

TOP EXPERIENCES: ARIZONA & THE GRAND CANYON

Grand Canyon Hiking

You could spend the rest of your life hiking the Grand Canyon and never cover all the trails. There are hiking and walking trails aplenty, for all levels of fitness. Bright Angel Trail is the most famous, but it's tough: with an elevation change of more than 5,000 feet, don't try to hike to the Colorado River and back in one day. Less strenuous is part of the 12-mi Rim Trail, a paved, generally horizontal walk. Other outstanding choices are the South Kaibab Trail and the Hermit Trail. Many short routes lead to epic viewpoints, like the Cape Royal and Roosevelt Point trails on the North Rim.

Jeep Tours

Why drive yourself when open-air four-wheeling is available, complete with guide and driver? Jeep tours abound in the Grand Canyon state, whether it's a rough ride on a Pink Jeep tour in the red rocks of Sedona or a Lavender Jeep tour in historic Bisbee, a weeklong excursion or an afternoon adventure. Some of these companies have special permits that provide access to national forests, and an up-close view of Native American communities.

Colorado River-Rafting

Hiking too boring? Jeep tours not enough? True thrill-seekers take the plunge when they visit Arizona. There are nearly two dozen commercial river-rafting companies in Arizona that offer trips as short as a day or as long as three weeks through the Grand Canyon on the Colorado River. These rough-riding trips are popular with travelers, so be sure to make reservations very early, up to a year in advance.

Personal Pampering

If roughing it in the great outdoors isn't your vacation style, head to one of Arizona's world-class spas for a day of complete relaxation. Enjoy a standard mani-and-pedi afternoon, or further indulge in a specialty treatment, such as a creek-side massage at L'Auberge de Sedona, or a Native American-inspired session at the Golden Door Spa at the Boulders Resort in Carefree. Between sessions be sure to take advantage of relaxation rooms, saunas, and pools. Finish the day with a decadent meal at your resort's restaurant.

Biltmore Golfing

One of Phoenix's most historic hotels is also home to some of the Valley's most heralded golf courses. The Arizona Biltmore, Arizona's first resort, set the standard in 1929. The Biltmore has two 18-hole PGA championship courses, Adobe and Links. Arizona's climate is particularly hospitable to golfers, so green fees are especially pricey in winter and spring. Early risers can find slightly more affordable fees in the wee hours of the morning in summer. Other premier Phoenix-area courses where you can play like a pro include the Phoenician and Troon North.

Native American Traditions

Westerns and the enduring myths of the Wild West don't compare to the experience of seeing firsthand the Native American cultures that thrive in Arizona. In northeast

Arizona, you can visit Navajo and Hopi reservations; there are more than 21 tribes in the state today. Stop at a trading post on a reservation to see artisans demonstrating their crafts. Visit one of Arizona's fantastic Native American museums, such as the Heard Museum in Phoenix or the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. At spectacular national monuments, such as Montezuma Castle near Camp Verde, visitors can see 600-year-old preserved dwellings.