

# ARIZONA

GRAND CANYON STATE

## I Dig Arizona!



Arizona has some of the richest earth in the world. It ranks second in mineral production out of all 50 United States. Some of the world's highest quality turquoise and amethyst come from Arizona. Gold, silver, and copper can all be found in Arizona's red earth. There are also plenty of prehistoric marvels, such as fossils and dinosaur footprints. Whether you are a diehard rockhound or you just believe that all that glitters should be gold, you are sure to dig Arizona.

If you are interested in what is under Arizona, be sure to check out our list of [caverns and caves](#).

## **Precious Metals:**

### **Throughout Arizona:**

[Arizona Gold Adventures](#) facilitates gold prospecting expeditions. You get to keep all of the gold you find on the trip, and Arizona Gold Adventures will help you find it. The company has access to professional guides, claim owners, outfitters, and expert training.

Tel: (914) 589-3985

[TerrySoloman@aol.com](mailto:TerrySoloman@aol.com)

### **Northern Arizona:**

PRESCOTT: [Lynx Creek Gold Pan Day Use Area](#) lies within the Lynx Lake Recreation Area just outside of Prescott in the Prescott National Forest. Lynx Creek, which feeds the lake, has been a popular spot for gold panning since the days of the Old West. According to the Recreation Area [map](#), gold panning is available in grids C4 and D4. The Lynx Creek Gold Pan Day Use Area off of Lynx Creek Rd. Another gold panning site is located a little farther north near the Salida Gultch Trail (Trail 95) and the Salida Connection (Trail 9263), and the directions to this location are available in the [brochure](#). Bring your own pan. Per regulations, the use of motorized equipment is prohibited and all holes must be backfilled. This site closes following especially heavy rain or snow, and when the roads are too icy. Visitors can call to make sure it is open during seasons of inclement weather.

Tel: (928) 443-8000

S Lynx Creek Rd, Prescott, AZ 86303

### **Central Arizona:**

FLORENCE: [Florence Copper](#) offers site tours and access to their technical experts. Visitors come away with a better understanding of how Florence Copper operates its Production Test Facility. The Florence Copper Project is possible because of a rare copper deposit located in the Historic Copper Corridor of Arizona. The unique extraction process occurs deep in the bedrock but without open pits, tunnels, or the large equipment typically associated with traditional mining. It involves a simple combination of physics and basic chemistry to dissolve and then pump copper-rich solution to the surface. Once at the surface, the solution is converted into large sheets of up to 99.999% pure copper cathode. Tours typically start at 10 a.m. and last about two hours. Call or visit the website to make a tour reservation.

Tel: (520) 374-3984

1575 West Hunt Highway, Florence, AZ 85132

## **Southern Arizona:**

SAHUARITA: [ASARCO Grupo Mexico](#) offers seasonal, Saturday [mine tours](#) of a working, open-pit copper mine. The tour begins at the [Mineral Discovery Center](#), which offers exhibits and films on mining and is free to enter. Guests then board a bus to go to a lookout point on the south rim of the mine, which is a quarter-mile deep, two miles long, and a mile-and-three-quarters wide. The tour then goes through the South Mill, where the copper is ground into a fine powder and separated by flotation. Finally the tour views the reclamation areas. Purchase tour tickets at the Mineral Discovery Center; no reservations required.

Tel: (520) 625-8233 or (520) 625-7513  
1421 W Pima Mine Rd, Sahuarita, AZ 85629

## **Gems:**

\*\*Rockhounding sites listed in the Rocks section are also great places to find gems.\*\*

## **Northern Arizona:**

GOLDEN VALLEY: [Cuesta Fire Agate Mine](#) is located off of Route 66 between Kingman and Oatman. The mine site consists of four, 20-acre claims that have been owned by the same family since 1902. This mine offers a fee dig. Visitors pay a fee and can rent tools for a nominal fee in order to mine the claim for a day. Whatever they find is theirs to keep, up to a five gallon bucket daily. The owner, Don, talks about how Fire Agate is formed and offers assistance in how to find, locate and dig the fire agate out of the host rock. Visitors will also sometimes find Chalcedony (Desert) Roses and Druse Crystal Clusters.

Tel: (928) 565-4145  
9049 Oatman Rd (Old Route 66), Golden Valley, AZ 86413

## **Central Arizona:**

FOUNTAIN HILLS: [Amethyst Mine Tours](#) by [Sami Fine Jewelry](#) are offered periodically and allow guest to get up close to the Arizona Four Peaks Amethyst. Guests travel to the mine by helicopter. Once there, they get to meet the owner of the mine, Kurt Cavano, along with the miners. The miners take guests inside the mine to show them how they extract the beautiful amethyst. Guests that don't mind getting a little dirty are also invited to try mining on their own. \*\*Reservations required and space is very limited.\*\*

Tel: (480) 568-4743 or (855) 912-8135  
16704 Avenue of the Fountains #100, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268

PERIDOT: [Peridot Dreams](#) is located on the San Carlos Apache reservation and is one of the largest peridot mines in North America. Most of the world's supply of peridot comes from Arizona. Only tribal members are permitted to dig there, but there is plenty of peridot available for purchase, both loose gems and finished jewelry. The loose gems offered are facet grade rough, cab grade rough, and cut stones.

Tel: (480) 249-5838

[peridotdreams.sj@gmail.com](mailto:peridotdreams.sj@gmail.com)

QUARTZSITE: [Desert Gardens International Rock, Gem and Mineral Show](#) is the largest rock, gem, and mineral show in Quartzsite and the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in the world, with hundreds of vendors from around the world. Desert Gardens offers free parking, free admission, a food court, and more than 200 25' x 35' spaces for vendors.

Tel: (623) 606-0053

1050 Kuhen St, Quartzsite, AZ 85346

## **Southern Arizona:**

TUCSON: [Tucson Gem and Mineral Show](#) is the world's largest, oldest, and most prestigious gem and mineral show. The Tucson Gem and Mineral Show has enjoyed international stature since the 1970s, and was the first gem and mineral show to bring the hobby enthusiast, the public, and the curator/professionals together for discovery and discussion. Tens of thousands of visitors flock to Tucson's largest public event of the year.

Tel: (520) 322-5773

TUCSON: [The University of Arizona Gem & Mineral Museum](#) is dedicated to providing public education and the preservation of minerals and meteorites while also serving the research needs of professionals, students, and collectors. The collection is world-wide in scope, but with specific emphasis on minerals from Arizona and Mexico. It is [moving](#) into the Old Pima County Courthouse and will feature a 7,500-square-foot exhibition hall showcasing magnificent gemstones, outstanding original mineral specimens, jewelry, meteorites and fossils. There will also be extensive laboratories on site as a part of the University's Geosciences Departments, where gemologists and mineral collectors will be able to access state-of-the-art technologies, including Raman analysis, X-ray diffraction, and mass spectroscopy.

Tel: (520) 621-4227

1601 E University Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85721 **\*\*Moving into the Old Pima County Courthouse at 115 N Church Ave, Tucson, AZ 85701\*\***

## **Rocks:**

**\*\*Rockhounding sites listed in this section are also great places to find gems and fossils.\*\***

### **Northern Arizona:**

FLAGSTAFF: [Willow Bend Environmental Education Center](#) offers [Free Guided Downtown Geology Tours](#) of Flagstaff twice monthly during the months of June, July, and August. The one-hour walking tours are based on local Flagstaff author, Marie Jackson's book, *Stone Landmarks*. The tour covers the ancient history of stones used to build downtown's iconic buildings, including Moenkopi Sandstone, Pumiceous Dacite, Kaibab Limestone, and Malpais Basalt. The tour also highlights the progression of architectural styles, changing preferences for certain rock types, and historic events. Participants get to search for fossils on the Ice House walls, find out what stone is referred to as "Arizona Red", visit the layers of the "Grand Canyon" at Heritage Square, view beautiful stone etchings, and more.

Tel: (928) 779-1745

24 N San Francisco St, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

LITTLEFIELD: [Virgin River Recreation Area](#) — This public land was designated a rockhounding area by the Bureau of Land Management. Here, rockhounds can find mineral specimens, rocks, semi-precious gems, petrified wood, and invertebrate fossils. Each person can collect up to 25 lbs per day and 250 lbs per year of material for non-commercial purposes free of charge. Just remember, you may not collect historical artifacts—such as pottery, rock art, and arrowheads—or vertebrate fossils—such as dinosaurs, mammals, or fish—on public lands. This site has a campground. The rockhounding area is located on Interstate 15 at exit 18, 16 miles northeast of Littlefield, AZ.

Tel: (435) 688-3200

Littlefield, AZ 86432

WIKIEUP: [Burro Creek Campground](#) — This public land was designated a rockhounding area by the Bureau of Land Management. Here, rockhounds can find mineral specimens, rocks, semi-precious gems, petrified wood, and invertebrate fossils. Each person can collect up to 25 lbs per day and 250 lbs per year of material for non-commercial purposes free of charge. Just remember, you may not collect historical artifacts—such as pottery, rock art, and arrowheads—or vertebrate fossils—such as dinosaurs, mammals, or fish—on public lands. This site has a campground. The rockhounding area is located 1 1/2 miles off U.S. Highway 93, approximately 60 miles northwest of Wickenburg.

Tel: (928) 718-3700

Wikieup, AZ 85360

WINSLOW: [Rock Art Canyon Ranch](#) is a working cowboy-run ranch that is home to one of the finest stands of Anasazi petroglyphs in the Southwest. Guests can ask to view the small pioneer-cowboy and Anasazi museums furnished with artifacts found on the ranch. **\*\*Make reservations in advance.\*\***

Tel: (928) 386-5047

The end of Rock Art Ranch Rd, Winslow, AZ 86047

## **Central Arizona:**

DUNCAN: [Round Mountain Rockhounding Area](#) — This public land was designated a rockhounding area by the Bureau of Land Management. Here, rockhounds can find mineral specimens, rocks, semi-precious gems, petrified wood, and invertebrate fossils. Each person can collect up to 25 lbs per day and 250 lbs per year of material for non-commercial purposes free of charge. Just remember, you may not collect historical artifacts—such as pottery, rock art, and arrowheads—or vertebrate fossils—such as dinosaurs, mammals, or fish—on public lands. To find the rockbound area, follow Highway 70 east into New Mexico for 5.5 miles and turn right onto a dirt road called Lazy B Ranch. Take the dirt road for 12 miles, following the signs to the rockhounding area.

Tel: (928) 348-4400

Duncan, AZ 85534

QUARTZSITE: [Dome Rock Mountain 14-Day Camping Area](#) — This public land was designated a rockhounding area by the Bureau of Land Management. Here, rockhounds can find mineral specimens, rocks, semi-precious gems, petrified wood, and invertebrate fossils. Each person can collect up to 25 lbs per day and 250 lbs per year of material for non-commercial purposes free of charge. Just remember, you may not collect historical artifacts—such as pottery, rock art, and arrowheads—or vertebrate fossils—such as dinosaurs, mammals, or fish—on public lands. This rockhounding area has a campground

Tel: (928) 317-3200

2995 Dome Rock Rd W, Quartzsite, AZ 85346

SAFFORD: [Black Hills Rockhounding Area](#) — This public land was designated a rockhounding area by the Bureau of Land Management. Here, rockhounds can find mineral specimens, rocks, semi-precious gems, petrified wood, and invertebrate fossils. Each person can collect up to 25 lbs per day and 250 lbs per year of material for non-commercial purposes free of charge. Just remember, you may not collect historical artifacts—such as pottery, rock art, and arrowheads—or vertebrate fossils—such as dinosaurs, mammals, or fish—on public lands. This site is located two miles north of Highway 191, down a dirt road that is located 10.5 miles north of the intersection of Highway 191 and Highway 70. The entrance to the dirt road is paved.

Tel: (928) 348-4400

Safford, AZ 85546

## **Southern Arizona:**

DATELAND: [Painted Rock Petroglyph Site and Campground](#) — The site provides visitors the opportunity to view an ancient archaeological site containing hundreds of symbolic and artistic rock etchings, or "petroglyphs," produced centuries ago by prehistoric peoples. There are also inscriptions made by people who passed through during historic times. The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, The Butterfield Overland Stage Route, and the Mormon Battalion Trail are three trails that played prominent roles in the history of Arizona and the American West, and all three pass through the campground.

Tel: (623) 580-5500

Rocky Point Rd, Dateland, AZ 85333

TUCSON: [Earth Sciences Center at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum](#) — This realistic, artificial cave houses displays among the cave formations and side chambers. One display charts the development of a limestone cave and the formation of stalagmites and stalagtites. Another teaches about the animals that frequent cave entrances, including bobcats, pack rats, ringtails, and barn owls. A side tunnel, posted with a warning for those with claustrophobic tendencies, provides a realistic caving experience in 75 feet of sinous, low-clearance maneuvering. An adjacent room houses a glistening mass of cave formations, gently floodlit from beneath the surface of a turquoise pool. The cave exhibits lead to rooms containing a NASA-funded Earth from Space: A Satellite's View of Earth exhibit and part of the Museum's breathtaking mineral collection. The Desert Museum's permanent mineral collection, with a focus on minerals from the Sonoran Desert region of Arizona, Sonora and Baja, California, is lauded as one of the finest regional mineral collections in the world.

Tel: (520) 883-2702

2021 N Kinney Rd, Tucson, AZ 85743

TUCSON: [Signal Hill Picnic Area in Saguaro National Park West](#) is home to dozens of well-preserved, 800-year-old petroglyphs, just a short walk from the road. The ancient Hohokam people created both abstract designs, like the one pictured, and representational images, such as humans and animals, at this site. These are very accessible petroglyphs, so make sure not to touch them, as oils from hands damage them.

Tel: (520) 733-5158

Signal Hill Rd, Tucson, AZ 85743

## **Arizona West Coast:**

LAKE HAVASU CITY: [Lake Havasu](#) is a terrific destination for rockhounds. For millions of years, the mighty Colorado River has been depositing treasures along its banks and they're just waiting to be found by those who look. Many of the specimens available in the Lake Havasu area can be found right on the shoreline of Lake Havasu. Agates, quartz, geodes, drusy, gneiss, fossils, and precious metals are all abundant around Lake Havasu.

Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403

YUMA: [The Hull Mine](#) — This enchanting mine is home to incredible fluorescing mineral walls, containing as many as ten stunning colors under ultra-violet light. It was part of the Arizona Railroad Mine in the 1880s. Tours take visitors 100 feet underground to see an exposed silver galena vein, crystal formations, an underground blacksmith shop, and forgotten mining artifacts. Entering the florescent chamber is like standing in a kaleidoscope. Tours are operated by the [Castle Dome Museum](#).

Tel: (928) 920-3062

Castle Dome Mine Rd, Yuma, AZ 85365

## **Fossils:**

\*\*Rockhounding sites listed in the Rocks section are also great places to find fossils. Only invertebrate fossils may be collected.\*\*

## **Northern Arizona:**

CAMP VERDE: [Montezuma Castle National Monument](#) — Montezuma Castle is one of the best-preserved cliff dwellings in North America. This 20 room high-rise apartment, nestled into a towering limestone cliff, tells a story of ingenuity, survival and ultimately, prosperity in an unforgiving desert landscape. Visitors can take an easy 1/3-mile trail to a peaceful grove, where they can view the 900-year-old legacy of the ancient Sinagua culture. The National Monument is also home to other ruins, such as rockshelters, pueblos, and irrigation systems. In 1978, the park boundary was adjusted to protect fossil mammal tracks. \*\*Admission allows entrance for 7 days to both the Montezuma National Monument and the Tuzigoot National Monument. No need to pay twice.\*\*

Tel: (928) 567-3322 ext 221

Montezuma Castle Rd, Camp Verde, AZ 86322

CONCHO: [Dobell Curios](#) is the world's oldest dealer in petrified wood. Located just outside of the Petrified Forest National Park, the area is strewn with exquisite petrified wood samples and other treasures. Unlike in the National Park, the owners let guests find and dig their own petrified wood to take out in five gallon buckets. They also have equipment to load larger specimens into truck beds.

Tel: (928) 524-2628

Concho, AZ, 85924

FLAGSTAFF: [Museum of Northern Arizona](#) — The Museum of Northern Arizona is considered to be Northern Arizona's premier museum about Native cultures, tribal life, and traditional arts and stories of the surrounding region. Interactive exhibits feature geology, natural history, anthropology, archaeology, and paleontology of the Colorado Plateau. The Museum is home to several annual heritage festivals, including the Zuni Festival, Hopi Festival, and Navajo Festival. In its paleontology collection, the Museum holds approximately 150,000 specimens, including amphibians, turtles, dinosaurs, pterosaurs, tritylodonts, invertebrates, vertebrate and invertebrate tracks, and paleobotany specimens.

Tel: (928) 774-5213

3101 N Ft Valley Rd, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK: [Grand Canyon National Park](#) — Unique combinations of geologic color and erosional forms decorate a canyon that is 277 river miles (446km) long, up to 18 miles (29km) wide, and a mile (1.6km) deep. The sedimentary rocks exposed throughout the canyon are rich with marine fossils such as crinoids, brachiopods, and sponges with several layers containing terrestrial fossils such as leaf and dragonfly wing impressions, and footprints of scorpions, centipedes, and reptiles. Ancient fossils preserved in the rock layers range from algal mats and microfossils from Precambrian Time (1,200 million to 740 million years ago) to a multitude of body and trace fossils from the Paleozoic Era (525 million to 270 million years ago). Visitors will not find dinosaur fossils in the Grand Canyon because the rocks of the canyon are older than the oldest known dinosaurs. Based on archeological evidence, hunter-gatherers passed through the canyon 10,000 or more years ago. The ancestral Puebloan people have lived in and around the Canyon for several thousand years, leaving behind dwellings, garden sites, food storage areas, and artifacts. Modern tribes still consider the Grand Canyon to be their homeland.

Tel: (928) 638-7888

Northwestern Arizona

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK: [Redwall Cavern](#) — Located along the Colorado River in the eastern portion of the Grand Canyon, this massive cavern is accessible by taking a Grand Canyon rafting tour provided by one of the numerous companies that are permitted to operate in the national park. The cavern, which is open to the public because it is not a cave by the National Park Service's definition, appears small from the river. However, upon entering, visitors are greeted by a cavernous amphitheater. John Wesley Powell, known for his exploration of the Grand Canyon in 1869 during the government-sponsored Powell Geographic Expedition, estimated that 50,000 people could fit in Redwall Cavern. Towards the mouth of the cavern, fossils of sea creatures are visible in the walls. Though it is open to the public, camping and building fires is prohibited.

Tel: (928) 638-7888

Mile 33 of the Colorado River, Grand Canyon National Park, AZ 86052

PETRIFIED FOREST NATIONAL PARK: [Petrified Forest National Park](#) offers a program that provides an introduction to paleontology field work. The Fossil Dig program is part of the [Petrified Forest Field Institute](#) offered by the Petrified Forest Museum Association. The one-day excursion includes a behind-the-scenes tour of the park's fossil collections and the chance to go on a fossil dig with the pros. This is a real paleontological dig, not a simulation, and collected specimens become part of the park's museum collection. No petrified wood, artifacts, or any other paleontological finds may be removed from the national park.

Tel: (928) 524-6228 ext 239

1 Park Rd, Petrified Forest National Park, AZ 86028

TUBA CITY: **Moenkopi Dinosaur Tracks** — Located on the Navajo Nation in northeastern Arizona, the tracks were formed on what was once a sandy beach during the Mesozoic Era. The site includes a variety of dinosaur tracks trailing in different directions. The tracks have been verified by paleontologists, and a fossilized dinosaur skeleton was discovered nearby more than 70 years ago.

U.S. Hwy 160, Tuba City, AZ 86045 (At the crossroad of U.S. Hwy 160/Moenave Rd.)

## **Central Arizona:**

MESA: **Arizona Museum of Natural History** is the premier natural history museum in Arizona, boasting more than 60,000 objects of natural history, anthropology, history, and art, as well as 10,000 photographs. The Museum is an official repository for fossil specimens collected from State, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Forest, and Fish and Wildlife lands throughout Arizona. The collection is impressive to view, but for those who want a more hands-on experience, the Museum is home to the **Southwest Paleontology Society**, detailed below.

Tel: (480) 644-2230

53 N Macdonald St, Mesa, AZ 85201

MESA: **Southwest Paleontology Society** is a volunteer organization affiliated with the Arizona Museum of Natural History. Members and their families have a rare opportunity to have a lot of fun, while contributing to scientific research and enhancing their knowledge about the Earth's history for the last 4.5 billion years. Guided by experienced paleontologists, the members actively participate in the process of discovering and collecting delicate fossil specimens and preparing them for museum exhibits and collections. It is open to all adults and children with an interest in paleontology, no degree required.

Tel: (480) 644-4098

53 N Macdonald St Mesa, AZ 85201

SCOTTSDALE: **Pangaea Land of the Dinosaurs** is an indoor interactive exhibit and educational center located at OdySea in the Desert. Complete with more than 50 life-sized, animatronic dinosaurs that roam through exhibits and true-to-life recreations of prehistoric habitats, Pangaea is designed to transport guests back to the age of the dinosaurs. Guests even get to mount dinosaurs and take them for a ride. For those that want to experience the work of a paleontologist, the excavation station lets guests use specialized tools to break through blocks of Earth and uncover hidden dinosaur fossils. Plus, guests can take home the fossils as souvenirs.

Tel: (480) 362-3466

9500 East Vía de Ventura c100, Scottsdale, AZ 85256

## **Southern Arizona:**

SIERRA VISTA: [San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area](#) — Containing about 40 miles of the upper San Pedro River, this site is home to a rare remnant of the desert riparian ecosystem as well as significant archaeological and cultural sites. One of the most popular sites in the area is the [Murray Springs Clovis Site](#). People belonging to what is now called the Clovis Culture first arrived in this area 11,000 years ago and were the earliest known inhabitants of North America. Named after the distinctive and beautifully crafted Clovis spear points they made, they were expert hunters of the large mammals of the last Ice Age. During an excavation, a full mammoth skeleton was found at the site. An interpretive trail leads visitors through the area, where they can find a nine-panel exhibit including displays of two killsites and one campsite.

Tel: (520) 439-6400

N Moson Rd, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION: [Ventana Cave](#) — Miles away from civilization on Tohono O'odham lands, this cave is on the [National Register of Historic Places](#). It was excavated in 1941 by Emil Haury, Juilian Hayden, and Kirk Bryan. They were able to recover the remains of a Pleistocene horse, antelope, and sloth, along with other fossils. Visiting the site requires a permit, issued by [Tohono O'odham tribal authorities](#).

Tel: (520) 383-2028

[contactus@tonation-nsn.gov](mailto:contactus@tonation-nsn.gov)

TUCSON: [Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum](#) is renowned for its extensive taxidermy collection, including 230 native mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and birds including a multi-species hummingbird aviary. In addition, the Museum has an extensive Sonoran Desert region gem, mineral, and fossil collection totaling 14,095 catalogued specimens, some of which are on display at the [Earth Sciences Center](#). The vertebrate paleontology collection contains the first and only significant dinosaur skeleton from Southern Arizona.

Tel: (520) 883-2702

2021 N Kinney Rd, Tucson, AZ 85743