



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Best Free Things to Do in Phoenix

Mesa, Phoenix, Glendale, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Guests on a budget enjoy hiking and biking on the numerous free trails in the area. Seven lakes within a easy drive provide inexpensive recreation.

contact:
tel: 480-610-3300

location:
26 N. MacDonald, Room 120
Mesa AZ 85211-5800

1 Four Peaks Wilderness Area

DESCRIPTION: Four Peaks Wilderness was established in 1984, and contains approximately 60,740 acres with a major mountain rising up in its center from the desert foothills. The Four Peaks themselves are visible for many miles, and are one of the most widely recognized landmarks in central Arizona. The rapid change in elevation produces interesting and unique plant and animal combinations. Elevations range from 1,900 feet near Apache Lake to 7,600 feet on Brown's Peak. A large part of the wilderness was burned over by a human caused fire which was started on April 27, 1996. It will take decades for the pine-covered mountains to recover. Hiking in this extreme area is a plus with the massive change in elevation that is unusual in most of Arizona over such a short area. The ruggedness is perfect for getting back in touch with nature or just spending some quiet time with the native animals populations. Situated just north of Canyon and Apache lakes, the wilderness area is best accessed via Hwy. 87 and taking Forest Road 143 to the edge of the wilderness area.

contact:
tel: +1 623 930 4200
fax: +1 623 931 9651
<http://www.glendaleaz.com/ParksandRecreation/SahuaroranchPark.cfm>

location:
9802 North 59th Avenue
Glendale AZ 85301

hours:
Apr-Oct: 6a-noon Su-Sa, Nov-Mar: 6a-10p Su-Sa

2 Sahuaro Ranch Park

DESCRIPTION: Return to an earlier time when you visit this lovely historic park built in the 1890s. Seven original buildings set on 16 acres are home to rabbits, chickens and peacocks. Originally a citrus farm founded by William Henry Bartlett, the ranch is now a Glendale City Park. Tour the main house and view exhibits of years past. The park is open to visitors daily April through October 6a-noon and November through March 6a-10p. Daily historic tours of the area are available November 9 through April. Call for further information. © wcities.com



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contact:
tel: +1 602 534 2406 / +1 602 262 6412

location:
1134 North Central Avenue
Phoenix AZ 85004

hours:
6a-10p

3 Margaret T. Hance Park

DESCRIPTION: This no-fee inner-city park offers a grassy area for picnics, a playground area, restrooms, sand volleyball pits and a full lighting system. This facility is frequently used for a variety of activities and events such as the annual Arizona Book Festival and the Light the Night walk for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Plenty of free parking is available and while you're here, why not check out the Burton Barr Library? It's just north of the park and offers quiet spots for reading. © wcities.com



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Phoenix Snapshot

Local Info

Love it or hate it, this sprawling desert metropolis has become one of the biggest, most modern cities in the American West. Rising from the ashes of the Hohokam civilization, Phoenix transitioned from dusty agricultural farm town to gleaming city of nearly two million residents (the population doubles if you include the suburbs) in the blink of an eye. Although the city keeps a low profile and is more famous for its suburban sprawl than tourist attractions, the city will reward your persistence if you take the time to seek out its hidden treasures.

Downtown Phoenix

Downtown Phoenix is still not what one would hope for in a city of this size, but development has been growing steadily over the years and there's plenty to see and do. The recent inauguration of the Arizona State University Downtown Campus has brought some much-needed new blood to downtown, with new student-centered businesses and living facilities adding a whole new energy to the area. Perhaps the biggest boon to downtown Phoenix in years is the new light rail system that connects downtown to points north and east, and makes it easier than ever to get around downtown.

Downtown becomes a frenzy of big-city pedestrian activity and traffic jams during major events. The Phoenix Suns play at the U.S. Airways Center, and the Arizona Diamondbacks are just a stone's throw away at Chase Field--expect big traffic delays during a game day. The Phoenix Civic Center drives traffic into the area with an ongoing schedule of national conferences and events, and visitors have plenty of choices in terms of museums and attractions. The Arizona Science Center is a favorite with kids and adults alike, while the Phoenix Art Museum regularly brings world-class exhibits to the Valley of the Sun. Other top museum destinations include the world-famous Heard Museum, home to one of the largest collections of Native American artwork, pottery, textiles, and jewelry, and the popular Phoenix Children's Museum, featuring hands-on exhibitions and activities for children of all ages.

The Downtown Phoenix Business Improvement District (formerly known as Copper Square) is the sleek 90-square

block nucleus of shops, eateries, and businesses. Here you can observe office workers criss-crossing the busy streets at lunchtime, with a slew of sandwich shops and cafes feeding the downtown masses with impressive speed. After business hours, however, the business district can start to look like a ghost town.

West Phoenix

The Westside, which makes up a large part of the Valley of the Sun, is a gathering of suburban neighborhoods largely developed throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Generally speaking, the homes and communities get newer the further west you drive, although there are pockets of historic points of interest. For vintage charm, check out Historic Downtown Glendale, touted as "Arizona's Antique Capital." Indeed, there's much antique hunting to be done at the shops of Caitlin Court.

Concertgoers should familiarize themselves with Cricket Pavilion, home to annual music festivals and major touring acts. Desert Sky Mall caters to West Valley's Latino population, while Arrowhead Towne Center in Peoria is a mecca for suburban shoppers. The Westside got a big shot in the arm with the development of the recent Westgate City Center, billed as "Times Square in the Desert," featuring chic boutiques, eateries, and multiplex movie theater. Westgate is home to the Phoenix Coyotes, who play at Jobbing.com arena, and just a stone's throw away is the huge University of Phoenix Stadium--lovingly nicknamed the Spaceship or Toaster by the locals--where NFL action looms large every Sunday in the fall with the Arizona Cardinals.

South Phoenix

This is one of the oldest parts of Phoenix and home to South Mountain Park, one of the largest municipal parks in the United States. Dobbins Lookout is located at 2330, the highest point in the park, and is easily accessible by car. Make sure to stop by for amazing panoramic views of the city. Horse rentals and trail hiking make this a perfect spot to spend the day.

South Phoenix is a culturally diverse area with thriving Latino and African-American communities. For comfort food ecstasy, South Phoenix is home to perennial favorites like Carolina's Mexican Food and

traditional soul food at Lo-Lo's Chicken and Waffles and Mrs. White's Golden Rule Cafe.

Northwest

A mix of old and new, the Northwest Valley is comprised of communities like Peoria, Glendale, Sun City, Sun City West, Youngtown, and Surprise. Sun City and Sun City West are large active living retirement communities. Some of the best hiking in the Valley of the Sun can be found at White Tank Mountain Regional Park, and animal lovers can get an eyeful at the Wildlife World Zoo and Aquarium.

East Side

Some of the oldest and most exclusive communities in the Phoenix area are located on the Eastside. The Valley's rich and famous find their sanctuary among the red rocks and hills of Paradise Valley, while Scottsdale remains a major draw for its high-end boutiques, art galleries, and fabulous resorts. For exclusive shopping, dining, and weekly outdoor markets, the Borgata of Scottsdale brings a unique Mediterranean-in-the-Desert flavor to North Scottsdale.

Tempe, located south of Scottsdale, brings college town amenities and energy to the Valley of the Sun. Arizona State University, one of the biggest universities in the country, is the beating heart of Tempe. Mill Avenue, with its assortment of hamburger joints, cafes, boutiques, and bars, is the major artery and gathering point, home to the Tempe Festival of the Arts and major Fourth of July Festivities. Tempe Beach Park, built around the wide, artificial Tempe Towne Lake, offers temporary respite from the desert with boat rides, walking trails, and snack kiosks selling premium gelato.

Further east are the cities of Mesa, Chandler, and Gilbert. Mesa, once a busy agricultural community, is now a major city boasting the Mesa Arts Center complex and a busy downtown area. Chandler too has experienced a renaissance, with downtown receiving a major face-lift, and a full performing arts schedule showing at the Chandler Center for the Arts.

Continuing east we find Mesa, Chandler and Gilbert. Chandler remained largely an agricultural community until a growth spurt, which began in the 1970s. Much of this area houses young families and

Phoenix Snapshot continued

middle-class professionals in stucco and tile developments. Local shopping is enjoyable at the Superstition Springs Center Mall at

the northwest corner of Highway 60 and Power Road.

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