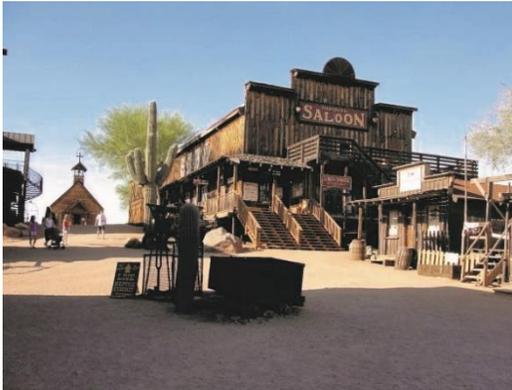




Arizona's Western Ways

Where to experience the Old West in Arizona



Throughout Arizona you can rub shoulders with real cowboys or with those just keeping the cowboy spirit alive. Arizona's desert landscape often evokes the image of a cowboy riding off into the sunset. Although you can do that (ride off into the sunset), you can also find places in Arizona that invoke the days of the Old West. Here we will point out a few places throughout the state where you can do just that!

Riding the trail

Leisurely riding above the land on horseback allows you to share the same unique perspective of a cowboy. From a little taller vantage point than hiking allows, and by allowing the horse to worry about where to take the next step, you can soak in the views, appreciate all the natural beauty and if you are lucky, spot some wildlife.

One of the largest municipal parks in the country is located in the metropolitan Phoenix Area – South Mountain Park. Although you are in the middle of almost 5 million people, you can get out on a trail and feel like you are in the middle of nowhere. [Arizona-Horses Ranches and the Ponderosa Stables Livery](#) has more than 50 miles of private trails through the world-renowned Sonoran Desert and they offer one- and two-hour rides.

If you want a little more time on the trail, on the north side of the Phoenix metro area, [Arizona Horseback Adventures](#) at Spur Cross offers three to three-and-a-half hour rides through pristine Sonoran Desert in the Tonto National Forest. Half day rides allow you to ride into the desert and view ancient petroglyphs. Or, a five-hour Indian ruins ride is available.

Desert horseback rides come with the possibility of spotting all sorts of native birds and creatures such as coyotes, mule deer, snakes, or Arizona's famous roadrunner.

If you prefer to ride in the largest Ponderosa pine forest in the country, then join [AZ High Mountain Trail Rides](#) at Mormon Lake in northern Arizona. They are open between May 1 and the end of September and are located just south of Flagstaff, or about two hours north of Phoenix. In the forest, you might want to keep your eyes open and your hopes up for the possibility of seeing deer, foxes, elk or a raccoon. Add a stay at one of the cozy cabins available at [Mormon Lake Lodge](#), which also has an RV park and campground.

Where Cowboys Eat and Drink (Watering Holes)

Working the doggies and riding the range can certainly leave a cowboy's throat dry and hungry. Current "cowboys" can step into the Old West at a number of watering holes and places to whet your whistle. Or, you can step back in time and stroll the storefronts of a frontier town or take part in activities of yesteryear.

Saloons and Restaurants

[The Palace Restaurant & Saloon](#), in central Arizona's cowboy town of Prescott, is one of the top ten historic bars in America. In the late 1870's, Wyatt Earp, Virgil Earp and Doc Holliday were patrons of The Palace. Virgil and his wife Allie lived in Prescott where Virgil owned a saw mill at Thumb Butte and was Town Constable. Wyatt and his other brother, Morgan, visited Virgil in Prescott before they left for Tombstone. Doc was on a winning streak on Whiskey Row (possibly at The Palace) where he won \$10,000 in poker. He joined the Earp's eight months later in Tombstone. Today, visitors enjoy typical American-style lunches and dinners as well as a few libations.

When the Earps' left Prescott and traveled to southern Arizona, to Tombstone, they were known to have taken lodgings at the luxuriously furnished Grand Hotel originally built in 1880. Unfortunately, the original building burned in 1882. But, it was rebuilt with some of the original features such as the long bar area that was originally housed in the basement of the hotel, and is now located on the main level. Although no longer a hotel, [Big Nose Kate's Saloon](#) is a great place to have a drink, dine, dress up and take pictures behind the bar or with a cowboy or saloon girl.

An authentic remnant of an old west town, nestled in the midst of the Tonto National Forest, in the Superstition Mountain Range of central Arizona, [Tortilla Flat](#) started out as a stagecoach stop in 1904. Mosey down the boardwalk and visit the Superstition Saloon and Restaurant. Real saddles serve as bar stools where you can enjoy a cold brew or sarsaparilla. The restaurant is renowned for their burgers and chili and no one can leave without a stop in the country store for a scoop of prickly pear gelato. Then visit the mercantile/gift shop for a memento before you leave.

The [Cowboy Club](#) in Sedona, (formerly the Oak Creek Tavern), originally opened in 1946 and has been serving as a meeting place, pool hall, saloon and grocery store. During the 1950's and 1960's, more than fifty western movies were filmed in the area. When the day's shooting was done, Hollywood's biggest stars gathered here. Legends like John Wayne, James Stewart, Donna Reed, Robert Mitchum, Burt Lancaster, Rock Hudson, Glen Ford, and Joan Crawford enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere. Even Elvis was said to frequent the tavern while filming 1968's *Stay Away Joe*. Today it features 'High Desert Cuisine' showcasing the best of the Southwest with angus steaks, wild game, fresh seafood, and house specialties including rattlesnake and cactus.

Just north of Phoenix, [The Buffalo Chip Saloon](#), in Cave Creek, began as an 800 square foot feed and bait shop in 1951 on two-thirds of an acre, but has grown to encompass five acres and more than 6,000 square feet and has picked up accolades along the way such as the "Best Western Saloon" by *True West*

magazine. Over the years it has been known as The Crystal Palace, The Maverick and finally The Buffalo Chip Smokehouse & Saloon – one of the most authentic dance halls and saloons in the country. And it is more than a place to spin your partner on the dance floor (dance lessons on Tuesdays and Thursdays), or have a great meal. You can live some of your cowboy dreams by trying your hand on Wednesday or Friday nights in the ring. The bull riding ring. Make your reservations to either watch the fun, or test your luck.

Old West Towns

The Verde Valley offers a place that when the dinner bell rings it's time to chow down on a chuck wagon supper of BBQ chicken and ribs and all the fixin's. Come early and belly up to the bar at a real Western saloon featuring some of Arizona's finest brews. Spend time in this Western town that features a museum, Old-Tyme photo studio, shooting gallery, ropin' lessons, tractor pull, and Western shops. After dinner the [Blazin' M Ranch](#) cowboys entertain with their award-winning musical talents mixed with cowboy poetry and humor. It's an hour-long Western stage production. Otis, named Cornville's most eligible bachelor since 1986, says this year may be the one when he finally gets hitched. Be wary of the Ranch's most infamous occupant, the Ghost Rider, lest he steal you away forever to ride the devil's herd across the endless skies.

Back in the 1890's Goldfield (just east of Mesa) boasted three saloons, a boarding house, general store, blacksmith shop, brewery, meat market and a schoolhouse. Just when it looked like the town would outgrow Mesa, the vein faulted, the grade of ore dropped and the town died a slow painful death. However, travelers from all over the world still visit this former gold mining town located on the historic Apache Trail and enjoy the excitement and grandeur of Arizona's Wild West! Today, in [Goldfield Ghost Town](#), visitors walk down Main Street, explore the many shops and historic buildings. You too, can tour the historic Mammoth Gold Mine and visit the Goldfield Museum. Pan for gold then take a ride on Arizona's only narrow gauge train. Witness an old west gun fight performed by the famous Goldfield Gunfighters! Also on offer is a Goldfield Ghost Town Walking Ghost Tour, rugged off-road and smooth, scenic guided tours, the Superstition Live Reptile Exhibit, a shooting gallery, Superstition's O.K. Corral Stables, or a guided tour of Lu Lu's Bordello.

About an hour north of Phoenix, near Wickenburg, Western Destinations operates [Robson's Ranch and Mining Camp](#) representing a time when people were self-reliant, and connected to nature. A time when the brave and adventurous left the humdrum of life in settled society and set off for the unexplored western frontier. Seasonally, visitors can experience the thrill of nature and the rugged beauty of the Sonoran Southwest the same way the original cowboys did. Activities include horseback trail riding adventures, learning to shoot shotguns and handguns in a safe and controlled environment, strolling the streets of a genuine old western town, savoring the flavors of a cowboy cook-out, and cowboy entertainment around the campfire.

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Appreciate AZ: The Arizona Office of Tourism and the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics have forged a partnership to promote sustainable tourism practices across Arizona's spectacular landscapes and unique destinations. In addition to following local rules and regulations, it's important to understand the principles of Leave No Trace, which are guidelines that help protect beautiful, wild spaces. These include such things as plan and prepare, stick to trails, trash your trash, leave what you find, be careful with fire, respect wildlife, and share the outdoors. [Appreciate AZ](#) is Arizona's program

for responsible tourism. It ensures we are doing our part to educate visitors and residents on how to recreate responsibly and to keep our state beautiful for future generations. If we do our part to take care of our public lands, we will have the privilege of enjoying them for many years to come. Thank you for doing your part to keep Arizona beautiful!

Please note: For visitor guidance due to COVID-19 such as mask-wearing, a list of tourism-related re-openings or closures, and a link to public health guidelines, click here:

<https://www.visitarizona.com/covid-19/>. Some attractions are open year-round and some are open seasonally or move to seasonal hours. To ensure the places you want to see are open on your travel dates, please check their website for hours of operation.

Additional information can be found on our website:

<https://www.visitarizona.com>

For more Arizona cowboy inspiration, please visit these resources:

<https://www.visitarizona.com/like-a-local/the-old-west-wilderness-and-wine-traveling-in-southeast-arizona/>

<https://www.visitarizona.com/like-a-local/contemporary-cowboy-fun/>

<https://www.visitarizona.com/like-a-local/home-cooked-ranch-style-cowboy-dinners/>

<https://www.visitarizona.com/like-a-local/indulge-your-wild-west-fantasy-in-arizona/>