

10 Scenic Small Towns To Retire In Arizona

By Quinter Auma

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Spend your sunset years in these beautiful small towns in the Grand Canyon State.

Summary

Florence: Historic town with stunning scenery, outdoor activities, and an affordable cost of living. Perfect for seniors looking for a peaceful retirement destination.

Green Valley: Picturesque town with a peaceful atmosphere, access to big-city amenities, and an affordable cost of living. Seniors can enjoy year-round sunshine and a tight-knit community.

Nogales: Scenic small town near the U.S.-Mexico border with diverse culture, low cost of living, and plenty of outdoor attractions. Perfect for retirees looking for a peaceful and laid-back lifestyle.

Home to the Grand Canyon, one of the most beautiful destinations in the US, Arizona's breathtaking desert landscapes, waterways, and snow-capped peaks attract tourists from different corners of the world. Its unique scenery has made it a popular spot for retirees looking for a peaceful place to spend their golden years, and while there are plenty of beautiful small towns to retire in the U.S., the Grand Canyon State has a lot of gems that are perfect alternatives. Many of them have more incredible features,

including laid-back vibes, tight-knit communities, safety, and low crime rates, which are perfect for senior living. Here are 10 scenic small towns to retire in Arizona.

10 Florence

Stunning scenery, rugged terrain, outdoor activities
There are plenty of must-visit historic towns in Arizona, and Florence, being among the oldest, will offer a great experience for history buffs. It is also among the most scenic places to retire in the Grand Canyon State. Choosing to retire in Florence offers more than just the big-city amenities but also all things nice about Tucson, as they are only 79 miles apart. The town serves as an incredible retirement destination with multiple outdoor opportunities for seniors, including biking, golfing, and hiking.

Average cost of living:3% lower than the national average
Scenic things to experience in Florence: ATV adventures, Poston Butte Golf Club, and Saturday Farmer's Market
What else makes Florence great for seniors: Affordability, safety, an incredible shopping scene, big city amenities, and small-town charm
Population:28,074

9 Green Valley

Picturesque scenery, peaceful atmosphere, and beautiful weather
Green Valley has an amazing location, located 20 miles from Tucson and 40 miles from the Mexican border, giving seniors access to big-city amenities and an incredible culinary scene. It has become a famous

retirement community thanks to its breathtaking scenery, peaceful atmosphere, and year-round sunshine that allows seniors to enjoy abundant outdoor adventures. Seniors will also enjoy a slower-paced life and a tight-knit community.

Average cost of living:3% lower than the national average
Scenic things to experience in Green Valley: Desert Meadows Park, Green Valley Farmer's Market, and Colossal Cave Mountain Park
What else makes Green Valley great for seniors: Affordability, big-city amenities, laid-back vibe, outdoor adventures, and more
Population:20,729

8 Nogales

Gorgeous scenery, fun activities, plenty of beautiful attractions
Situated along the U.S.-Mexico border, Nogales boasts stunning scenery, a peaceful and laid-back atmosphere, and an incredibly diverse culture that makes it one of the most scenic small towns in Arizona for retirees. It is home to plenty of beautiful attractions, including Patagonia Lake State Park and Nasib Karam Park, which means multiple outdoor adventures to explore. Out of 14,577 adults, 3,687 of them are seniors.

Average cost of living:18.4% lower than the national average
Scenic things to experience in Nogales:Patagonia Lake State Park and Nasib Karam Park
What makes Nogales great for seniors: Peaceful atmosphere, laid-back vibe, diverse culture, low cost of living
Population:19, 643

7 Cottonwood

Beautiful natural scenery, picture-perfect attractions, and outdoor recreation
Cottonwood’s beautiful natural scenery makes it a great option for travelers who want to spend their sunset years in a peaceful and unique atmosphere, away from the hustle and bustle of the big cities. It is situated near the spectacular red rocks and offers plenty of benefits for seniors. It is home to Dead Horse Ranch State Park, one of the state parks in Arizona known for its campsites, and offers plenty of other picture-perfect attractions to explore. Seniors will find plenty of outdoor activities, including fishing, hiking, camping, and more. The town boasts a vibrant arts scene and a rich history.

Average cost of living:3% lower than the national average
Scenic things to experience in Cottonwood: Dead Horse Ranch State Park, Riverfront Park, Page Springs
What makes Cottonwood great for retirees: Peaceful atmosphere, affordability, vibrant arts scene, diverse culture
Population:12,943

6 Paradise Valley

Beautiful landscape, valley views, and a peaceful charm
One of the most expensive places to retire in Arizona, Paradise Valley offers seniors beautiful scenery, a vibrant arts and entertainment scene, and a robust healthcare system, which comes with all kinds of medical practitioners. It is a great choice for people looking to retire in a luxury lifestyle and features high-end shopping and lots of lavish real estate options. It also

comes with warm year-round weather, spectacular landscapes, beautiful views, and a peaceful environment away from the urban chaos.

Average cost of living: 13% higher than the national average
Scenic things to do: Barry Goldwater Park, the Sanctuary Spa, and Camelback Golf Club
What makes Paradise Valley great for retirees: Luxury lifestyle, peaceful environment, robust healthcare system, vibrant arts and entertainment scene, and more
Population: 12,625

5 Camp Verde

Scenic natural beauty, breathtaking mountain vistas, and outdoor adventures
Situated right in the heart of Verde Valley, Camp Verde is one of Arizona’s most beautiful waterfront towns and offers plenty of fun experiences for retirees. Being surrounded by the iconic Prescott National Forest and Bradshaw Mountains, the town is picturesque in every direction, and tourists will enjoy endless mountain vistas. It is an outdoor haven for seniors looking to retire in Arizona, with hiking, off-roading, horseback riding, and jeep tours being some of the best activities to try. There are 9,344 adults in this town, and 2,663 of whom are seniors, which means the retiree community is strong. Camp Verde is also suitable for seniors looking for a very laid-back and peaceful lifestyle.

Average cost of living: 14.1% higher than the national average
Scenic things to experience in Camp Verde: Out of Africa Wildlife Park, Camp Verde

Visitor Center, and Fossil Creek Wilderness

What makes Camp Verde great for retirees: A laid-back vibe, a peaceful atmosphere, and a strong senior community
Population:12,601
Camp Verde is incredibly scenic, but its location only a short distance away from some of the most beautiful cities in Arizona, such as Flagstaff, Payson, and Prescott, makes it even more attractive.

4 Show Slow

Breathtaking scenery, outdoor activities, and mountain vistas
Nestled on the eastern side of Arizona near the New Mexico border, Show Slow offers beautiful natural scenery for retirees, plus plenty of spectacular attractions and multiple outdoor adventures to enjoy. The charming town is found in the iconic White Mountains, which means endless mountain vistas. The city is also loved for its peaceful and laid-back atmosphere, small-town charm, and low cost of living.
Cost of living: 2.1% lower than the national average
Scenic things to experience in Show Slow: Bison Golf Club, Show Slow City Park, and Fool Hollow Lake Recreation Area
What makes Show Slow great for retirees: Laid-back vibe, peaceful atmosphere, small-town charm, and low cost of living
Population:12,056

3 Litchfield Park

Spectacular landscape, mountain vistas, and green spaces
Nestled in the western suburbs of Phoenix, Litchfield Park is

among the most scenic small towns to retire in Arizona. The town boasts golf courses, impressive pathways, and multiple parks, which makes it incredibly livable for seniors. Being surrounded by gorgeous mountain ranges, the town offers endless mountain views and outdoor activities, including biking, hiking, golfing, and more. Other things that make it perfect for retirees include a small-town charm, a vibrant community, and proximity to some of the state's major highways. It also comes with modern amenities and is a great option for seniors looking for a peaceful suburban lifestyle.

Cost of living: 13% higher than the national average
 Scenic things to do: Wildlife World Zoo and Aquarium, Wigwam Golf Resort, and Phoenix Sunrise Hot Air Balloon Ride
 What makes Litchfield Park great for retirees: Peaceful atmosphere, vibrant community, modern amenities
 Population: 7,085

2 Cave Creek

Scenic desert landscapes with mountain views and picture-perfect old-west architecture Cave Creek is increasingly becoming a popular destination for retirement and comes with a lot to offer. Its lush desert landscape boasts breathtaking views, thanks to the surrounding Black Mountain. It boasts architecture from the Old West and many charming streets to stroll through. Seniors will find Cave Creek a perfect alternative to Phoenix, not only because its cost of living is slightly lower but also because it features modern amenities, a unique

small-town charm, and a laid-back vibe.

Cost of living: 13% higher than the national average
 Scenic things to do: **Cave Creek Regional Park**, Wild at Hurt, and Phoenix Hot Air Balloon Ride
 What makes Cave Creek great for retirees: Laid-back vibe, modern amenities, small-town charm
 Population: 5,253

1 Bisbee

Gorgeous scenery, vibrant arts culture, impressive outdoor activities
 One of the unique and strange towns in Arizona to add to a bucket list, Bisbee, is among the most scenic small towns to retire in the U.S. The town is famous for its long, fascinating mining history, and today, seniors interested in traveling back in time can explore the Copper Queen Mine. The lovely small town is a blend of beautiful scenery, fun, and a little bit of weirdness. It is home to multiple parks and numerous outdoor activities, including hiking, camping, golfing, and biking. It has a vibrant arts and cultural scene and a quiet, laid-back vibe that will be perfect for retirees.

Average cost of living: 9% lower than the national average
 Scenic things to experience in Bisbee: Copper Queen Mine, the Mexican Border Road, and Bisbee Muheim Heritage House Museum
 What makes Bisbee great for seniors: Long, beautiful history, small-town charm, laid-back vibe, quiet atmosphere
 Population: 4,905

Edible Plant Hike

Signals
 January 23, 2024



Hike the Scenic Trail with Ranger Derik to learn about the many plants that can be eaten in the desert and about the native peoples that first harvested them.

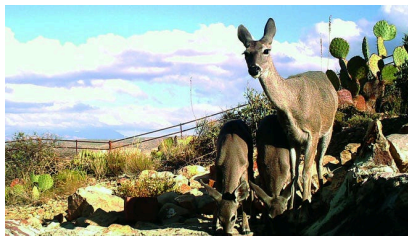
We will hike 4.3 miles out and back of the Scenic Trail starting from the Trailhead Staging Area. The trail is rated as moderate and will have sandy, rocky, and uneven sections so please wear proper footwear and if you need them trekking poles are not a bad idea. Make sure to bring water on the hike as well as a snack. Bathrooms and water are available at the trailhead.

MEETING LOCATION: Trailhead Staging Area, **McDowell Mountain Regional Park**

Limit 20 participants. To register, please email Ranger Derik at derik.rodgers@maricopa.gov with your name, phone number, and number of people attending. If you find you cannot attend a program after you have registered, please email back ASAP so those on the waiting list may be contacted. Registration for this program will close on 2/8/24.

How an aerial count of deer and javelina helps Arizona wildlife officials regulate hunting

Hayleigh Evans
Arizona Republic
January 20, 2024



Before Arizona hunters set out to track big game during hunting season, the Arizona Game and Fish Department surveys how many animals can be hunted while sustaining wild populations.

Department biologists are performing the winter aerial survey of javelina and deer to prepare for the 2024 hunting season. Throughout the year, the agency determines deer, javelina, antelope and bighorn sheep populations to quantify the pool for hunters.

“That’s how we figure out how many tags we can issue because we want the harvest to be sustainable,” said Mark Hart, a public information officer for AZGFD. “We don’t want hunters out there taking so many creatures that it adversely impacts the population overall.”

Here’s what to know about aerial surveys and big game hunting in Arizona.

What are big game aerial surveys?

Every winter, the agency sends teams of biologists in helicopters across the state to count deer and javelina before the hunting season.

The state is divided into geographic areas known as game management units. During the annual survey, helicopters fly over these game areas, counting animals.

AZGFD runs the totals through an algorithm that accounts for overcounts and undercounts. From this data, the department decides how many tags — individual permits to hunt a specific species — to issue in a lottery system to registered hunters who have applied to hunt deer and javelina in each game area.

A similar process occurs for other big game species; the annual antelope count takes place in the summer and the bighorn sheep survey in the fall.

Weather permitting, Hart expects the aerial surveys to finish around Jan. 23.

How does AZGFD manage big game hunting?

AZGFD manages wildlife populations throughout the state. The agency issues hunting licenses and tags, enforces rules to prevent illegal poaching and conserves threatened and endangered species.

“In the absence of a game management agency like ours, we’d be back to the days of hunting things to extinction,” Hart said. “We regulate it to

ensure the amount of game taken in any given year is sustainable and will not adversely impact that population.”



Two javelinas visit the watering hole at Cave Creek Regional Park.

If Arizonans wish to hunt non-big-game species, like coyotes or bobcats, the agency will issue a general hunting license. For big game like deer and javelina, hunters need a license and a tag to hunt a specific species in a game management unit.

The tag must be affixed to the game taken to be legal. Wildlife officers patrol during hunting season and check licenses and tags. A program called Operation Game Thief offers rewards for information leading to arrests in suspected poaching cases.

The agency relies on income from hunting licenses and tags to operate. It is not funded by the state budget, and revenue from hunting and fishing licenses is the agency’s primary funding.

How does big game hunting manage wildlife populations? Wildlife managers say hunting in moderation can help maintain healthy and sustainable animal populations. Big game like elk and deer can overpopulate a habitat, especially if there is a lack of predators.

An overabundance of a species can threaten the ecosystem, other species and food supplies and can increase human-wildlife interactions.

Hart says regulated hunting is an effective way to address overpopulation and is integral to America's history and identity.

"There are parts of the country that are overrun with deer," Hart said. "It's a tool for population management, and it's consistent with what is known as the North American model."

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which dates to the late 1800s, is the idea that wildlife belongs to everyone regardless of socioeconomic standing.

The model protects wildlife from overhunting and extinction, allowing government agencies to manage populations and ensure sustainable and legal hunting.

"This notion that the wildlife belongs to the people is a very American idea. Some people want to watch and take photos, some people want to hunt," Hart said. "Within reasonable limits, people can, in terms of recreation, do what they want to do."

24 Best Camping Destinations for 2024: Campspot

By [Kanchan Nath](#) On Jan 20, 2024

TD Editor

Campspot, the platform redefining the art

of camping and outdoor adventures, will make planning your 2024 camping trips much easier. With 70% of campers saying they crave a sense of calm and relaxation in their trips this year, they're kickstarting your mental refresh with this ready-made list of the top camping destinations for 2024, ranked by popularity as campers shake off the winter chill and look ahead. Return to the outdoors with this camping bucket list in hand.

1. Denver, Colorado

Denver, Colorado, stands out as an exceptional camping destination due to its proximity to an array of diverse outdoor landscapes. Nestled against the Rocky Mountains, campers in Denver have easy access to trails, alpine lakes, and scenic vistas, creating an ideal playground for hikers and nature enthusiasts. Moreover, the city's favorable climate, with over 300 days of sunshine annually, offers a comfortable camping experience year-round.

Where to Camp: Base Camp at Golden Gate Canyon

This campground is just a short hour's drive from the Denver metro area and 20 minutes from Golden Gate Canyon State Park, and it offers an incredible mountain camping experience. Take your pick from the available RV sites, cabins, and tent sites, and access great fishing, hiking, biking trails, and much more during your stay. You'll also be near the Peak to Peak Scenic Byway for breathtaking Colorado views.

2. Oxford, Florida

Nestled within the picturesque landscape of central Florida,

this region boasts numerous lush woodlands or lakeside sites for outdoor enthusiasts to explore. Popular nearby attractions, like the Ocala National Forest and crystal-clear springs, offer campers easy access to memorable and immersive camping experiences.

Where to Camp: The Cove Pub Campground

What used to be a Florida fish camp has evolved into a fan-favorite campground. The Cove Pub Campground offers a waterfront restaurant alongside its premium RV sites, so you can have your fill of hot wings, beverages, and burgers as you enjoy the beautiful landscape.

3. Yellowstone National Park

Yellowstone National Park is truly a peerless camping destination, captivating adventurers annually with its natural wonders. The park is home to various wildlife like bison, wolves, and grizzly bears, and its vast expanse of geothermal features, from the iconic Old Faithful to bubbling hot springs, draws campers year-round.

Where to Camp: Yellowstone Hot Springs

Located just eight miles from the North entrance to Yellowstone National Park, Yellowstone Hot Springs offers a coveted soaking experience as your basecamp for your daily adventures. A 2022 Campspot Awards winner for Top Views, the park is situated between two mountain ranges and on the bank of the Yellowstone River, so you can enjoy total outdoor serenity

while mineral-rich pool waters relax your body and mind.

4. Great Smoky Mountains National Park

One of the best places to camp in 2024, Great Smoky Mountains National Park stands as a premier camping destination with its mist-shrouded peaks and lush valleys. The abundance of hiking trails, waterfalls, and panoramic viewpoints ensures your adventures in the Great Smoky Mountains will be unforgettable.

Where to Camp: Sun Outdoors Pigeon Forge

This resort is a great camping destination for any age. Enjoy the swimming pool area (complete with a lazy river and splash pad), head to the playground or basketball court, or take your furry friend to the fenced-in bark park. You'll be minutes from Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, so you can hit up the likes of Dollywood, Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies, and of course, the majestic Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

5. Orlando, Florida

While known for its theme parks and entertainment, Orlando, Florida, also serves as a surprising oasis for camping enthusiasts. The surrounding landscapes offer a mix of lakes, lush forests, and serene trails, providing an ideal setting for camping, hiking, and wildlife exploration.

Where to Camp: Central Park

Central Park offers over 350 sites for your RV or pet-friendly cottage stay. Enjoy the heated pool, a few games of shuffleboard or pickleball,

horseshoes with the kids, and more. This campground is just a short drive from Orlando and Tampa, and it's also a great basecamp to visit LEGOLAND®, Walt Disney World®, or surrounding golf courses and shopping centers.

6. Arches National Park

Arches National Park in Utah continues to be one of the best places to camp in 2024, drawing visitors worldwide with its iconic red rock formations. Visitors can experience the magic of the desert landscape among the red-hued arches and towering sandstone fins, and the clear desert skies also make for exceptional stargazing.

Where to Camp: Sun Outdoors Arches Gateway

A 2023 Campspot Awards winner in the category Best Campgrounds for Spontaneous Campers, Sun Outdoors Arches Gateway is practically at the doorstep of Arches National Park. Take your pick among the varied lodging options, whether you want RV hookups, a tent site, cabin rental, or even a vintage Airstream trailer. Enjoy majestic views while soaking in your hot tub after a day of climbing and touring.

7. Tampa, Florida

Tampa, Florida, remains as one of the best places to camp thanks to its numerous beaches, state parks, and lakes—not to mention its year-round mild and sunny climate. Campers will also be close to natural attractions like the Florida Everglades and the Hillsborough River State Park.

Where to Camp: Keylime Bay RV Resort

This luxury RV resort is conveniently located across the street from Upper Tampa Bay Park. Enjoy the beautiful property and its "nature park" vibes, and take advantage of the full suite of amenities, including a poolside gym, laundry, personal showers, dog park, fishing dock, and a tremendous lodge.

8. Acadia National Park

Acadia National Park in Maine is one of the best places to camp because of its stunning ocean views, rocky cliffs, and pristine forests. Explore its intricate network of hiking and biking trails, and enjoy sunrise or sunset atop Cadillac Mountain. Acadia National Park offers an enchanting camping experience with a unique blend of coastal charm and mountainous terrain.

Where to Camp: Pleasant Hill Campground

Just off Interstate 95, Pleasant Hill Campground is the perfect place to stop whether you're roadtripping across the country or simply looking for a peaceful place to stay. In addition to easy day-trip access to Acadia National Park, Moosehead Lake, Bango City Forest, and other popular Maine spots, the surrounding area offers many hiking, biking, fishing, and boating opportunities when you want to venture offsite.

9. St. Augustine, Florida

St. Augustine, Florida, is a camping destination that also allows visitors to enjoy not only pristine beaches and salt marshes, but also the rich cultural heritage of the nation's oldest city. Explore historic sites such as the Castillo de San Marcos and the charming

streets of the historic district. Don't miss Anastasia State Park while you're in town.

Where to Camp: Ocean Grove RV Resort

Located just blocks away from St. Augustine Beach and five miles from the St. Augustine historic district and St. George Street, Ocean Grove RV Resort is a destination camping resort where you can experience the best of the city. Whether you're looking for a premium RV site or vacation rental, this campground has something to suit all preferences—including year-round family activities, on-site restaurant and bar, bocce ball, fishing, swimming, and more. Shops, grocery stores, hiking, and other entertainment venues are also conveniently nearby.

10. Phoenix, Arizona

Phoenix is one of the best places to camp for those seeking a range of settings from saguaro-studded expanses to mountainous terrain. Visitors can explore the nearby Tonto National Forest and Sonoran Desert, while also enjoying outdoor activities like hiking, rock climbing, and stargazing.

Where to Camp: Sundial

Just a half-hour drive from Phoenix, Sundial RV Park provides spacious RV sites, modern facilities, and a host of amenities to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable stay. Explore the area's numerous hiking trails and local cultural events while enjoying the Arizona sun.

11. Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Nestled in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains, Gatlinburg

offers a gateway to one of the most biodiverse national parks in the country. Visit the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, witness cascading waterfalls, and immerse yourself in the vibrant flora and fauna. The town itself offers a charming atmosphere, with rustic cabins, local shops, and authentic Southern hospitality.

Where to Camp: Greenbrier Campground

After white water rafting in the Smokies or shopping in downtown Gatlinburg, take respite at this campground located less than half a mile from the Greenbrier entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Guests can choose from 120 full hookup campsites ranging from premier riverfront views to wooded canopies. Lounge on the Little Pigeon River bank, go trout fishing, or take a dip in the renowned Flint Rock swimming hole.

12. Key West, Florida

While Key West, Florida, is renowned for its vibrant culture and lively atmosphere, it also offers a unique camping experience, especially for those looking for a tropical environment. The island's campgrounds, surrounded by swaying palms and turquoise waters, provide a serene escape just moments away from the lively Duval Street. Wake up to the gentle sound of ocean waves, explore sandy beaches, and indulge in water activities like snorkeling or kayaking.

Where to Camp: Sun Outdoors Sugarloaf Key

This luxury campground features a seven-acre saltwater

lake, making it a perfect basecamp for both outdoor adventures and on-site lounging. When you're not visiting the nearby state parks or mangroves, hit up the tiki bar, head down the lakefront boardwalk, or go paddleboarding on the lake—there are so many ways to kick back and relax at this park.

13. San Diego, California

San Diego's mild climate and numerous campgrounds along the coastline provide campers with a perfect setting to enjoy the sun, sea, and surf. From the scenic bluffs of Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve to the beachside setting of Carlsbad, San Diego offers a range of camping experiences for all preferences. With a plethora of outdoor activities, including hiking, water sports, and wildlife observation, camping in San Diego gives you access to the rich natural beauty and recreational opportunities that define Southern California.

Where to Camp: Paradise by the Sea Beach RV Resort

If you want to be minutes away from the beach with resort-style amenities, look no further. This RV resort in Oceanside places you in the heart of San Diego's North Shore community, giving you easy access to great surfing, beach cafes, playgrounds, and more. Venture around the coastal towns of Oceanside, Carlsbad, Encinitas, and Camp Pendleton, or visit famous attractions like the San Diego Zoo & Safari Park or LEGOLAND California.

14. Savannah, Georgia

Savannah offers serene camping retreats in outdoor

destinations like Skidaway Island State Park, replete with nature trails—while the city's cobblestone streets and antebellum architecture offers a unique sense of cultural history.

Where to Camp: Jekyll Island Campground

Whether you're looking for full hookups or a tent site, Jekyll Island Campground provides a gorgeous stay among tall oak trees draped in Spanish moss. Guests can explore Clam Creek and Driftwood Beach as well as enjoy amenities like bike rentals, a bird sanctuary, general store, and on-site laundry.

15. Sarasota, Florida

Sarasota is a fantastic camping destination for those looking to explore Siesta Key Beach with its powdery white sand, lush nature preserves like the Myakka River State Park, or the region's many opportunities for wildlife observation and hiking. The Ringling Museum of Art is also a noteworthy stop on the itinerary.

Where to Camp: Buttonwood Inlet RV Resort

Whether you're seeking an overnight RV stay or a longer-term home as a snowbird, this pet-friendly RV resort is the perfect place to set up shop. The campground is just a short drive from Anna Maria Island, and you can walk over to the fishing charters, dinner cruises, and boat rentals. Visitors can also hop on the free trolley that takes guests around the island.

16. Miami, Florida

Miami, Florida, surprises many as a great place to camp, offering a unique blend of urban vibrancy and natural beauty. The

city's proximity to the Everglades National Park provides a remarkable camping experience amidst the subtropical wilderness. Campers can explore the park's vast mangroves, sawgrass prairies, and abundant wildlife during the day, and then return to the city's lively culture in the evening.

Where to Camp: Sun Outdoors Key Largo

This campground offers a variety of accommodations for every traveler, whether you're bringing your RV, seeking a room in a duplex, or looking for a vacation cottage. The campground boasts a boat launch, docks, and a small, private beach where guests can partake in water sports like snorkeling and swimming.

17. Daytona Beach, Florida

Daytona Beach serves as a sun-soaked camping destination along the Atlantic coast. Miles of sandy shores offers opportunities for water sports, beachcombing, and relaxation. Additionally, the city's vibrant atmosphere, highlighted by the iconic Daytona International Speedway and lively boardwalk, adds a unique flair to the camping experience.

Where to Camp: Indian Mound Fish Camp

Water lovers and anglers will find their home at Indian Mound Fish Camp, which offers a boat launch, boat slips, bait, tackle, snacks, and fishing guides. If you're itching for another activity, rent a kayak and head down the Indian River. This park is just a drive from Orlando and Daytona Beach, as well as

Disneyland, Universal Studios, and SeaWorld.

18. Austin, Texas

Campers in Austin can enjoy the city's live music scene, eclectic food options, and cultural attractions alongside its many outdoor attractions, including riverside sites along the Colorado River and the serene landscapes of McKinney Falls State Park. With the opportunity for hiking, rock climbing, and water activities in the nearby lakes, Austin's camping perfectly balances urban excitement and outdoor adventure in the heart of Texas.

Where to Camp: Oak Forest RV Resort

Just 10 minutes from downtown Austin, Oak Forest offers comfortable accommodations for motorhomes, 5th-wheel RVs, and travel trailers. Partake in water sports at nearby Lake Walter Long, explore the many gardens at Zilker Botanical Garden, or kick back on-site at the resort-style pool after a game of ping pong.

19. Pretty Prairie, Kansas

This charming town provides a serene camping destination with vast fields of wildflowers and open skies. The local campgrounds offer a peaceful retreat, allowing campers to unwind and appreciate the simplicity of nature while accessing unique Kansas landscapes.

Where to Camp: Anthony Lake Campground

The highlight of Anthony Lake Campground is the 153-acre lake where you can enjoy boating, fishing, and nearby

hiking trails. RV and tent campers can enjoy the sand volleyball courts, swimming area, horseshoe pits, and restrooms and showers. The Gun Club and Southern Kansas Bow Hunter Club Range and facilities are popular stops, while a nine-hole golf course overlooking the lake and dam challenges golfers throughout the year.

20. Jacksonville, Florida

Campers in Jacksonville can explore the expansive Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, or enjoy the miles of hiking trails and water activities in the St. Johns River. The riverfront parks and nearby state forests makes Jacksonville a continued favorite among camping destinations.

Where to Camp: Pecan Park

Named one of the 10 Best Campgrounds in America by the 2023 Campspot Awards, this award-winning campground provides something for everyone. From casting a line at the fishing lake, taking a dip in one of the two pool areas, or breaking a sweat at the basketball, tennis, pickleball, and bocce ball courts, the activities are endless for the whole crew. The park is ideally located by the Jacksonville International Airport, Museum of Science and History, Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, Little Talbot Island State Park, and other attractions.

21. Johannesburg, Michigan

Campers in Johannesburg can explore the diverse ecosystems of Northern Michigan, fish on nearby lakes, or embark on scenic hikes along the extensive

trail networks. Whether you're tent camping or glamping, the beauty of Michigan's woodlands and waters will make you wonder why you haven't camped here sooner.

Where to Camp: Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park™ Camp-Resort: Petoskey

Find your Northern Michigan camping destination at Jellystone Park™ Petoskey. Whether you want to tent camp, bring the RV, or stay in one of the many cozy cabin rentals, you can set up camp and then enjoy the 30 acres of beautifully manicured grounds. The campground is also just a seven-minute drive from Gabriel Farms & Winery if you want to enjoy a glass of wine, beer, or cider.

22. Mesa, Arizona

Mesa, Arizona, stands out as an excellent camping destination with its proximity to Mountain Regional Park and Tonto National Forest. The area's warm and dry climate, along with stunning desert vistas, creates an ideal Sonoran Desert backdrop for outdoor activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and stargazing.

Where to Camp: Mesa Sunset RV Resort

This luxury RV resort boasts newly paved roads, upgraded restrooms and facilities, and larger lot sizes, so you can be comfortable whether you're staying for a night or a year. Modern amenities include a pool, spa, clubhouse, and pickleball. **Usery Mountain Regional Park** is just six miles away when you're ready to hike and take in the stunning Superstition Mountains.

23. Goldston, North Carolina

Campers in Goldston can explore Jordan Lake State Recreation Area and other natural reserves for hiking, fishing, and birdwatching. The small-town charm of Goldston adds to the camping experience of enjoying all that North Carolina's countryside has to offer.

Where to Camp: Oak Hollow Campground

Open year-round, Oak Hollow Campground is nestled within the 1,550-acre Oak Hollow Park. There are 107 RV sites with full hook-ups and 13 tent platforms, and many sites are a skip away from the Oak Hollow Lake shores.

24. Pinnacles National Park

Pinnacles National Park offers campers rugged landscapes, unique rock formations, and towering cliffs in the heart of central California's wilderness. Campers can explore the network of trails, dramatic rock spires, and the park's famous talus caves. With its dark skies, Pinnacles National Park also offers an excellent opportunity for stargazing.

Scorpion Bay hiring for the 2024 season

By Peoria Times Staff
Jan 20, 2024



Scorpion Bay Marina and Scorpion Bay Grill are hiring for the 2024 season.

Positions range from two marina maintenance positions to dockhands. There are multiple positions open at the grill, including cooks, runners, hostesses, store associates, bussers, dishwashers, servers and prep cooks.

Individuals 18 and older may apply to support the marina and the grill as Scorpion Bay enters its busiest season this spring and summer.

Returning patrons and new guests continue to seek out the calm and beauty of the lake, and seasonal attendance surges mean Scorpion Bay needs to expand its team. Marina maintenance crew members will assist with keeping the marina running smoothly and safely.

“Working at Scorpion Bay is the best of both worlds,” said Lynn Lovelady, marina manager.

“Working in such beautiful surroundings and with customers who are here to have fun, it doesn’t get much better. We’re excited to bring on new hard-working team members to help our guests have a safe and enjoyable visit.

Full- and part-time and seasonal positions are immediately available. Full benefits are available for full-time employees.

“We offer a daily lake view; a free meal; access to boat rentals; and for full-time employees a 401k, PTO plus health, dental, life and vision

benefits,” said Matt Osterman, Scorpion Bay Grill’s food and beverage director.

“While our starting pay ranges depending on position, each is very competitive, and we offer double pay on holidays.”

Email marina maintenance resumes to info@scorpionbayaz.com (18 and older). Email restaurant resumes to mosterman@troon.com (18 and older preferred, but may hire 16- or 17-year-olds)

Located 45 minutes from Downtown Phoenix in Peoria on Lake Pleasant, Scorpion Bay offers hundreds of covered and uncovered wet slips and world-class food at Scorpion Bay Grill.

It also features boat rentals, including pontoons, fishing boats, ski-boats, kayaks and other water toys.

As part of **Lake Pleasant Regional Park**, visitors can venture out for hiking, picnicking and wildlife viewing in the area.

Parking is easily accessible, and the no-cost electric tram will take guests and their gear from the parking lot to the dock in minutes. Scorpion Bay is managed by Desert Troon Companies www.desert-troon.com.

[Call 928-501-3441 for more info.](tel:928-501-3441)

What’s Up in Ultra This Weekend — January 20

[Amy Clark](#) 01/18/2024
Ultrarunning.com

Winter temperatures are keeping many indoors right now, but our UltraRunning Calendar includes races that’ll bring runners back to the start line. The Coldwater Rumble kicks off Saturday in Arizona, along with the Dark Anchor in Georgia, Lake of the Woods 50k in Ohio and the Calico Trail Run in California.

The Coldwater Rumble takes place at **Estrella Mountain Regional Park** in Goodyear, Arizona, starting on Saturday, with ultra distances of 100 miles, 100k and 60k. Desert trails wind through the rugged Sierra Estrella mountain range. Runners in the 100-mile and 100k events will have 32 hours to finish, and winter weather typically includes highs in the 60s and lows in the 40s. Registration is closed.

In Georgia, the Dark Anchor is a no DNF event. In its third year, runners have 34 hours to keep pace on a 3.5-mile, flat loop in Savannah. The start/finish includes aid station headquarters, with lunch and dinner provided. The race begins at 6 a.m. on Friday, January 19 at Wormsloe State Park, and Yeti Trail Runners provides custom medals for all runners and custom buckles for all 100-mile runners. Registration is closed.

Lake of the Woods 50k begins on Saturday in Farmersville, Ohio at Lake of the Woods Camp Grounds. The course loops through the woods and around the lake for 5k, and runners will complete 10 loops. To ensure runners stay warm, the race includes a bonfire, warm-up room and outdoor

shelter that will include the aid station. There are 14 spots left and you can sign up here.

The 20th Calico Trail Run in Barstow, California, is a 50k on Sunday, January 21. Calico Ghost Town is a historic silver mining town 10 miles north of Barstow, and the course consists of runnable dirt roads and trails, and views of the Calico Mountains. Registration closes Friday.

10 Charming Small Towns Near Phoenix, Arizona

By [Neha Bhatiya](#)

Published Jan 19, 2024

Discover charming small towns near Phoenix, Arizona, for an exciting getaway with loved ones.

Summary

Oracle: Explore the desert town with beautiful hiking trails and a colorful history.

Jerome: Discover the ghost town with stunning artwork and a love for wine.

Cornville: Indulge in wine and art in this scenic town with a playful spirit.

Arizona is the heart and soul of the American Southwest, beating wild and free! It caters to many vacationers, offering opportunities for outdoor adventure, relaxation, historical revelations, and cultural experiences. Truth be told, Arizona dances between extremes. From stunning man-made structures like Hoover Dam and Chapel of the Holy Cross to the natural beauty of Sedona Rock formations and

Havasu Falls, there are many attractions that entice holidaymakers to explore the magic of The Grand Canyon State.

In this post, we've highlighted some charming towns near Phoenix in Arizona that could be ideal places for a relaxed, laid-back exploration. So, dust off your boots and gear up for some desert delights - let's dive in!

10 Oracle

116 miles from Phoenix
Located in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains, Oracle is a desert town at an elevation of 4,500 feet that has earned its nickname – Sky Island. Hike beautiful trails of oak forests filled with rock outcroppings.

Once a stagecoach stopping point, Oracle's roots stretch back to the 1800s. Peek at the town's history at the Acadia Ranch Museum and learn about its colorful past. When here, enjoy stargazing under the Milky Way at night and head to explore the Arizona landscape the next day.

Population:3,051

Driving time: 1 hour, 58 minutes

Top Attractions:Biosphere 2, Oracle State Park, Oracle Historical Society Museum, Oracle Farmers and Artisans Market, and Oracle Art Walk

9 Jerome

112 miles from Phoenix
Nestled amidst Arizona mountains, Jerome is one of the best historic downtowns in the state. It basks in the ghost town glory with an exciting twist, stunning artwork, and culinary

delights. Once a bustling copper mining town, Jerome echoes with the tales of hardworking miners and daring gamblers. Walk past the abandoned storefronts, mines, and old buildings to learn why it is called "The Wickedest Town in the West." Hop on a guided ghost tour and catch a glimpse of paranormal activities.

Though Jerome wears the mantle of the ghost town, it is also famed for its love of wine. Don't forget to sip world-class wines at vineyards across the Verde Valley while enjoying scenic landscapes.

Population Density: 464

Driving time: 2 hours

Top Attractions: Jerome State Historic Park, Jerome Artists' Cooperative Gallery, Sliding Jail, Guided Ghost Tours, and Verde Canyon Road

8 Cornville

105 miles from Phoenix
Nestled amidst the breathtaking scenery of Arizona, Cornville is a haven for wine aficionados with 30 wineries. Begin the journey with a delicious crisp chardonnay or zinfandel pour and bask in the artsy atmosphere, showcasing local artwork and unique crafts.

Step back in time while walking past the sun-baked walls and dusty streets, or visit the historic John McCain Cabin. Find the new, unusual side of Cornville at Eliphante, a hand-built sculptured village that cheers visitors with a playful spirit.

Population:3,362

Driving time: 1 hour, 39 minutes

Top Attractions: Slide Rock State Park, Oak Creek Canyon,

Verde Valley Wine Trail, Montezuma Castle National Monument, and Ghost Town Trail.

7 Wickenburg

65 miles from Phoenix
Nestled amidst the Sonoran Desert, Wickenburg is one of Arizona's unique and strange towns to add to the bucket list. It is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts and full of historical treasures. It is famed as the Dude Capital of the World, home to historic ranches like Kay El Bar and Flying E Dude Ranch. One can attend annual events like the Gold Rush Day Rodeo to channel their inner cowboy and test their roping skills. When here, explore vulture mines, hike the scenic Hassayampa River Preserve Trail, and head out to view the diverse landscapes of Arizona.

Population: 7,474
Driving time: 1 hour 6 minutes
Top Attractions: Desert Caballeros Western Museum, Vulture City Ghost Town, **Hassayampa River Preserve**, Wickenburg Ranch Golf and Social Club, and Frontier Street

6 Superior

64 miles from Phoenix
Famed as the Copper Capital of Arizona, Superior echoes its mining history. It is one of the state's least crowded and oldest towns. Walk past the old buildings, abandoned mines, and the captivating Bob Jones Museum to learn about the storied past.

Hilke the stunning Queen Creek trail or enjoy the panoramic views of the majestic Queen Creek Canyon. When here, hop on a guided tour and see ghost

town trails reminiscing about the mining past. Don't forget to visit the world's smallest museum – Pinal County Historical Society Museum, near the town, and discover unique artifacts.

Population: 2,407
Driving time: 1 hour, 5 minutes
Top Attractions: Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Picketpost Mountain, Historic Downtown Superior, Queen Creek Canyon, and Pinal City Ruins

5 Queen Valley

55 miles from Phoenix
A cave entrance, Superstition Mountains, AZ
Queen Valley is a hiking haven calling for all outdoor enthusiasts to explore the natural beauty of the Superstition Mountains. All anglers can show their talent by casting a line for redfish or trout in the sparkling waters. Be sure to visit the Shell Mound State Park and grab a delicious bite at the unique Ranch House Grill, a local favorite.

Witness the Victorian-era charm when walking past the old cattle trails, quaint wooden cabins, and historic buildings. Get acquainted with the ranching heritage and cowboy way of life. Know the early settlers, homesteading, and old fishing techniques at Steinhatchee Historical Museum.

Population Density: 967
Driving time: 1 hour, 3 minutes
Top Attractions: Hole-in-the-Rock, Peralta Canyon, Goldfish Ghost Town, and Queen Creek Olive Mill

4 Wittmann

47 miles from Phoenix
Wittman, the Ostrich Capital of Arizona
Welcome to the Ostrich Capital of Arizona - yes, you read it right!
Wittman houses the largest ostrich farm in Arizona, offering opportunities for wild encounters with the birds. Be sure to conquer the scenic Sunset or Rainbow Trail and discover stunning desert flora, fauna, and majestic views of nature.

The town is a haven for history buffs, showcasing artifacts from railroading to the ranching past at the Wittman Historical Society Museum. Nearby ghost towns like Aguila and Vulture City speak of the mining communities, spooky atmosphere, and storied past of the Wild West. When here, don't miss the opportunity to adore the inky sky filled with stars while enjoying the stunning view of the Milky Way.
Population: 684
Driving time: 48 minutes
Top Attractions: Wittmann Historical Society Museum, Justice Brothers U-Pick, and Agua Fria River

3 Carefree

35 miles from Phoenix
Located in the heart of the Sonoran Desert, Carefree is one of the scenic towns in Arizona. It offers a unique blend of laid-back charm, desert delights, and outdoor adventure. The town embraces its name, Carefree Sundial, an iconic 90-foot Sundial plaza that reminds us of the slow pace of life. Hike or bike the cacti forest filled with beautiful desert flora. When here, test your skills at

unique Rattlesnake Roundup and Cowboy Roundup Days or tee off on world-class golf courses.

Population:3,690

Driving time: 45 minutes

Top Attractions: Carefree Desert Gardens, Black Mountain Ranch & Golf Club, and Sundial Trail

2 Cave Creek

32 miles from Phoenix

Located in the foothills of the Sonoran Desert, Cave Creek has been captivating people with its diverse offerings. It offers a scenic trip just 30 minutes away from Phoenix. Plan a getaway here to experience authentic cowboy living, calling outdoor enthusiasts for horseback adventures.

Walk down the network of trails at the **Cave Creek Regional Park** and McDowell Mountain Ranch and adore the desert flora. Foodies on the mission can try the local favorite prickly pear margarita, and don't forget to tap into the tunes of country twangs to bluesy tunes at a live music event.

Population:4,892

Driving time: 41 minutes

Top Attractions: **Cave Creek Regional Park**, Frontier Town, **Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area** and Cave Creek Museum

1 Litchfield Park

21 miles from Phoenix

Litchfield, a desert luxury, is your ideal Arizona base camp. Experience Hollywood glam at the Wigwam Resort and explore the outdoor paradise on White Tank Mountain's trails. Uncover cotton farming history at the Litchfield Historical Museum,

which is filled with vintage equipment stories. Don't miss Art in the Park—immerse yourself in local talent, buy unique keepsakes, and cherish the essence of this charming town.

Population:6,847

Driving time: 29 minutes

Top Attractions: **White Tank Mountain Regional Park**, Litchfield Historical Museum & Park, The Wigwam Golf Course

The Most Unique Hiking Trails Within One Hour of Phoenix

Respectmyregion.com

January 19, 2024

Phoenix, surrounded by the rugged beauty of the Sonoran Desert, offers outdoor enthusiasts a playground of [unique hiking opportunities](#).

Although Camelback Mountain and Piestewa Peak trails are well-known in the city, there are hidden gems within an hour's drive that offer unique landscapes, breathtaking vistas, and a departure from the ordinary.

Hieroglyphic Trail in the Superstition Mountains

The Hieroglyphic Trail offers a captivating [journey](#) through the otherworldly terrain of the Superstition Mountains. Also, the ancient petroglyphs are a popular quality of the trail. These etchings carved into the rocks by Indigenous peoples add a cultural and historical dimension to the hike.

Hikers encounter a series of rocks adorned with figures that tell stories of people who once called this desert home. The contrast of the petroglyphs against the backdrop of the desert and rugged mountains creates a surreal and awe-inspiring atmosphere.

The route offers panoramic views of the wilderness and the Valley of the Sun, providing a scenic reward.

Wind Cave Trail in Userly Mountain Regional Park's Userly Mountain Regional Park's

just east of Phoenix, and the Wind Cave Trail is a highlight within this desert park. The [trail](#) takes hikers on a moderate ascent through the mountains to a natural cave formation known as Wind Cave.

Wind Cave is a natural alcove created by erosion, and its distinctive shape and location make it a captivating destination. Hikers encounter rewarding views of the surrounding landscape from the cave, providing an ideal spot for a peaceful pause.

Userly Mountain Regional Park is home to diverse desert flora and fauna. Also, the trail offers an opportunity to observe the unique plants and wildlife adapted to the arid environment.

Wave Cave Trail in the Superstition Mountains The Wave Cave Trail's a moderate hike in the Superstition Wilderness leading to [a distinctive rock formation](#) resembling a wave. Located in the heart of the Superstition Mountains, the trail provides a

blend of desert scenery and geological wonders.

The cave's natural rock formation comes with a concave shape, creating a sheltered space that hikers can enter. The surrounding views of the rugged mountains and vast desert add to the allure of this unique geological feature.

The Wave Cave has become a canvas for hikers who leave behind colorful paintings, drawings, and messages on the rocks. This special feature creates an ever-evolving display of trail art.

Tom's Thumb Trail in McDowell Sonoran Preserve

Situated in McDowell Sonoran Preserve, this jaunt is challenging yet rewarding, leading to the prominent granite rock formation, Tom's Thumb. The [excursion](#) offers a mix of Sonoran Desert landscapes, including cacti, diverse flora, and expansive views of the McDowell Mountains.

Tom's Thumb is a towering granite spire that stands as a landmark in the preserve, visible from various vantage points. The exposed rock face and unique geological features make Tom's Thumb a distinctive destination for a more adventurous experience.

Tom's Thumb attracts rock climbers looking for technical challenges. The granite formation provides opportunities for climbing, adding an adventurous element to the hike.

Peralta Trail to Fremont Saddle in the Superstition Mountains

The Peralta Trail to Fremont Saddle is a popular hike in the Superstition Wilderness that offers breathtaking views of Weaver's Needle and the surrounding landscape. The [stroll](#) takes hikers through diverse desert terrain, showcasing the beauty of the Superstition Mountains.

Fremont Saddle serves as a natural amphitheater with expansive views of Weaver's Needle, a striking rock formation that stands prominently against the desert backdrop. The changing colors of the landscape during sunrise or sunset create a magical atmosphere, making it an ideal spot for photography enthusiasts.

The course has historical significance, as it is believed to follow a route used by miners and prospectors during Arizona's mining boom in the late 19th century.

Shaw Butte Trail in North Mountain Preserve

In North Mountain Preserve, the Shaw Butte Trail leads to the summit, providing sweeping views of Phoenix and surrounding mountains. The [path](#) is easily accessible from the city, offering a convenient option for a nature escape.

The famous full-scale panorama includes the downtown Phoenix skyline, Camelback Mountain, and the distant mountains stretching across the horizon. The juxtaposition of urban sprawl and pristine desert landscapes makes this trail a unique experience within the city limits.

During the spring months, Shaw Butte Trail becomes adorned with vibrant wildflowers, adding bursts of color to the desert landscape and enhancing the overall hiking experience.

Tips for Exploring Unique Phoenix Hiking
Bring Ample Water:

The desert climate can be harsh, especially during the warmer months. Ensure you have an ample supply of water to stay hydrated during your hike.

Check Trail Conditions:

Desert trails may be affected by weather conditions, so it's advisable to check trail conditions before embarking on your hike. Some trails may be temporarily closed for maintenance.

Wear Sun Protection:

Protect yourself from the intense Arizona sun by wearing sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses. Long sleeves and pants can also help shield your skin from the sun.

Respect Leave No Trace Principles:

Practice Leave No Trace principles by staying on designated trails, packing out your trash, and respecting the natural environment. Preserve the beauty of these unique landscapes for future generations.

Hike Safely and Within Your Abilities:

Choose hikes that match your fitness level and experience. Be aware of your surroundings, follow trail markers, and let someone know your Phoenix hiking plans, especially if you're

venturing into more remote areas. Phoenix's natural beauty extends beyond known hiking trails, offering a wealth of experiences within a short drive from the city. Whether you're drawn to ancient petroglyphs, mesmerizing rock formations, or panoramic desert views, Phoenix hiking provides a tapestry of landscapes.

As you venture into the desert wilderness, let the unique features of each trail unfold before you, revealing hidden treasures that make this region a captivating destination for outdoor buffs. Embark on these hikes, connect with nature, and discover the extraordinary beauty that lies just beyond the city's bustling streets.

Verdes volunteers help prevent wildfire

Annual border clearing underway
Fountain Hills Times
January 17, 2024



Verdes residents continue efforts to prevent fires. (Independent Newsmedia file photo)

Cool January weather is the best time to clean up desert vegetation surrounding the Verde Communities with an eye

toward the hot summer and increased fire danger.

The good news for this year's volunteer crew is that the summer was dry, so the vegetation has not grown as much as in some previous years. The bad news is the increased fire risk and many plants have died, so the dead vegetation needs to be cleared from the community borders to help reduce the risk of wildfire. Border clearing began earlier this month with volunteers working Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday starting around 7:30 a.m. and working a few hours each day.

Crews began the cleanup at the Verde Trailhead into **McDowell Mountain Regional Park** off Palo Fiero Drive and are working south toward McDowell Mountain Road along the western Rio Verde border. Those interested in helping with the project can contact volunteer coordinator, Diane Newcomb at dnewcomb1957@cox.net or 856-498-4160 to be included in the volunteer emails, where information on start times and locations is provided. Volunteers participating should be aware that gloves, loppers and shovels are in high demand, and they should bring their own if they have them.

Conservancy events in full swing for Fountain Hills

Activities through January
Fountain Hills Times
January 11, 2024



The Sonoran Conservancy of Fountain Hills has an offering for those who enjoy the easy pace hikes at sunrise.

Those participating will head out on the Ridgeline Loop Wednesday, Jan. 17, beginning at the Adero Canyon Trailhead at 7:30 a.m.

Cathy Pepperd will again lead the sunrise hike. The hike starts at the Overlook Trail and follows the Ridgeline Trail to the Scenic View for a 3.3-mile out and back hike. Bring two liters of water and snacks. Wear sturdy boots. Hiking poles recommended. No dogs please. Register for Course #2434.

The Dixie Mine is the destination for a hike Wednesday, Jan. 24. Steve Ehrlich and Nancy Whitton lead this moderate 5.2-mile round trip hike to a historic mine in the **McDowell Mountain Regional Park**. Only trace amounts of valuable minerals were ever found. This hike requires a \$2 park entry fee. Bring two liters of water and snacks. Wear sturdy boots. Hiking poles recommended. No dogs. The hike departs from the Golden Eagle Trailhead at 8 a.m. Register for Course #2435.

Tuesday, Jan. 30, is the opportunity to enjoy moonless stargazing from the trail. Vicky

Derksen of Night Sky Tourist and the FH Dark Sky Association will lead the group along with Janice Holden of SCFH on this moonless evening to observe the night skies with less moonlight interference. See a planet or two and locate and identify constellations and their stars while Vicky recounts some myths and stories held by ancient cultures. After the hike the Star Dudes will point their telescopes at deep space objects that can't be seen with the naked eye.

Bring preregistered children over eight years, wear comfortable clothing, close-toed shoes, bring water, hiking poles if needed, and a red flashlight to protect everyone's night vision. Be prepared to hike approximately two miles. No pets, please.

Derksen is the host of the Night Sky Tourist podcast, President of the Fountain Hills Dark Sky Association and serves on the board of the International Dark Sky Discovery Center. Find her online at nightskytourist.com. Meet at the Adero Canyon Trailhead at 7 p.m. Register for Course #2436. The program "What's in my Pack" will be hosted at the Adero Canyon Trailhead Wednesday, Jan. 31, at 1 p.m. Also, there will be an introduction to the AED equipment at the trailhead.

Whether new to hiking or have had the same contents in a backpack for years, it's time to refresh. In addition to an overview of desert safety, this class includes an introduction to CPR and using an AED. This information can be lifesaving in

the desert, at home and in public spaces. A link to a 20-minute video on the SCFH YouTube channel with basic first aid practices for hiking in the preserve will be made available. Presenters will be two professionals who have been managing first aid and saving lives in the Sonoran Desert - Yvonne Massman, Natural Resources Coordinator, McDowell Sonoran Preserve and Lori Stauffer, Public Information Officer, Community Relations, Scottsdale Fire Department. Register for Course #2531.

This Week In Running: January 8, 2024

This Week in Running's trail and ultra recap for January 8, 2024. By [Justin Mock](#) on January 8, 2024
[Irunfar.com](https://irunfar.com)

It's our second Monday of 2024, and there were no big races this weekend, but we're running down top scores and scorpions from California to Mississippi.

We've got a short look at next weekend's HURT 100 Mile in Hawai'i too.

Races and Runs

Bob Graham Round – Lake District, England, United Kingdom

It happened again, another new men's fastest known time on the 66-mile, 42-peak fell running route. This time Finlay Wild (U.K.) completed a solo and unsupported winter round in 15:35. It was the fastest winter

round ever, made more challenging by the fact that he started at 4 p.m. and ran from dusk to dawn.

Avalon Benefit – Avalon, California
Believe it or not, Catalina Island's where the bison roam. A small herd of bison are on the island off the coast of southern California, and 50-mile and 50k runners might've seen them on the island traverse. The race marked its 43rd year. Haley Hasty won the 50-mile race in 7:33 alongside men's leader Michael Ruf in 6:30, and Laura Beresford and Sam Condon won the 50k in 4:24 and 4:00. Condon was only four seconds in front of second-place Matt Powers.

Del Dios 50k – Escondido, California
It was the ninth "race of the Gods" around Lake Hodges and Brittany Poor and John Oppermann were the closest to godlike in 5:45 and 4:38.

No Hands 50k – Auburn, California
It was all legs for Abigail Swift and Drew Macomber at the No Hands 50k. Swift and Macomber won the Inside Trail race in 5:26 and 4:26.

San Tan Scramble 50k – Queen Creek, Arizona

The Aravaipa Running race was at the **San Tan Mountain Regional Park** southeast of Phoenix. First- and second-place Allison Baca and Arden Young both ran under the old course record. Baca won in 4:13 and Young was second in 4:20. Third-place Lindsay Weigel gave the women three of the first four overall finishes with her 4:34

mark. Men's winner Matt Hamilton was in that mix at 4:25.

Brazos Bend 100 Mile –
Needville, Texas

There was a venue change this year from the Brazos Bend State Park to the private 7IL Ranch, but the course was likely still similarly fast. Rong Hu and Fernando Lopez won the 100-mile race in 20:16 and 18:13, and Sonja Stutz and Jonathan Morris were best in the 100k at 12:50 and 9:34.

Frozen Gnome 50k – Crystal Lake, Illinois

The race calls itself a triple black diamond run for its fun course that includes butt slide hill. Rachel Reyes scored a 34-second win over Briana Bower for the women, both finishing in 5:28, and Reese Slobodianuk led the men with a 4:21 mark.

Frozen Sasquatch 50k –

Charleston, West Virginia
It was the race's 14th year at Kanawha State Park and Nandini Satsangi was way out in front of the women's group. She won in 5:38 and Katie Felton and Michelle Gray were up next in 6:19 and 6:22. Caleb Bowen protected his home state in the men's race, gapping everyone with a 4:06 winning time. David Smith and Michael Owen got on the podium at 4:24 and 4:29.

Great Scorpion Trail 50k –
Meridian, Mississippi

The race name pays tribute to its setting in Bonita Lakes Park and the area's arachnid friends. Season Lane and Peter Kazery were the scorpion queen and king in 5:36 and 4:24.

Salem Lake Frosty 50k –

Winston-Salem, North Carolina
On a wet and chilly day and along the namesake 365-acre lake, Bailey Reutinger and Zachary Vaslow won in 4:30 and 3:13.

Croom Zoom – Brooksville, Florida

The sunshine state run is inside the Withlacoochee State Forest. The 50k winners Elizabeth Myers and Sean Green finished in 5:40 and 4:09.

Next Weekend – HURT 100 Mile – Honolulu, Hawai'i

This year's race will be run on an alternate course, avoiding a section of washed-out trail. The new course still totals 100 miles over five 20-mile loops, and adds an extra 350 feet of climbing per loop. That pushes the total gain to 26,750 feet.

There's 133 runners on this year's roster, and a few of the expected top entrants are listed below.

Women

- Jade Belzberg – 1st 2023 Cuyamaca 100k
- Candice Burt – 1st 2023 Creede 100 Mile
- Christal Cuadra-Keegan – 1st 2023 American River 50 Mile
- Tracy Garneau (Canada) – 4th 2023 HURT 100 Mile

Men

- Masazumi Fujioka – 6th 2022 HURT 100 Mile
- Art Hurtado – 1st 2023 Zion 100 Mile
- Ihor Verys (Ukraine, lives in Canada) – 1st 2023 Canadian Death Race 125k
- Takeshi Yamada – 5th 2023 HURT 100 Mile

Nature hike held at McDowell Park

100 miles in 100 days
Fountain Hills Times
January 9, 2024



A guided hike is planned for Jan. 20. (Independent Newsmedia file photo)
Posted Monday, January 8, 2024 2:10 pm

Learn more about the Sonoran Desert ecosystem during this guided hike with Ranger Eric Hough at **McDowell Mountain Regional Park** Saturday, Jan. 20.

Join Ranger Eric for a guided hike to learn about the animals, plants and ecology of the Sonoran Desert. This hike is 4.5 miles round trip on a loop including portions of Pemberton, Stoneman Wash, and Granite Trails. Most trails are moderate grade with rocky or uneven ground, but the portion in Stoneman Wash is more difficult due to walking on deep sand. The hike may take about 3.5 hours, but possibly less.

Dress in layers, wear protective clothing and/or sunscreen, wear sturdy footwear, and carry ample water, electrolytes, and snacks. Restrooms are available at Trailhead Staging Area.

Participants should meet at the Trailhead Staging Area off Shallmo Drive just past the Nature Center at 10:30 a.m.

This event is limited to 12 participants with registration required. Register by email to eric.hough@maricopa.gov. For those participating in the 100 Miles in 100 Days Challenge, this is a great way to hike toward that goal. For more information on the challenge, visit maricopacountyparks.net/thing-to-do/activity/100-miles-in-100-days-challenge. Also, beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 20, join Ranger Eric for a Guided Bird Walk. He will discuss how to identify birds by sight and sound as well as traits that make them unique. This will be a walk of about one half to one mile. Those who have their own binoculars should bring them. Meet at the Nature Center. This activity is limited to 10 people. Register by email to eric.hough@maricopa.gov.

10 Affordable Towns To Visit In Arizona, Ranked By Cost Of Vacation

By [Reena Jain](#)

Published Jan 6, 2024

Looking for a budget escape in Arizona? These affordable Arizona towns offer a joyful, exciting, and adventurous vacation without breaking the bank!

Sedona is a cheap choice for budget-conscious visitors, with a low-cost vacation only costing \$164 per person per day.

Cave Creek offers a variety of thrilling activities without straining the wallet, with a cheap trip costing \$154 per person per day.

Winslow is an excellent choice for budget-conscious vacationers, offering a wealth of experiences that can be explored with a low-cost trip costing \$144 per person per day.

Amazing scenery, vibrant cities, eerie ghost towns, and year-round sunny weather make Arizona the perfect destination for vacations at any time of year.

But is it affordable to visit Arizona?

Well, rich in natural splendor with the Coconino National Forest, the world's largest pine forest, and the Grand Canyon, the top tourist attraction in the US, as well as Native American history and much more, Arizona boasts numerous beautiful small towns that are perfect for a day trip and even reasonably priced for a vacation.

From historical encounters to outdoor adventures, indoor indulgences, wilderness escapes, and, yes, cozy places to stay, there is something for everyone in these charming Arizona towns. All in all, these affordable towns in Arizona offer a fun vacation without breaking the bank!

10 Sedona

\$164 per person per day
Nestled in the very heart of Arizona's Red Rock Country is the town of Sedona, renowned for its breathtaking scenery and

ethereal energy. This town in Arizona is a well-known tourist destination with a variety of experiences, but it's also a cheap choice for visitors on a tight budget—a low-cost vacation here only costs \$165 per person per day. Visiting the Chapel of the Holy Cross, Cathedral Rock, and the Red Rock Scenic Byway is a must in Sedona, and it won't strain the wallet. Hiking along the West Fork Oak Creek Trail is an unforgettable experience, as is visiting Sedona's art galleries, vortex sites, and spas.

Population: 9,963

Popular Attractions: Chapel of the Holy Cross (free), Red Rock Scenic Byway (free scenic driving route), Sedona Heritage Museum (Adults: \$10, Children (under 13): free)

Average Solo Budget Trip Cost: \$164 per day

Cheapest Time To Visit: Early to mid-September

9 Cave Creek

\$154 per person per day
Want to get back to nature without going too far from city life? Cave Creek in Maricopa County is the place to be! Only 27 miles from Phoenix, this small town offers a leisurely pace of life along with a variety of thrilling activities to enjoy—all without straining the wallet (a cheap trip here is \$154 per person per day). Cave Creek is an Arizona hotspot for hiking, live music, outdoor adventures, and cowboy culture. **Cave Creek Regional Park** offers hiking, Cave Creek Trail offers horseback riding, and Cave Creek Museum is the place to learn about the region's history. Local restaurants serve native cuisine at affordable prices.

Certainly, a trip to Cave Creek is a lot of fun!

Population: 5,253

Popular Attractions: Cave Creek Museum (Adult: \$10, children under 10 free), **Spur Cross**

Ranch Conservation Area (\$3 per person), Cave Creek Regional Park (\$3 per person)

Average Solo Budget Trip

Cost:\$154 per day

Cheapest Time To Visit:Early to mid-September

8 Winslow

\$144 per person per day

Along Arizona's famous historic Route 66, there is a small town where people enjoy a laid-back life amid beautiful surroundings.

Yes, it's Winslow, the historic town popularized in the 1970s song "Take It Easy." This

Arizona town offers a wealth of experiences that one can explore with a free walking tour.

Standing On The Corner Park, La Posada Hotel, and McHood Park & Clear Creek are some of the main draws in Winslow.

Nearby attractions include Painted Desert Inn, Jack's Canyon Camping and Climbing Area, and Meteor Crater. And,

with a low-cost trip costing \$144 per day per person, the town is an excellent choice for budget-conscious vacationers.

Population: 9,070

Popular Attractions: Standing On The Corner Park (free),

McHood Park (free), Painted Desert Inn (\$15 per person for 7 days), Jack's Canyon Camping and Climbing Area

Average Solo Budget Trip

Cost:\$144 per day

Cheapest Time To Visit:Early to mid-September

7 Wickenburg

\$137 per person per day

Wickenburg, an underrated small town in Arizona, is also an excellent alternative to Sedona, which enchants visitors with its historic charm and natural beauty. Take a walking tour of Wickenburg to learn about its history and explore 19th-century structures, amazing monuments, and, yes, a 200-year-old Jail Tree (all absolutely free)! For those seeking outdoor thrills, there are golf courses, hiking trails, horseback riding, ghost tours, dude ranches, and roping arenas (all reasonably priced). With an average budget trip cost per person per day of only \$137, it is obviously a wonderful Arizona town to have an amazing vacation full of fun and joy.

Population: 8,226

Popular Attractions: Desert Caballeros Western Museum (Adults: \$15.00, Seniors: \$12.00), Maricopa County Parks & Recreation (\$5.00 per person, children under 12 free)

Average Solo Budget Trip

Cost:\$137 per day

Cheapest Time To Visit:Early to mid-September

6 Tubac

\$129 per person per day

A must-visit historic town in Arizona, Tubac is also an affordable place to have a memorable getaway with a relatively low budget trip cost of \$129 per person per day.

Located on the Santa Cruz River in Santa Cruz County, Tubac is recognized as an artists' colony.

Whether one is an art admirer or not, everything there is appealing. Tubac has an

incredible selection of great art, dining, shopping, and luxury galleries, as well as opportunities for birding, hiking, biking, spa treatments, and wine

tastings. Tubac Presidio State Historic Park and Museum is a must-see, as are the Flying Leap Tasting Room & Art Gallery and Tubac Golf Resort & Spa.

Population: 1,274

Popular Attractions: Tubac Center of the Arts, Tubac Presidio State Historic Park and Museum (Adults (14+): \$7

Youth (7-12): \$2), Anza Trail, Flying Leap Tasting Room & Art Gallery (tasting fee is \$28.95)

Average Solo Budget Trip

Cost:\$129 per day

Cheapest Time To Visit:Early to mid-September

5 Eagar

\$125 per person per day

Situated in Apache County at the base of the White

Mountains, Eagar is an affordable getaway from frantic city life, with a budget trip cost

of just \$125 per day. Take advantage of the laid-back atmosphere Eagar has to offer

and utilize this time to indulge in leisure activities and hobbies.

Its pleasant Mediterranean weather makes it a four-season destination in Arizona other

than Phoenix, whether one is looking for fun, adventure, or

relaxation. Explore the charming downtown district, take a guided tour of the R Lazy J Ranch,

savor regional cuisine, or indulge in outdoor activities like fishing, skiing, hiking, camping,

horseback riding, hunting, and mountain biking (all reasonably priced). Explore the Apache-

Sitgreaves National Forest or simply sit back at Big Lake Recreation Area and take in the

scenery at no cost.

Population: 4,466

Popular Attractions: Big Lake Recreation Area (free), Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest

(free), R Lazy J Ranch (Guided

tours: Adults and Children (age 3+) for \$25)
Average Solo Budget Trip
Cost:\$125 per day
Cheapest Time To Visit:Early to mid-September

4 Munds Park

\$116 per person per day
Munds Park, located in Arizona's Coconino National Forest, is a hidden gem for good reason. For those who enjoy the great outdoors, it's a treasure trove of hiking trails, fishing spots, golf courses, camping areas, and opportunities for nature exploration. And all these activities don't put strain on the wallet. There are also eateries, shops, and Pinewood Farmers Market to enjoy. Sit outside any saloon or restaurant and take in the scenery while enjoying some local food and beverages and live music. Without a doubt, it's really an experience among pines! Munds Park is definitely an affordable Arizona town to visit, as the average budget trip cost is only \$115 per day per person, and its distinct appeal makes it an excellent alternative to Flagstaff.

Population: 780

Popular Attractions: Pinewood Country Club, Fishing in Lake O'Dell, Hikes in Munds Park, Pinewood Farmers Market
Average Solo Budget Trip
Cost:\$116 per day
Cheapest Time To Visit:Early to mid-September

3 Globe

\$115 per person per day
Globe, in Arizona's gorgeous Gila County, is renowned for its historic appeal and mining heritage and is one of the incredible places to visit in Arizona. It stands out as one of Arizona's most affordable

towns (\$115 per day per person average budget trip cost) to visit, with an array of budget-friendly lodging options, from comfortable motels to reasonably priced bed & breakfasts. The town's dining options are also moderately priced, so visitors may experience regional food without going over budget. The Downtown Historic District, Waggin' Vineyard & Estate, Waggin' Train Zoo, Old Dominion Mine Park, and many more attractions offer a variety of experiences, making them the greatest places to vibe without breaking the bank.

Population: 7,141

Popular Attractions: 1910 Historic Gila County Sheriff's Office and Jail (\$5 per visitor), 1916 Globe, AZ Train Depot Complex & Museum, Waggin' Vineyard & Estate (Wine Tasting Red Flight-\$19.95, White Flight-\$19.95, Full Flight-\$24.95), Old Dominion Mine Park (free), Historic District of Globe (free)
Average Solo Budget Trip
Cost:\$115 per day
Cheapest Time To Visit:Early to mid-September

2 Bisbee

\$113 per person per day
Bisbee, a lovely town located among the Mule Mountains, offers a wonderful combination of culture, history, and breathtaking surroundings. Visitors travel from all over to see its historic downtown, which is filled with vivid architecture, one-of-a-kind shops, and art galleries. Plus, visitors can opt for free self-guided tours to have an overview of the town's rich architectural and historical legacy, and they can visit Historic staircases and even

Lavender Pit, a large open-pit copper mine that offers breathtaking views at no cost. Many affordable museums are also there, each providing a glimpse into the city's history and culture. Indeed, it doesn't cost a fortune to experience Bisbee (with an average budget trip cost of \$113 per day per person), making it one of the most affordable places to visit in Arizona.

Population: 4,905

Popular Attractions: Historic staircases (free), Lavender Pit (free), Bisbee Restoration Museum (\$5 per visitor), Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum (\$10 per visitor)
Average Solo Budget Trip
Cost:\$113 per day
Cheapest Time To Visit:Early to mid-September

1 Tombstone

\$105 per person per day
Originally a mining town, Tombstone in Cochise County now relies on tourism and is notoriously famous as the site of the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral. Tourists interested in the history of the Wild West will find this small town, particularly the downtown area, appealing. There are several places worth seeing, including saloons, Allen Street, and the Tombstone Courthouse. Last but not least, the recreation of O.K. Corral is not to be missed! The nicest thing about visiting Tombstone is that it won't break the bank as most attractions are reasonably priced (or free), and there are lots of inexpensive (historic inns) lodgings and restaurants along the well-known Allen Street. With an average budget trip cost of \$105 per day, Tombstone is the most

affordable town to visit in Arizona on this list.
Population: 1,310.

Popular Attractions: O.K. Corral Gunfight Site (Admission with live Gunfight reenactment: \$10), Tombstone Courthouse State Historic Park (Adult (14+): \$7.00, Youth (7-13): \$2.00), The Bird Cage Theater (Adult (18+): \$16.50, Youth (8-18) and Seniors (60+): \$15.00)
Average Solo Budget Trip Cost: \$105 per day
Cheapest Time To Visit: Early to mid-September

'I was not surprised about another attack': Group of teens filmed assaulting another teen in East Valley

PCSO says thankfully, the 16-year-old victim sustained only minor injuries, but it's another example of teen violence in the East Valley.

Author: Bianca Buono
Published: 9:53 PM MST
January 5, 2024
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January 5, 2024

PINAL COUNTY, Ariz. — The Pinal County Sheriff's Office is investigating a group teen assault that happened in the area of the [San Tan Mountain Regional Park](#).

It happened on November 18th. Officials said they were called to a desert area off of North Wagon Wheel Road and West Sun Dance Drive for a report of an altercation.

Video of the fight has been shared on social media in the East Valley and it shows a 16-year-old getting ganged up on by a group of other teens. He is punched multiple times and once he's taken to the ground, assailants take turns kicking him.

A spokesperson for the Pinal County Sheriff's Office confirmed the video being shared is in fact of the November incident.

Officials say the teen suffered minor injuries and was not able to immediately identify his attackers.

The incident has been forwarded to PCSO's Criminal Investigations Bureau for further investigation. This case remains active as investigators continue to interview those potentially involved.

"I was not surprised about another attack," said Katey McPherson, a youth mental health advocate and East Valley mom.

McPherson and others have been vocalizing concerns about the safety of teens in the East Valley for the past several months. Community frustration has mounted since the horrific death of Preston Lord. The 16-year-old was assaulted and killed outside of a Halloween party in Queen Creek on October 28th.

"I think the public needs to know there's not just like one group of four or five. We're talking 20-30 deep and this style is a thing. It's a trend," McPherson said.

Gilbert PD says it has reopened four of its teen assault cases in light of Lord's death.

It's unclear if those involved in the Pinal County assault case are connected to any other cases being investigated.

McPherson cautions parents of this violent trend and says social media plays a big role. She notes assailants typically record their group-style assaults then share the videos on social media for the purpose of clout and likes.

"We knew this was coming post-COVID. A lot of the experts and behavioral science said we're seeing more aggression, we're seeing more physical assaults, our high schools have never seen so much violence post-COVID. So none of this really surprises me," McPherson said.

Queen Creek PD says its investigation into Lord's death is ongoing and they have submitted charges against seven people for review to the Maricopa County Attorney's Office.

So far, no arrests have been made.

In an interview with KTAR on Friday, County Attorney Rachel Mitchell said Queen Creek PD's report was 1,800 pages and they are reviewing around 2,000 pieces of evidence, including around 600 videos.

What is Surprise, AZ Known For? 10 Things to Love About This City

January 2, 2024 by [Marissa Crum](#)

Updated on January 5th, 2024
Redfin

Welcome to [Surprise, AZ](#), a charming city known for its family-friendly atmosphere, outdoor recreation, and welcoming community. From the Surprise Recreation Campus to beautiful parks and golf courses, Surprise offers residents a unique blend of opportunities and experiences. Whether you're on the lookout for a new home or excited to explore what Surprise is known for, this Redfin article is your guide to uncovering the distinctive qualities that make [Surprise, AZ](#), a delightful and tight-knit community.



1. Spring Training Baseball
This annual event brings in professional baseball teams from across the country to train and prepare for the upcoming season. Fans have the opportunity to watch their favorite players up close and personal, creating an exciting and immersive experience for baseball enthusiasts.

2. Surprise Stadium
This state-of-the-art facility is home to Spring Training Baseball and hosts various other sporting events throughout the year. With its modern amenities and spacious seating, Surprise Stadium provides a comfortable and enjoyable environment for spectators to cheer on their favorite teams.

3. White Tank Mountain Regional Park

This expansive park offers breathtaking views, hiking trails, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Visitors can explore the desert landscape, encounter diverse wildlife, and appreciate the natural beauty that surrounds the city.

4. Community parks
These well-maintained parks provide a safe and welcoming space for people to gather, play, and enjoy outdoor activities. With playgrounds, picnic areas, and open green spaces, Surprise parks promote a sense of community and offer a place for residents to connect and unwind.

5. Uptown Alley Surprise
This entertainment venue offers a variety of activities, including bowling, arcade games, laser tag, and dining options. It is a popular destination for individuals looking for a fun and engaging experience.

6. Surprise Aquatic Center
This facility features multiple pools, water slides, and splash pads, providing a refreshing escape from the desert heat. Whether it's swimming laps, taking swimming lessons, or simply enjoying a day by the

pool, the Surprise Aquatic Center offers a fun and enjoyable aquatic experience for all ages.

7. Surprise Recreation Campus
This expansive complex offers a wide range of recreational activities, including sports fields, courts, and fitness facilities. Whether it's playing a game of soccer, basketball, or tennis, or working out at the gym, the Surprise Recreation Campus caters to the active lifestyle of residents and visitors.

8. Marley Park
This master-planned community features beautiful homes, tree-lined streets, and neighborhood parks. With its charming architecture and community events, Marley Park fosters a sense of belonging and provides a picturesque setting for residents to call home.

9. Surprise Farms Community Park
This park offers a range of amenities, including sports fields, playgrounds, and walking paths. It serves as a gathering place for the community, where residents can engage in recreational activities, socialize, and enjoy the outdoors.

10. Surprise Heritage District
This historic area showcases the city's rich heritage and cultural significance. With its preserved buildings, unique shops, and local restaurants, the Surprise Heritage District offers a glimpse into the city's past while providing a vibrant and charming atmosphere for residents and visitors to explore.

2023 was a very good year

By **Sonoran News**

January 2, 2024

By **Cave Creek Mayor Bob Morris and Vice Mayor Kathryn Royer**

As 2023 ends, it's appropriate for the Town of Cave Creek to report back to its residents, businesses and visitors on our successes and challenges. I'm proud to provide this summary of accomplishments as well as striking changes that will soon be taking place.

First and foremost, we need to say "goodbye and thank you" to Carrie Dyrek, our talented and dedicated Town Manager, who will soon be retiring after 26 years of service—19 as Town Clerk and the last 7 as Town Manager. Carrie has been an integral part of our town's leadership team which has taken us from barely surviving in 2009 to absolutely thriving in 2023. Cave Creek is safer, roads are better, open space was preserved, in fact, there is no area in the town where improvements haven't been made under Carrie Dyrek's guidance and leadership. We thank her profoundly.

Everything starts with our financial viability. We are fortunate to report that Cave Creek is in an excellent financial position with revenues exceeding expenses which allows us to move forward with essential projects throughout town.

In 2023, these projects include collaborating with our

community with a ribbon cutting event for preserving 30.6 acres of open space abutting **Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area**. We held a groundbreaking ceremony for an innovative land-sharing agreement with the Foothills Food Bank. Significant infrastructure improvements have been completed at the Cave Creek Rodeo Grounds and 7 iconic businesses in Cave Creek have been recognized as Local Landmarks.

With respect to our beloved Cave Creek town core, we've held 2 public engagement meetings and created a webpage for the Town Core Plan which is being updated after 10 years. Rehabilitation of our medians is underway, beginning with the transplant of native plants from other building sites around the town. We're focusing on improving pedestrian pathways for increased safety, including installing flashing beacon lights for crosswalks and posting additional Sheriff's patrols to help reduce the speed of drivers. We've met with town core merchants on two occasions to improve business relations and share ideas for improved parking and visitor engagement.

In terms of public works, the damaged "Welcome" sign located in the entry to our town has been replaced, which is truly a welcome sight! Arroyo Road has been modified to serve as a safety exit for residents during emergencies. Much delayed but necessary road and curb improvements can now be seen taking place throughout town.

It goes without saying that water is always at the top of the list of priorities. We're making significant town core improvements that help us measure our data to determine water losses. We're addressing ongoing odor issues at Stagecoach Village. While we've had significant staffing issues at the water treatment facility, we've managed to add and calibrate flow meters to improve the accounting of water losses for conservation purposes.

The first design phase of an interconnection with Phoenix has been completed which ultimately will serve as a backup water supply in times of emergencies. Leaking service lines in our water distribution system have been completely replaced rather than patched. Our meter replacement program has begun for more accurate readings and early leak detection. Last but not least, we've been able to store one year's worth of our precious Colorado River water supplies underground via the Central Arizona Project for future use.

As a result of the establishment of a Cave Creek Fire Department in 2021 in association with Daisy Mountain Fire Department, remodeling of the previous Cave Creek Fire Station is underway to provide additional space for fire trucks and a cleaner, safer environment for firefighters. This year, Cave Creek was the grateful recipient of a grant from Firehouse Subs for an emergency service vehicle to reach lost hikers in Spur Cross, among other purposes.

The Town of Cave Creek staff and our fellow Council members are diligently working to serve the best interests of the town. We hope you agree we have employed successful financial, operational, and managerial strategies to meet and exceed the needs of our community. We thank you for your trust in our abilities and look forward to another successful year in 2024.

Ray of Hope Hike for the Kids - Charity 5K+ Walk on New Year's Day at Cave Creek Regional Park

Gilbert Sun News
January 1, 2024

Join this fun hike to raise funds for youth at risk. Start New Year's Day out on the trails! Be a part of the First Annual Hike to Benefit Anthem Rotary's 'Ray Norris Youth At-Risk Program'

Lace up your hiking boots and help make a difference in the lives of youth at risk. This event is about having a great time while supporting an important cause.

Date: Monday, January 1, 2024
Time: 9:00-9:55 AM Check-In, 10:00 AM Start
Location: 37019 North Lava Lane, Cave Creek, AZ -- Park at the **Cave Creek Regional Park** Playground, just north of the Nature Center.

Our 3.5-mile hike will take you through the beautiful Overton

Loop Trail, a moderately challenging trail with 524 feet of elevation gain. Hikers on AllTrails rate this trail 4.6 stars on a 1-5 scale. On average, this hike takes 90 minutes to complete.

Here is the AllTrails info for this trail: <https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/arizona/overton-trail>

Not only will you enjoy the beauty of our desert, but you'll also be helping to provide hope and support to young students who are experiencing homelessness right here in our local neighborhoods.

Grab your friends and family members and join us for a memorable New Year's Day of adventure and philanthropy.

By participating in the Ray of Hope Hike for the Kids, you'll be making a direct impact on the lives of youth at risk. Your support will enable the Anthem Rotary Club Foundation to provide essential resources to help these students overcome tough challenges and build a brighter future.

This event has a limit of 200 hikers, so register now, spread the word, and get ready to embark on an unforgettable hike for a great cause. Together, we can make a difference!

Park admission fees are \$7 per vehicle so carpools are encouraged. If you have a valid Maricopa County Parks annual pass, show it to the officials at the park entrance gate and pay no admission fees.

Proceeds benefit the Ray Norris Youth At Risk Program, a

service program from Anthem Rotary Foundation. To learn more about the program, watch this video.

https://youtu.be/AguY9BDCSyQ?si=Vbx6Ws8dcGfM_qJS