

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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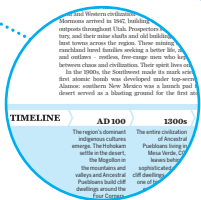
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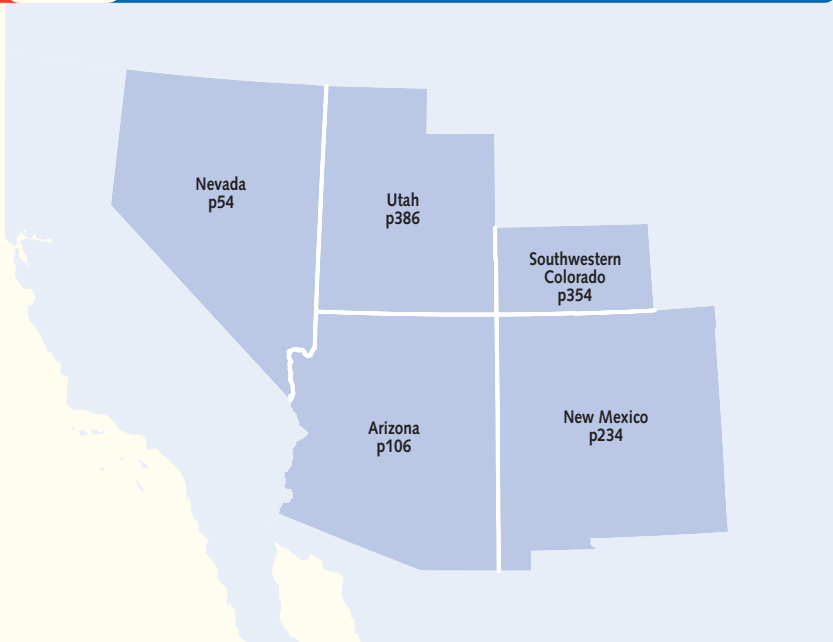
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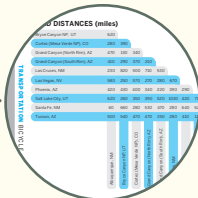
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Lisa Dunford, Carolyn McCarthy**

➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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Southwest USA

Hwy 50

Empty roads require full tanks (p93)

Grand Canyon

Hike two billion years into the past (p158)

Las Vegas

Travel the world on the Strip (p58)

Flagstaff

Microbreweries, mountains and Hotel Monte Vista (p149)

Sedona

Sip margaritas in the glow of red rocks (p141)

Phoenix

Spas, shopping and the Suns (p109)

Tucson

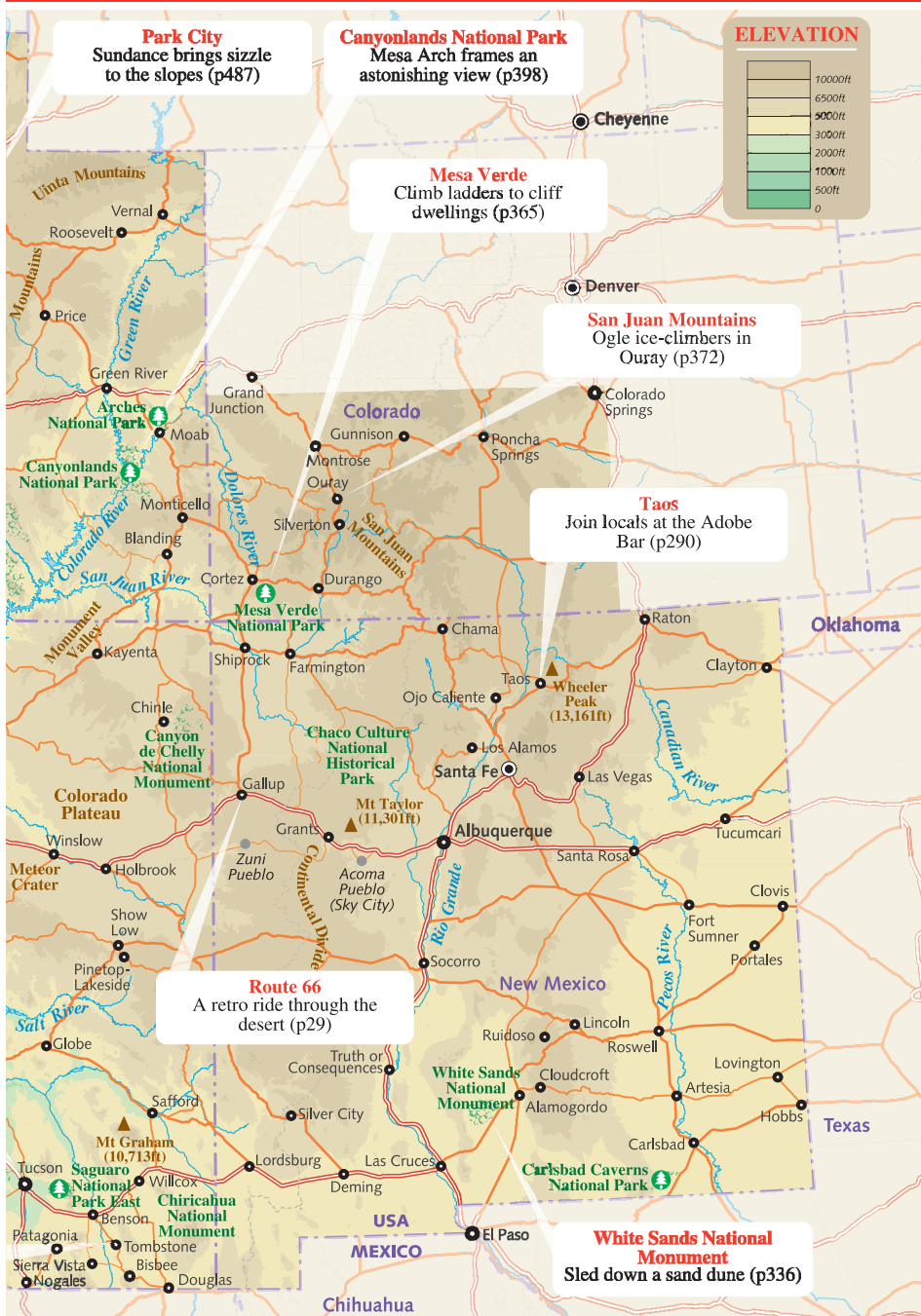
Sonoran hotdogs require gobbling, and napkins (p203)

Old West

Practice your fast draw in Tombstone (p223)



Top Experiences >





Carolyn McCarthy

Author Carolyn McCarthy was introduced to southern Colorado as a university freshman, when a freak blizzard stranded her orientation group in tents at 12,000ft in the Sangre de Cristo range. With sagebrush, powdery peaks and Spanish lore, the region soon became a favorite. In the last seven years she has contributed to more than a dozen Lonely Planet titles. She has also written for *National Geographic*, *Outside* and *Lonely Planet Magazine*, among other publications. You can follow her Americas blog at www.carolynswildblueyonder.blogspot.com.

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[Jeff Campbell](#) has been a travel writer for Lonely Planet since 2000. He was the coordinating author of three editions of *USA*, as well as editions of *Southwest USA*, *Zion & Bryce National Parks*, *Hawaii*, *Florida*, and *Mid-Atlantic Trips*, and he's been a contributor on other titles. He wishes that he called the Southwest home, but next best is meeting and writing about those who do.

[David Lukas](#) is a professional naturalist whose travels and writing take him around the American West and further afield. He has contributed environment and wildlife chapters to about 20 Lonely Planet guides. David's favorite Southwest moment was getting up to watch sunrise on the magnificent hoodoos at Bryce Canyon (don't miss it!).



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse.'

OUR WRITERS



Amy C Balfour

Amy has hiked, biked, skied and gambled her way across the Southwest, finding herself returning again and again to Flagstaff, Monument Valley and, always, the Grand Canyon. On this trip she fell hard for Bisbee and Chiricahua National Monument. When she's not daydreaming about red rocks and green chile cheeseburgers, she's writing about food, travel and the outdoors. Amy has authored or co-authored 11 guidebooks for Lonely Planet, including *Los Angeles*

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Michael Benav

Michael came to New Mexico in 1992 and quickly fell under its spell; soon after, he moved to a rural village in the Sangre de Cristo foothills, where he still lives. A veteran international traveler, he can't imagine a better place to come home to after a trip. Aside from his work for LP, he's authored two non-fiction books and writes and photographs for magazines and newspapers. His website is www.michaelbenav.com.

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Sarah Chandler

Long enamored of Sin City's gritty enchantments, Sarah jumped at the chance to sharpen her blackjack skills while delving into the atomic and alien mysteries of rural Nevada. In Vegas, Sarah learned the secret art of bypassing velvet ropes, bounced from buffets to pool parties, and explored the seedy vintage glamour of downtown. Sarah is currently based between the US and Amsterdam, where she works as a writer, actor, and lecturer at Amsterdam University College. When in

doubt, she always doubles down.

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Lisa Dunford

As one of the possibly thousands of descendants of Brigham Young, Lisa was first drawn to Utah by ancestry. But it's the incredible red rocks that keep her coming back. Driving the remote backroads outside Bluff, she was once again reminded how here the earth seems at its most elemental. Before becoming a freelance Lonely Planet author 10 years ago, Lisa was a newspaper editor and writer in South Texas. Lisa co-authored Lonely Planet's *Zion & Bryce Canyon*

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MORE WRITERS

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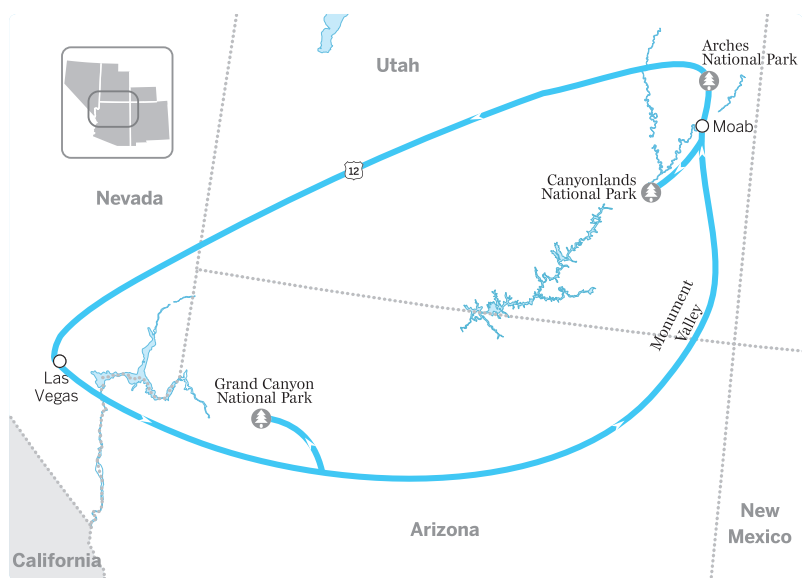
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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travelers.



Two Weeks

Vegas, Grand Canyon & Southern Utah Loop

If you only have time for a short loop, this tour offers a taste of the Southwest's most famous city, canyon and scenery. Start in **Las Vegas** and dedicate a few days to traveling the world on the Strip. When you've soaked up enough decadence, head east to canyon country – **Grand Canyon** country, that is. You'll want a couple of days to explore America's most famous park. For a once-in-a-lifetime experience, descend into the South Rim chasm on the back of a mule and spend the night at Phantom Ranch on the canyon floor.

From the Grand Canyon head northeast through **Monument Valley**, with scenery straight out of a Hollywood Western, to the national parks in Utah's southeast corner – they're some of the most visually stunning in the country. Hike the shape-shifting slot canyons of **Canyonlands National Park**, watch the sun set in **Arches National Park**, or mountain-bike sick slickrock outside **Moab**. Then drive one of the most spectacular stretches of pavement, **Hwy 12**, west until it hooks up with I-15 and takes you back to Las Vegas.



Three Weeks to One Month Grand Tour

Throw a pair of cowboy boots, hiking boots and comfy walking shoes into the saddlebag, pardner, and get ready to ride. Suspend judgments and roll the dice for two days on the **Las Vegas Strip** before crossing the new **Mike Callaghan-Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge** – be sure to ogle **Hoover Dam** – as you swoop into Arizona. Next up is **Route 66**, which chases trains and Burma-Shave signs as it unfurls between **Kingman** and **Williams**. Funky **Flagstaff** is a welcoming spot to regroup before venturing into the **Grand Canyon National Park**, where a hike is always a must-do. After three days in the park, end the week among the red rocks of **Sedona**.

Heading south, get in touch with your shabby-chic side in **Jerome** before driving into **Phoenix** for two days of shopping and museum hopping. Mellow out on 4th Avenue, **Tucson**, then study the cacti at **Saguaro National Park**. Fancy yourself a gunslinger in **Tombstone** before ending the week with a two-day stay in charming **Bisbee**.

Next up is New Mexico, where you can sled down sand dunes in the remote **White Sands National Monument**. Spend a day exploring the caves at **Carlsbad Caverns National Park** then head north to **Roswell** to ponder its UFO mysteries. Plan to spend two days in **Santa Fe**, a foodie haven and a magnet for art fiends. Atomic-age secrets are revealed at nearby **Los Alamos**, which are an interesting contrast to the laid-back musings of the hippies and ski bums just north in **Taos**. Drive the luscious **Enchanted Circle** then chill out with a microbrew and bike ride in **Durango**. Next up? Pondering the past inside the amazing cliff dwellings at **Mesa Verde National Park**. You'll be equally amazed by the towering red buttes at **Monument Valley**.

For the most stunning wilderness in the US, spend your last week in Utah's national parks, including **Canyonlands National Park** and **Arches National Park**, for which **Moab** serves as a staging area. From Moab follow **Hwy 12** back to Las Vegas, stopping at **Capitol Reef National Park**, **Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument**, the spires of **Bryce Canyon National Park** and the sheer red rock walls at **Zion National Park** along the way.

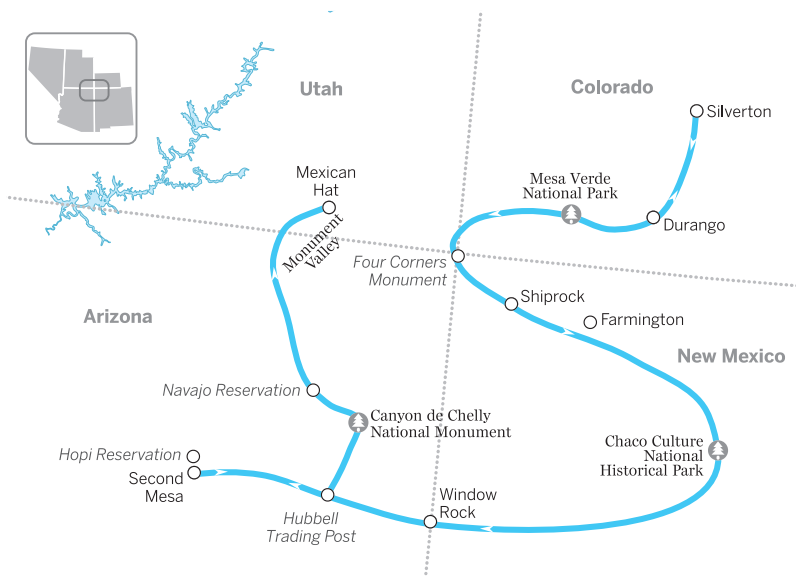


Ten to 12 Days Southern Arizona

This crazy-eight loop starts in **Phoenix**, where the multitude of posh spas, top museums and upscale dining and shopping options on offer will have you primed for exploring. Escape the urban crush with a long drive south on **Hwy 85** to the lonely but rejuvenating **Organ Pipe Cactus National Park**. Hike, explore and relax for two days. From there, take Hwy 85 north to Hwy 86. Follow this lonely two-lane road east to lofty **Kitt Peak National Observatory**, site of 24 optical telescopes – the largest collection in the world. Take a tour or reserve a spot for nighttime stargazing.

Just northeast, laid-back **Tucson** is a pleasant place to chill out for a day or two. Indie shops line 4th Ave, and Congress St is the place to catch live music. Stop and smell the cacti in **Saguaro National Park** before spending the night in **Benson**, a good launchpad for the pristine **Kartchner Caverns** and the gloriously eclectic **Singing Wind Bookshop**. Wander the odd rock formations at **Chiricahua National Monument** then loop south on Hwys 191 and 181 for eye-catching galleries, great restaurants and an interesting mine tour in **Bisbee**. And you can't drive this far south without swinging by **Tombstone** for a reenactment of Wyatt and Doc's shootout with the Clantons. From Tombstone, Hwy 82 unfurls across sweeping grasslands, the horizon interrupted by scenic mountain ranges (known in these parts as sky islands).

Enjoy a day of wine-tasting in the villages of **Sonoita** and **Elgin** capped off with a slice of Elvis-inspired pizza in **Patagonia**. Close the loop with a swing back through Tucson on I-10 West, grabbing a Sonoran dog for the drive back to Phoenix.



One Week

Four Corners/Native American Journey

Start in **Durango** and spend a day exploring the historic mining town. The next day, ride the narrow-gauge railway to **Silverton** and quaff a beer at a Durango microbrewery on your return. Climb ladders into the haunting ruins at **Mesa Verde National Park** before heading to Arizona, stopping on the way at the recently revamped **Four Corners Monument** – check out that snazzy new plaza – to snap a cheesy picture with your hands and feet in four different states.

As you head into New Mexico, ogle **Shiprock**, a stunning, ragged red-rock formation. Spend the night at a motel in nearby **Farmington** or enjoy a snooze inside Kokopelli's Cave, a B&B room 70ft underground – complete with hot tub. A dusty, rutted drive leads to the isolated **Chaco Culture National Historical Park**, an amazing architectural sight. Stay near **Window Rock**, the capital of the **Navajo Reservation**, and be sure to check out the namesake rock. The old-world **Hubbell Trading Post** was the reservation's lifeline when it was established in the 1870s. Detour (65 miles each way) to **Second Mesa**, the heart of the **Hopi Reservation**, where you will find artisans and the Hopi Cultural Center.

Next up? The relatively verdant **Canyon de Chelly National Monument**, an inhabited, cultivated canyon with hogans and sheep herds. Remember to breathe as you approach the out-of-this-world beautiful **Monument Valley**. Drive the 17-mile loop around the towering buttes then spend the night at the adjacent View Hotel, you'll want to spend time – a lot of time – gazing at the monuments from your balcony. Finish the trip with a drive north to **Mexican Hat** in Utah – trust us, you can't miss it.

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