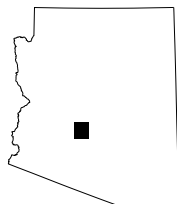


Greater Phoenix



Phoenix doesn't have the best reputation. Known for heat, retirement communities, sprawl and golf, sometimes it feels like the best compliment this town gets is, 'Well, it's sunny.' But give Phoenix some time, and you'll find a place that's surprisingly easy to fall for.

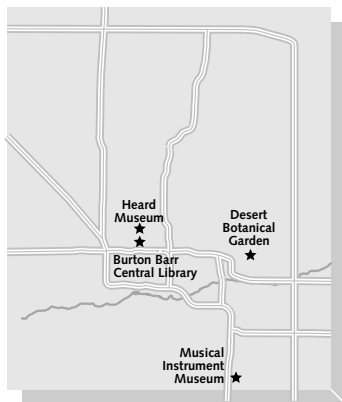
With regular triple-degree temperatures in summer and more than 300 days of whiteout sunshine a year, Phoenix is pretty damn hot and sunny. But it's not the weather that makes Phoenix and adjoining Scottsdale, Tempe and Mesa (collectively known as the Valley of the Sun) such a treasure hunt. What can make Phoenix initially off-putting is what makes it, at second glance, cool. Its huge sprawl is tough to manage at first, but within it are little clusters of gastronomic joy, jags of shopping fun, blips of nightlife cool. When you're in the know here, you feel like you're really in the *know*.

You'll be hard-pressed without a car, though. Sometimes it feels like every avenue is a four-lane highway, and strip malls, strip clubs, gas stations and gated communities are the norm. But for all the ugliness of car culture, there's some beauty too: deco-style diners, '50s-era motels and, when the sun sets and the lights blink on, a jazzy sense of neon noir.

Scottsdale is the gussied-up glamour girl next door; Tempe, the hard-partying, occasionally artsy college kid; Mesa, a quiet family; and Phoenix a blend them all. Don't just drive through. Order a *burro*, catch a First Friday, and never forget: the best parking spots are in the shade.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Best Views and Serene Cultural Space Wrapped into One**
Reading on the top floor of **Burton Barr Central Library** (p84)
- **Most Unexpected Global Music Experience**
Listening to the sounds of a West African harp at the **Musical Instrument Museum** (p87)
- **Most Desertlike Place in the City**
Counting the stars as the sun sets over the **Desert Botanical Garden** (p86)
- **Best Information about Southwest American Indians**
Embarking on ethnographic adventures in the **Heard Museum** (p84)
- **Best Place to Experience Art, Music and Surprisingly Strong Street Culture**
Strolling down Roosevelt St and Grand Ave on **First Fridays** (p92)



■ Population: 1.5 million

■ Metro area 3.6 million

■ Elevation: 1200ft

HISTORY

Hohokam people lived here 2300 years ago (see p88) and small groups of Pima and Maricopa Indians eked out an existence along the Gila and Salt Rivers. In the mid-1860s, the US Army built Fort McDowell northeast of Phoenix. This prompted Jack Swilling to reopen Hohokam canals to produce crops for the garrison and led to the establishment of a town in 1870.

Phoenix established itself as an agricultural and transportation center, but for decades it was a small town. The railway arrived from the Pacific in 1887 and when Phoenix became the territorial capital in 1889, it had 3000 inhabitants – even by Arizona standards this is a relatively young place. In 1886 the Arizona Normal School, later to become Arizona State University (ASU), was established in Tempe. Other villages appeared: Mesa was founded by Mormon settlers in 1878, and Scottsdale followed a decade later, named after army chaplain Winfield Scott.

Lack of water was a stumbling block to growth until 1911, when the Roosevelt Dam on the Salt River was finished. In 1926, Phoenix's railway link became transcontinental, enabling people from the east to pour into the state. By WWII, Phoenix had become a major transportation and distribution center. A 1947 fire that destroyed most of the city's street railway system was replaced by a bus system and, eventually, the car culture that characterizes getting around the Valley of the Sun.

Phoenix grew at an incredible pace from the 1960s on, with homes sprouting like grass, but the city was hit particularly hard by the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008. The resulting dip in home prices has also led to some urban regrowth. Cheap real estate has helped repopulate the city center and in particular attracted the artists and creative types who are often at the forefront of urban renewal.

ORIENTATION

The Valley of the Sun is ringed by mountains that encompass a hot, dusty pancake otherwise known as Greater Phoenix. A few important east–west roads cut across town; running from south to north these are Washington St (which divides streets and avenues North and South, ie N 5000 16th St is roughly 50 blocks north of Washington St), Van Buren

St, Roosevelt St, McDowell Rd, Indian School Rd and Camelback Rd.

Phoenix is the largest town and houses the state capitol, the oldest buildings, several important museums and professional sport facilities. Scottsdale starts around 56th St, east of Phoenix. The main drag, Scottsdale Rd, is technically 72nd St. Southeast of Phoenix lies Tempe, home of ASU, anchored around Mill Ave and University Dr. East of Tempe, Mesa is the second-largest town in the valley (and technically bigger than Miami and St Louis).

Major freeways include I-17 North (Black Canyon Hwy; this has many motels along it), I-10 West (the Papago Freeway), I-10 South (the Maricopa Freeway) and Hwy 60 East (the Superstition Freeway). It's generally quicker to get around via freeway than city streets.

INFORMATION

Emergency & Medical Services

There are CVS pharmacies all over town. The following hospitals all provide 24-hour emergency care.

Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center (Map p82; ☎ 602-839-2000; www.bannerhealth.com; 1111 E McDowell Rd)

St Joseph's Hospital & Medical Center (Map p82; ☎ 602-406-3000; www.stjosephs-phx.org; 350 W Thomas Rd)

Internet Access

Wi-fi connections can be found in most hotels, cafes and all library branches (see p84).

Cyberzone (Map p82; ☎ 602-978-1278; www.azyberzone.net; 4153 W Thunderbird Rd; per hr \$3; ☎ 10am–3am)

Netlans (Map p82; ☎ 602-494-5450; www.netlans.com; 3131 E Thunderbird Ave; per hr \$3; ☎ 1pm–midnight Sun–Thu, till 2am Fri & Sat)

Media

91.5 KJZZ National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate.

Arizona Republic (www.azcentral.com) Daily newspaper.

College Times (www.collegetimes.com) Student news and views, with good Tempe listings.

Phoenix New Times (www.phoenixnewtimes.com) Alternative weekly. Provides better local news coverage than the *Republic* and far superior entertainment listings.

Money

Most major banks will buy foreign currency. There are many Bank of America, Chase and