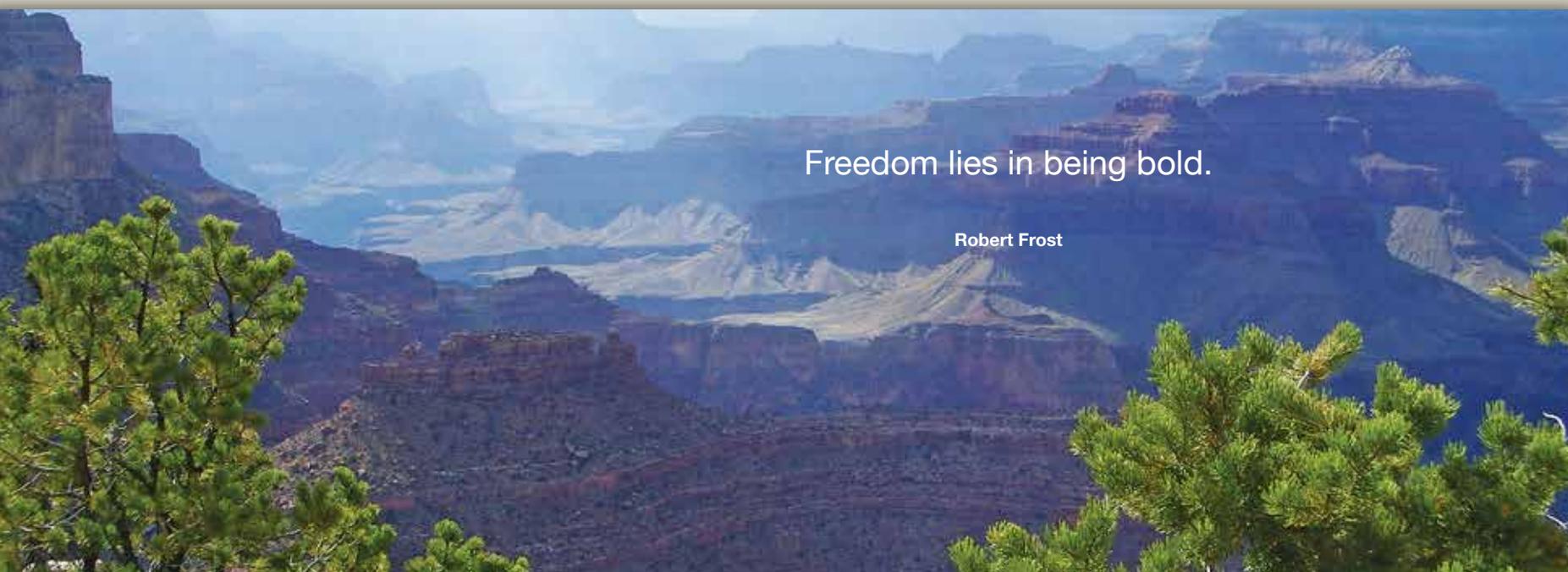


# THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF ARIZONA

Grand Canyon (p40)



Freedom lies in being bold.

Robert Frost



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## ARIZONA – ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST DIVERSE STATES

When people think of Arizona, they think of 117 degrees, burning-hot steering wheels and mild winters. But just up the road a couple of hours, it's amazing how things change. Travel north to view beautiful pine forests and spruce trees, the Colorado Plateau, the San Francisco Mountains and beautiful canyons, with cooler temps in the summer and significant snowfalls in the winter. From Grand Canyon to Tucson, Arizona's got it all, with plenty of history to boot. So fill up the gas tank and check out *The Natural Beauty of Arizona*.

From Sea to Shining Sea | BOOK ONE

# THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF ARIZONA

Design and Photography by Barbara K Olson

Order more copies of this book and check out my travel blog at  
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## The Natural Beauty of Arizona



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The Painted Desert (p20)



“Land of extremes. Land of contrasts. Land of surprises... That is Arizona.”

**Federal Writers Project, Arizona: The Grand Canyon State, 1956**

**W**hen I was twenty-something, I left home to get away from it all, as many did in the '70s. Of all the places in these beautiful United States, I'm not sure why I picked Phoenix. The warmth in the winter, the desert, the nearby mountains – there was something that had me intrigued. It wasn't California or Colorado, which were obvious destinations back then, but it was far enough away from my Midwestern upbringings and totally different from cows and cornfields.

During the four years I resided in the state, I had friends who enjoyed the cactus and dry desert as much as I did. We loved to hike up into the Phoenix mountains and gaze out over the beautiful desert. We'd joke the saguaros were flipping off the people who cared only for the winter warmth, and we secretly wished the snowbirds would stay away until they appreciated the desert for all it had to offer.



After many years, reconnecting with family in Arizona sparked something inside me. I realized after all these years, I never really got over the desert. It must be fate that these words are on this paper today. Now is my chance to show the snowbirds more of what this beautiful desert has to offer, as well as others who may be thinking about a trip to Arizona.

My goal with this book is to whet your appetite for the natural beauty of Arizona, and show some less-than-obvious things to do, along with the icons that people travel hundreds or thousands of miles to see. I combined information and photographs from three trips, with the third trip feeling somewhat like déjà vu, leaving by myself to explore. Although this time it was to document and photograph some of the beauty of a state I've come to love. And, like my trip so many years ago, significant rainfall made the desert even more lush and beautiful – kind of like it's showing off for you.

Enjoy the trip! I hope you love reading this as much as I loved writing it!

Entering the state from the far northeast corner, I divided this book into two parts. **EAST TO WEST** starts on Hwy 191 through Canyon de Chelly and travels West along I40 and Arizona Route 66 (where available) to Lake Havasu City. **NORTH TO SOUTH** runs along I17 from the Grand Canyon to Tombstone, exiting the state southeast of San Simon on I10.

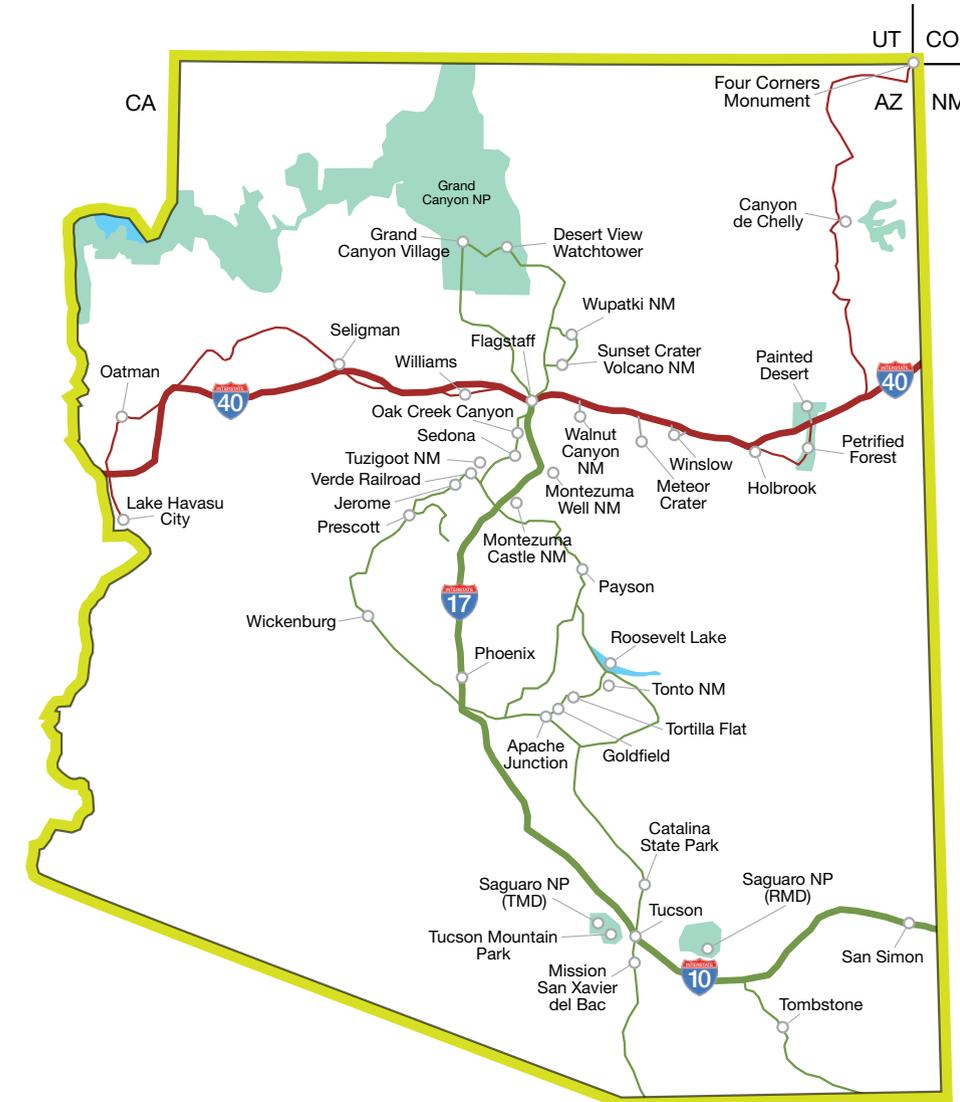


Photo on next page:  
Tucson Mountain Park (p93)

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“We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us.”



Canyon de Chelly National Monument

Ya`at`eeh (The Spirit of Good)



“Canyon de Chelly is a sacred place for the Navajo people. Come and experience the beauty, majesty, harmony and history of this place. May your journey be sacred and your visions clear.”

**From the guest information book at the Sacred Canyon Lodge**

A scenic drive from Walsenberg, Colorado called the Highway of Legends, allows entry into Arizona in the far northeast at Four Corners, marked with a monument commemorating the only point in the U.S. shared by four states – Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. About two hours down the road is perhaps Arizona’s best kept secret – Canyon de Chelly (de-shay). Although a National Park, it is entirely within the boundaries of the Navajo



Nation. Millions of years of land upheavals and water sculpting have created the sheer cliffs of the Canyon and Native Americans have lived within its walls for nearly 5,000 years. Sacred Canyon Lodge sits on the site of a trading post built in 1896 and is the only hotel in the Park. Once I stood at the top of the first overlook, caught the first glimpse of the Canyon and heard absolutely nothing, I was hooked. What a beautiful sight!

North Rim: Massacre Cave Overlook (p10), Antelope House Overlook (p11)



North Rim: Mummy Cave Overlook (p12 and p13)

It was suggested that pictures of the North Rim are better in the morning. There are only three overlooks on the North Rim but they are a ways apart. There are vendors at most stops and much of their artwork includes replicas of petroglyphs (symbols carved or scratched into rock) or pictographs (symbols painted on rock) which can be seen on the walls of the Canyon floor. The floor of the Canyon can only be visited on a Jeep tour with a Navajo



guide, which enhances the experience of this beautiful place. There you can hear the history and see the ruins, the petroglyphs and some Navajo dwellers who still raise livestock and farm the land. The views of the canyon walls are spectacular from that vantage point. The photo above is Mummy Cave (Tséyaa Kini – House Under the Rock). Anasazi lived here for nearly a thousand years, perhaps the longest occupied site in the canyon.

Next stops are the eight overlooks on the South Rim (better for afternoon pictures). The picture below was taken at the furthest point – Spider Rock Overlook. Front and center in this photo is Spider Rock, which towers to 800 feet above the canyon floor and is the spiritual center of the Navajo universe. This spot is steeped in Navajo traditions and the story of Spider Woman. The story goes that she was first to weave her web of the



universe. She taught the Navajo people to create beauty in their own lives, teaching balance within the mind, body and soul. As people of the earth, Navajos have always been ranchers and farmers, raising churro sheep because they produce the best wool for weaving Navajo rugs. In a culture that didn't use money, trading and bartering was a way of life and jewelry was their wealth and artistic expression.

South Rim: Spider Rock Overlook (p14 and p15)





South Rim: Sliding House Overlook



South Rim: Tunnel Overlook



North Rim: Massacre Cave Overlook

The Painted Desert and Petrified Forest

## A Natural Canvas



### **El Desierto Pintado**

While standing on the edge of the vast landscape, a Spanish explorer is rumored to have named it because the hills looked like they were painted with the colors of the sunset.



The Painted Desert is a gorgeous reminder of the earth's violent past. Over millions of years, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and floods helped to create this beautiful place, which covers over 93,000 acres. Mounds of colorful rock in almost every hue, seem to bulge from the earth. It's quite a drive all the way out there, but worth the trip. Allow at least an hour to drive through, or two or three if you walk the trails and stop at all of the turnouts.





Long ago, the area now called The Petrified Forest was lush and green and covered with huge trees. Lava from one or more volcanos took down the forest, and the trees were embedded in layers of silt, mud and volcanic ash for millions of years. Erosion eventually set the logs free, revealing the brightly-colored petrified wood – made mostly of quartz.



One of many pueblo remains in the area, Puerco Pueblo may have been home to about 200 people around the year 1300. Unable to adapt to climate changes, they abandoned the pueblo by the end of the century, leaving behind these sandstone bricks and other artifacts to tell their tales.

Centuries of flooding eroded the softer rock beneath this 110-foot petrified log not harming the Agate Bridge at all, yet someone felt it necessary to add a beam to shore it up.



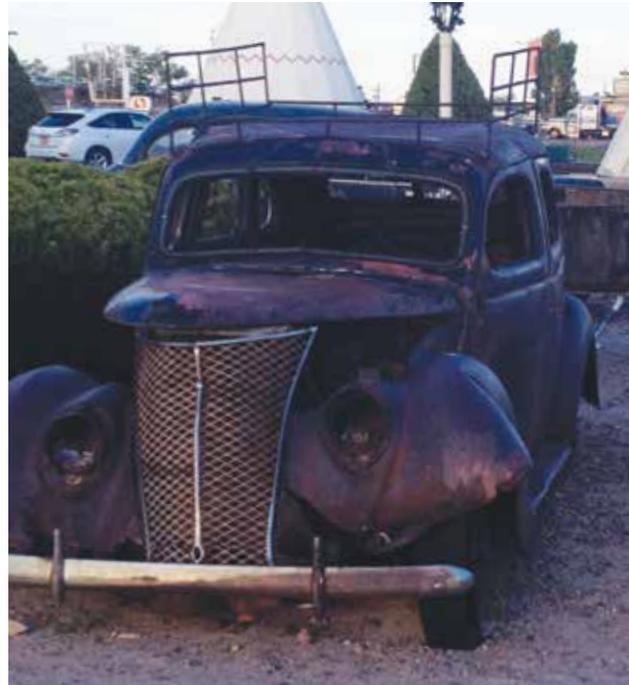


Blue Mesa Overlook

## HOLBROOK

Holbrook has been a frontier town since 1881 when cowboys, cattle ranchers and railroaders made it the center of ranch country. Travelers kept it hopping for nearly thirty years with its location along the infamous Route 66 (p34).

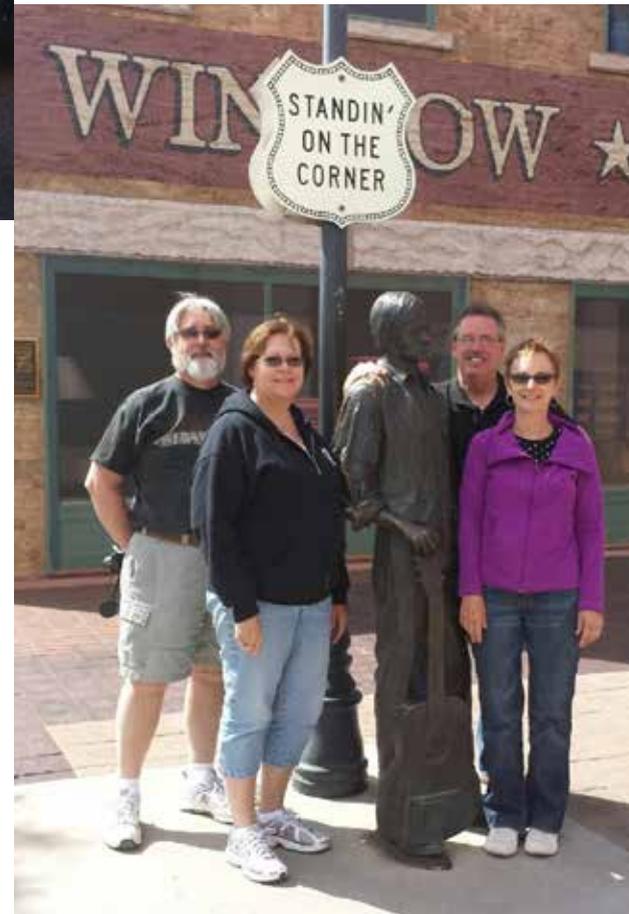
Holbrook is home to several roadside attractions that made Route 66 so fun, including the Old 66 Rock Shop, where life-size dinosaurs greet you. One of the seven original Wigwam Motels is also here, which was restored and reopened in 1988. The motel has 15 tee-pees available for your next stay in Holbrook.



## WINSLOW

This city suffered immensely when Route 66 (p34) was bypassed by Interstate 40 in the late 70s, but the popularity of the song "Take It Easy" by the Eagles led to renewed attention for Winslow. Today, residents and business owners – with the help of some state and federal funding – have begun a transformation, hoping to lure drivers back through their town and help rejuvenate the town's tourism industry.

We couldn't go by Winslow, Arizona without standin' on the corner now, could we?



## METEOR CRATER

Discover the most well known, best preserved meteorite crater on the planet – an easy drive just south of I40. Meteor Crater is the breath-taking result of a collision between an asteroid and Earth 50,000 years ago. Nearly one mile across, 2.4 miles around and more than 550 feet deep, this crater is something to see! Check out the Discovery Center and watch the movie called “Impact”. Although you can’t walk around the crater, there are three lookout points to view it, as well as a guided rim trail tour for more history and information. Allow about 1-1/2 hours to go through the Center and take the tour. Despite its importance as a geological site, it is privately owned and not protected as a national monument, although designated a National Natural Landmark in 1967.



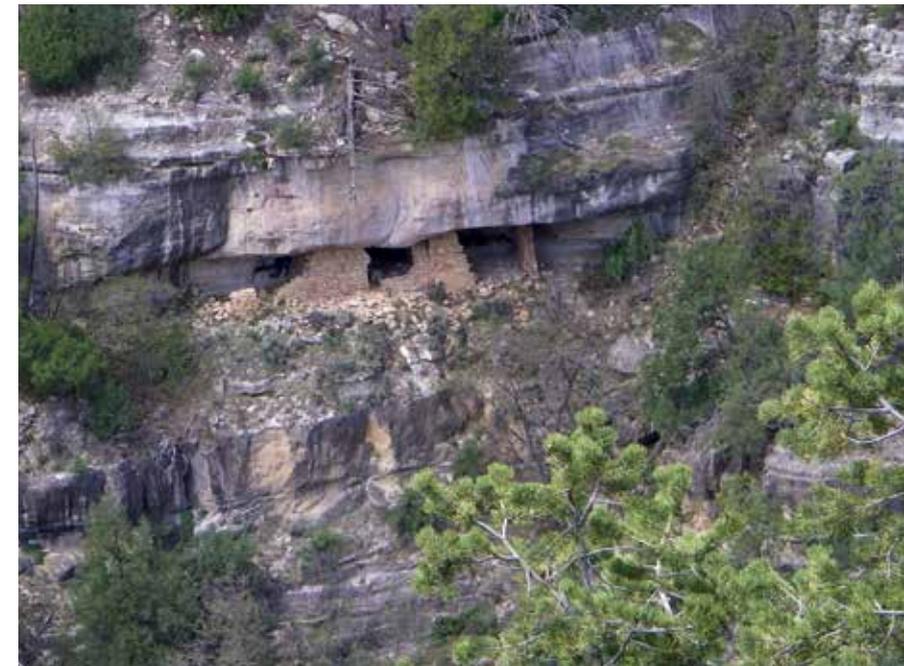
## Walnut Canyon

# Ancient Cliff Dwellings, Beautiful Views



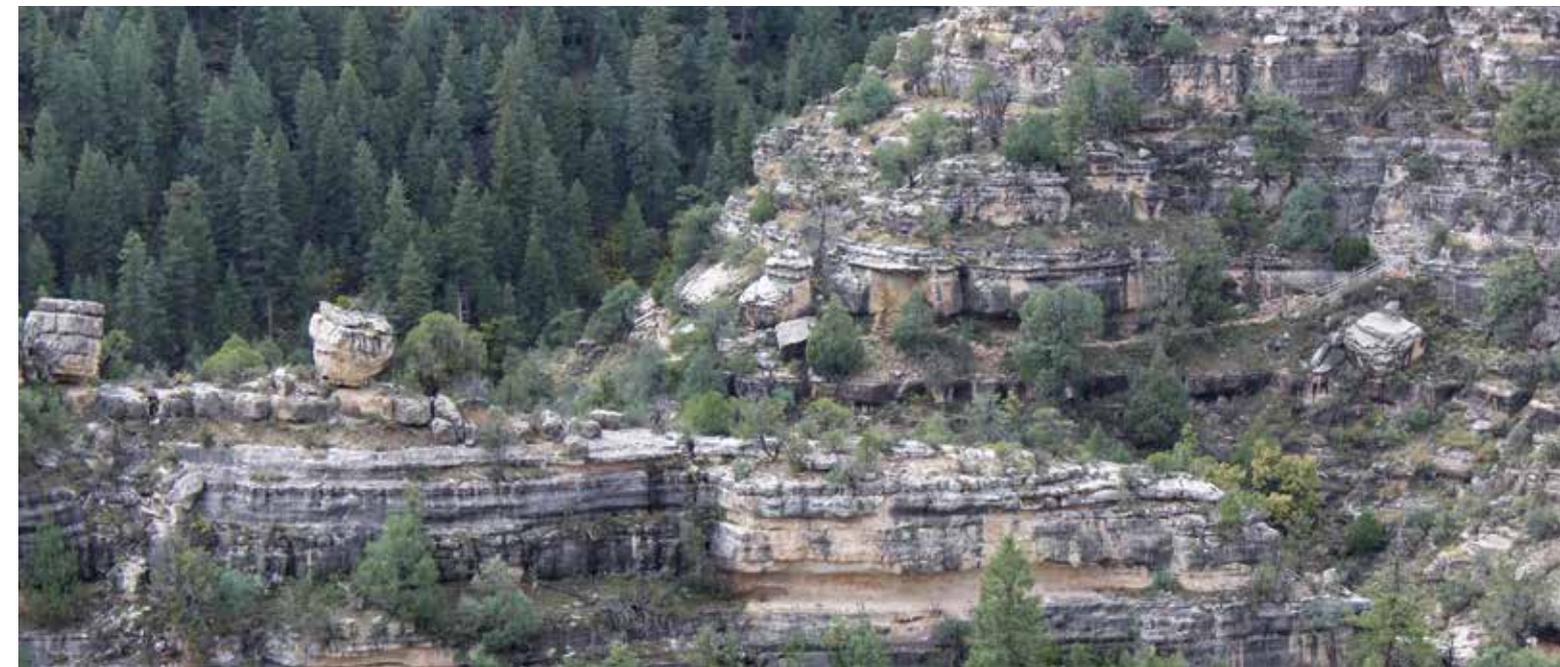
“For thousands of people every year, Walnut Canyon offers the perfect opportunity to admire nature and to learn from the past. With continued protection and cooperation from visitors, this intimate canyon will educate and inspire for years to come.”

From [www.nps.gov/waca/historyculture/places.htm](http://www.nps.gov/waca/historyculture/places.htm)



Within the canyon walls are ancient cliff dwellings constructed by the Sinagua, a pre-Columbian cultural group that lived here from about 1100 to 1250. Other Sinagua remains are preserved in nearby Tuzigoot, Montezuma Castle and Montezuma Well National Monuments (p65-p68).

The Island Trail descends 185 feet into the canyon where you can see 25 cliff dwelling rooms. A strenuous hike of almost a mile round trip provides one of the best ways to experience the park, but be advised. There are 240 steps back up. The Rim Trail offers an easier overview of the canyon, but you can't see the dwelling rooms without the climb.



Get Your Kicks

## Arizona Route 66



Route 66 is one of the original highways in the U.S., established in 1926 and completely paved by 1938. It became one of America's most famous roads – a major route from Chicago to Santa Monica that stretched 2,448 miles. In the 1930s, many headed west on this route to escape the Dust Bowl, where drought and high winds caused thousands of families in the Great Plains to abandon their farms. During



### **Will Rogers Highway, The Mother Road or America's Main Street.**

Back when the journey mattered as much as the destination, Route 66 was the "ultimate road trip" through the American frontier. Arizona's stretch is one of the most beautiful along the entire route, providing photo opps, a wealth of history, and lots of Route 66 memorabilia.



World War II, war-related jobs sent people to California, and in the 1950s folks were headed west on vacations. The Arizona stretch of Route 66 was particularly popular because of destinations like the Painted Desert (p20), the Grand Canyon (p40) and Meteor Crater (p30). Towns along this popular route thrived after folks opened service stations, motels and restaurants to accommodate the travelers. In keeping with America's love of the car – the first drive-thru restaurant was opened and you could listen to the hit song "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" on your radio. Many road-side attractions sprung up along the route, including Wigwam Motels. Only three of the original seven survive today, with one in Holbrook (p28). Life was good, at least for a while.

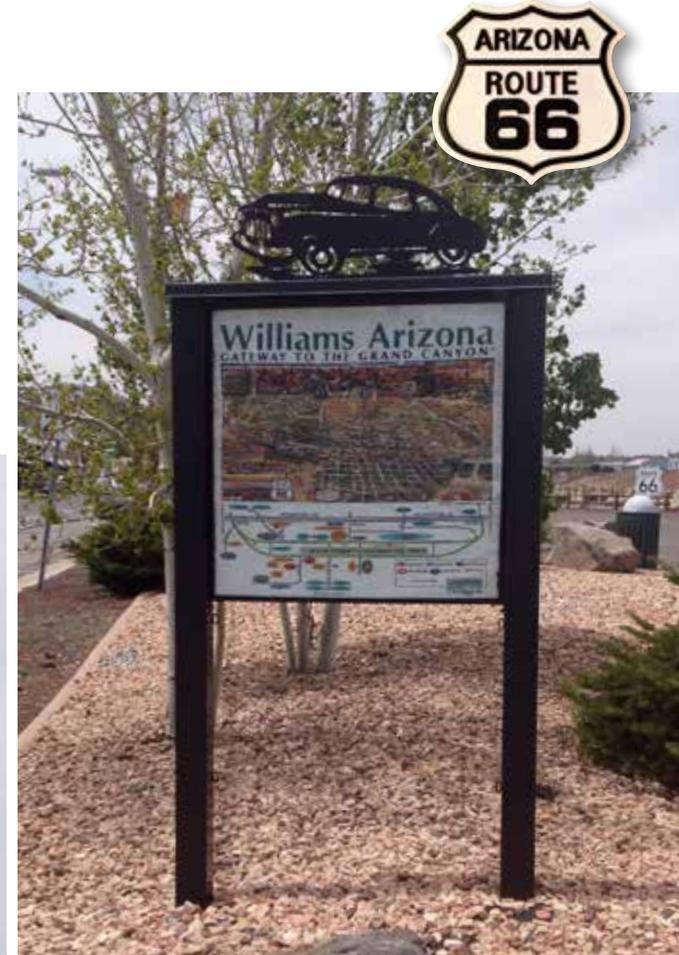
Williams (p34 and p35)

As life moved faster and more people were traveling, the Interstate replaced more and more of the original route, despite protests and even lawsuits by many of the once-thriving, now-struggling towns it bypassed. In 1984, the now-complete I-40 skirted around Arizona's final stretch of Route 66 just north of Williams. With decertification of the highway the following year, US 66 was officially taken off the map. Most of the original road was either torn up or became part of the new Interstate system. Many states kept sections of the Route as state roads or off ramps, but today it's impossible to drive the whole route uninterrupted. In an effort to keep the history of this iconic road alive, the first

Route 66 associations were founded in Arizona in 1987 with others following shortly after. "Historic Route 66" signs are now up along most of the Route and some portions are on the National Register of Historic Places. I would highly recommend driving Arizona's section of Route 66 if you haven't already, since your parents or grandparents may have driven it, or at least wished they were that cool!



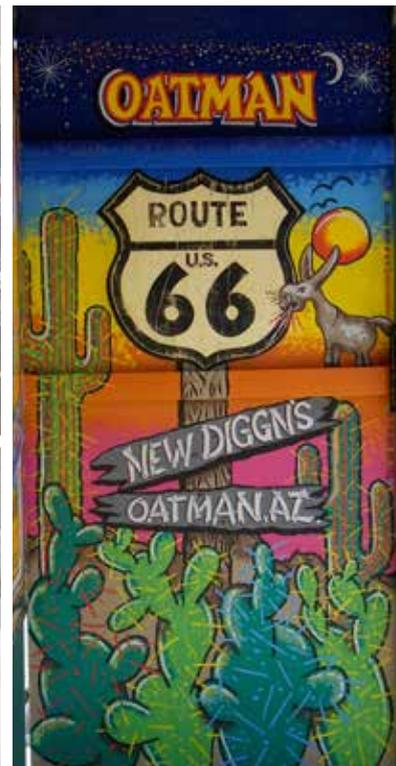
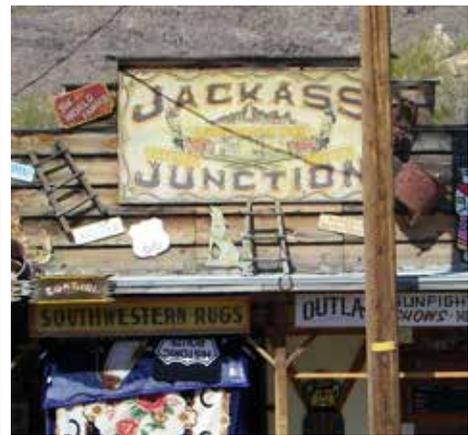
Williams was exactly what I was expecting from a small town steeped in so much history – nostalgic signs, old cars and great burger joints. Seligman is hopping the first part of May during the Annual Historic Route 66 Fun Run, when more than 800 show-stopping vehicles make the 140-mile run between Seligman and Topock/Golden Shores – the longest remaining stretch of Route 66. A visit to Seligman is not complete without a stop at Angel's Barber Shop, where it all began.



Williams (p36 and p37 top); Seligman (p37 bottom)

## OATMAN

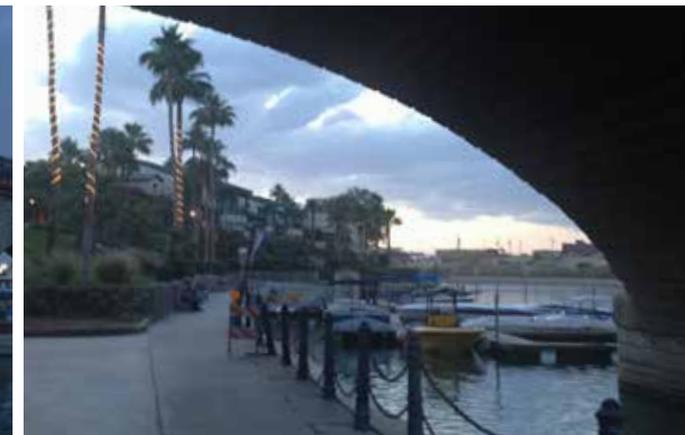
Once referred to as “Bloody 66”, the road from Kingman to Oatman is a beautiful drive but not for the faint of heart – with switchbacks, drop-offs and narrow road through the Black Mountains. Oatman is a gold-mining town dating back to the late 1800’s, where sidewalks remain wooden and most of the buildings are original. Several times a day gunfighters perform Western shootouts in front of the Oatman Hotel. Since kibble is available at most stores, the burros that roam the streets look forward to the next group of tourists, and if you’re not careful, will help themselves to whatever you are carrying. This makes for an enjoyable stop.



## LAKE HAVASU CITY

Set on the shores of Lake Havasu just across the Colorado from California, Lake Havasu City is home to the London Bridge. Bought from the City of London in 1968, it was disassembled, shipped and reassembled here, opening in 1971.

Dine at a nearby restaurant and take a walk around the base of the London Bridge. College students love Lake Havasu City for spring break and snowbirds for its above-freezing winters. A hot spot in the summer, temps can reach 125° or more.



## Grand Canyon

# Simply Amazing



At 18 miles wide, 277 miles long and a mile deep, Grand Canyon simply takes your breath away and it is pretty obvious why it's one of the seven wonders of the world. The clouds and ever-changing angles of the sun on its various elevations make for fabulous views from any of the lookout points. About 90% of the Canyon's five million yearly visitors view it from the South Rim, as shown here. Only about 10% see the Canyon from the North Rim

“Grand Canyon is a powerful and inspiring landscape. It overwhelms our senses through its immense size and unique combinations of geologic color and erosional forms.”

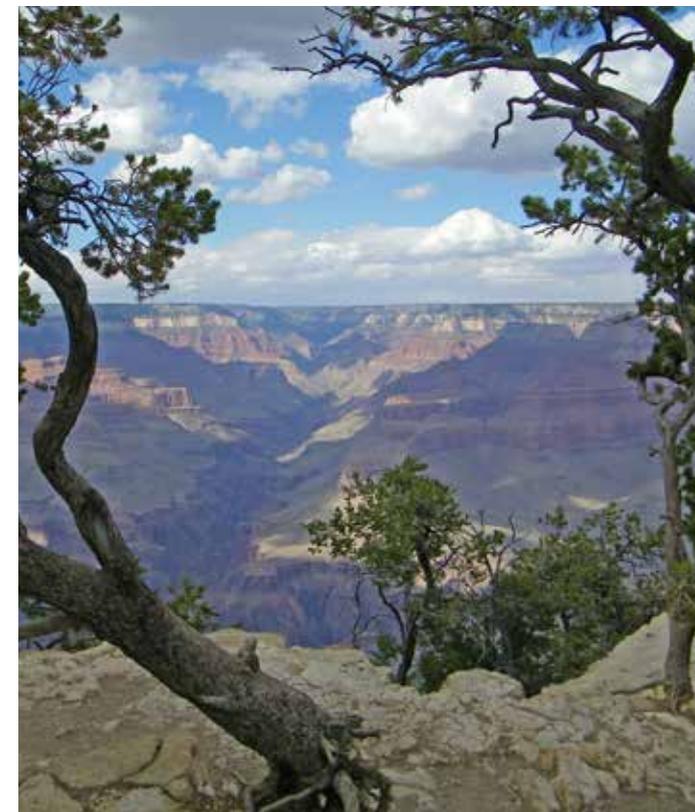
[www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm)

because of its remote location and shorter tourist season. There are many opportunities for adventure-seekers in the Inner Canyon which includes everything below the rim. Hikers, backpackers, mule riders or river runners can all enjoy nature at its finest inside the canyon. But be prepared! It is a harsh desert environment with little shade and summer temperatures over 100°F, so make sure you take along a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water.

A free, environmentally-friendly shuttle system runs every fifteen minutes during busy months, with drop-offs and pick-ups at any stop along the route. Visit the park's website at [www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm) for points of interest, maps, and illustrations of the shuttle system. We took almost all afternoon on the Hermit Road Scenic Route (Red), stopping at all nine stops. The return trip is an express, with four stops. Three other routes may



be used for transportation between hotels, restaurants and campgrounds – some have viewpoints and most have canyon views a short walk away. Be sure to visit the Visitor Center and Yavapai Geology Museum. An overnight is recommended if you love the sun's affect on the Canyon as it rises or sets. We stayed at El Tovar and loved the convenience for returning the next day and the history and views are spectacular!





Moran Point Overlook



You can catch glimpses of the Colorado River making its way through the canyon at most of the lookouts, and the further east you go, the longer the glimpses become. With binoculars you might see rafters enjoying a float down. Raft trips lasting from three days to three weeks are probably the best way to really see the canyon, waking up to incredible views while camping below the rim.



Heading out of the Park and to the east, the Desert View Watchtower is a must-see. Pictured above is the view of the Painted Desert standing outside the Watchtower facing east. Views are magnificent even from the ground, but get up in that 70-foot-high stone building and you'll be at the highest point on the South Rim. Can you say WOW?

Desert View Watchtower

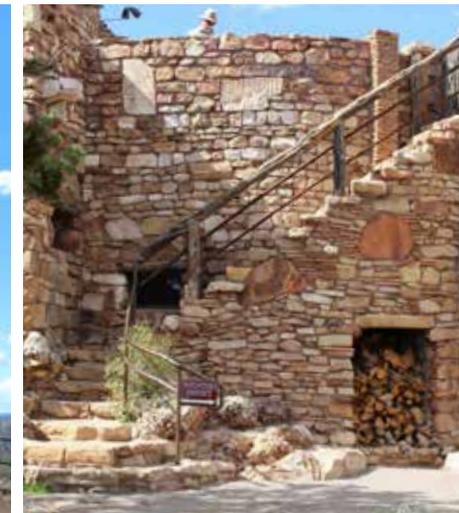
## Built to Blend into the Environment



Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter, designer of the Watchtower wanted to make it difficult to tell where the rock of the canyon walls ended and the tower began. To achieve this, her design built-in the appearance of rubble at the base of the tower and she insisted the builders only use rocks at actual size and not cut, to keep their weathered surfaces.



A truly unique stop, Desert View Watchtower stands at the eastern end of the South Rim. Featuring a concrete foundation and steel framework beneath the stones, it offers spectacular views of the Grand Canyon and the Painted Desert at each level. Paintings adorn the interior which depict various aspects of Hopi mythology and religious ceremonies.



## WUPATKI NATIONAL MONUMENT

In the 1100s this landscape was densely populated. Wupatki, Wukoki, Lomaki, and other masonry pueblos were home to hundreds of people, some of them possibly seeking a new home after the eruption of Sunset Crater Volcano. Wupatki pueblo – the largest – shares a stop with a very nice Visitors Center. These photos are of Wukoki, because there were fewer people here and it seemed the tallest and most well-preserved. It was quite beautiful.



## SUNSET CRATER

Around 900 years ago, the eruption of this volcano reshaped the surrounding landscape, forever changing everything in its path. The sharp contrast between the black lava flow and the yellows from the autumn leaves made this the perfect stop on this perfect day.



Sedona / Oak Creek

## Awe-Inspiring Vistas, Beautiful Red Rock

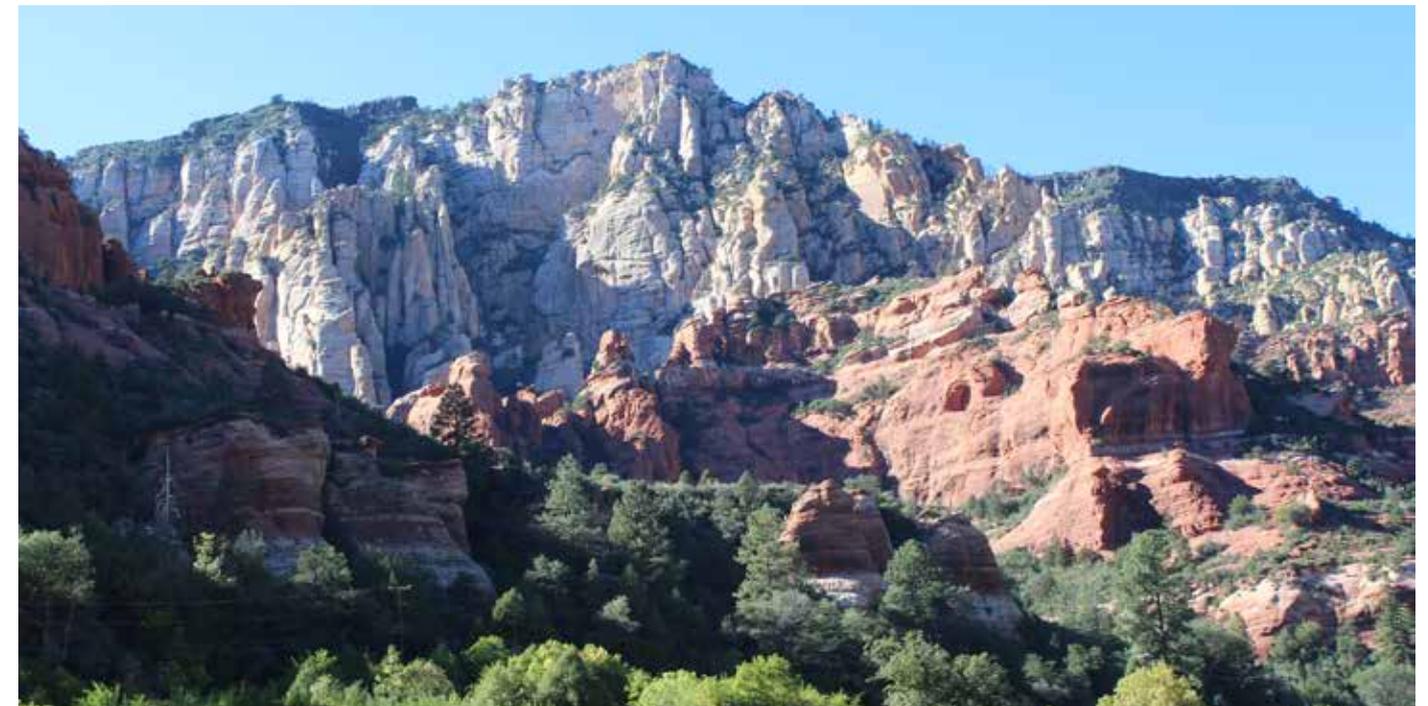


“In our daily lives we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful,  
but gratefulness that makes us happy.”

~ Albert Clarke

Because of Sedona's elevation, don't be surprised to see a little snow if you visit in early spring, as we did here. Since we had come to Arizona from Wisconsin for spring warmth (and some spring training), we were a little disappointed, but not for long. The contrast of the white snow on the red rock was quite a beautiful sight, and since the day warmed up nicely, the snow was soon a beautiful memory.

Sedona after a spring snowfall is pretty spectacular. The snow piled up on trees and deck railings but not on the roads, which worked out nicely. As beautiful as it was, the rest of the photos in this section contain blue skies and sunshine. With an extreme monsoon season, October boasted lush, green landscapes and still offered great contrast with the red rocks for absolute beauty, as well as perfect 85 degree temperatures.



After several trips to Sedona over several years, I think I am in love. For a relatively small area, Sedona has a plethora of great things to see and do. Everywhere you turn you will see magnificent rock formations of varying hues, heights and textures. The sun casts shadows that deepen the reds, so the colors change with the time of day. At every lookout I find myself thinking, "This is a glorious area of the country and I am so blessed to be here." Regarded by Native Americans as sacred, Sedona has a way of instilling inner peace, tranquility and spirituality for many visitors. Could it be the



red rocks and the warmth of the sun? Is it the Native American history and their beliefs – or the vortexes with their energy flows? Or is it the combination of all of the above? Aside from the natural beauty, talented artists present their creations at rows and rows of wonderful shops all along the city streets. When you need to eat, there is quite an assortment of restaurants and if you like music with your dinner, that's an option as well. And the shopping. I love the shopping! Bring on the shopping! Sedona has it all – and then some.



Shopping in Sedona

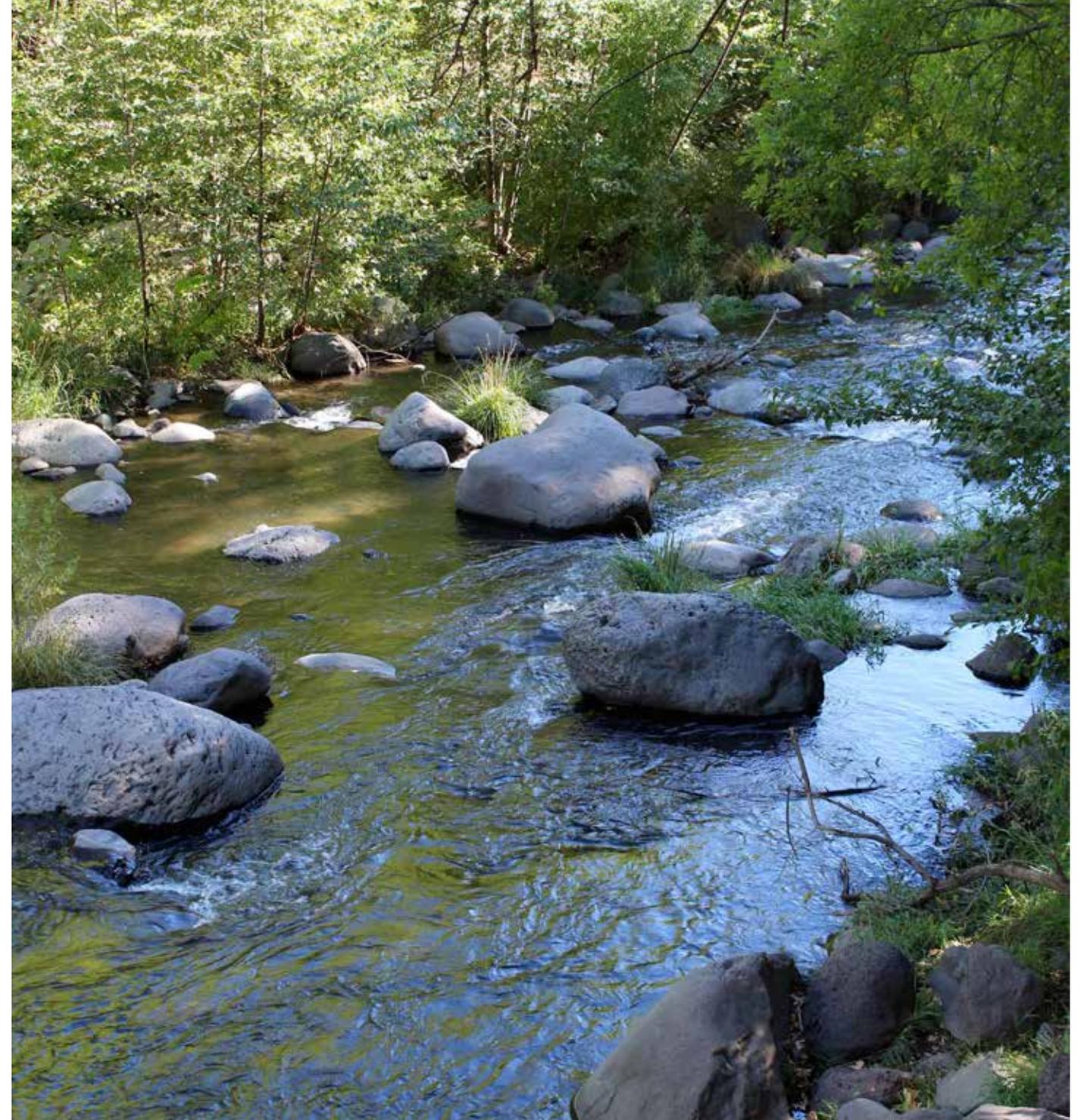


Red Rock Crossing





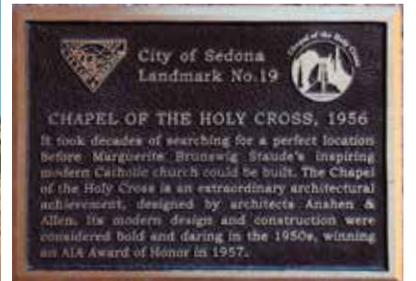
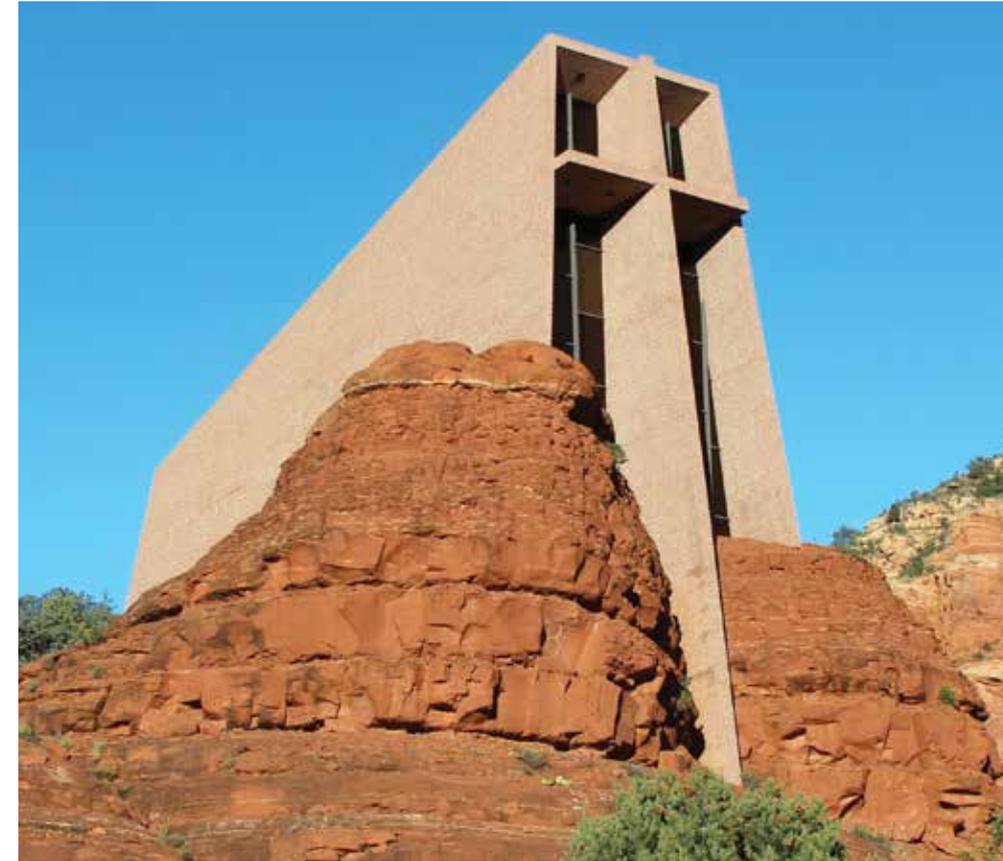
Slide Rock State Park in Oak Creek Canyon



Oak Creek near Indian Gardens in Oak Creek Canyon



Three of Sedona's Icons – A) Cathedral Rock, B) Bell Rock and C) Courthouse Butte



Chapel of the Holy Cross

“...it is the way of the Native American Indian that love and compassion is the strongest of all and to forgive and to ask for forgiveness is a way of healing and bringing you to your true talents, the true love that you hold within you, and the true power you have been given by the Creator...”

**Quote used by permission from [www.sedonadrivetours.com](http://www.sedonadrivetours.com)**



## A Stone's Throw from Sedona



- **Tuzigoot National Monument** has a visitor's center with great information and beautiful artifacts.
- **Montezuma Castle National Monument** is one of the best preserved cliff dwellings in North America.
- **Montezuma Well National Monument** is a site still considered sacred by many local Native Americans.
- **Verde Canyon Railroad** is a great way to see the canyon and ride an historic train.

### TUZIGOOT NATIONAL MONUMENT

Tuzigoot National Monument preserves a pueblo ruin on the summit of a limestone and sandstone ridge just east of Clarkdale, about a half hour's drive southwest of Sedona. Tuzigoot is the largest and best-preserved of the many Sinagua pueblo ruins in the Verde Valley.

Enjoy exploring these interesting and beautiful ruins in the Arizona sun while a slight breeze keeps you cool. You'll be able to see way off into the horizon all along the perimeter of the monument.

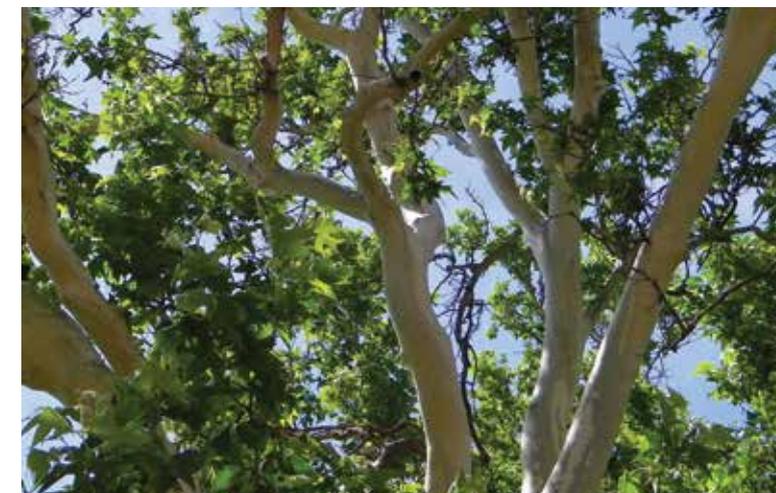


## Two of Our Favorite Stops



“Neither part of Montezuma Castle’s name is correct, since the Sinaqua dwelling was abandoned before Montezuma was born and the dwellings are more like a ‘prehistoric high-rise apartment complex’ than a castle.”

<http://www.nps.gov/moca/historyculture/index.htm>



### MONTEZUMA CASTLE NATIONAL MONUMENT

This stop features well-preserved cliff-dwellings that were built and used by the Sinagua people around the year 700.

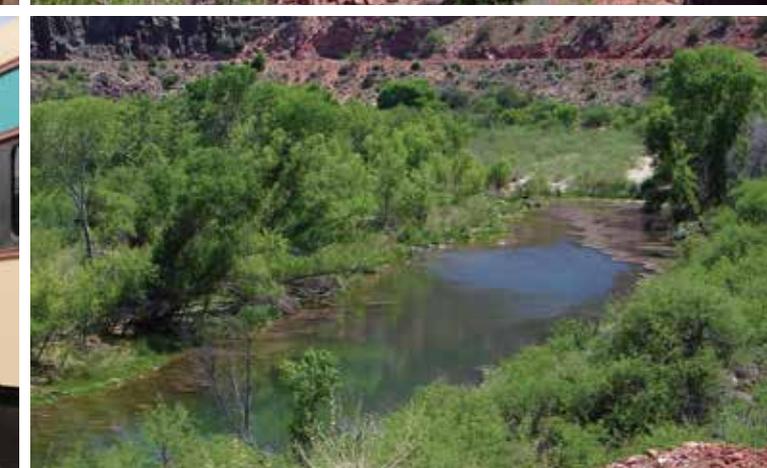
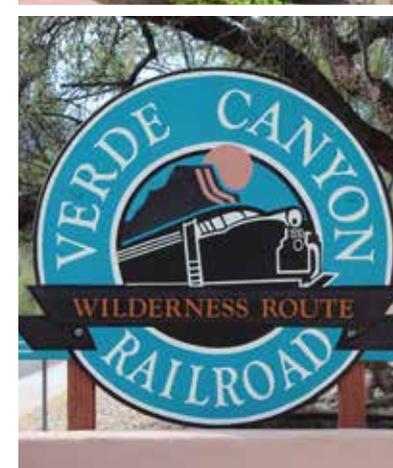
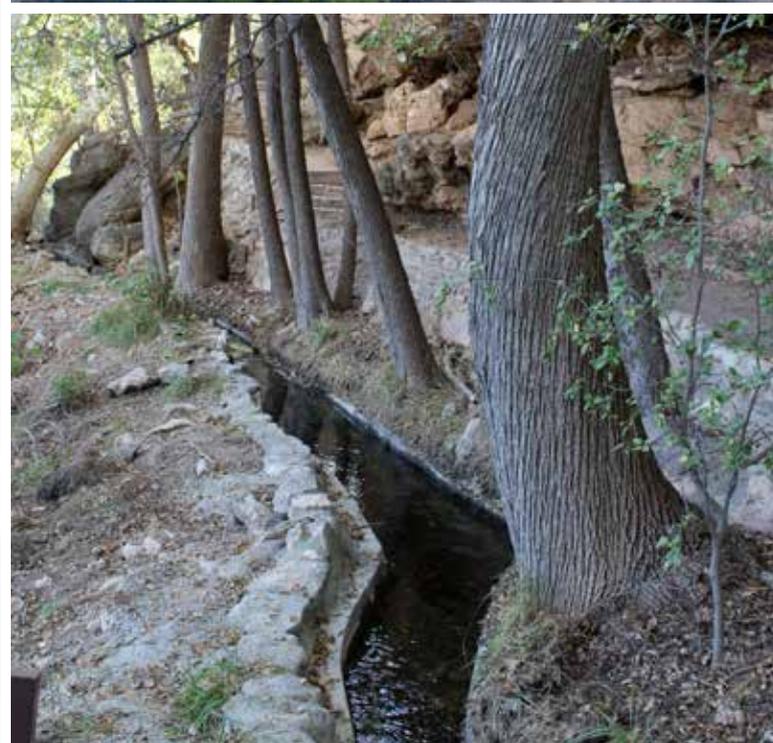
Located about 40 minutes southwest of Sedona, Montezuma Castle is another fabulous monument offering lots of history, natural beauty and a great visitor’s center. The 1/3-mile loop trail is easy to walk with benches and photo opportunities at every turn. Since the Arizona Sycamore trees are so lovely, it’s easy to forget about time and relax here for a while. The path meanders past a spring-fed creek, one of only a few in Arizona. Cliff swallows have quite a collection of mud nests on the ledges above the castle.



## MONTEZUMA WELL NATIONAL MONUMENT

Cliff dwellings along the rim, pueblo ruins and an ancient pit house are only part of the beauty of this stop. The trail to an outlet is short, but very sweet and offers some relief from the hot temperatures up top.

A seemingly endless supply of water must have been an oasis for the people who made their homes here. Over 1.5 million gallons of water flows into Montezuma Well every day and has not fluctuated much over the years. The water flows through over 150 feet of limestone and then into an irrigation ditch (pictured on bottom right), which dates back over 1,000 years. It then spills into Beaver Creek (pictured below), a tributary of the Verde River.



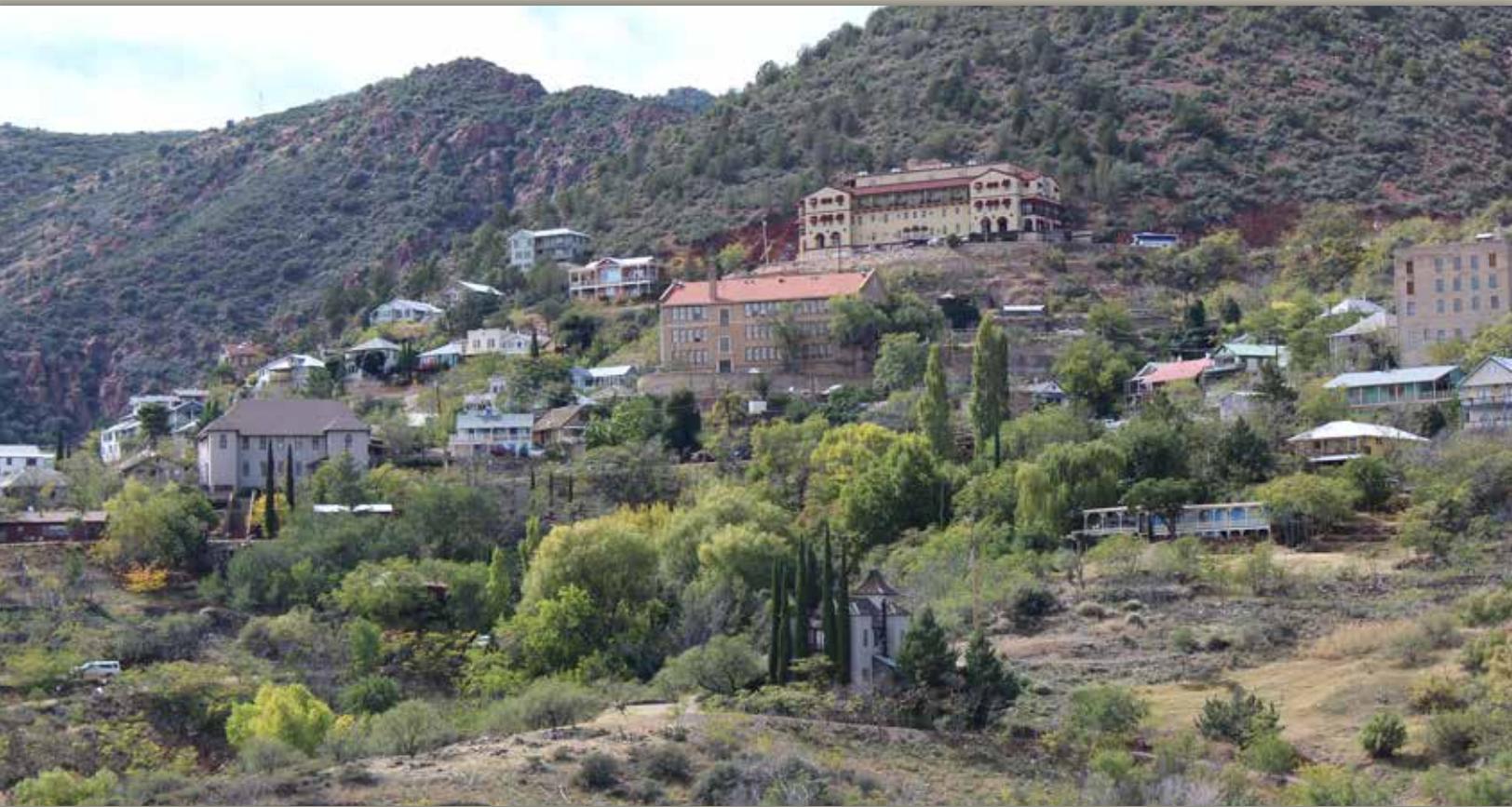
## THE VERDE CANYON RAILROAD

Catch this passenger excursion at its depot in Clarkdale, about 25 miles southwest of Sedona for great views of the beautiful Verde Canyon, which is only accessible by rail. You'll see rugged, high-desert rock faces and spectacular vistas as you are pulled by vintage diesel engines into this fabulous canyon. And what's more fun than riding on a train?!

First class includes snacks, more comfortable seats and access to an open car for better views. There is a full bar on board if you get thirsty on the four-hour trip.

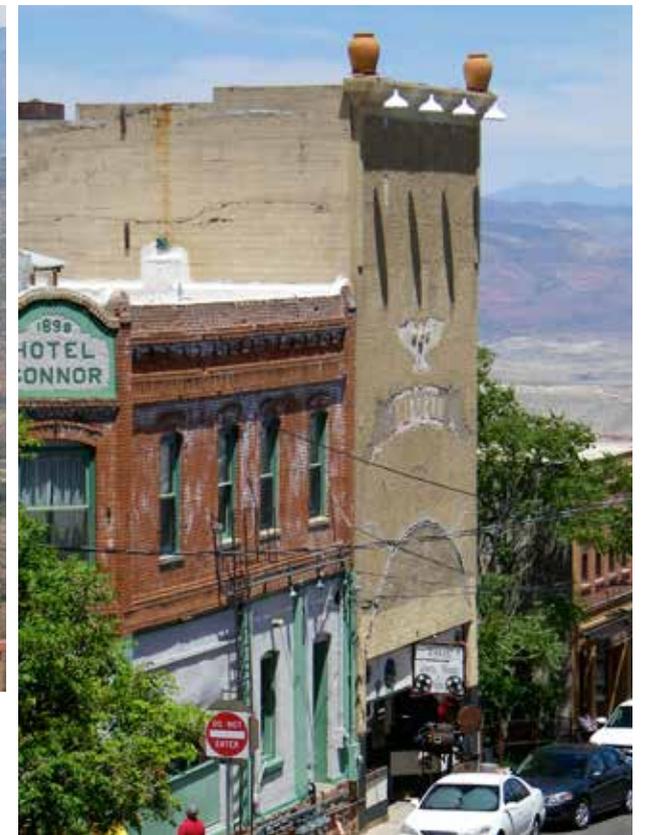
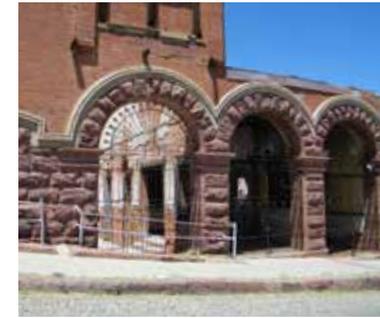
Jerome

## Historic Copper Mining Town



“Jerome is located high on top of Cleopatra Hill. Once known as the wickedest town in the west, Jerome was a copper mining camp, growing from a settlement of tents to a roaring mining community.”

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



This is a quaint little town about 40 minutes southwest of Sedona with great shopping on the side of a mountain. The top building in the picture on the previous page is the Jerome Grand Hotel. One of the ten most haunted places in America, it offers ghost tours and if you get your picture taken at the Asylum, a ghost just may join you for dinner. If you're planning a Halloween visit, start planning now, because they are booked years in advance! In keeping with the "haunted" theme, you will notice an abundance of goth-type merchandise in the stores and the wait staff at our lunch stop were a little scary as well. Audrey Headframe Park has an old mine shaft and some equipment from back in the mining days and the gutted Bartlett Hotel must have been an impressive building in its time. Awesome views and wonderful historic buildings.

My suggestion is always to make the drive from point A to point B a beautiful transition – and the route from Jerome to Phoenix should be no exception. Unless you are in a terrible rush, I see no reason to take the Interstate when you can drive on roads that will give you beautiful views. Continue on 89 through Jerome and take the drive through Prescott, Wickenburg and into Phoenix from the west. An overnight may be warranted



in the Prescott area for some time to visit the lakes and the surrounding areas. You can get a feel for frontier life in Wickenburg, with a visit to the historic downtown or a stay at a real dude ranch. But even if you're just passing through, this area is so beautiful, you'll want to avoid the interstate and give yourself a little extra time at the pullouts – because you're gonna want to stop – I guarantee it!



Greater Phoenix

## The Valley of the Sun



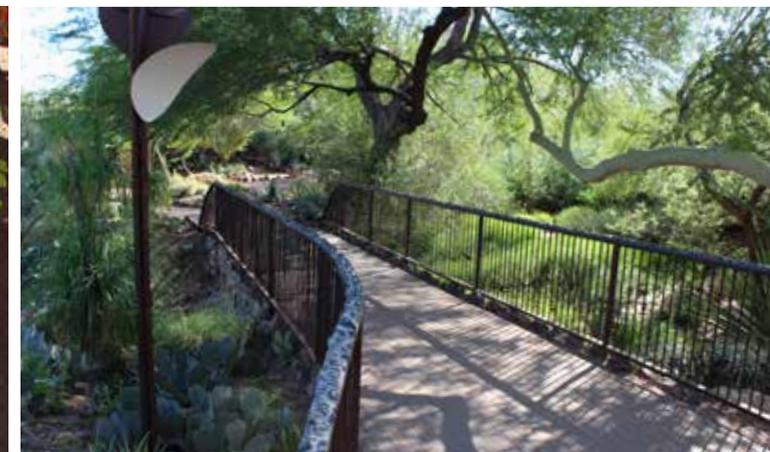
Although extremely hot from late May to early October, Phoenix is very pleasant the rest of the year. There are so many wonderful things to do here and it's central location in the state make many more of Arizona's treasures close at hand. It's easy to see why over four million people call greater Phoenix home.

**Greater Phoenix includes Chandler, Glendale, Scottsdale, Tempe and a few others.**



### DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN

As you enter the Garden, there are three glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly (two are pictured top left). And it just keeps getting better from there. Given the extensive monsoon season in 2014, the gardens were especially lush during this visit. The bees and butterflies were having a field day with so much to do and the cactus were showing off, standing tall on the hillside. In case you had any doubts – even with its prickly exterior – the desert is a beautiful place!

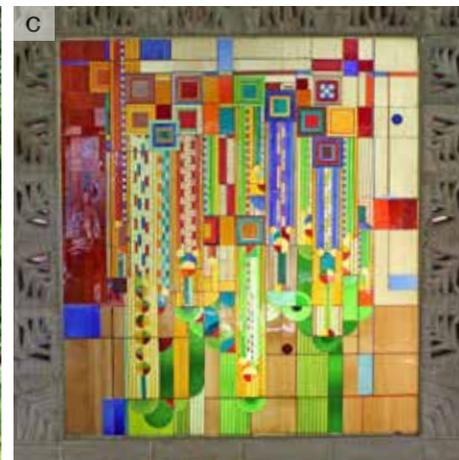
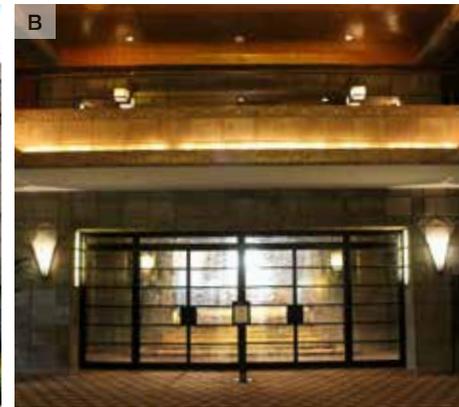
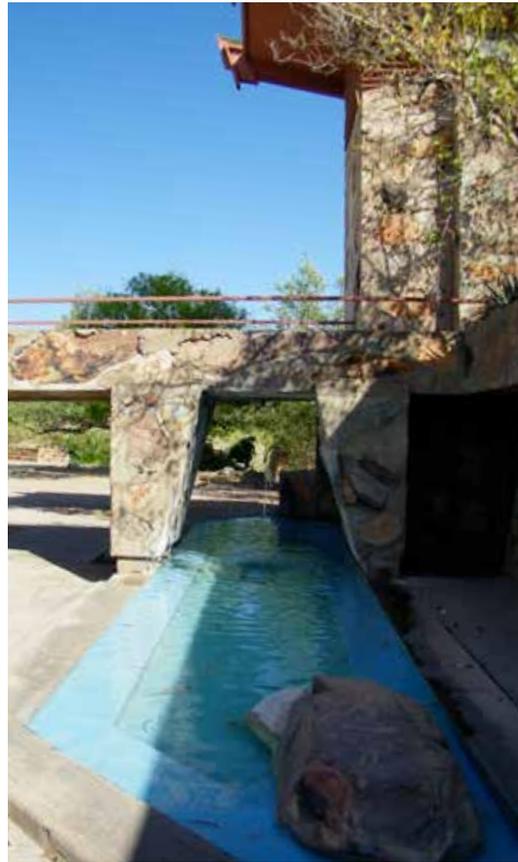


If you read my blog (BarbaraKOlson.com), you'll see I am a huge fan of Frank Lloyd Wright. Whether it's the craftsman style or his love of blending so beautifully with nature, we seek out his creations whenever we travel and Phoenix is full of his influences.

### TALIESIN WEST

In 1937 (at age 70) Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship began building Taliesin West as a winter home, studio and architectural campus. It remained in a constant state of change as they experimented and redesigned it over the years.

Our tour guide was very dedicated to portraying Wright as the brilliant and dedicated teacher of architecture that he was. It must have been a great honor to learn from him.



### THE ARIZONA BILTMORE

Although not "officially" designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, his influences are all over this beautiful hotel. With each renovation, more and more of his signature elements were added. See [www.arizonabiltmore.com/About/History.aspx](http://www.arizonabiltmore.com/About/History.aspx) for info.

Originally an elite by-invitation-only hotel, the powers-that-be didn't let just anyone in. Celebrities, presidents, V.I.P.'s only – you get the idea. It wasn't until 1973, when ownership changed again that it became a traditional hotel.

Irving Berlin sat poolside and wrote "White Christmas." Marilyn Monroe called the Biltmore's her favorite pool. Ronald and Nancy Reagan, and Clark Gable and Carol Lombard honeymooned here. And the Mystery Room – it was a mystery where the men disappeared to after dinner, but it wasn't a mystery what was going on in there during prohibition. The spotlight in the photo below (D) was used to warn of a raid by shining the beam into a skylight conveniently located in the ceiling of that room. This place was fabulous!!

A) In 1929 the Aztec Room was second only to the Taj Mahal in square footage of gold leaf ceiling B) Entrance to the Gold Room where two original linen tapestries hang, which are insured for millions C) Frank Lloyd Wright's "Saguaro Forms and Cactus Flowers" stained glass is built into the "Biltmore Block" near the entryway D) One of two spotlights directed into a skylight to warn of "intruders"

## FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In 1950, Frank Lloyd Wright finished his design of a Classical University for the Southwest Christian Seminary, complete with a chapel and other structures. When the seminary closed, the university was never built. Permission was granted from Wright's widow to use the plans and in 1973 the First Christian Church was completed. It is a working church and is "Bringing Real Life Change to Central Phoenix." Visit its website at [www.fccphx.com](http://www.fccphx.com). It is a very unique structure with a beautiful bell tower (shown at right), built several years later.

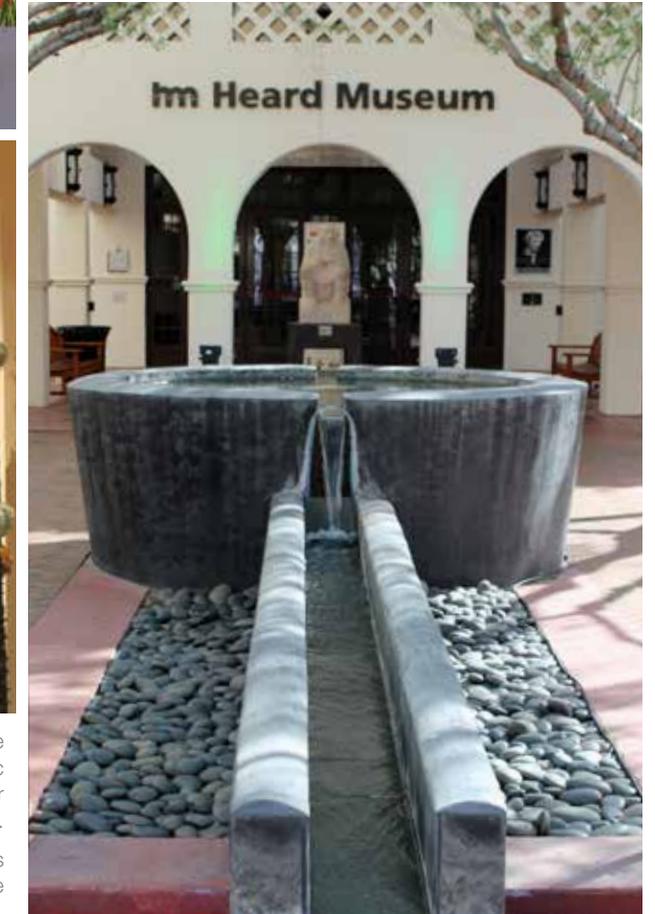


**"Indigenous Evolution"** by Tony Jojola, Isleta and Rosemary Lonewolf. The art fence just above references the land of the Southwest and the organic fences built by Native people from materials such as adobe, ocotillo or saguaro cactus and harmonizes colors of the Southwest in clay and glass.

"This linear installation reminds visitors to leave stereotyped preconceptions behind and enter a world where indigenous people blend the past with the present and firmly establish a limitless future." ~ Rosemary Lonewolf

## THE HEARD MUSEUM

Founded in 1929 by Dwight and Maie Heard, the Heard Museum is dedicated to the accurate portrayal of American Indian arts and cultures and combines their stories with the beauty of art. Long before the museum was opened, Maie would bring out her collections for everyone to see and then pack them up and take them home – every day. Today the Heard is recognized internationally for the quality of its collections, educational programming and festivals.



## Fasten Your Seat Belts!



The Superstition Mountains are the backdrop for this drive. Forty miles of narrow, winding road through rugged desert mountains, past deep reservoir lakes, with 22 miles of dirt road. Scary you ask? A little – but so worth it.



### GOLDFIELD

Before you actually get started on the Trail drive, up comes the first stop. The ghost town of Goldfield offers a train ride, a guided mine tour and lots of fun. True, it's a little touristy, but there are lots of photo-worthy buildings and it's a good place to stretch your legs and grab lunch or a cold beverage at a local saloon before heading up the Superstitions.



For a somewhat intense experience, take a drive on the Apache Trail. Formerly a stagecoach trail, it was named after the Apache Indians who traveled through the Superstitions using this route. Use caution, stay attentive and go very slow as the road twists and turns up and down. The road is good – until the dirt begins. There are only a few places to pull off for pictures, and some spots that look like turnouts

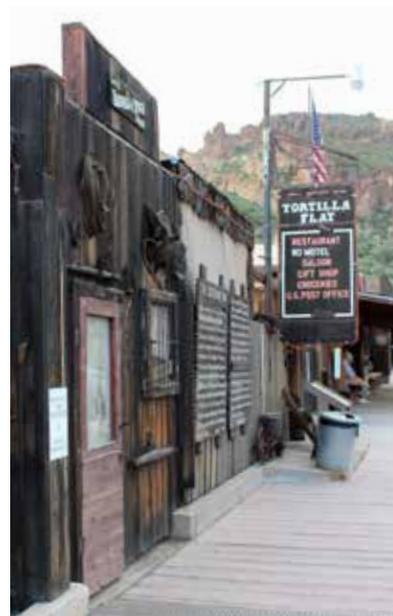
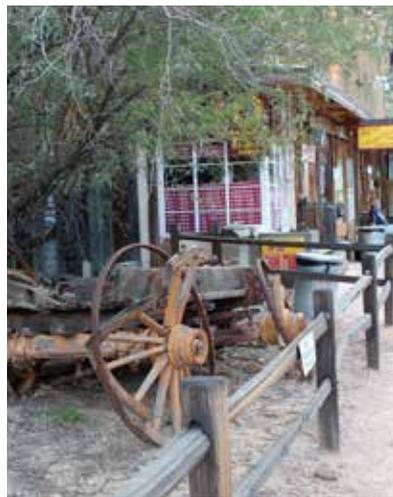


are small and not very well maintained. In a small car without much clearance, I opted to skip a few, so not to bottom out. But the views are breathtaking and definitely worth the trip. Canyon Lake, about 15 miles from Apache Junction, is one of the first stops with a paved parking lot. Canyon Lake was created by the Mormon Flat Dam and is the smallest of four lakes (reservoirs) created along the Salt River.



## TORTILLA FLAT

Tortilla Flat is an authentic Old West town that started out as a stagecoach stop in 1904. It has a great little museum and serves “the biggest burgers, the hottest chili and the coldest drinks everyday. Real saddles serve as bar stools where you can enjoy a cold brew or sarsaparilla.” This was a fun stop and they have excellent gelato too!



Just past Tortilla Flat, the Trail turns to dirt for 22 miles, starting out too wash-boardy for my small car. I wouldn't recommend driving it unless you have a car with good clearance or a truck – but don't go too big, since large SUVs and especially RVs shouldn't travel that part of the road either. I opted to turn around, but by doing so I missed Apache Lake, which was unfortunate. Roosevelt Lake should be high on your must-see list and can



be seen by driving a much easier route up 87, turning south before Payson onto 188. This is an absolutely beautiful drive through the Tonto National Forest and the Tonto Basin, passing by the northwestern end of Roosevelt Lake (pictured above). I would recommend a stop at the Tonto National Monument, which is very interesting and boasts spectacular views, which you'll see on the two pages that follow.



### TONTO NATIONAL MONUMENT

Despite the rugged terrain in this part of the Sonoran Desert, these cliff dwellings were occupied for over two hundred years by the Salado culture who were fine craftspeople. They produced some of the most brightly-colored pottery and intricately woven textiles found in the Southwest. Be sure to stop at the visitor center museum, to see some artifacts that were excavated around the area. An easy trail will take you right up to the dwellings and a movie down below offers some great history. Don't miss this awesome stop with beautiful views of the desert and Roosevelt Lake.



Tucson & Vicinity

## Like Soldiers Standing Guard



Nicknamed “The Old Pueblo,” Tucson is one of the oldest continually-inhabited areas in North America. Hohokam Indians lived and farmed here before Spanish missionaries and soldiers arrived in the late 1600s. In 1912 the total number of different flags flown over Tucson reached five: American, Spanish, Mexican, Confederate and finally, the State of Arizona.

After leaving Roosevelt Lake, continue on 188 to Globe. Drive west on 60 to finish up the rest of the Apache Trail drive, then turn south on 79 at Florence Junction. Shortly after the road changes to 77 near Catalina, a gorgeous mountain range comes into view (pictured below). The Santa Catalina Mountains are some of the most beautiful mountains in the world and are home to Mount Lemmon, the southernmost ski destination in



the continental United States at 9,157 feet. Up top is Mount Lemmon Station Observatory. Previously a USAF radar base and then a military emergency radar tracking station for landing the Space Shuttle and tracking missile launches, it is now used by the University of Arizona for astronomical research. If you’d like to visit the observatory, the Catalina Highway runs up to the top of Mount Lemmon to the town of Summerhaven.



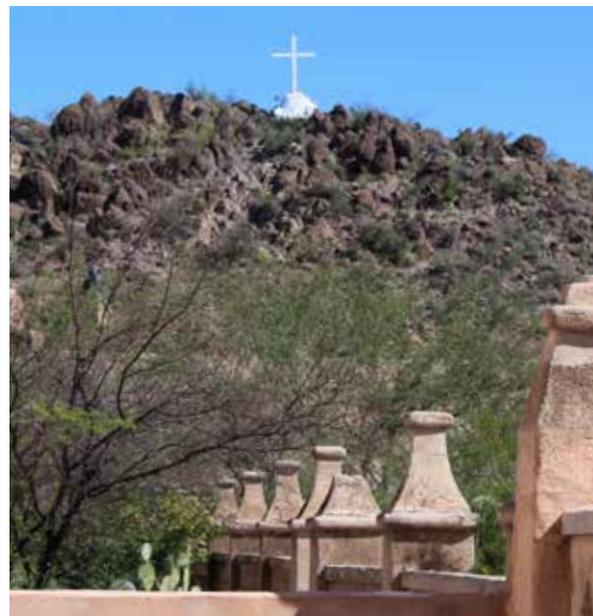
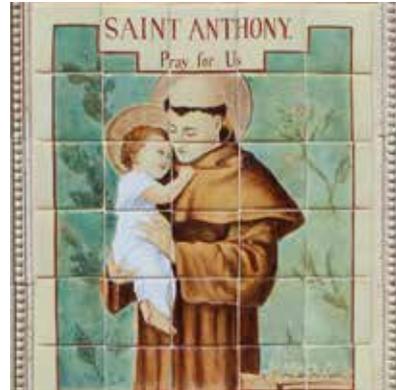
Recently designated as the Sky Island Parkway, a US National Scenic Byway, the Catalina Highway is a beautiful, curvy drive – a tourist favorite and a great way to escape the summer heat. Be sure to visit Catalina State Park, which has many miles of hiking and backpacking trails, several campgrounds and an equestrian center, with specific trails open to horseback riding. It is absolutely beautiful!



Catalina State Park

## MISSION SAN XAVIER DEL BAC

This beautiful Franciscan mission is open to the public daily – except during church services – and offers a free tour. The design of the sanctuary resembles a cross and at least three different artists painted the artwork inside depicting prominent people and events from the bible. Considered by many to be the finest example of Spanish mission architecture in the U.S., the mission was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1960.



The universal symbol of the American west, the giant saguaro can grow to 50 feet in height – nearly a five-story building! Saguaros are only found in the Sonoran Desert and are protected at Saguaro National Park. The Park is divided into two sections and separated by Tucson's one million residents. The Rincon Mountain District (RMD) is to the east and the Tucson Mountain District (TMD) is to the west – where all of my pictures



were taken. All sorts of cactus, not just saguaro make this an amazing stop and a dream come true for the photographer in us all. I entered the Park from Tucson Mountain Park, which starts out very steep and curvy, but levels out to a magnificent desert floor. It was really something, and if you head into Saguaro National Park, it just gets better. I would definitely recommend spending a couple of days in Tucson.

“Travel is one of the few things you buy  
that will make you richer.”



## TOMBSTONE

One of the last frontier boomtowns in the Old West, Tombstone prospered from about 1877 to 1890, when the town's silver mines were extremely profitable. It is best known as the site of the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral and draws most of its revenue from tourism.

Don't miss this great little town, complete with the Legendary Boothill Graveyard. Helldorado is a big reenactment in Tombstone on the third Friday-Sunday in October, but even at other times of the year, you'll see a few gunslingers walking around stirring up trouble.



Big Nose Kate's Saloon



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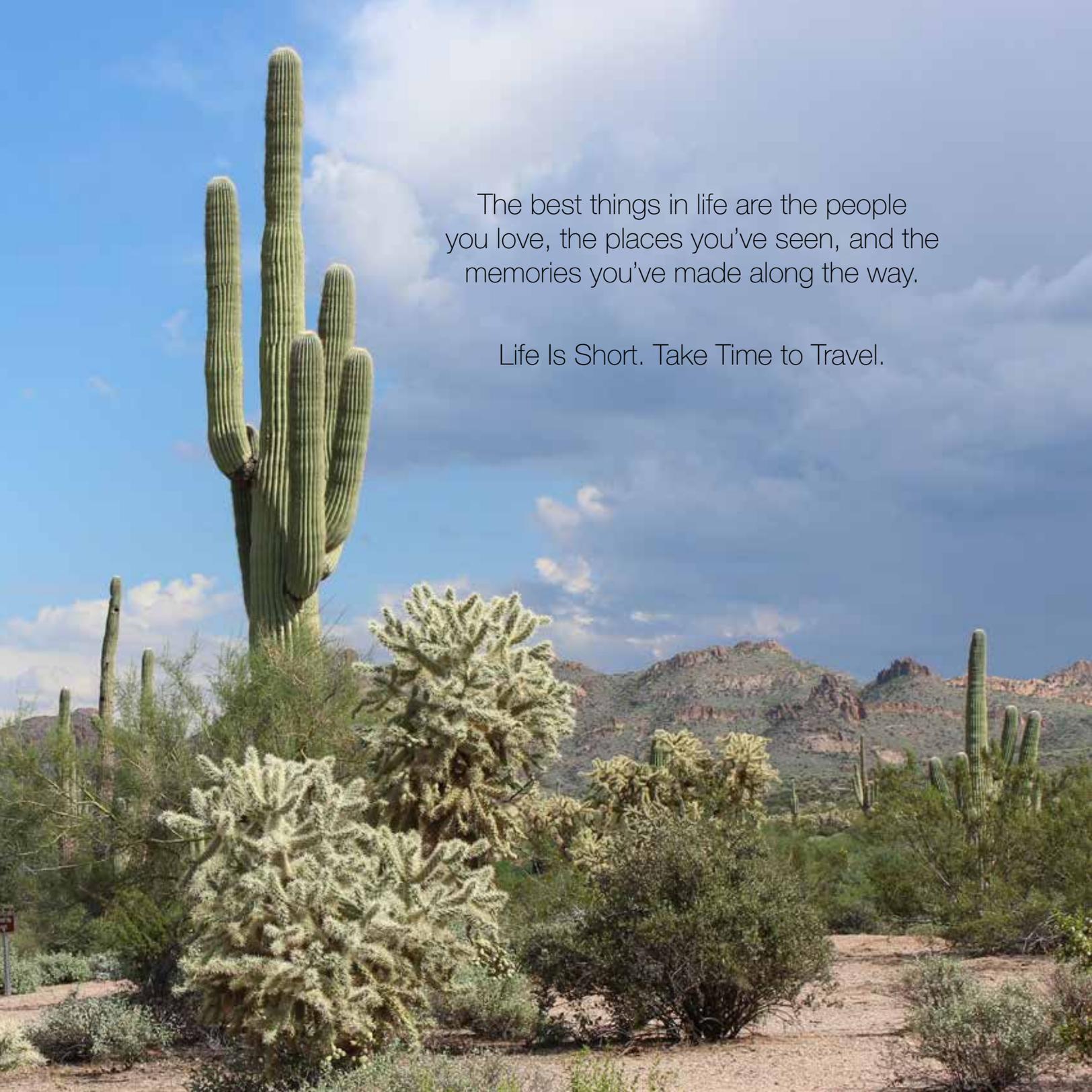
### In Conclusion

## Put Arizona on your Bucket List. Right Away.

I hope you've enjoyed this tour of a state I've come to love. I know of at least two things I missed – Lake Powell and Monument Valley. Looks like we'll be returning again soon!

If it's been a while or if you've never been, Arizona should be way up on your bucket list. Thanks for checking out *The Natural Beauty of Arizona*. Look for my next book – which will be a LOT closer to home – coming soon.





The best things in life are the people  
you love, the places you've seen, and the  
memories you've made along the way.

Life Is Short. Take Time to Travel.