

Contact: Marjorie Magnusson
602.364.3695
mmagnusson@azot.gov

Arizona: A Perfect Playground

With its varied terrain and clear, sunny weather, Arizona is a terrific place to play outdoors, no matter what your favorite sport. From birdwatching, golf, and fishing to rock climbing, skiing, and whitewater rafting, Arizona's activities will challenge your skills and push your threshold for fun.

What to Play and Where to Play It

Golf: With more than 300 courses of every configuration – although famed for its desert-savvy “target” designs – Arizona is one of the world's premier golf destinations. Two-thirds of the greens are in Greater Phoenix, with many of the rest concentrated in and around Tucson. A steady influx of golf schools, golf shops, golf vacation packagers, and residential golf communities – as well as summer incentives such as low-priced resort rooms and green fees – have helped solidify the state's year-round standing with duffers.

Birdwatching: Almost 500 types of birds stop off in southeast Arizona for a drink and a snack during their annual migrations, making the region one of this country's top five bird-watching spots. Among the most popular of the places listed on the Southeastern Arizona Birding Trail map, available at visitors centers throughout the region, are the San Pedro Riparian Area; Willcox Playa; Madera, Ramsey, Miller, and Cave Creek canyons; and Portal. The non-profit **Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory** (www.sabo.org) offers guided walks and workshops. On the state's west side, the Imperial, Kofa, Bill Williams, and Havasu national wildlife refuges along the Colorado River are also major avian hangouts.

Hiking, mountain biking, and rock climbing: Arizona's abundant – and varied – undeveloped terrain makes the state a magnet for footloose adventurers of all levels. It would be hard to find a region that didn't have great **hiking** trails and places to lay down a sleeping bag or tent. Many natural areas also draw biking enthusiasts of all levels. Greater Phoenix, Tucson, Sedona, Flagstaff, and Prescott all have shops where visitors can rent two-wheelers, learn about the best nearby **mountain biking** trails, and even, in many cases, book guided rides. **Rock climbing** is popular, too, and these cities and towns offer indoor instruction studios, as well as rapeller friendly sporting good stores.

-more-

www.arizonaguide.com

1110 W. Washington, Suite 155 Phoenix, AZ 85007 [P] 602.364.3700 [F] 602.364.3701
Janice K. Brewer, Governor ♦ Sherry Henry, Director

Horseback riding: What's a visit to cowboy country without some horseplay, whether a gentle sunset hayride or a week-long pack trip? Most of the equine-oriented tour operators and outfitters can be found around Tucson, southeast Arizona, Greater Phoenix, Wickenburg, Prescott, and Sedona; there's also riding at the Grand Canyon (mules, too), Monument Valley, and Canyon de Chelly. Mix history, horses, and beer on the Mill Iron Cattle Company's saloon-to-saloon horseback ride from Tumacacori to Tubac along the Anza Historic Trail.

Off-road vehicle tours: Nearly every city and town in the state has companies to take you to scenic spots your car would balk at, or where visitors are not otherwise permitted (for example, in Monument Valley and Canyon de Chelly, with tours run by Navajo guides). Among the more unusual off-road excursions are the Scottsdale-based **Desert Storm Hummer Tours**, which takes you into the desert after dark with night-vision goggles (www.dshummer.com); **Outback Adventures**, which heads from Lake Havasu City via 6-wheel-drive Pinzgauer into the region where the Sonoran and Mohave deserts meet (www.azoutback.com); **Apache Trail Tours**, with excursions on the spectacular trail for which the company is named and into Lost Dutchman mine terrain (www.apachetrailtours.com); and **Pink Jeep** (www.pinkjeep.com) and **Red Rock Jeep** (www.redrockjeep.com), both offering rides through Sedona's red rocks to view ancient Native American petroglyphs.

Aerial Adventures: Whatever your preferred method of ascent; Arizona can provide it. **Hot-air ballooning** is on the rise in Greater Phoenix, Tucson, and Sedona, while **helicopter** and **small plane** tours over the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, and Sedona are soaring in popularity. Looking for something completely different? Greater Phoenix (www.turfsoaring.com and www.azsoaring.com) and Tucson (www.tucsonsoaring.org) offer **sailplane** (glider) rides; Sedona provides **bi-plane** flight seeing (www.sedonaairtours.com); and a Mesa outfit teaches participants some tricks of the **fighter pilot** trade (www.fightercombat.com).

Water sports: Yes, Arizona has water – and plenty of it. **Boating, fishing, kayaking, jetskiing,** and other water sports abound on Lake Powell, Lake Mohave, Lake Roosevelt, and smaller lakes throughout the state. In western Arizona, especially near Lake Havasu City and Parker, the Colorado River is the splashy playground of choice. As the Colorado runs through the Grand Canyon, the chasm it carved over the millennia, it becomes the state's premier

-more-

www.arizonaguide.com

1110 W. Washington, Suite 155 Phoenix, AZ 85007 [P] 602.364.3700 [F] 602.364.3701
Janice K. Brewer, Governor ♦ Sherry Henry, Director

whitewater rafting venue. Less famous but equally popular with locals, the Salt River offers Class 3 and 4 rapids and spectacular scenery, snowmelt from the nearby White Mountains permitting.

Winter sports: Not only does Arizona have water; it also has snow, especially in the northern and eastern parts of the state. The state's top **downhill ski** runs are at Sunrise Park, an enterprise of the White Mountain Apaches, and Arizona Snowbowl, just outside Flagstaff. The family-oriented Williams Ski Area only has two surface lifts, but generally has lots of the white stuff; Mount Lemmon Ski Valley near Tucson, the southernmost ski area in the United States, has several lifts, but not always a lot of snow. All the ski areas rent **snowboarding** and **snowshoeing** equipment along with skis. Nordic or **cross-country skiing** in the Coconino Forest near Flagstaff is offered by the Mormon Lake Ski Touring Center and Wing Mountain Cross-Country Ski Trails, and close to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon by Flagstaff Nordic Center.

Some Sporting Asides

- Several parks in Arizona offer guided hikes during the day; a few also offer them at night by the light of the full moon (generally, from October through April). Among the most popular lunar-lit walks are those at Lost Dutchman State Park, Scottsdale's Pinnacle Peak Park, and Tucson's Sabino Canyon.
- In April, May, July, and, especially early August-through mid-September, as many as 10 species of hummingbirds stop at the San Pedro River during their migrations. Watch the staff and volunteers from the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory band, measure, weigh, and release the tiny critters at the San Pedro Riparian Conservation Area, near Sierra Vista.
- Jet-skis were created by Clayton Jacobsen II on the Colorado River's Parker Strip – still a great place to play with them.

For additional Arizona travel information and deals, visit www.arizonaguide.com. For media information only, visit www.arizonaguide.com/press-room