

Arizona's UNESCO Designations

UNESCO designations are for places “deemed to possess outstanding universal value to humanity and as such, are to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy”. The state of Arizona enjoys four such designations:



Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Photo credit: An Pham

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument – UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

[Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#) was designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1976. According to UNESCO, Biosphere Reserves are “learning places for sustainable development. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity.”

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is a first-generation biosphere reserve created for the conservation of the Sonoran Desert ecosystem. This designation has attracted scientists from around the world in order to conduct studies to help us better understand the Sonoran Desert and the impact of humans on this unique landscape.

Thirty-One species of cactus are present at this monument, including the park's namesake, organ pipe, and the giant saguaro. As a protected area, the plants and animals living in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument are able to flourish under ideal wilderness conditions. The monument is an outstanding natural preserve where one of the of the Earth's major ecosystems survives almost unspoiled. [Activities](#) at the monument include ranger led programs, hiking, camping, horseback riding, biking and scenic drives.

Five Fun Facts

- Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is located in the southernmost part of Arizona and shares a border with the Mexican state of Sonora
- This 517-square-mile park was set aside in 1937 to preserve a pristine example of the Sonoran Desert habitat
- It is the only place in the United States where the organ pipe cactus grow wild
- Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is bordered to the northwest by Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and to the east by the Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation
- Organ pipe cactus gets its name from the many slender, curving stems which resemble the pipes of an old-fashioned organ



Grand Canyon National Park. Photo credit: Joel Grimes

Grand Canyon National Park - UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site

Thanks to its stunning landscapes and well-preserved layers that are a window into the past, [Grand Canyon National Park](#) was designated a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site in 1979. The Grand Canyon was formed due to millions of years of geological activity and erosion by the Colorado River. It is 1.5-kilometer (1 mile) deep and ranges from 500 m to 30 km (0.3 mile to 18.6 miles) across.

Considered one of the most spectacular landscapes on earth, the Grand Canyon is famous for its plunging depths with temple-like buttes. Within the park, visitors can experience a multitude of topographies including high plateaus, plains, deserts, forests, cinder cones, lava flows, streams, waterfalls, and one of America's great whitewater rivers, the Colorado River.

In addition, the Grand Canyon is an exceptional example of different biological environments at different elevations. Many species of fauna and flora exist (including endemic, rare or endangered) as well as a diverse ecosystem including numerous animal species.

The best part is that the Grand Canyon is a place where one can get a glimpse first hand of the enormity of the history and vastness it represents. Enjoy a hike, mule ride into the canyon, camping within its walls, a helicopter tour over it or a stunning sunrise/sunset leaving you breathless. Any way you choose, get ready to be amazed.

Five Fun Facts

- Grand Canyon National Park celebrated its centennial in 2019
- Grand Canyon National Park is listed among the Seven Natural Wonders of the World (which includes places such as Mount Everest and the Great Barrier Reef)
- Grand Canyon National Park has a north (open seasonally) and south rim (open year round)
- Six million visitors visit Grand Canyon National Park annually
- There are eleven Native American tribes with historic connections to the lands and resources found within Grand Canyon National Park. (source: <https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/historyculture/associated-tribes.htm>)



Barrio Bread, Tucson. Photo credit: Starr Nordgren

Tucson - UNESCO City of Gastronomy

In 2015 [Tucson](#) was the first US city to be designated a UNESCO City of Gastronomy thanks to its "rich agricultural heritage, thriving food traditions, and culinary distinctiveness." Tucson's

agricultural history dates back 4,000 years and is a woven tapestry of Mexican and Native American traditions.

Tucson's food culture is evident not only in its thriving restaurant scene, but also through a number of local, innovative food projects that keep the region's food heritage alive. The [San Xavier Cooperative Farm](#) in a native Tohono O'odham Nation's ancestral village incorporates native culture into its farming practices to ensure that decisions in the farm's rehabilitation project are consistent with their beliefs such as respecting the land and sacredness of water. Located at the base of Tucson's Sentinel Peak, [Mission Gardens Project](#) demonstrates the longevity and diversity of agriculture in Tucson during the last 4,000 years. A nonprofit seed conservation organization based in Tucson, [Native Seeds/SEARCH \(NS/S\)](#) works to conserve and promote the arid-adapted crop diversity of the Southwest in support of sustainable farming and food security.

Thanks to Tucson's rich food traditions and culinary scene, unique food experiences abound here. One of the most important factors behind metro Tucson's thriving and distinctive culinary scene is that two-thirds of the more than 1,200 restaurants and bars are locally owned rather than national chains. Get ready to explore Tucson's vibrant food scene. For some recommendations see: <https://www.visittucson.org/visit/food-drink/restaurants>.

Five Fun Facts

- Established in 1922 El Charro Café of Tucson is the nation's oldest Mexican restaurant in continuous operation by the same family
- Tucson boasts 23 miles of the best Mexican food outside of Mexico
- Grown locally, tepary beans are a drought-resistant legume native to the American Southwest
- Tucson has the longest agricultural history of any city in the United States
- Tucson's own El Güero Canelo won the James Beard "America's Classics" Award in 2018 for its famed Sonoran hot dog



Taliesin West. Photo credit: Jill Richards

Taliesin West - UNESCO Cultural World Heritage

Frank Lloyd Wright (June 8, 1867 – April 9, 1959) was an American architect, interior designer, writer, and educator. He believed in designing structures that were in harmony with the environment, a philosophy he called “organic architecture”.

[Taliesin West](#), Frank Lloyd Wright’s winter home and school in the desert was designated a UNESCO Cultural site in July 2019 (it is also a National Historic Landmark). Taliesin West was one of eight major Frank Lloyd Wright-designed buildings to receive this designation. Taliesin West is the first and only cultural World Heritage Site in Arizona. Wright’s designs in Arizona include ASU Gammage in Tempe, First Christian Church in Phoenix and a handful of private homes.

Located in the foothills of the McDowell Mountains in Scottsdale, Taliesin West was considered a bold new endeavor for desert living where Wright produced design and structural innovations to match the dramatic desert setting. Taliesin West is open to the public and offers a variety of [tours](#).

Five Fun Facts

- During the Private Collections Tour you will view Frank Lloyd Wright's personal art collection which includes Japanese prints and textiles
- Taliesin West draws its name from Wright's summer home, Taliesin, in Spring Green, Wisconsin
- Wright was continually altering and adding to Taliesin West throughout his lifetime
- Many of Wright's famous buildings were designed at Taliesin West, including the Guggenheim Museum and Grady Gammage Auditorium

- Most of the buildings constructed at Taliesin West were built by Wright's apprentices under his direction

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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>