more about their art, blogs, tours, or businesses.

Now, then, into the book...

ON TRAVELING LIKE A LOCAL

Like many well-touristed places, Arizona has two faces.

There's the face that most tourists see, full of busy shopping streets, crowded viewpoints, and well-known monuments and attractions—like Antelope Canyon, Lake Powell, and the Grand Canyon.

Many of these things are worth seeing and experiencing (as many of my interviewees will tell you); they're world-famous for a reason.

BUT.

They aren't the whole story of the Arizona wilderness.

There's another face, another story—one that the locals live every day—full of curious hidden canyons, less-trafficked hiking trails, and weekend ski runs.

For me, the goal of any travel is to experience this other side of an area, to slip into the culture, to try to understand it, to feel—even if I am only there for a few days—like I am truly living in that place, experiencing it like a local would.

I'm sure many of you feel the same.

Which is, of course, the whole point of this book.

In over 16 years of short-term international trips and nearly four years of traveling full-time, I've come up with a routine that makes me feel more like a local. And the most important thing I've found is simply this: **the best way to live like a local is to ask locals.**

Which is why, for those of us who don't have a local friend to show us around, I've collected these interviews and written this book.

ON TRAVELING LIKE A LOCAL

Before you dive into the interviews, though, here are five more ways to experience Arizona (or any place, really) in a fresh, authentic, local-centric way:

1. Travel slowly. Spend some real time in a place. The only way to see all of a city's hidden corners is to spend time exploring it.

2. Rent apartments, preferably in a neighborhood full of local people. (Not sure how to find the right neighborhood? I've asked locals to tell us in the interviews you'll find in this book. Not sure how to find apartments? My personal starting point is *airbnb.com*.)

3. Shop at fresh markets, small butcher shops, and neighborhood bakeries. This is where you'll find the best food (as opposed to the grocery store).

4. Make friends with people who live there. Ask people about their lives, their thoughts, and their backgrounds. Expats and locals are both incredibly fascinating, and every conversation will teach you a lot.

5. Try to fit in. In Arizona, this means stay on the trail, pack out your trash, and don't hold up traffic, even for that perfect photo

It is these principles and this type of travel that I've molded the questions in this book around. So, if you, too, want to slow down and experience Arizona in a different way, these interviews are for you.

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Rachel Harman

Grand Canyon Hiking Guide. Rock Climber.

About Rachel

I grew up in Virginia and didn't get into hiking until college. First, I became obsessed with rock climbing. This motivated me to apply for a year-long outdoor leadership program at school. I wanted to lead climbing trips and thought hiking was just what you had to do to get to a climbing area. After my first backpacking excursion, though, I realized that it is an outdoor sport in its own right...and I haven't stopped since.

I moved to Flagstaff after securing a job as a backpacking guide in the Grand Canyon.

Grand Canyon Hikes for Beginning Hikers

The rim trail is a paved path that goes along the South Rim. This is a leisurely walk that offers unique views of the canyon from different vantage points.

Another option for a beginner who wants to go below the rim is going down the Bright Angel Trail and turning around at the first resthouse. This is three miles round trip.

Then there's the hike down to Cedar Ridge on the South Kaibab trail. This is also three miles round trip, but is steeper and offers more panoramic views.

Grand Canyon Hikes for Advanced Hikers

Those seeking a challenge can take the Grandview Trail down to Horseshoe Mesa for an eight-mile round trip. This is a steep trail with excellent vistas and an interesting history.

Rachel's Personal Favorite Hikes

My favorite hike is the Hermit Trail. It has not been maintained for over 80 years and large sections have been washed out. This makes for a fun day of scrambling around large boulders.

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Recommended Multi-Day Hikes

The classic overnight trek in the canyon is going down to Phantom Ranch via the South Kaibab trail. On day two, head up the Bright Angel trail to Indian Gardens. On your last day, continue on Bright Angel back to the rim.

If you are seeking more solitude, take the Bright Angel down to Indian Gardens and turn left on the Tonto Trail. Stay on the Tonto until you reach the Hermit Trail and take that back to the Rim. There are several camps along the Tonto, so you can make this trek three, four, or five days long.

Arizona Hiking & Wilderness Safety

Create a small first aid kit and learn how to treat common hiking injuries before you head out. It is best to hike with others, but if you are going solo, make sure to let someone know where you will be and how long you will be gone. Make sure to bring a mesh sack with you for food storage to keep mice and other critters from getting into your supplies.

Arizona Hiking Etiquette

Mules and uphill hikers always have the right-of-way; step aside to let them pass.

The desert is a fragile environment; protect it by staying on the trail.

Most people go into the wilderness for peace and quiet; respect other hikers by not playing loud music.

You are responsible for all trash and food scraps that you create on your trip; everything you have brought into the canyon must be packed out.

Legal Concerns

There is very little at-large camping in Grand Canyon. Most backcountry sites require permits, and there are serious consequences for not having one. It is best to apply for a permit in advance, though there are a number of last minute walk-up

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permits available. Call 928.638.7875 or visit the Backcountry Office to see what permits are available.

Fires are never allowed below the rim of the canyon. If you want to have a fire on the rim, make sure to use an existing fire ring and wood from the area.

When to Go

The best seasons to hike in the Grand Canyon are spring and fall. In the spring, you can catch cactus flowers blooming. In the fall, cottonwood trees turn a beautiful yellow. The weather is also best during this time...not too hot and not too cold.

The summer is extremely hot, with temperatures at the bottom of the canyon often 20 degrees warmer than the rim. Winter is a nice time to avoid the crowds, but most trails will have snow and/or ice on them near the rim.

Find Rachel at [instagram.com/rachelharman](https://www.instagram.com/rachelharman).

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John Dzurka

Expert Hiker. Business Owner.

About John

I was born, raised, and educated in Canada, where I became the owner/operator/pharmacist of a successful chain of pharmacies.

I began exploring the state of Arizona in the early '80s with my wife Wendy, and we moved our family into the USA permanently in 2008, making our home in the town of Fountain Hills.

In 2013, after many years of research, I opened an outdoor adventure company, called Arizona Hiking Adventures. I have traveled, explored, hiked, and backpacked throughout Arizona, covering the state from east to west and north to south. I have trekked thousands of miles and enjoy sharing stories from my hiking adventures around the world. My passion is in educating our guests on the wonders of the desert and challenging those that travel with me to achieve the highest level of success during their journey.

In addition to being an experienced guide, I have completed wilderness survival training under Cody Lundin at the Aboriginal Living Skills School in northern Arizona.

I can proudly say that I have covered most of the major trail systems in Arizona more than once and spend most of my free time exploring lesser-known trails throughout the state. When not out on the local trails, I enjoy researching and planning international adventures. I have partners in Peru, Tanzania, and Nepal and am about to launch a company called Guiding Peru, which will offer unique routes through the Andes into Machu Picchu with my indigenous partners.

For Beginning Hikers

The West Fork Trail at Oak Creek in Sedona is one of the best trails in the state and is often listed as one of the top 10 trails in

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the US. It's six-miles round trip and is relatively easy. There are a number of stream crossings, which are aided with stepping stones and logs. At the trail's end, you'll find a pool of water surrounded by red sandstone cliffs. It's possible to travel another 11 miles upstream if you want, though that requires boulder hopping, wading through waist-deep water and some swimming, adding to the difficulty. The extended version usually requires an overnight stay at the end of the trail before returning back to the trailhead.

Bell Rock/Courthouse Butte Loop Trail (also in Sedona) is the best and most popular introduction to Sedona's myriad of red-rock hiking opportunities. This is an easy four-mile loop that provides great views at every turn. The trail begins directly off Route 179 in the Village of Oak Creek, which is only a few miles south of Sedona. The colorful scenery and terraced landscape will amaze! Unfortunately, there are plenty of other hikers, too.

There is something irresistible about waterfalls in the desert, and on the Seven Falls Trail in Tucson you get more than enough falls to satisfy any craving to cool off on a hot desert day. The 7.8-mile (there and back) trail is in the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area northeast of the city. It's a must if you're in the area and want to spend a day in the wilderness.

Peralta Trail, east of Phoenix in the Superstition Mountains, is located on the southwestern edge of the Superstition Wilderness. It stretches 6.2 miles through two diversely vegetated canyons highlighted by Weavers Needle—a 4,553-foot spire that towers over the landscape. The trail begins at the mouth of Peralta Canyon and climbs steadily on a rugged, heavily vegetated path. Oak and mesquite cover portions of the trail along the canyon's seasonally flowing creek. The trail follows Boulder Canyon Creek past several backcountry campsites and leads to the Peralta and Dutchman trail junction on the floor of Boulder Canyon. Return the way you came.

Piestewa Peak Summit in Paradise Valley (often called Squaw Peak by the locals) is a 2.4-mile trail that is considered easy in the lower portions of the trail and becomes much more difficult

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as the steepness increases in the upper portion. The 2,608-foot Piestewa Peak is not only one of the most prominent landmarks in the valley, it is also one of the most popular hiking areas. Over half a million hikers visit the summit annually and Piestewa is second only to the Grand Canyon's Bright Angel Trail as the most visited hiking trail in Arizona.

Dixie Mine Trail in Fountain Hills is a 4.25-mile return trip hike that leads hikers into an abandoned mine (that is now little more than a gated shaft) and to a high point in the foothills that offers terrific views across the McDowell Mountains, river valley, and cottonwood-lined canyon in which a wonderful petroglyph panel exists.

Butcher Jones Trail, (east of Phoenix in the Superstition Mountains, is a five-mile return trip trail that runs along a section of Saguaro Lake's northern shore. This reservoir is the closest lake to Phoenix and draws many visitors seeking views of the colorful mountains. It offers many scenic overlooks of the lake and the surrounding Superstition Mountain Range. Burro Cove, the turnaround point, has impressive views of the Four Peaks across the lake. And wild horses are often spotted drinking along the lake edge.

Finally, Fossil Creek Wilderness Hike, north of Payson, is home of one of only two official Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) in Arizona. It seems to appear out of nowhere, gushing out of a series of springs at the bottom of a 1,700-foot deep canyon. Emerald green and aqua blue water cascade over multiple falls and deep, clear pools of water creating a beautiful oasis. It is a rare wet area within an otherwise arid landscape. Most people come to Fossil Creek to sunbathe, wade, hike, and birdwatch. It's also a photographer's paradise. While you're here, keep your eyes open for javelina, beaver, otter, leopard frogs, and black hawks.

For Advanced Hikers

The South Kaibab Trail, which starts at the Grand Canyon's south rim, offers better views than the more popular Bright Angel Trail and has much less traffic. It is great for day hikers

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and is the preferred downhill route for anyone heading to Phantom Ranch for the night. This is a strenuous hike even if you go only a mile or so down the trail. Remember, the trip back is all up-hill, and you should plan on taking twice as long to get up as you did to go down.

Reavis Ranch Trail, east of Phoenix, is a pleasant hike through the Superstition Mountains and to the old abandoned Reavis Ranch homestead. From Rogers Trough Trailhead, take the Reavis Ranch Trail north into Rogers Canyon. Continue downhill to pass the West Pinto Trail. At about 5.5 miles, you'll cross the creek and at six miles you'll arrive at the Fire Line Trail intersection. From here, you quickly enter the main meadow where the ranch is. There's an abundance of camping spots in this popular area. This is the turn-around point and a great place to explore the apple orchards and many scenic spots along the creek during a well-deserved lunch break.

Also in Phoenix, Alta Trail in South Mountain Park (a park that covers more than 16,000 acres with over 51 miles of trails for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking) is considered one of the most challenging hiking trails within the park, but the steep climb to the ridgeline from either end rewards hikers with a striking view of the desert landscape below. At just over 4.5-miles round trip, this hike is considered difficult however is inviting to those that prefer to hike undisturbed as the majority of guests prefer the less challenging trails within this park.

Still in Phoenix, Paradise Valley's Camelback Mountain is the best-known hiking destination in the valley. It's unique in the sense that you have an amazing mountain hike right in the middle of the city. Unfortunately, due to its popularity it's also one of the busiest and most crowded trails in the area. There are two trails: Echo Canyon and Cholla. Both are rated as moderately difficult. Echo Canyon is steeper and Cholla is slightly longer. Towering 1,400 feet above its base, Camelback mimics the shape of a gigantic camel that appears to be admiring the amazing views across the Valley below.

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In southern Arizona, near Tucson, Cathedral Rock takes you up a trail of one of the Santa Catalina Mountains' most prominent summits. If hiked in its entirety, it is one of the most difficult trails in southern Arizona. The hike can be partitioned into three legs: the first (approximately three miles) ends at a prominent saddle called Cardiac Gap. The next leg follows Esperero Canyon to Bridalveil falls (for five miles). The first two legs make for a great destination or turnaround point. The last leg of the hike is the most difficult. It is very steep, overgrown, and can be extremely difficult to navigate. Look for cairns (rock piles): these markers will lead you to the summit.

Superstition Mountains Four Peaks Summit, east of Phoenix, rise dramatically out of the desert, ascending over 5,000 feet from the desert floor. On a clear day, they can be seen from downtown Phoenix. This is the premier climb in the area. It consists of both easy trails and class three scrambling up a scree filled crevasse. From Brown's Peak (the highest of the four peaks), the view is truly amazing. One can see not only Saguaro Lake to the south and Roosevelt Lake to the north, but about one fourth of the state from the top!

On a good day, you can even see Humphrey's peak near Flagstaff. Four Peaks Wilderness is home to abundant wildlife, including black bear, ring-tailed cats, skunks, coyotes, deer, javelinas, and mountain lions, not to mention rattlesnakes and scorpions.

Speaking of Mount Humphreys, this Flagstaff mountain is Arizona's premier high altitude climbing experience. 9.4 miles round-trip, the trail starts in a nice flat meadow at 9,300 feet, but quickly gains elevation as it ascends in a series of long switchbacks. The elevation gain is 3,300 feet ends at a 12,633-foot peak. This is not an easy hike by any standards, but when you make it to the top, you are standing on the state's highest peak and are rewarded with a 360° panoramic view that is unparalleled anywhere in the state, taking in hundreds of square miles on a clear day.

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The Barnhardt Trail, north of Fountain Hills is a 14-mile out and back hike that takes you on a scenic trail that leads deep into the Mazatzal Wilderness. It provides great views into deep gorges, up rugged mountains, and across rolling hills. You will come across spectacular waterfalls in the wet season, which add to the dramatic landscape. The Mazatzals are a massive range that exceeds 7,000 feet in elevation and are a nice location for hiking during Arizona's hot summer months.

Finally, Reavis Falls, also in the Superstition Mountains, is a 140+ foot waterfall—the end destination for the 13.5-mile out and back hike of the same name. North of Phoenix in the Superstition Range, the Reavis Creek meanders through deep valleys before tumbling down a sheer cliff to form a spectacular waterfall. When conditions are good, after a rainfall, the falls flow with much force; at other times, they may be a small trickle. Tall cliffs and rocky slopes surround the falls and they're a great place for a picnic and rest before heading home. The climb out of the canyon (1,600 feet) is much tougher than the hike in.

John's Personal Favorite Hikes

For me, any day on most trails is a great day and I have yet to find a trail that totally sucks (well unless there happen to be 100s of others using it on same day as me). That being said, I do particularly like:

Tom's Thumb on the north side of Scottsdale: a 4.2-mile moderately difficult trail that weaves in and out of gorgeous vegetation providing breathtaking views of the Four Peaks and Camelback Mountain. The most interesting feature of this trail is the iconic Tom's Thumb, a large granite bump on the McDowell Mountain Range. Make sure to check out Ogre's Den, a natural cave featuring rock art located below and to the west of the thumb. The summit offers the best viewpoint in the McDowell Mountains.

Sunrise Peak, also near Scottsdale, is located in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve area and features an easy-to-follow trail with

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clearly signposted junctions through the Sonoran Desert. It is 6.2 miles round-trip and considered moderately difficult. From the peak, you have unobstructed views of Scottsdale, Fountain Hills, the four peaks, Weavers Needle, Camelback Mountain, and the mountain range. Although this trail begins only a few miles outside Scottsdale, it has a nice wilderness feel to it, lined with many saguaro and cholla cactus, as well as scrub grasses, palo verde, and ocotillo.

Finally, there's Roger's Canyon Trail in the Superstition Mountains. The long, rough ride into Roger's Canyon is worth the trip in and of itself. The nine-mile out and back trail leads down into the stunning 1,000-foot canyon, traveling alongside shady stream-side trails, which lead to well-preserved Salado cliff dwellings. These ancient cliff dwellings are easily accessible from the trail and are over 700 years old. The trail ends at Angel's Basin, which leads into additional trails in the Superstitions.

Multi-day favorites include the Superstition Mountains (see below) and Paria Canyon/Buckskin Gulch (also see below).

Recommended Multi-Day Hikes

My top 4 multi-day hikes in Arizona include:

The Superstition Mountains: situated 50 miles east of Phoenix, this is one of the best hiking areas within an hour's drive of any major city in the US. Ranging in elevation from 2,000 to 6,265 feet, the Superstition Wilderness Area has 160,000 acres of protected National Forest. Formed by volcanic eruptions 30 million years ago, the mountains are home to impressive rock walls, jagged hoodoos of rock, and narrow twisting canyons.

As with most of the terrain surrounding the Phoenix area, the Superstitions have a desert climate with high summer temperatures often reaching 110 F. The best time for hiking is October through May, although cold nights, torrential rain, and snowstorms can occasionally occur. This is a true desert hiking area, and although it's close to a city it doesn't mean the prepar-

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ation should be any less than if you were traveling in any other wilderness area.

There is a network of over 180 miles of National Forest System Trails serving this wilderness area and the surrounding region. Trail conditions vary from excellent to poor. Signs are installed at all junctions, but many have been vandalized or stolen. In addition, there are many miles of non-maintained paths on maps that may be anything from abandoned roadbeds to the remains of old wildlife trails.

Overnight backpacking trips here range from a single overnight to four nights. Highlights include the Salado Indian Cave Dwellings (well-preserved, 600-year-old ruins), Reavis Falls (the 200-foot waterfall mentioned above), and Sinagua Indian Circlestone Ruins (an ancient solstice/equinox station rarely visited). Expect solitude on trails and at campsites, wildlife sightings galore, and a quintessential back-country experience.

Paria Canyon/Buckskin Gulch: in northern Arizona, on the Utah border, this trek is ranked in the top five North American hikes by National Geographic. It's a very adventurous hike that requires many river crossings.

Paria Canyon is famous for its colorful, deep slot canyons. Buckskin Gulch is among the longest and deepest slot canyons in the world. The hike will take you through narrow gorges, past unique rock formations, beautifully sculpted walls, natural springs, ancient petroglyphs, and the world's seventh longest natural arch, spanning over 200 feet in length. Be prepared to get wet during this 43+ mile hike, as you will be hiking a portion of the canyon through waist-deep water in the Paria River.

Booking this trip early is important, as advanced permits are required for entry into the canyon. Only 30 hikers are allowed to camp overnight in the entire canyon each day and these permits are sold four months in advance. The best time for hiking the canyon is from early March through mid-June or mid-September through end of November. Flash flooding is

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common during the summer months due to monsoons. Temperatures in the winter months become too cold to comfortably hike through the waters of the Paria.

Overnight backpacking trips here range from three to four nights. Highlights include colorful, narrow, deep slot canyons, red sandstone cliffs, ancient petroglyphs, wildlife sightings, solitude, Wrather's Natural Arch, and 400+ water crossings.

Havasupai Falls in the Grand Canyon: located in northwestern Arizona, Havasu Canyon is a paradise nestled deep, (5,000+ feet) within the Grand Canyon. It's an area of towering red walls, turquoise-colored travertine pools, and stunning cascades. There are many waterfalls and aquamarine-colored streams lined with giant cottonwoods that thrive below the shade of the majestic red sandstone walls. Here you will have the opportunity to get up and close to Havasau Canyon's three major waterfalls—Havasau Falls, Mooney Falls, and Najavo Falls—and explore the depths of the Grand Canyon floor along the mighty Colorado River.

In Havasupai, you'll witness a diversity of life, including over 1,500 plant varieties and more than 500 types of animals. The hike winds through an area of undisturbed natural habitat over a range of elevations from desert to mountain forests on the rims. Supai has around 450 Native Americans that call this area their home on the Havasupai Reservation. The Havasupai have lived in the canyon for hundreds of years, farming the fertile soil, raising maize, squash, and beans, and tending their livestock. The best time for hiking here is March through October; during the winter months, temperatures become too cold to enjoy the wonders of the canyon.

Overnight trips range from a single overnight to four nights. Highlights include descending 5,000 feet into (and hiking 5,000 feet back out of) the Grand Canyon, swimming in turquoise-colored travertine pools, and witnessing majestic waterfalls, native culture, and solitude along the Colorado River.

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The Arizona National Scenic Trail is a continuous, 800+ mile diverse and scenic trail running south to north across Arizona, linking deserts, mountains, canyons, and communities. Along the trail, you'll be close to many friendly, scenic communities that are fun to explore, including old mining towns and large metropolitan areas. It offers a variety of experiences for the outdoor enthusiast and takes multiple weeks to complete the entire trail.

Starting at the US-Mexico border, the trail climbs and descends from one mountain range to another, gaining and losing thousands of feet in elevation and traversing regions ranging from desert to boreal forest. Continuing across the Sonoran Desert, the route crosses the Gila River and winds through the Superstition Mountains and the Mazatzal Wilderness on its way to the Mogollon Rim and San Francisco Peaks. The trail north takes travelers across the Grand Canyon through billions of years of geology. Climbing out on the North Rim, ponderosa pine forests line the Kaibab Plateau, eventually leading to red sandstone as the trail nears the Utah border on the edge of the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument.

The trail has been developed in passages throughout the state, creating a network of trails that offer a taste of Arizona's diverse terrain. Most of the passages are ideal for weekend trips, offering up the Arizona Trail to hikers in manageable pieces as opposed to taking on the whole 800+ mile route at one time.

Arizona Hiking & Wilderness Safety

Arizona provides the greatest number of outdoor terrain and weather variables within the shortest travel distance of any geographic region in North or South America. From all four North American deserts to snow-covered alpine tundra, our topography and climate changes demand proper preparation. So, what is proper preparation? I recommend the following:

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1. Pick a hike that matches your physical condition and give yourself enough time to complete that hike.
2. Bring a good hiking guidebook or topographic map showing your selected route.
3. Check the weather before you head out and bring the right clothes for that weather. And if the weather changes during your hike? Consider turning back and trying again another day.
4. Always let someone (who is not traveling with you) know where you're going and when you expect to return.
5. Bring someone along or, if you are hiking alone, choose a popular trail where others can offer assistance if you need it.
6. Pay attention to landmarks and consult your map often. Turning around from time to time to see the trail from another angle can help you stay on track on your way back.
7. Don't let your group get separated.
8. Always carry maps, a compass, seasonal clothing, a flashlight, water, a knife, food, something for water purification, and an emergency blanket or tarp.

Arizona Hiking Etiquette

Observe the rules and guidelines posted at trailheads.

Share the trail (mountain bikers yield to hikers and horses, hikers yield to horses, hikers going downhill yield to hikers going uphill, group hikers yield to singles or doubles, and slower hikers yield to faster hikers or trail runners).

Stay on the trail (this means: do not cut between switchbacks or take shortcuts, stay to the right on wider paths, pass on the left, and, if you are in a group, hike single file or two abreast in the middle of the trail). Also, when stopping for a view or rest,

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exit the trail so it is free for others. When selecting a spot for a rest, exit the trail in a well-used area.

Leave the trail as you found it. This means if you bring it in, you need to bring it back out. Don't leave any markers (stone piles, also known as cairns) when hiking off-trail. And, we've all heard the adage: take only memories, stories, and photos and leave only footprints.

Finally, be respectful of others on the trail.

Legal Concerns

Arizona's hiking trails are located within City Preserves, State Parks, and National Parks and there are specific rules and regulations that hikers must adhere to in each region, including wild camping and campfires or seasonal fire bans.

Many hiking trails require permits for entry and may be limited in numbers. Make sure to check the entry requirements and plan ahead, as some regions in Arizona sell entry permits many months ahead and these often sell out quickly during the popular hiking seasons.

For the Arizona State Parks, visit azstateparks.com. For the US National Parks, go to nps.gov. For the USA Department of the Interior, Arizona Bureau of Land Management go to blm.gov. Or Google the city preserve of your choice (there are too many to list).

When to Go

Arizona's weather is dependent on the altitude, which varies greatly from south to north. Southern Arizona's altitude is near sea level, central Arizona (Phoenix) is at 1,750 feet above sea level and Northern Arizona is well above 7,000 feet.

In the south and greater Phoenix area, the months of October through April are considered ideal, with daytime temperatures at 80 F and nighttime lows around 45.

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At that same time of year in Northern Arizona, you can expect temperatures below freezing with snow and ice conditions. The reverse is true during the months of May through September. Hiking is ideal in Northern Arizona, with daytime highs in the mid-70s and evening lows in the mid 40s. Temperatures soar in Southern Arizona and Phoenix at that time, with daytime highs reaching 115 F and evening lows still well above 80.

Arizona is in a very dry climate, statewide and year-round. As with all activities here, it is essential to bring and drink lots of fluids. Water, water, and more water should be a priority when packing your supplies for your hike.

Find John at arizonahikingadventures.com.

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Alex Thevenin

Grand Canyon White Water Rafting Company Owner.

About Alex

I grew up boating with my parents, just like my dad grew up boating with his parents. I don't remember learning how to row. I do, however, remember how hard it was to learn to read water in my late 20s, when I came back to the river to pursue guiding and eventually outfitting. People just assumed I could do it because I could row and had grown up on the river! It was quite a challenge.

Now, I only get to run about three trips per year. The rest of the time I'm running Arizona Raft Adventures (AzRA), with my husband, Fred, parenting our two adventurous daughters, and playing—hiking, biking, skiing, boating, whatever way we can get outside!

Rafting for Beginners

Almost anyone, even first-time campers, can go on a Grand Canyon raft trip. Motor trips are better choices for families with kids under 12, for those who want to see the whole canyon in just over a week, or for those who want to feel the security of a larger craft. Classic trips are better choices for those who want a slower trip, closer to the water. For the more fit, they may choose a partial trip involving a hike in or out of the canyon.

Rafting for the More Adventurous

For the most adventurous souls, I recommend and all paddle trip—where the guests paddle under the guidance of a paddle captain 100% of the time—or a Hikers' Special in the spring or fall.

Alex's Personal Favorites

I have so many favorite places in Grand Canyon...I love the Supai Narrows in the Upper Canyon and Conquistador Aisle in the Lower Canyon. I love Unkar and Sockdolager Rapids on

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the Upper Half and Hance always has something to teach us. Deubendorff, on the Lower Half, is my favorite rapid, and what's not to love about Lava? Exploration-wise, there are so many hiking options; each trip offers something new—the Nankoweap to Kwagunt or Surprise Valley loops for the most intrepid; the Little Colorado, Elves Chasm, and Havasu Creek for families in the summer; or shorter jaunts with big payoffs like the Granaries or Shinumo Creek for everyone.

Rafting Safety

Wilderness is never completely safe or without risk, so the trick is to mitigate risks. If you don't have the skills yourself, use an outfitter and take the expedition and your health seriously. If you do have the skills, prepare carefully equipment-wise, try to get the highest medical training you can (a Wilderness First Responder course is typically 80 hours, but even basic first aid is better than nothing), and do your research.

When I go private boating, I also like to ask the commercial guides on that river: Which route did you choose? How would you run this rapid? Where are your favorite camps? Etc.

Rafting Etiquette

Communicate with the trips around you about your plans and theirs. There are plenty of spectacular places in Grand Canyon for everyone.

Legal Concerns

Private (self-outfitted) trips definitely need permits. Each river has a different system, so check online. Each river also has different requirements regarding equipment—everything from the size of your fire pan to the type of human waste containers you must carry. Commercial guests can leave those concerns to their outfitters.

Best Seasons for Rafting

My favorite time of year is April because I love the cooler hiking and wildflowers, though the weather is unpredictable in the spring.

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Every guide will give you a different answer for their favorite time of year, and every participant has different needs. July is great for families. August has beautiful storms. Late September and October are the no-motor season. And winter trips are only for the exceptionally experienced private boaters.

Final Notes & Other Tips

Everyone should experience the Grand Canyon from the bottom. It's such an amazing escape from technology, a journey toward the intricate—each wave or each shadow—and the magnificent, a chance to be in the quiet and have comradery, a return to our simplest needs and values.

Also, commercial trips in Arizona are hard to come by, except on the Salt River, which is a lovely place, though not a mellow one.

Find Alex at azraft.com.

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FLAGSTAFF

Your artsy, mountain town gateway to the Grand Canyon.

FIND WI-FI HERE: Cedar House, Rendezvous, & Fire Creek coffee shops & the public & on-campus libraries.



Caskey & Peppers Families

Adventurers. Outdoor Sports Enthusiasts. World-Travelers.

About the Caskeys & Peppers

Hey! We're the Caskeys (and Peppers)—Tina, Robert, Emily, Matt, Eric, and Chris (and Ryan and another Chris, who couldn't be here today to put in their two cents). We're all related and we're long-time Flagstaff locals.

For work, we cover the gamut. We've got two orthodontists, a middle school math teacher, and an about-to-publish fantasy novelist.

For fun, we're runners, hikers, mountain bikers, travelers, skiers, and explorers. Matt is a self-proclaimed day-adventurer. Tina has a blog that shares her personal journey with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and food intolerance (and includes low-allergen recipes). And Robert skis out of helicopters from time to time.

What to do in Flagstaff (the Basics)

Lowell Observatory is well worth a trip. That's where Pluto was discovered. Don't mention that Pluto isn't a planet around here, by the way. That's a faux pas.

Go to Lake Mary or hike up into the peaks or to the observatory at night for some amazing star-gazing.

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Head to Buffalo Park for a nice, easy nature walk with the peaks in the distance.

There's a farmer's market every Sunday spring to fall down by city hall. And in the summer there are lots of festivals to enjoy.

Riordan Mansion (two interconnected homes built in 1904) is gorgeous and the Pioneer Historical Museum and Museum of Northern Arizona (which is cheap and has a meteorite) are excellent.

And make sure to go downtown. See Heritage Square. Walk around and visit the shops. And for local gifts, head to Fire on the Mountain. You might even get a glass-blowing demonstration while you're there.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

The mile-long Lava River Cave, about 14 miles from Flagstaff, is very cool. You're basically taking a long, mostly level walk underground. Bring your own flashlights. It's pitch black down there. It's also not paved (so bring good shoes) and gets pretty chilly even in summer (so bring warm clothes).

Wupatki National Monument—with its native American ruins—and Walnut Canyon—a canyon full of cliff dwellings—are also worthwhile.

For a pretty drive, try Schultz Pass Road. The drive is through forest and if you're up for a hike, it takes you to Old Weathford Road to Doyle Saddle—a cool hike that not many people do.

Another cool drive is along 89 before the Painted Desert, heading north up and through Tuba City as far as Tonalea. The stretch from Cameron to Tonalea, right before you hit Monument Valley, is full of cool rock formations and painted desert.

If you have a high clearance vehicle, you can also drive to the top of Mount Elden. It's a great panorama, especially at sunset.

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Where to Stay

Stay downtown or on the west side of town. Or, if you have the budget, stay at the Little America Hotel (flagstaff.littleamerica.com). It's particularly neat in December with its Christmas lights. In fact, even if you're not staying there, head over during the holidays to check out the lights.

Day Trips

In the south, start with Sedona. The red rocks there are unique in the world. It's also 2,000 feet lower than Flagstaff in elevation, which means it's still gorgeous and temperate in the winter. There's a creek down there that's perfect for summertime dips. There's blackberry picking in the fall. And there are beautiful autumn colors. (Speaking of Sedona, the Sedona Pink Jeep Tours are fun and scenic.)

For excellent hikers, the whole West Fork drainage is a great place. There are some mandatory swims along the route and it takes a whole day, but it's wonderful. The trailhead is off Woody Mountain Road (for directions, check out todds hiking guide.com/hikes/arizona/coconino/coconino16.htm). [Editor's note: Keep in mind that camping is prohibited here, no open fires are allowed, and the water is very cold. Go prepared.]

Just past Sedona to the south, we also love Jerome—an old mining town that's basically a ghost town that never quite died. The old insane asylum is now a restaurant. The town has a history of sliding down the hill every time there was a mine blast. And people—even the people you wouldn't expect—claim to have seen ghosts there.

Montezuma Well and Castle—about 45 minutes south of town—are fascinating. The well is a giant natural sinkhole where subterranean water flows out from below ground to create a lake. There are native dwellings along the side and the castle itself is a large cliff dwelling.

Tuzigoot National Monument is another fascinating Native American ruin. Fairly well preserved, it's particularly cool because it takes over the top part of a hill and flows down the hill in a

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unique way. While you're there, get some prickly pear jelly. It's the best cactus product around. Stay away from the weird gummies and the Jalapeno jelly.

Wet Beaver Creek is great if you love cliff jumping. Tonto Natural Bridge is a giant travertine arch (the largest in the world) only a couple hours away by car.

To the north, the obvious and important day trip is the Grand Canyon. But make sure to get out of the main South Rim tourist trap. Desert View Tower (a viewpoint along the south rim) is incredible. The whole routh rim drive is good—and even better on a bike if you can get one and do the trail. And if you can, head to the North Rim for an overnight, especially in the fall.

If you have plenty of time and money, rafting the Colorado River is a special gem of an experience. The rapids had to have a whole new classification system invented for them because they're so crazy and big.

If you can't be very active while here, take the train from Williams to the Grand Canyon. It's a nice ride and they stage a train robbery and in the winter you see Santa. The Polar Express version was cool. It's a very kid-friendly thing to do.

Lake Powell is worth visiting for an overnight (or couple nights). There are no trees on the lake, so bring your own shade. And go kayaking if you can.

Also, make sure to see the nearby slot canyons (particularly Buckskin Gulch across the border in Utah...the longest slot canyon in the world). Antelope Canyon is the most popular of the slot canyons, but there are a lot like it and you'll have a cheaper and easier time getting to Secret Canyon.

While you're there, eat at the Canyon King Pizzeria (663 S. Lake Powell Boulevard) in Page—a pizzeria inside a converted riverboat.

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East of Flagstaff, Meteor Crater is the best preserved meteor impact site on earth. The largest shard of the meteor is housed in the lobby and there's no glass. You can literally go right up and touch it.

A lesser-known ghost town in the area is Two Guns (between Flagstaff and Meteor Crater). It's a Route 66 ghost town with a dark history. During the 66 boom, they tried to set up a zoo and hotel and even built fake ruins to draw people in. It's supposedly haunted because it's the site of a Native American massacre.

Finally, Canyon Diablo—off the same exit as Two Guns, but turn left instead of right and drive until you hit the railroad tracks—has less to see, but lots of interesting history to read up on. Their claim to fame is that they couldn't keep a sheriff. They all died violently, except one who fled. The first sheriff was sworn in in the morning and buried by eight.

Grand Falls is taller than Niagara Falls and only flows during melting and monsoon seasons. It's a great trip, but a high clearance vehicle is strongly recommended. And if watering holes are your thing, check out Tonto Creek and Horton Creek.

First Mesa, an old Native American ruin that's somehow still inhabited, though it has no water or electricity, offers settlement tours. It's the longest continually inhabited (by a single people group) village in the country.

To the northeast, interesting Navajo monuments include the Keet Seel cliff dwellings and Canyon de Chelly National Monument.

Where to Walk & Hike

Start with the San Francisco Peaks—a volcanic mountain range with some great hikes. We particularly like the Veit Springs Trail, a short trail that passes through an Aspen forest. For strong hikers, Humphreys Peak is great, as well. It's the highest mountain in Arizona (at 12,637 feet). [Editor's note: The

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Humphreys Peak Trail is about five miles each way and views along the way include the rim of the Grand Canyon.]

Other favorite hikes in that area include the Inner Basin Trail, Elden Lookout Trail, and Kachina Trail, which is pretty easy and flat.

Fat Man's Loop is a beginner trail with views of the east side of town. Sunset Crater Trail is a lava-rock strewn walk to a 1,120-foot crater. And Mount Elden offers views of the whole town.

For strong hikers, Horseshoe Mesa in the Grand Canyon is a great day hike. For more moderate hikers, we recommend Cedar Ridge (also in the Grand Canyon).

And, of course, there are tons of hikes down in Sedona. We really like Cathedral Rock, which is mostly a scramble up rock faces and is, from the vantage point of Red Rock Crossing State Park, one of the most photographed sights in Arizona, and Submarine Rock, which is a really great hike and scramble that far less people know about. Other favorites include Steamboat Rock and Sterling Pass.

What & Where to Eat & Drink

Cottage Place (126 W. Cottage Avenue; phone: 928.774.8431) is the highest end restaurant we have here, followed closely by Brix (413 N. San Francisco Street; phone: 928.213.1021). They're swanky.

For Italian, try Mama Louisa's (2710 N. Steves Boulevard, #14; phone: 928.526.6809) and Pasto (19 E. Aspen Avenue; phone: 928.779.1937).

For Mexican, our favorite is El Capitan (1800 S. Milton Road), followed by MartAnne's Breakfast Palace (112 Historic Route 66).

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For Chinese, we like Hunan West (1302 S. Plaza Way; phone: 928.779.2229) and Hunan East (1926 N. 4th Street, Suite 8; phone: 928-526-1009).

Black Bart's Steakhouse (2760 E. Butler Avenue; phone: 928.779.3142) is a hidden gem. It's steak in a trailer park with show tunes during dinner.

Another good steakhouse is Horseman's Lodge (8500 US-89; phone: 928.526.2655). At night the prices jump, but during the day it's very reasonable. They serve breakfast till 2 p.m. Definitely order the cinnamon roll French toast. Or the black and blue burger.

We also love Josephine's Modern American Bistro (503 N. Humphreys Street; phone: 928.779.3400). The baked brie is excellent and the prices are, too.

For burgers and shakes, Mama Burger (991 N. Fort Valley Road) is very good and Diablo Burger (120 N. Leroux Street, #112), though a bit more expensive, is good and right downtown.

For healthier fare, head to Mix (120 N. Leroux Street) for salads and sandwiches or Old Town Creperie (same location) for crepes (only open in summer).

For thai, try Ewa (110 S. San Francisco Street) or Pato Thai (104 N. San Francisco Street).

If you like breweries, Beaver Street (11 S. Beaver Street, #1) and Lumberyard (5 S. San Francisco Street) are the best of the bunch.

And for coffee, White Dove (2211 E. 7th Avenue), Cedar House (2009 E. Cedar Avenue), Fire Creek (22 Historic Route 66), and Kickstand (719 N Humphreys Street) are our top picks. Macy's (14 S. Beaver Street) is extremely popular and cool and the coffee is good, though you'll stand in line for ages.

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Budget Tips

Hiking is free. So is star-gazing. We've got cheap concerts at the Orpheum Theater, cheap history tours through the visitor center, and a free art walk the first Friday of every month.

Chris, who is nine, loves the rock climbing gym, which is affordable.

You can also bike everywhere and save money that way. There's an urban trail that goes out east and a 40-mile loop clear around town. The bike park at Fort Tuthill (the county fairgrounds) is free.

For cheap food, try Tacos Los Altos (tacoslosaltos.com).

How to Fit In

Do not litter and *absolutely* obey all fire laws. This is a high-fire-risk area. Do not throw your cigarette butts on the ground or out the car window. Most years, campfires are not allowed. And all fires that are allowed must be fully extinguished—including the embers—when you're done.

If you see something compelling on your drive, pull over. Don't hold up traffic. As for the elk situation: there will be more. Do not stop or feed them. There are always more deer, elk, and squirrels.

Leave no trace is a serious thing here. Don't leave your broken sled behind; there's no one whose job it is to clean that up. Don't carve into the red rocks (which is a felony) or the trees. Don't throw trash in the woods or break anything in nature. And, especially in the desert, nothing actually biodegrades here, including orange peels and sunflower seed. Pick it *all* up.

Finally, do not stop on the train tracks. The trains do not use horns and there are a lot of them.

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How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Join a hiking club, biking club, running club...there are clubs for every outdoor activity around here. And through the university there's any kind of group you can imagine.

Fire Creek has Sunday night readings. There are plenty of bars if you're into the brewery scene. The Museum Club even has 10-cent beers on Wednesday nights, we hear.

Best Places to Take a Photo

Head to the San Francisco Peaks, especially in the fall and especially at sunset. There are aspens up there. Aspen Corner is a particularly good spot.

Sedona is also great for photographs, especially if you're lucky enough to be here when the snow level drops that low—Sedona is stunning in the snow. And West Fork is a perfect place for an easy walk and amazing photos.

Finally, of course, the Grand Canyon at sunset or sunrise—though that's obvious.

Final Notes & Other Tips

During NAU graduation, family weekend, homecoming, and move-in days, the town gets packed with excited students, parents, and friends. If you love hustle, bustle, and high energy, it's a good time to come. If you're looking for a quieter getaway, you might want to avoid those events.

Finally, a weird fun fact: if you find a Ponderosa Pine with red bark, get close. It smells like vanilla.

Find Matt at mattcaskey.com & Tina at youseasonwithlove.com.

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Gigi Griffis

Hiker. Food Snob. Writer. Full-Time Traveler.

About Gigi

Hey there, friends. It's me again—the author of this hefty Arizona + Colorado guidebook. After about three and a half years of full-time travel, I settled myself here in Flagstaff for four months while I started gathering these interviews and writing this guide. Since I've been here awhile, I thought I'd take a little space and share my Flagstaff favorites with you.

As you already know, I write for a living. I've published eight guidebooks (including this one) and write for magazines, blogs, websites, etc. For fun, I'm a hiker, road biker, star-gazer, reader, writer, home cook, conversationalist, traveler, and dog-lover.

What to do in Flagstaff (the Basics)

Start with a walk around downtown. The small downtown area is all brick buildings and cozy coffee shops and rustic charm, perfect for strolling hand-in-hand.

If you like universities and architecture, the NAU campus is also rather pretty. And the library on campus is a quiet and lovely place to read or get online.

That said, Flagstaff is really an outdoorsy town, so most of the must-sees are outside on the trails. Buffalo Park is a nice one for an easy walk with pretty mountain scenery in the distance (though don't step off the path; there are tons of tiny terrifying cactus hidden in the grass). And the hikes on Mount Elden are nice mid-skill-level options.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

Despite its size, Flagstaff is a wonderful hub of culture. You'll find literary readings on Monday nights ([facebook.com/narrowchimney](https://www.facebook.com/narrowchimney)) and poetry slams on other weekdays ([facebook](https://www.facebook.com/narrowchimney)

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.com/flagstaffpoetryslam). There are tons of artists around, so ask around about the latest installations. And there's a great little music community, as well, so watch for concert listings and ask around about jam sessions.

Where to Stay

I stayed in and adored the Hospital Hill area—just north of the hospital on the west side of town. It's quiet and residential and there are trails that start in the neighborhood and lead to Buffalo Park and other pretty natural areas. It's also walking distance (about 30 minutes) to downtown.

If you're only staying a night or two, though, consider staying right downtown, in the heart of everything.

Day Trips

The big obvious day trip is the Grand Canyon. It's about an hour's drive and you'll need a National Parks Pass to get in (you can buy one when you arrive or beforehand). The South Rim Trail has pretty views, but it's very crowded, so I recommend coming in the off-season (we hiked in February and March) and taking the Bright Angel Trail into the canyon instead. You still won't be alone on the trail, but it's not too crowded, especially once you get past the first mile or two. Go all the way down to Plateau Point if you can; it's worth the walk (six miles each way) with its views of the Colorado River and the north rim.

Sedona is my second pick. Head down and drive along Highway 89 for gorgeous red rock views. Then stop for a hike somewhere along the way (Cathedral Rock scramble is a fun one).

And it's a bit far for a day trip, but if you have a night or two, Lake Powell is something special. I've never seen anything like it...a desert landscape artificially filled with water, it's odd and gorgeous and thought-provoking.

While you're there, go for a hike in one of the slot canyon. I like Water Holes Canyon, which gets far less tourists than the more popular Antelope and Secret Canyons and is much less expen-

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sive, at \$12 per person for a permit. To get a permit, head to the Navajo Tribal Park Office behind the LeChee Health Center three miles south of Page on Coppermine Road.

Finally, if you want to see something really unusual and not publicized while you're in Page, take S. Lake Powell Boulevard west across Highway 89. You'll see a dead end sign. Pass it and park somewhere near the animal shelter on the left. Beside the shelter, you'll see two large white tanks. Walk toward and behind them and head toward the canyon (you can see it from there). Once you reach the canyon—which the locals call Car Canyon—you'll notice a giant pile of classic cars, twisted and rusting and sticking out of the canyon's edges. What happened here? Years ago there was a mass exodus from Page and tons of people left cars behind. The city tasked the waste management folks in town with getting those cars off the streets and out of the yards. Rather than disposing of them properly, they chucked them into a canyon. Now, they're a strange, sad part of the landscape.

Where to Walk

For something easy and pretty, check out Buffalo Park. For something mid-level, head to Mount Elden's trails (and make sure to keep your dog on a leash; there have been mountain lions spotted here).

What & Where to Eat & Drink

I had a couple good (though not rave-worthy) meals at Criollo Latin Kitchen (16 N. San Francisco; phone: 928.774.0541). The food is Latin-fusion, the ingredients are fresh and local-ish, and they are known for their margaritas.

I also had a really excellent garlic soft pretzel at Sugar Mama's Bakery (116 S. San Francisco Street) and a very tasty smoothie at Morning Glory Café (115 S. San Francisco Street)—the go-to for vegan fare in town.

As for coffee shops, I adore Cedar House (2009 E. Cedar Avenue)—a small, cutely decorated shop with good prices, good

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Wi-Fi, and even better mint mochas. My backup coffee spot is Rendezvous (100 N. San Francisco Street). It's more expensive, but it's right downtown and has a cozy lounge area and a very sunny front room.

For drinks, I really like the front room of FLG Terroir (17 N. San Francisco Street), which looks out over a cute downtown street. They have a nice little wine selection and the atmosphere of that front room is cozy.

Budget Tips

Hiking, biking, star-gazing, and strolling are generally free. You can find free Wi-Fi and cheap printing services at the public library if you need them. And Cedar House seems to be the cheapest coffee house in town.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

If you're a word nerd like me, check out the literary readings (particularly the Narrow Chimney series) and poetry slams. If you're outdoorsy, head out on a hike and strike up a conversation with some strangers. The outdoorsy crowd tends to be friendly. If you're single, Tinder is pretty active here and I didn't meet any creepers during my own Tinder stint in town.

Best Places to Take a Photo

In Flagstaff itself, Buffalo Park is probably one of the prettiest scenery spots. Outside Flag, of course, you've got the Grand Canyon. Hiking the Bright Angel Trail offers some great photo ops. And, of course, Sedona is hard to beat with its giant, interesting red rocks.

Find Gigi at gigigriffis.com.

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WILLIAMS

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Eric Hadder

Railway CMO. Entrepreneur.

About Eric

I'm originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, but moved to Arizona when I was 10. I grew up in Phoenix, went to college in Tucson, and have lived in Williams since 1998. I'm currently the Chief Mechanical Officer for Grand Canyon Railway and also own Cafe 326 in downtown Williams. In my spare time, I like to travel around the state and the southwest, seeing all of the wonderful things this area has to offer.

What to do in Williams (the Basics)

The Grand Canyon is, of course, the prime destination in the area for tourists, and there are plenty of obvious reasons for that. Adding a ride on the Grand Canyon Railway can really enhance the experience, especially if you combine it with an overnight stay inside the national park.

Bearizona (a wildlife park) is a fairly new attraction that is growing every year. They do a really nice job and it's typically worth several hours of quality family entertainment.

We also have a lot of visitors that are interested in the Route 66 nostalgia, and Williams does a good job of keeping to those traditions, with lots of neon signs and classic roadside hotels. You can go west from here and follow the longest existing

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unbroken stretch of Route 66 from Crookton, Arizona, to the California border.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

South of Williams is an old mining town called Jerome, which is now an artist community and real-life ghost town. There are three ways to get there. Two are paved highways, but the most direct route follows a small paved county road south of town then turns to well maintained dirt forest service roads. It crosses the Verde River at Perkinsville Ranch, then follows an abandoned narrow gauge railroad grade into the backside of Jerome.

Also, about 12 miles west of here is an abandoned railroad tunnel from the Santa Fe Railroad. The line was built in the late 1800s and abandoned around 1960.

If you wander the forest service roads around town, you can find all sorts of things—like lava caves, petroglyphs, seasonal waterfalls and lakes, and deep canyons. Plus, there is the climb to the top of Bill Williams Mountain at 9,000 feet for 100-mile panoramic views.

Where to Stay

Williams is very small, so it really doesn't have separate neighborhoods. However, staying close to the downtown area will provide the most access to dining and shopping.

Day Trips

I like to send people on a Grand Canyon loop. Head north into the national park, then go out the east entrance, passing many spectacular overlooks along the way. After leaving the park, you'll enter the Navajo Indian Reservation, with several breathtaking overlooks of the Little Colorado River Canyon. At Cameron, they junction with US Highway 89 at an old trading post. Then head south past Wapatki Indian Ruins and Sunset Crater National Monument before entering Flagstaff. Flagstaff has lots of activities, including the Lowell Observatory. Then it's a 30-minute drive on the interstate to get back to Williams.

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I've already mentioned the Route 66 tour to the west, where you get off the interstate at Crookton Road. From there, head through Seligman, which is known as one of the inspirations for the movie *Cars*. Then it's past Grand Canyon Caverns and Peach Springs, where you can divert down Diamond Creek Road all the way to the Colorado River inside the Grand Canyon. Following Route 66 will take you into Kingman, then on to Oatman, an old mining town that still has wooden sidewalks and native burros that roam the town. After that you will end up at the Colorado River across from Needles, California.

You can also do the Highway 89 tour, starting by heading east to Flagstaff. Then it's south through the winding switchbacks of scenic Oak Creek Canyon before entering world-famous Sedona, known for its red rocks, shopping, and wilderness areas. After that, cross the Verde River and enter Clarkdale, home to the Verde Canyon Railway, which takes a scenic four-hour round trip through the Verde Canyon Wilderness. On the hill above Clarkdale is the mining town of Jerome, which is continually sliding down the slope due to all of the underground excavations over the years. After topping Mingus Mountain, head down into Prescott, which was the capital of the Arizona Territory. The old courthouse is still in use in the center of town, adjacent to Whisky Row. On the north side of Prescott is Watson Lake, which is located in an area known as the Granite Dells. I think it's the most scenic lake in the area.

Where to Walk

Bill Williams Mountain towers 2,000 feet over the town, with a summit at about 9,000 feet. There are three trails to the top, one of which originates on the south side of town. Once at the top, you can climb a fire tower for some really terrific views.

For easier trails, try Keyhole Sink, about 10 miles east of town. This one-mile level hike will take you to some ancient petroglyphs and a seasonal waterfall. Sycamore Canyon is south-east of town, and Forest Service Roads will take you to some pretty neat trails and spectacular overlooks along the rim.

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There is also an abandoned railroad grade that heads west from Williams towards Ash Fork, and you can walk most of it, including the part that goes through Johnson Canyon Tunnel.

Finally, there are a half dozen small lakes within about a 30-minute drive. Each is a great place to view wildlife, including osprey, bald eagles, mule deer, elk, and great blue herons.

What & Where to Eat & Drink

Williams is a tourist town, and so the restaurants mostly cater to what they think the tourists will like. So I wouldn't say that it has its own particular flavor. However, there are about 40 restaurants in this small town, which produces plenty of variety. Rod's Steak House (301 E. Route 66; phone: 928.635.2671) is a Route 66 tradition and has been here since the '40s. On the more modern side, the Red Raven (135 Route 66; phone: 928.635.4980) has been recognized as one of the better restaurants in the state, and Kicks on 66 (2550 Route 66; phone: 928.635.2052) is developing itself as a healthy upscale dining experience.

For a unique coffee experience, of course, I have to recommend my own place—Cafe 326 (326 Route 66)—which offers locally roasted espresso and a variety of homemade pastries, plus a sandwich menu for breakfast and lunch.

For drinking, try South Rims wine and beer garage (514 E. Route 66), which offers a variety of local wines and ales, plus a limited but tasty food menu to compliment. There are also two microbreweries that call Williams home: Grand Canyon Brewing Company (233 Route 66) and Historic Brewing Company (141 W. Railroad Avenue). Both offer terrific locally developed selections.

If you head west, I have to say that we have found Lulu's BBQ in Ash Fork (33 Lewis Avenue) to be a nice surprise. In Seligman, there are three restaurants of note: Delgadillo's Snow Cap (301 Route 66) is another old Route 66 burger joint, with a collection of old memorabilia as noteworthy as the service. Westside Lilo's (405 Chino Street) has terrific homemade dishes and a large

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menu. And the Roadkill Café (502 Route 66) has a decor that lives up to its name.

Budget Tips

For a tourist town, Williams is not particularly expensive. However, keep in mind that hotel rates change seasonally. The highest demand will be any time that schools are typically closed (summer and holidays). If you can travel during the fall or early spring, you'll find a more intimate experience.

That said, the summer is when Williams is really hopping, with more activities to enjoy and more people to meet. There is a staged gunfight in the street every evening, and there are often classic car clubs that pass through town and stop over for the night.

If you like the outdoors, there is plenty of open forest surrounding the town to explore. Get a local Forest Service Map and start hitting the dirt roads and you never know what you might see. There are plenty of opportunities for camping and fishing in the area. You can even drive to the top of Bill Williams Mountain and climb the fire tower, offering 360-degree views of the surrounding area, where you can often see over 100 miles.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Start chatting it up with any of the service staff at the gift stores, hotels, or restaurants. The locals all know what to do. Also, check with the Visitor Center or the Chamber of Commerce website to see what activities are coming up in the area and get a copy of the weekly Williams News.

Best Places to Take a Photo

There are two gateway arches located at the main entrances to the town, donated by the Arizona State Railway Museum and constructed of old Santa Fe Railroad signal bridges. The Grand Canyon Railway has historic equipment on display at the Williams Depot. And the downtown area still maintains its

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Route feel, and there are plenty of photo ops there, especially if you like the old neon lights.

Final Notes & Other Tips

For train buffs, the Grand Canyon Railway departs every morning. About once a month, they use the historic steam locomotive to pull the train (find schedules at *thetrain.com*). Also, the BNSF transcontinental mainline runs just north of town with 100 trains a day.

Finally, be prepared for changing weather. At 7,000 feet of elevation, the seasons are definitely prominent. Summer high temperatures usually top out at 90 degrees or so, and the winters can see a snowstorm of two feet on occasion, with lows below zero. Late summer monsoon rains can add a little spice to the day, with clear skies in the morning and thunderstorms by the afternoon. But the evenings are perfect for walking downtown, catching some live music and a drink on the patio, browsing the curio shops, or having a nice meal.

Find Eric at cafe326.com.

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SEDONA & COTTONWOOD

Known for scenic red rocks and power vortexes.

FIND WI-FI HERE: Indian Gardens, Whole Foods, Sedona Library, Red Rooster, Nic's, Pizzeria Bocce, the Tavern Hotel, & Burning Tree Cellars.



Jodi Thornton O'Connell

Travel Writer. Arizona Adorer.

About Jodi

Originally from Green Bay, Wisconsin, I moved to Arizona when I was only two years old, which makes me "almost a native." I've been in love with Arizona since childhood and particularly with Sedona/Oak Creek Canyon. I had the pleasure of spending my summers there growing up and moved there as an adult. I get to indulge my love for Arizona on a daily basis as a travel writer, creating content for clients that include jetBlue, Choice Hotels, Hipmunk, and many others.

What to do in Sedona (the Basics)

One thing I really love about Sedona is that there are no disappointing attractions. There are so many activities in the area that cater to so many interests.

First, take a drive up the canyon, especially during autumn. Make sure to get a Red Rock Pass for a nominal fee; you'll need it to stop and enjoy the view at Midgley Bridge or other viewpoints. The road runs adjacent to the creek. Bring your suit, park at a pull-off, and make your way down to the water to cool off. These sites are much less crowded than Slide Rock. Stop across the road from Pine Flat Campground to fill up your water bottles from a natural spring. Pro tip: Head up the can-

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yon early in the morning to get a good spot. And avoid the stop-and-go traffic when heading back into town by making a day of it. Most of the traffic dwindles by 5:30 p.m. Take a picnic, dine at Indian Gardens or Dairy Queen in the canyon, or continue on to Flagstaff.

[Editor's note: you can get a Red Rock Pass in person at the Red Rock Ranger District (8375 State Route 17, Sedona), the Sedona Oak Creek Chamber of Commerce (331 Forest Road, Sedona), North Gateway Visitor Center (at the Oak Creek Vista), Oak Creek Visitor Center (3901 N. Highway 89A, Oak Creek), Coconino Forest Supervisor's Office (1824 S. Thompson Street, Flagstaff), Verde Ranger District (300 E. Highway 260, Camp Verde), as well as many grocery stores, gas stations, shops, and resorts. There are also self-serve machines at some trailheads and you can purchase by phone via 928.203.2900.]

Next, hit the trails. The national forest surrounds the town and any trail you pick will reward you with panoramic views of the red rocks. The Bell Rock Trail is a good starting point, as intersecting loops let you custom-tailor your hike. It's also home to some of Sedona's most-accessible vortexes. Other trails start right in town, such as Soldier Pass. Pro tip: Stop by the Ranger Station on Highway 179 on your way into the Village of Oak Creek to pick up free hiking maps or buy a hiking guide.

Browse the shops, most notably Tlaquepaque—an arts and crafts village was built using ancient Mexican methods and that offers much more than upscale artwork. The galleries are fascinating to browse through, especially the Kuivato Glass Gallery.

Cucina Sedona is another favorite of mine. Not only do they have unique kitchenware with a southwest flair but there are spice rubs, soup mixes, and other ready-to-makes with an authentic Arizona flavor.

Vom Fass is another unique store, with tasteable oils, vinegars, liqueurs, and spirits straight from the cask.

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And Tlaquepaque has sycamore-shaded courtyards and fountains to linger in while listening to free live music, as well as a Friday morning farmer's market.

Another great shopping area, Uptown has a mix of galleries and souvenir shops. Clear Creek Trading Company on the far end of the shopping district sits in a historic ranch house and still operates as an authentic trading post. You'll find authentic and unusual items here, including hides and supplies for making your own crafts. Pro tip: Some shops in town sell non-authentic (made in China or by non-native locals) replicas of Native American artwork, smudging sticks, flutes, etc., which are usually less expensive than authentic items. Its not an attempt to deceive so much as to offer less-expensive alternatives (buying a \$10 flute for your kid vs. a \$300 one, for example). Be sure to ask—and expect to pay a bit more—if authenticity is important to you.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

Take a drive out Dry Creek Road and discover wild red rock country. The drive offers an escape from touristy Sedona and has a bounty of ancient Native American petroglyphs and dwellings. The graded gravel road is accessible with most passenger cars except for the very low-slung unless there have been recent heavy rains (which can leave the road muddy in spots).

The forest service manages two free sites, Honanki and Palatki (again, you'll need a Red Rock Pass for these) where short, easy hikes take you to ancient ruins. Palatki has guided tours through the ruins.

For a longer hike, stop at the Loy Canyon trailhead and hike back to the Loy Canyon Rock Art, the largest rock art panel in the area. When viewed as a whole, it tells the story of people from the north and people from the south coming to the area and living together in peace (according to my NFS guide who obtained the info from a Hopi guide). Pro tip: There are some old ruins of pueblos on side trails as well. Look and listen care-

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fully for bees before getting too close to non-maintained ruins. Visitors should know archaeological etiquette (not taking potsherds or other souvenirs, not carving their names, etc.), as the forest service monitors the sites and penalties are very stiff for defacement.

Where to Stay

Uptown gives a true flair of the city. From an Uptown Sedona motel or resort, you're perfectly poised to dine creek-side, explore niche shops, catch a tour, hike a couple nearby trails, or catch the trolley to attractions that are further away. My family owns a creek-side condo and even as a local I still vacation there one week a year out of sheer love of the area!

Day Trips

Jerome—an old mining town that clings to the edge of Mingus Mountain and is filled with quirky shops just as unique as the town itself—has breathtaking views of the red rock country from a distance. Eat on the Haunted Hamburger (410 Clark Street) outdoor patio to savor the view as well as some of the best burgers in the Verde Valley.

Drive the canyon and continue to Flagstaff where you can take a chairlift up the highest mountain in Arizona, explore Ponderosa pine and aspen forests, or meander through the historic downtown.

Head up Mingus Mountain to play in winter snow or take a hike among the cool pines in summer.

And follow the road down the other side to head to the city of Prescott. On the way back, take Highway 69 to Cherry Road and enjoy the views.

Where to Walk

Other than the plethora of hiking trails in and around the city, Sedona's parks are a wonderful place to spend some time and go for a walk. They also have ADA-accessible trails designed to make the Sedona experience easy for those with mobility issues. Jordan Historical Park in Uptown has nature trails winding

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through natural areas and orchards. Sunset Park has a wheelchair-accessible Splash Park and a nature trail that connects to trails in the national forest. Chimney Rock Loop is one of several trails that start in town and offer sweeping views of the red rocks. I like this one because it is on the west end of town and offers views into the wilderness area as well as over the city.

What & Where to Eat & Drink

Sedona is very eclectic in its cuisine and you'll find dishes from all over the world here. For regional southwestern cuisine, Mesa Grill (1185 Airport Road; phone: 928.282.2400) is a favorite for its food and views from the airport mesa. In Village of Oak Creek, Miley's Cafe (7000 AZ-179, Suite 108) has an informal atmosphere and delicious food. And Historic Indian Gardens (3951 N. State Route 89a; phone: 928.282.7702) is well-loved.

Cafe Paleo Brio (1650 W. State Route 89A) wins my award for the best healthy eats in town. Unlike some healthy eateries, you feel like you're eating decadently, not healthfully. Meat-eaters can choose from grass-fed beef or bison, as well as chicken and seafood options. And vegans, vegetarians, and even fruitarians will find dishes that leave them feeling satisfied. I have several favorite dishes here: The Bell Rock Plate with sourdough is my number one breakfast choice and the Gluten-Free Breakfast Wrap follows closely behind. For lunch, I usually get a Sedona Ranch Panini with yucca fries or a Paleo Bowl with bison, sweet potato hash, avocado, caramelized onions, and grilled jalapenos with Sedona olive oil and maiden salt. For appetizers, the Devils on Horseback are amazing and the Cave Man Sausage is a must-try. Brian, the owner, truly caters to the locals, so this is a true locals-only find.

Olde Sedona Family Restaurant Bar & Grill (1405 AZ-89A) is my number one spot for happy hour. I particularly love fish taco Fridays. I used to go there often for an Olde Sedona Burger (before I found Senor Bob's) but now I usually just do the happy hour or have a Navajo Pizza. I love the old-fashioned building with its rustic ambience. And it's very much off-the-tourist-track.

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Golden Goose (2545 AZ-89A; phone: 928.282.1447) is another favorite for happy hour. I went for the Prickly Pear Margarita (good), but stayed for the Red Rock Pink Cadillac (even better!). We always order up a few prime rib sliders, fried jalapeno bites, and yucca frites. For dinner, the Chicken Marsala is my favorite here, with the meatloaf coming in a close second.

I love the unique dishes they serve at Rene Restaurant (336 AZ-179; phone: 928.282.9225). It has a very romantic atmosphere and one-of-a-kind dishes featuring lamb, duck, and antelope. I particularly love the tenderloin of antelope that comes with whiskey juniper sauce—both definitely regional delights.

I love fried chicken and Schoolhouse Restaurant (7000 AZ-179 C-106; phone: 928.284.2240) definitely has a gourmet take on them. Try the Buttermilk Fried Chicken with waffles. Their Colorado Lamb Meatloaf is also great.

Budget Tips

Pack a picnic and head up the canyon. Pick up the city's best sandwiches at Sedona Memories Bakery Café (321 Jordan Road) or stop for the best hot dogs and hamburgers in town (really!) at Senor Bob's (2015 W. State Route 89A). For dessert, pick up a coupon from your concierge (or from a local brochure rack) from Sedona Fudge Company. Check for coupons online at sites like Visit Sedona or stop by the brochure racks you'll find in businesses throughout Uptown.

How to Fit In

We love tourists! Many citizens were once tourists themselves. But yes, there are a few things we locals wish tourists knew ahead of time:

First, learn to drive roundabouts before arriving. Traffic during peak visitation can be stressful as it is, so that's no time to try to figure out what to do in a roundabout. Big pet peeves of every local include stopping in a roundabout to yield to traffic not yet in the circle, stopping before entering a roundabout when there's no traffic, and driving the wrong way in a roundabout to shortcut the circle (my husband almost got in a head-on

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yesterday for this very reason). Locals try to be kind and understanding, but it would benefit everyone's stress level if you read up on how to drive a roundabout and mentally prepare yourself for it ahead of time.

Second, when driving on Highway 179 (which runs through the national forest between the Village of Oak Creek and the town of Sedona), pull *all the way off the road* at the pull-offs and viewpoints along. It's not unusual to see tourists stopped in the middle of one-lane divided highway taking pictures of soaring monoliths. The road has no shoulder other than a narrow bike lane and is full of twists and dips that limit visibility. The speed limit is 35, but locals tend to take it at 50 or faster. So for the sake of both safety and consideration of those driving around you, pull all the way off the road.

Finally, be aware of your surroundings and take responsibility for your own safety. I love driving through Uptown in my convertible with the top down, hearing the laughter and excitement of the visitors enjoying their vacation. However, I know that in doing so, odds are that I'll find an unexpected pedestrian rocketing out in front of my car. People get in "Disneyland Mode" and forget about things like not backing into the roadway without looking when taking a picture or just running into the street at random when horsing around with their companions. Not to mention chasing down a Pikachu or Jigglypuff.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

The locals in the uptown shops are very friendly. Whole Foods patio is a great place to make friends. Join a Facebook Group such as Sedona Bulletin Board or Sedona-VOC Community Connections to find out where the locals are headed during your time in town. There are also apps such as Grouper, Trippal, and Party With a Local that will let you know who is in your vicinity and is into catching drinks or dinner (when writing about these a few weeks ago, I downloaded and tested the apps and found that there was a *lot* of activity in Sedona).

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Best Places to Take a Photo

Indian Gardens is my favorite photography spot. You can capture greenery, something blooming, and the red rocks in the background. Creek access provides memorable photos as well, with plenty of greenery, red rocks jutting out of the water, and small rapids. Head to Red Rock Crossing to capture the classic picture of Cathedral Rock with the creek in the foreground or stop on the scenic viewpoint on Upper Red Rock Loop Road to get a panoramic view with twisted juniper trees in the foreground.

Final Notes & Other Tips

Sedona is very pet-friendly and you'll find most shops not only allow dogs but put out water bowls as well. Some restaurants, such as Ken's Creekside (251 AZ-179; phone: 928.282.1705), have a menu especially for dogs.

For those looking for Wi-Fi and workspace, Indian Gardens is a favorite. The front patio is usually deserted and has a great Wi-Fi connections and inspiring views of the red rocks and plants. The back garden is where most patrons sit; you can enjoy the tall sycamores and garden atmosphere.

Whole Foods is another top pick. It's centrally located but has expansive shaded patios, fountains, and a lounge/bar, restaurant, and hot food bar. I enjoy this atmosphere because, chances are, local musicians are meeting on one of the patios for an informal jam session. It's a great place to meet locals as well.

Finally, when you need minimal distractions, Sedona Public Library offers private study rooms, conference rooms, laptop stations, and garden areas. High timber ceilings, skylights, and a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace flanked by view windows add a lot of ambiance. There are plenty of electrical outlets and a very fast connection.

Find Jodi at travelingwithlargedogs.com.

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Mitch Levy

Former Chef-Turned-Wine Cellar Owner.

About Mitch

I was a chef back in the '70s, but got tired of the 100-hour weeks, so I got out of the business. I ended up joining the military, retiring as a Medical Platoon Sergeant, and running a finance company for awhile. Then, in 08, I met Corey Turnbull and we started Burning Tree Cellars. He's the head winemaker and I run the business side. We made our first three wines in 2009.

In my free time, I'm an avid motorcycle rider, which is how I met my wife. I love playing golf. I'm on the board for the Verde Valley Wine Consortium and I'm the treasurer of an active + retired motorcycle group called Wind & Fire that raises money for charity.

What to do in Cottonwood (the Basics)

Take a walk through Old Town Cottonwood. It's a little strip of nice restaurants, hotels, art galleries, shops, and wineries. A particular favorite shop is Little Moo's Gourmet Market—a nice little shop featuring crafty food from the east coast.

Founded in 1885, it was originally a supporting town for Jerome, where the copper mining was. Now, it's a special place that so many people don't know about.

If you're a golfer, check out Coyote Trails and Verde Santa Fe—two great local golf courses.

Where to Stay

The Tavern Hotel and Ironhorse Hotel are both nice places to stay. And the Vineyards B&B in Cornville is simply awesome.

Day Trips

Go see some of the vineyards around Verde Valley. Then head to the pueblo ruin at Tuzigoot National Monument and the pre-

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served cliff dwellings of Montezuma's Castle. The Out of Africa wildlife zoo in Camp Verde is something special. The Fort Verde military grounds are interesting. And don't forget the Blazin' M Ranch (chuckwagon supper and wild west show).

Where to Walk

The Old Town Jail Trail is a great place to walk. You can take different paths along the way and cross over the Verde River in a couple spots. It's also considered one of the best birding trails in the area.

What & Where to Eat & Drink

One of my favorites is Nic's Italian Steak and Crab House (925 N. Main Street; phone: 928.634.9626); they have a great martini selection.

For Mexican food, my favorite is Juanita's Taqueria (611 AZ-89A; phone: 928.634.4670).

For breakfast and lunch, I frequent The Red Rooster (901 N. Main Street; phone: 928.649.8100).

Also good are Pizzeria Bocce (1060 Main Street) and Crema Café Coffee and Creamery (917 N. Main Street).

Budget Tips

If you're looking for a small clean room on a small budget, it's The Little Daisy you'll want to stay at. For cheap transport, take a cab. Taxi companies here charge \$10 to take you anywhere in Cottonwood.

Best Places to Take a Photo

As you're heading down 89A to Sedona, before you even get into town you can see the red rocks. The Enchantment Resort in the box canyon has gorgeous views. And really anywhere along that road is perfect for pulling off and getting a great shot of the red rocks.

Find Mitch at burningtreecellars.com.

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PRESCOTT

Land of aviation, hikes, & galleries.

FIND WI-FI HERE: The library, The Raven, & Starbucks.



Cathy Krieger

Painter. Gallery Owner. Hiker. Camper.

About Cathy

I grew up in Kansas but came west in 1969 with Arizona as my destination. I've lived in Prescott since 1971.

I work as a painter, primarily. My husband, Heath, is a potter/sculptor. And we've always made a living selling our art. We currently own a gallery called Krieger-Marcusen Gallery on Whiskey Row in the Hotel St. Michael's Alley.

I enjoy hiking daily and playing tennis. And we like camping with our dog, heading out to places where Heath can fish and I can paint.

What to do in Prescott (the Basics)

Prescott's downtown centers around the Courthouse Square, which is bordered by Whiskey Row, so strolling through shops and eating in restaurants on the row make for a nice first visit.

Sharlot Hall Museum is two blocks off the square and the most historic museum to include in your itinerary. The Smoki Museum has been upgraded the past few years and is also a great destination. The Phippen (western art) Museum is a five-mile drive north, but is well worth the trip. And Whiskey Row does have a couple of beautiful old bars, authentic and historic.

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For outdoor destinations, we have several lakes, with Watson Lake being the most scenic, located in Granite Dells. Lynx Lake, Goldwater Lake, and Granite Basin Lake are perfect picnic destinations (though you'll need to bring your own food to any of the lakes except Lynx, as that's the only one with food for sale).

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

We have wonderful Victorian neighborhoods. Drive to Mt. Vernon Street, park, and walk around those old and well-kept areas. Mt. Vernon Street is also known statewide by trick or treaters who come literally by the thousands from Phoenix as well as locally on Halloween.

Prescott is the Christmas City, with a parade of lights, kids' parade, the courthouse lighting, and Acker Night, which has been a not so well kept secret—a night of over 100 shops full of musical groups entertaining the many people out to enjoy the evening.

Finally, Cortez Street, opposite Whiskey Row, is an antique collector's dream, with lots of different qualities of antiques to discover.

Where to Stay

There are B&Bs in the Victorian neighborhood I mentioned, as well as at least one vacation rental.

Day Trips

The popular spots are the Grand Canyon, Sedona, Jerome, and even Arcosanti.

Where to Walk

For walkers, our forests are loaded with trails, the newest being the just completed Circle Trail that spans over 50 miles around the city. In town, there is a trail along Granite Creek for some blocks. Watson Woods is a couple of miles out of town toward Watson Lake and is very nice to get away to for a stroll. And Granite Creek Park is close to town with a trail and lots of green grass.

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What & Where to Eat & Drink

I think the food is best at the Bistro St. Michael (100 S. Montezuma Street; phone: 928.778.2500), which has duck on their regular menu! My brother-in-law owns it, so I am biased, but many locals agree.

On the other side of the square is Bill's Pizza (107 S. Cortez Street), which has excellent food. And Tara Thai (115 S. Cortez Street; phone: 928.772.3249) is fairly new and popular.

Other restaurant/bar establishments that are popular are Prescott Station Grill & Bar (200 E. Gurley Street), Raven Café (142 N. Cortez Street), which supports the arts and has live music, Papa's Uptown Italian Restaurant (129 1/2 N. Cortez Street), Iron Springs Café (1501 Iron Springs Road), and Casa Sanchez (our go-to Mexican place, at 1459 W. Gurley Street), where you can settle into a booth and count on good food and a hefty margarita. That said, we rarely eat out, so I am not on the cutting edge.

Budget Tips

Prescott prices are reasonable in most areas. If you're on the square, grab a slice of pizza to-go at Bill's Pizza. I don't know of any cheap places to stay, but the forests and lakes provide shady places to get away for quiet and for free.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

There is a healthy, respectable, and enjoyable social life available without having to go to bars. Taking classes at Yavapai College, joining the hiking clubs...all are good options. And we have many retiree volunteers who are invaluable and are often looking for new arrivals to make new friends.

Best Places to Take a Photo

An obvious choice for photography would be to drive toward Watson Lake, heading north on 89. There is an obvious pullout to photograph the dells, a spectacular viewing site. Drive south and you get into the forest for different views.

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Final Notes & Other Tips

In general, Prescott has one of the best climates for hiking, biking, outdoor events, and off-road bike racing. We also have a big rodeo event over the Fourth of July and Christmas city events in December. We also have many local artists who have galleries and co-ops, give workshops, and contribute much to the quality of Prescott.

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Laurie Back

Personal Trainer. Hiker. Culture-Lover.

About Laurie

I moved to Prescott (locals pronounce it "pres-kit") in '93 from Chicago and I've been a Personal Trainer here since then. I'm 65, semi-retired, and very eclectic in my interests, spending my time on anything from hiking to culture to food. It's a hobby of mine to know what's happening around town. I love Prescott and consider it the best move I ever made!

What to do in Prescott (the Basics)

The town is built around Courthouse Square. The actual courthouse is surrounded by grass and each side is a full city block long. Sidewalks form the boundaries and crisscross the square. This is where you'll find our nationally known free bluegrass festival, fine arts and craft fairs, many local events, and free music all summer long.

There are a lot of events here, actually. Prescott is Arizona's Christmas City—with a daytime Christmas parade, nighttime electric Christmas Light Parade, and the hugely popular Courthouse Lighting during the holidays. Then there's Acker Night—a very unusual event—which started out as a fundraising effort to increase music education for kids. Initially, 20 downtown stores surrounding the square stayed open late on a Friday night, and local musicians played in them, with people walking around enjoying the music. Now there are about 120 stores participating around the downtown area. This happens on the second Friday in December and it's become one of our most popular events.

For cyclists, the Whiskey Off Road is one of the premier off-road mountain bike races in the country. People come from all over the world and it gets bigger every year. The YMCA Whiskey Row Marathon, also considered one of the best in the US, is going

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into its 39th year. There is also an annual Celtic festival, an annual PowWow, and other special events.

Even if you aren't coming during an event, just going out to the Courthouse Square is an amazing and fun small town experience. There's music and dancing all summer: jazz on Tuesdays, Prescott Idol on Thursdays, live bands on Fridays and Saturdays. In the blocks around the square, you can get all kinds of food, including pizza, ice cream, and burgers, then join the locals on the lawn with their beach chairs to sit and listen.

As for things to see, start with the Sharlot Hall Museum. It has many authentic buildings on the grounds, including an 1800s little schoolhouse, a pioneer cabin, and the territorial capitol house (Prescott was the capitol in 1864). The museum has many interesting exhibits about northern Arizona, as well as extensive archives for history buffs.

The Phippen Museum, named after well-known western artist George Phippen, is a 10-minute drive from downtown. The drive takes you through some spectacular scenery that is only found in Prescott, and the museum is full of outstanding western art exhibits that rotate throughout the year.

The Smoki Museum is an unusual destination. It focuses on the Smoki people, who were actually white people who wanted to preserve Hopi culture. Founded in 1931, it was an invite-only society with secret rituals that performed Hopi dances for the town locals, as well as preservation of Hopi art and artifacts. These programs ended in 1990 at the request of the Hopis, but it's still an active museum with native American speakers and artists frequently presenting.

On the fourth Friday of each month, there's an art walk with about 20 galleries participating.

And last but not least, there's Prescott Frontier Days ("the world's oldest rodeo") every 4th of July. Many of the country's best competitors come to Prescott to participate in this fabu-

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lous four-day rodeo, which includes three nights of dances. It's truly a unique event.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

Prescott neighborhoods are something special. Just drive around and get lost in them. There's a huge variety and almost every one has a fantastic view. Mt. Vernon Street, just off downtown, is one of the best examples of the Victorian architecture of the early years and on Halloween almost every single house has massive decorations and huge lines for candy. It's *the* place to go for trick-or-treating.

We also have many historic districts, both commercial and residential. There's a walking tour in the summer (for more info, contact the Chamber of Commerce).

Then there's the world-famous, historic Whiskey Row: a full city block on the west side of the square where the old west cowboys used to drink in the many saloons. It's still got lots of bars, plus art galleries and shops. Check out the Birdcage Saloon, famous for its biker bar history and for burning down three or so years ago and being rebuilt by popular demand.

On that same street, you'll find the Palace Bar, which has a lot of memorabilia from the old west, including pictures of Wyatt Earp and other colorful characters, stirrups and other cowboy paraphernalia, and other interesting western artifacts. The movie "Billy Jack" was filmed around Prescott, with some scenes inside the Palace. This is another place in town that burned down—back in 1900. During the fire, the patrons picked up the beautiful 20-foot-long one-piece mahogany bar and carried it across the street to the square to save it (and then continued drinking). That original bar is back in place today, saved from the fire, and worth taking a look at.

Another interesting architectural piece of history is the tunnels that run under Prescott. Sometimes you can find talks about them here in town.

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The Elk's Opera House, half a block off the square, opened in 1904 with live entertainment. It still offers great live entertainment every weekend, including many classic rock cover bands. It's a real treasure, has been completely refurbished to its original state, and offers guided tours.

Where to Stay

Stay downtown. That's where you'll find places like the Saint Michael's Hotel, an old hotel on the corner of Whiskey Row—a cool place to stay from an historic perspective. Since I live here, I haven't stayed in or seen the rooms, myself, but the hotel is perfectly situated if you like to be where the action is.

The Hassayampa Inn is about a block off the square, also very old, and with a classy lobby and sweet little bar with music on Friday and Saturday nights. The restaurant attached to the bar is one of the nicer restaurants in town.

There are lots of little B&Bs around. And there is one really cool boutique hotel, the Grand Highland, which opened last year on Whiskey Row. The rooms are all decorated differently and are small, but themed and very cool.

Then there's The Vendome Hotel, about a block off the square. Those rooms are also themed...and they say it's haunted.

SpringHill Suites Prescott is just a block off the square, has a pool, and is located right next to a Sprouts Market and other commercial amenities.

If you stay downtown, you can walk pretty much everywhere.

For something farther out but nicer, the Prescott Resort, just a mile outside the city on the Yavapai Indian reservation is a very nice hotel and casino. The rooms and restaurant have the best views in town (though the food is hit or miss). Sunsets from up there are simply fabulous. They have a large lounge area and there's dancing on Saturday nights. Head out to the terrace off the lounge to take in the view.

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Day Trips

Prescott is an hour and a half from both Flagstaff (to the north) and Phoenix (to the south), so both are day-trip distance if they're on your Arizona bucket list.

Sedona is a world-class destination because of its unusual red rock geographical features. It's also considered an energy vortex. It's a pricey town but beautiful and attracts tourists from all over the world.

Jerome is an old mining town literally built on the side of a mountain, populated by artists. It's a scenic, twisty-turny drive from Prescott with a very small population and lots of interesting shops.

Clarkdale offers a train ride that goes along the Verde Canyon and one special trip to take is their moonlight train ride. The scenery is exceptional and it's quite romantic.

And let's not forget the Grand Canyon, which is a little over two hours away by car.

Where to Walk

Thumb Butte—the defining geographical feature of Prescott—has a mile and a quarter loop and the views are spectacular. It's a \$5 parking fee (free with a National Parks pass and free on Wednesdays) and there are many other trails from that lot. This is the trail most tourists opt to do and it's the highest in elevation (5,700 feet). There's great mountain biking here, too.

The Peavine Trail is an old railroad bed—maybe 16 miles round-trip—that is excellent for both hiking and biking. Of course, there's also always the option of just walking out and back for a mile or two. This is a favorite with locals. It goes through the Granite Dells, boulders that have been eroded into amazing and beautiful shapes. The Peavine is a 10-minute ride from downtown. [Park at Sundog Ranch Road Trailhead, which costs \$2, (free on Wednesdays).]

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There's a city trail that follows Granite Creek, which meanders through downtown.

Granite Mountain is another good option. Go down Iron Springs Road for 15 minutes and you'll enter a large mountain range. The mountain biking here is for all levels and it's outstanding. A hike up Granite Mountain is extremely challenging and not for beginners. The views are spectacular.

The 55-mile Circle Trail (completed in 2015) circles Prescott and the four easily accessible lakes (Watson, Willow, Lynx, and Goldwater) are also worthwhile. You can't swim in any of them, but you can fish and they all have great hiking trails. You can hike the whole thing or access it at different points for shorter hikes.

Finally, check out the Highland Center (highlandcenter.org)—a nature center designed to educate children and adults about the natural world. They have spring and summer camps for kids and naturalist-led walks for all ages. There are a lot of trails there, as well, including wheelchair accessible trails. In the summer, there are also concerts and plays in their small amphitheater. It's a true community treasure for nature lovers.

What & Where to Eat & Drink

I'm an organic eater, so my favorite restaurants all run along those lines.

Start with the Raven Café (142 N. Cortez Street), which has a huge organic, locally-sourced menu. The beef is from the owner's father's ranch in Montana. They also feature a huge selection of beer, a hip menu, alternative music four or five nights a week, and art on the walls.

Then there's The Local (520 W. Sheldon Street), which is open for breakfast and lunch, with good organic and locally-sourced meals.

For the bars, The Birdcage Saloon (a biker bar full of local color and music at 160 S. Montezuma Street) is a classic, as is The

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Palace Saloon (120 S. Montezuma Street) because of its artifacts. The Point Bar & Lounge (114 N. Montezuma Street) is the happening place for the 30s, 40s, and 50s crowd. The Prescott Crush Wine Café (1781 AZ-69 #15) is worth checking out. And the best views on Whiskey Row are at Jersey Lilly Saloon (116 S. Montezuma Street), which has an upstairs outside balcony that overlooks the street and square. This hosts an older clientele that loves to dance on the weekends.

Finally, try Marino's Mob Burgers & Ice Cream (113 S. Cortez Street) for burgers. And check out the Granite Mountain Brewery (123 N. Cortez) for local brews.

How to Fit In

Make sure you say Prescott correctly (pres-kit).

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Prescott has a lot of churches, which is always a great way to meet people. Volunteering is really big here, with lots of opportunities. People walk the square for exercise, especially with dogs. And dog people talk to dog people, especially at the square or at the dog park on Willow Creek Road. Peregrine Booksellers, owned by the same people who own The Raven Café, is guaranteed to be friendly and please all book lovers.

There's a very active peer-led education program, OLLI, with a huge selection of classes. That's a great way to meet people.

And we have a small but very active and dedicated dance community. Among other activities, there is a ballroom dance pretty much every Friday night at the Adult Center on Rosser Street with a lesson beforehand. There are a number of private dance studios, contra dancing once a month, and plenty of line dancing and two stepping in the bars—all great ways to meet people.

Best Places to Take a Photo

The Dells, the Courthouse Square, standing on Gurley Street with Thumb Butte in the background, or any of the lakes.

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Final Notes & Other Tips

Prescott, and northern Arizona in general is a big birding area. There are many opportunities for birding and the annual "Birdy Verde" festival in Cottonwood, an hour away, offers four days of continuous workshops and field trips with experts.

Prescott also boasts a large year-round farmers market on Saturdays. In the summer, it's held in the Yavapai College parking lot and in the winter it's across from the YMCA.

Finally, we have a fabulous library.

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JEROME

Ghost town turned art community on a hill.

FIND WI-FI HERE: The Mine Cafe.



Cody DeLong

Artist. Mountain Biker.

About Cody

I grew up in the midwest, but I've been in the southwest my whole adult life. I moved to the Verde Valley from Las Vegas nearly 20 years ago, and I love it here.

I have been a full-time professional artist for nearly 20 years, which takes up most of my time. I do live painting demonstrations four days a week at my studio (the Cody DeLong Studio, near the Visitor Center).

I also like to mountain bike for exercise.

What to do in Jerome (the Basics)

Jerome was a mining town on the side of a hill, then it was a ghost town, now it's a thriving arts community. Because Jerome is a historic district, it has maintained its authenticity better than most little towns. It has a lot of history, character, and characters. This is also an incredible area for mountain biking.

As for specific places to visit, there's a cute coffee shop with pastries and sandwiches called Mine Café (115 Jerome Avenue) and the building where I have my art studio is a historic site, built in 1905 as a Studebaker dealership. One of the old gas pumps still stands out front and today the building houses

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a shop called Casa Latina that sells colorful Mexican imports, a t-shirt shop, and an eclectic shop called Scooter Trash.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

The Verde Canyon Railroad in nearby Clarkdale is a great way to spend an afternoon. It's a slow-moving scenic train ride through some beautiful countryside skirting the Verde River, and there are geologists and people on board to tell you about the land and animals.

Day Trips

Tuzigoot National Monument, perched on a hill at a bend in the Verde River in nearby Clarkdale is an old Sinagua Indian ruin, which was quite a complex in its day.

Where to Walk

Sedona gets all the attention—and for good reason—but I like Sycamore Canyon best. It follows Sycamore Creek and is a beautiful hike without the crowds that Sedona usually has. Keep in mind, though, that you'll have to drive a half hour on a bumpy dirt road to reach the trailhead.

To get there, travel north (down the hill) on 89A to the first traffic circle. Go straight through and into the town of Clarkdale on Clarkdale Parkway. Then, at the town park, turn right on S. Broadway, follow this about a mile or so, and turn left on Tuzigoot Road. Cross the bridge over the Verde River and go left on Sycamore Canyon Road, which basically follows the Verde River until it intersects with Sycamore Creek about 15 miles out. Park at the trailhead parking lot and hike north along the creek. Forest service roads will take you to some pretty neat trails and spectacular overlooks along the rim.

What & Where to Eat & Drink

Cottonwood was recently written up in one of the Phoenix papers as a new culinary hotspot. We have just about everything you could want—from Mexican fare to truly fine dining. Jerome also has 11 restaurants, and they're all pretty good. I like the shrimp and pesto pizza at Grapes Restaurant & Bar (111 Main Street).

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The Spirit Room (166 Main Street) has some great live music from time to time. Just a block away is Paul and Jerrys (206 Main Street), which features a couple pool tables. Both have been in Jerome for eons and have that old town feel.

Nic's (925 N. Main Street in old town Cottonwood) is great for finer dining.

Budget Tips

Stay in Cottonwood instead of Sedona; the hotels are much more reasonable and you're halfway between Sedona and Jerome. The Out of Africa wildlife park—about eight miles to the east—is another great activity for the whole family.

How to Fit In

We're laid back in Jerome. My advice to tourists is simply be polite; it's amazing to me how many people are rude and in a hurry. Relax and enjoy our little town and all it has to offer.

Find Cody at codydelong.com.

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PAGE

Gateway to the famed Lake Powell.

FIND WI-FI HERE: River's End Cafe.



Korey Seyler

River Rafter. Outdoorsman. Business Owner.

About Korey

I'm the owner of Colorado River Discovery—a rafting company in Page. In my free time, you can often find me exploring the canyons, a place I've spent years showing to other travelers.

What to do in Page (the Basics)

The easily accessible attractions that you must see while visiting Page are as follows: First, Horseshoe Bend: it's three miles from the center of town to the trailhead and a ¾-mile hike to the overlook. The photos taken here have become the iconic shot of the Colorado River. And I'd be remiss if I didn't recommend taking a rafting trip on the river itself, through horseshoe bend.

My second pick is The Chains—a fishing and swimming spot at Lake Powell that's a great way to get down to the beautiful waters of the lake without having to go through the marinas. The parking lot is two miles from the center of Page and the walk is between a quarter mile (to the closest portion) up to one mile (to a far more secluded swimming hole). The hike is over the slick sandstone that makes up a majority of Glen Canyon.

Attractions to think twice about: Antelope Canyon is an incredible corkscrew slot canyon on the Navajo Tribal Land, 15 minutes from the center of Page. This canyon is, by far, the most photographed slot canyon in the world. Unfortunately,



there are tens of thousands of people that would like to take those same photographs, which generally means a not-so-intimate experience for the individual hikers in what would be a magical place. Instead, consider Owl, Rattlesnake, or Canyon X. The alternative slot canyons were formed by the same means as Antelope Canyon and you can see them without the big crowds.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

Rattlesnake, Owl, and Canyon X (as mentioned before) are an intimate slot canyon experience without the crowds. Then there's Buckskin Gulch, by way of Wirepass, which takes you into the longest slot canyon in the world. This hike can be as long or as short as you would like and takes you through breathtaking scenery, wildlife, and ancient petroglyphs/pictographs from the tribes that lived in the area thousands of years ago. Make sure to check the weather; this slot canyon can very easily flash flood (which is how the canyons formed in the first place).

For some of the most incredible overlooks in the region, Alstrom point is a 1.5-hour drive from Page, overlooking Lake Powell. As the crow flies, it is only about four miles from the center of town, but you'll need to take a 4-wheel-drive road around to the viewpoint. Another spectacular viewpoint is Paria Overlook. This place overlooks Lake Powell to the north and Paria River/Canyon and Lees Ferry to the west. It's also about 1.5 hours from Page, but is well worth the drive and has primitive camping if you're interested in an overnight stay.

Where to Stay

Since Page sits on a mesa (Mason Mesa), there are hotels and vacation rentals that are on or very near the rim. Those offer spectacular views.

Day Trips

Lees Ferry is an excellent choice for a day trip from Page. The ferry (which is a boat ramp) is only about an hour from Page and offers an opportunity to view the river at the geological

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transition from Glen Canyon to Grand Canyon National Park. The nearby Spencer Trail offers a spectacular view of the Colorado River. There is so much human and natural history to view around Lees Ferry and Marble Canyon.

Where to Walk

The Rim Trail is a must. It's a 10.5-mile loop around town that overlooks the lake, canyon, and Vermillion Cliffs. The Rim Trail is not very well marked, but if you walk to the rim of the mesa, you will eventually come across a modestly traveled trail. A walker or runner can exit the trail in most areas and be very near the center of town if the 10.5 miles is too long.

What & Where to Eat & Drink

I like Blue Wine & Coffee Bar and Blue Buddha Sushi Lounge (644 N. Navajo Drive), the floating restaurant Latitude 29 (Wahweap Marina at 100 Lakeshore Drive), State 48 Tavern (614 N. Navajo Drive), and the River's End Café (130 6th Avenue).

Budget Tips

Free attractions include Horseshoe Bend, The Chains, Lees Ferry, and Wahweap Overlook. Almost all the restaurants and bars in town are modestly priced. Consider a vacation rental; the hotels in Page are quite expensive March to September.

How to Fit In

Please be extremely conscious of not leaving your mark while visiting any place, especially in natural spaces. Place *all* trash in proper receptacles, stay on the trails if you are hiking, and do not take anything with you that does not belong to you, even a small pebble.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

The River's End Café seems to be the place to meet locals and fellow travelers looking to meet other travelers.

Best Places to Take a Photo

Horseshoe Bend, Wahweap Overlook, Chains, or Lees Ferry.

Find Korey at raftthecanyon.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gigi Griffis is a world-traveling entrepreneur and writer with a special love for inspiring stories, new places, and living in the moment. In May 2012, she sold her stuff and took to the road full-time with her freelance business and her pint-sized pooch, Luna.

Since then, she's lived in Switzerland, chased down real balsamic vinegar in Italy, motorcycled down the Croatian coast, hiked the Grand Canyon, road-tripped across Canada, and written 10 guidebooks—for Italy, Paris, Prague, Barcelona, Switzerland, France, New York City, Phoenix & Tucson, Denver & Surroundings, and, now, Northern Arizona.

Love what you read here? Find more at gigigriffis.com.

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