

Destination Southwest USA

The Southwest USA is cool enough to merit two Las Vegases. And both cities represent this triculturally diverse, historically rich, always artistic, sometimes outrageous and naturally gorgeous region with equal accuracy.

Home to UFO fanatics, vortex junkies, Native American casino owners, pious Mormons, pot-smoking hippies, New Age artists and environmental warriors, the region is like nowhere else in the USA. The howl of a coyote, the smack of a golf club, the clank of a slot machine – all these images are the Southwest. A place that embraces adventure head-on and somehow manages to maintain a balance between Las Vegas' sex appeal and Salt Lake City's virgin saintliness.

Mother Nature's beauty remains relatively untouched and ripe for exploration in the Southwest. Whatever outdoor pursuit you choose – be it horseback riding past majestic saguaro cacti in the Arizona desert, roaring down the Grand Canyon in a rubber raft or mountain biking slickrock in Utah's rainbow-hued canyon country – you can be sure the scenery will be stunning. This is the land of giant red arches, slickrock walls, humongous canyons, salt flats and vast deserts. A place where crimson rock monuments and crumbling rust buttes meet dazzling blue skies; where the desert landscape seems to have been invented for the backdrop of a John Wayne classic – or a John Denver music video.

Natural scenery isn't the Southwest's only ace. The human-created stuff, be it from 1798 or 2008, is also pretty damn cool. Sinfully delicious Las Vegas is one neon-lit chaotic dream sequence that never wakes up (or goes to sleep, depending on your perspective and how much you've had to drink). You can dine in Paris (France), in a restaurant at the Eiffel Tower, where you just might bump arms with the other Paris (Hilton), in town to host a party at the Palms resort down the Strip. Which just happens to be where Jessica Simpson, Britney Spears and Hugh Hefner and the Girls Next Door also like to hold court. Yes, it's safe to say Las Vegas, NV, is as hot as Los Angeles when it comes to Hollywood star power these days.

Vegas is far from the Southwest's only hot vacation spot. Also in Nevada is one of our favorite drives in the region, the 'Loneliest Road in America.' Running across the Great Basin, this is one solitary drive past barren brown hills and tumbleweeds, through stubborn old towns where the vintage neon signs are as authentic as the legal prostitutes and you can stop literally in the middle of nowhere at an oh-so-American family-run restaurant for fried eggs, a smoke and a spin on the poker slot machine. Or head to Lake Tahoe for sunbathing on sandy shores come summer and skiing fresh powder on the surrounding mountains in winter. In New Mexico, spunky Santa Fe is not just the USA's oldest capital, it's also its top art destination. Home to an eclectic lot of retired filmmakers and world-class artists, and all adobe architecture, it's the heart and soul of the 'Land of Enchantment.' Santa Fe's little sister, Taos, is almost as hot in the art department, and offers fantastic skiing, green chile beer, delicious food and the most famous Native American pueblo in the state. In Arizona, Phoenix and Tucson boast swank resorts, awesome golfing, big cacti and warm, sunny weather year-round. Places like New Mexico's Truth or Consequences, Arizona's Jerome and Utah's Torrey and Boulder, all filled with New Age crystal

FAST FACTS

Population of AZ, NM, UT, NV & Southwestern CO: 12.5 million

Inflation: 5%

Regional unemployment rate: 4.5%

Miles of lighted neon tubing in Las Vegas: 17

Sprinting speed of a roadrunner: 15mph

Grand Canyon's widest chasm: 18 miles

Annual reported UFO sightings in New Mexico: 400-650

Number of pueblos in New Mexico: 19

Percentage of land that is public in Utah: 65%

Miles of railway track on the Durango to Silverton line: 45

shops, quirky galleries and historic inns, are becoming increasingly popular off-the-grid retreats.

The past is alive in the Southwest, which is as traditional as it is trendy, as rural as it is cosmopolitan and as cultural as it is political. As it's home to a large portion of the USA's Native American population, the story of the American Southwest is not always pretty. But it is as haunting, surreal and mysterious, as beautiful, wild and magical, as the land on which it plays out. The legend of the Wild West has always been America's grandest tale, capturing the fascination and igniting the imagination of writers, photographers, singers, filmmakers and travelers the world around. It's taken on mythical proportions and enticed millions to visit.

Overall, Southwesterners are a friendly lot – people say hello on the streets. They're also low-key – cowboy boots and ties suffice for dress attire here. But don't mistake their easy-going approach to life as a lack of interest in world affairs. Whether they're talking politics over coffee in a neon-lit diner in a dusty Route 66 town or chattering about the area's rapid growth, its lack of water, the ongoing drought and the emasculation of subsistence farming in a Durango wine bar, Southwesterners are an opinioned lot. This is a region, after all, that produced two of the four all-star candidates running in the tightly contested 2008 presidential primaries. New Mexico's Governor Bill Richardson and Utah's Governor Mitch Romney may have dropped out of the race early after losing key states to Hillary, Obama and McCain – who by the way hails from Arizona – but they both displayed the fighting charisma the Southwest is famous for while playing.

Getting Started

How do you envisage your trip? As one-part desert pilgrimage and one part high-rolling party, with a dash of Native American mysticism and a pinch of Wild West thrown in for good measure? Do you see yourself dancing on tables at Las Vegas clubs or riding a mule to the base of the Grand Canyon? How you answer these questions will begin to narrow your choices considerably. And in a place as far and wide as the American Southwest, narrower is usually better.

WHEN TO GO

In northern Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, high season equates to summertime – traditionally from Memorial Day (late May) to Labor Day (early September). Expect higher prices and more crowds, except in hot southern Arizona, where luxury resorts cut their prices in half.

Wintertime visitors flock to the highlands for great skiing. Utah has world-class slopes; New Mexico is also pretty darn good. If you don't enjoy hurtling down snow-covered mountains, head to southern Arizona. Hotels in Phoenix, Tucson and other southern Arizona towns consider winter (Christmas to May) their high (and more expensive) season. While the rest of the country is buried under snowdrifts, southern Arizonans enjoy T-shirt weather most days.

Spring and fall are less crowded, but some services may not be available then. Fall is favored in the mountains of northern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado for admiring golden-leaved aspen trees and cottonwoods. In the springtime, the Sonoran Desert near Tucson in Arizona comes alive with tiny wildflowers and blooming cacti.

Be it Robert Redford's cutting-edge Sundance Film Festival in Utah's Park City in January or the country's largest Native American fair, the Navajo Nation Fair, in Arizona's Window Rock each September, the Southwest is filled with festivals throughout the year. For more specifics check out p522.

The Southwest conjures up images of searing desert heat, and this is certainly true in many areas. An excellent rule of thumb is to gauge the climate by the altitude. The lower you are, the hotter and drier it will be. Las Vegas, southwestern and south-central Arizona temperatures exceed 100°F (38°C) for weeks on end and occasionally surpass 120°F (49°C). The humidity is low, however, and evaporation helps to cool the body. Nighttime temperatures drop by 20°F or 30°F. Winter temperatures occasionally drop below freezing, but only for a few hours.

COSTS & MONEY

If you camp, share a rental car with another person and plan picnics, your daily expenses can be as low as \$75 per person. Two people staying in budget motels, eating lunch in fast-food Mexican restaurants and enjoying moderate dinners can expect to spend between \$85 and \$120 per person per day.

If you spend ample time in cities (like Sedona, Santa Fe, Las Vegas, Taos and Park City) and stay at a preponderance of historic hotels and character-filled B&Bs, costs edge up to about \$150 per person per day based on traveling with at least two people – not including extras such as lift tickets or Vegas shows. For those occasions when nothing less than a famous resort or spa will suffice, two people will undoubtedly drop \$350 per person per day.

See Climate Charts (p520) for more information.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Comfortable footwear with good traction for scrambling over rocky surfaces.
- Strong sunscreen, high-quality sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat.
- Plenty of layers of clothing – when the sun drops in the mountains, even in summer, it can get cold.
- A great set of road maps (p527) – or better yet a GPS unit in your car.
- Gear for camping and hiking, and reading up on desert survival techniques.
- The sexiest or most outrageous outfit you've ever wanted to wear for anything-goes Vegas.
- Your iPod – fill it with inspiring road-trip songs to pass the time on long drives.
- A bathing suit.
- A travel sleep pillow – preferably down – will make lumpy hotel pillows and nights camping much more comfortable.
- A copy of your passport and driver's license, and phone numbers for your credit cards.
- An open mind and a sense of humor.

Discounts exist, however. To make the most out of your money in this age of rising fuel and food costs try visiting museums on free days and eating at restaurants during happy hour, when many places offer as much as 50% off appetizers – which can be made into a whole dinner – as well as beverages. Families with kids should check for children's menus at restaurants – most dining establishments in this region are kid-friendly and offer discounted meals for children. Many hotels also offer discounts for children – some up to as old as 17, so ask before you shell out extra bucks for your little one's bed. For specifics on booking hotels online, see p517.

Discounts on car rentals and accommodations are also often available to members of the **American Automobile Association** (AAA; ☎ 800-564-6222; www.aaa.com); see p537.

For more on costs, see the Lonely Planet Index on the inside front cover.

HOW MUCH?

National park entry fee

\$10-20

Ski-lift ticket \$50-75

Las Vegas show ticket

\$75-165

Top-shelf margarita

\$7-14

Gas-station tamale \$1.50

TRAVELING RESPONSIBLY

Since our inception in 1973, Lonely Planet has encouraged travelers to tread lightly, travel responsibly and enjoy the serendipitous magic independent travel affords. International travel is growing at a jaw-dropping rate and we still firmly believe in the benefits it can bring, but, as always, we encourage you to consider the impact your visit will have on both the global environment and the local economies, cultures and ecosystems.

In America, 'going green' has become seriously trendy and businesses of all stripes now slap 'We're green!' stickers on their products and services (though many Americans would agree with *The Simpsons Movie* when it calls global warming an 'irritating truth'). For the traveler, determining how ecofriendly a business actually is can be difficult. Thankfully, many resources are springing up. We have recommended ecofriendly businesses and highlighted local green initiatives throughout this guide; see the GreenDex (p565) for listings.

Please be sensitive to regional cultures and traditions, especially when travelling on Native American land. Always ask before taking photographs and remember that many native dances and ceremonies are not open to the public. For more on Native American customs, see p54.

To Drive or Not to Drive

Where adequate public transportation exists, taking it rather than renting a car will decrease your carbon footprint. But realistically a car is often a necessity in the Southwest, so choose ecofriendly cars when available (ask the majors – they’re getting them!). You can drive ecofriendly if you rent in Phoenix, AZ: **EV Rental Cars** (www.evrental.com) at Sky Harbor International Airport specializes in hybrid and electric cars. The auto association **Better World Club** (www.betterworldclub.com) supports environmental legislation and also offers ecofriendly services. If your car is outfitted to take biodiesel there are more gas stations offering this option each year – at the time of research most of these stations were in the larger metropolitan areas, especially in environmentally proactive New Mexico.

Note that Amtrak runs trains across Arizona and New Mexico and across Nevada, Utah and Colorado (although not north–south between states). See p535 for details.

Responsible Travel Schemes

Sustainable travel is more than making ‘green’ choices; it’s a way of interacting as you walk. It’s practicing low-impact hiking and camping. It’s perhaps adding volunteering to a vacation. It’s also simply learning about your destinations and their cultures and understanding the challenges they face. The following websites provide further advice on traveling sustainably:

Climatecrisis.net (www.climatecrisis.net) Official website for the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*; offers carbon-offset programs, advice and loads of info.

Go Nomad (www.gonomad.com) Ecotours worldwide, including the Southwest.

Green Hotel Association (www.greenhotels.com) Ecofriendly hotels throughout the Southwest.

Greenprint Denver (www.greenprintdenver.org) Green travel in Colorado.

National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations (www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable) Promotes ‘geotourism’ with its Geocharter maps; currently three in the US, including Arizona’s Sonoran Desert.

Sustainable Arizona (www.sustainablearizona.net) Green travel statewide.

Sustainable New Mexico (www.sustainablenewmexico.org) Ecofriendly travel.

Sustainable Travel International (www.sustainabletravelinternational.org) Ecoguides, tour bookings and carbon-offset schemes.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Before heading off, pick up some books to help inspire your trip.

Jack Ruby’s Kitchen Sink: Offbeat Travels Through America’s Southwest by Tom Miller is a quirky read to accompany your own odyssey. *Traveler’s Tales: American Southwest*, a collection of regional essays, will infuse your impending adventure with a forthcoming richness.

Barbara Kingsolver’s novel *Animal Dreams* yields wonderful insights into a small Hispanic village near the Arizona–New Mexico border and from a Pueblo Indian. *House Made of Dawn*, a Pulitzer Prize winner by Kiowa novelist and poet N Scott Momaday, is about a Pueblo Indian’s struggle to return home after fighting in WWII.

For great chick lit that really gives you a feel for the land, adventures, people and even dogs of the Southwest, check out any of Pam Houston’s books. We especially like *Waltzing the Cat* and *Cowboys Are my Weakness*. Both are filled with funny, sometimes sad, stories about love lost and found in the great outdoors.

The region doesn’t suffer from a drought of inspired writers; for more on Southwestern literature, see p50.

TOP 10



FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Southwesterners really know how to throw a party. Whether it involves food or dance (probably both together), or aliens and music (probably not simultaneously), you're bound to find fun. For more comprehensive listings, check the individual towns and p522.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Sundance Film Festival (Park City, UT; p503), January 2 Winterfest (Park City, UT; p503), February 3 Green Jell-O Sculpture Competition (Springdale, UT; p469), March 4 World Series of Poker (Las Vegas, NV; p118), June to July 5 Telluride Bluegrass Festival (Telluride, CO; p398), June | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Solar Music Festival (Taos, NM; p341), June 7 Santa Fe Indian Market (Santa Fe, NM; p318), August 8 Sedona Jazz on the Rocks (Sedona, AZ; p185), September 9 International Balloon Fiesta (Albuquerque, NM; p297), October 10 Hellorado Days (Tombstone, AZ; p251), October |
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LANDSCAPES & PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Upon gazing at a crested butte silhouetted at sunset or dawn breaking over the Grand Canyon, only then will you understand the true meaning of the word 'awesome.' It's no exaggeration to say that jaw-dropping scenery blankets the entire region, but for particularly scenic drives, check out each state's Scenic Routes section. And keep your camera ready.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Grand Canyon National Park (AZ; p198) 2 Monument Valley (AZ; p224) 3 Canyon de Chelly National Monument (AZ; p224) 4 Mesa Verde National Park (CO; p391) 5 White Sands National Monument (NM; p369) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Chaco Culture National Historical Park (NM; p348) 7 Bryce Canyon National Park (UT; p453) 8 Zion National Park (UT; p463) 9 Arches National Park (UT; p436) 10 Canyonlands National Park (UT; p421) |
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KILLER MARGARITAS

With the exception of Utah, where a stiff drink is hard to come by, the margarita is a staple on nearly every Southwestern cocktail menu (see p65). They're served frozen, on the rocks or straight up, and flavored versions are also popular.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ore House (Santa Fe, NM; p324) 2 Cowgirl BBQ & Western Grill (Santa Fe, NM; p323) 3 Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe (Lake Tahoe, NV; p148) 4 El Charro Café (Tucson, AZ; p242) 5 La Roca Restaurant (Nogales, AZ; p249) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Coyote Café (Santa Fe, NM; p323) 7 Adobe Bar (Taos, NM; p340) 8 Cowboy Club (Sedona, AZ; p187) 9 Isla Mexican Kitchen (Las Vegas, NV; p123) 10 Pancho McGillicuddy's (Williams, AZ; p262) |
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INTERNET RESOURCES

American Southwest (www.americansouthwest.net) Arguably the most comprehensive site for national parks and natural landscapes of the Southwest.

Arizona Highways (www.arizonahighways.com) Online version of the glossy magazine with weekend getaways and photography tips; information on local flora and fauna too.

Film New Mexico (www.filmnm.com) Where to get the lowdown on moviemaking in New Mexico, including shoot locations for released feature films, extra casting calls for current productions and a section dedicated to green filmmaking.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Succinct summaries, travel news, links and the Thorn Tree bulletin board.

Notes from the Road (www.notesfromtheroad.com) Click on Desert Southwest to enter another world; it'll be hard to return.

Roadtrip America (www.roadtripamerica.com) This site covers the entire USA, but offers a host of classic road trips in the Southwest and includes tips on dining, fuel calculation costs and much more.

Visit Las Vegas (www.visitlasvegas.com) An inclusive site as flashy as the city itself, brought to you by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

VEGAS, GRAND CANYON & SOUTHERN UTAH LOOP Two Weeks

When you only have enough time for a short loop, this tour offers the chance to get a taste of the Southwest's most famous city, canyon and scenery. Start in **Las Vegas** (p102) and dedicate a few days to going around the world on the Strip. When you've soaked up as much delirious decadence as you can stand, head east to canyon country. **Grand Canyon** (p198) country, that is. You'll want to dedicate a couple of days to exploring America's most famous park. Descend into the South Rim chasm on the back of a mule and spend the night at Phantom Ranch on the canyon floor for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

From the Grand Canyon head northeast through **Monument Valley** (p224), with scenery straight out of a Hollywood Western, to the national parks in Utah's southeast corner – they're some of the most visually orgasmic in the country. Hike the shape-shifting slot canyons of **Canyonlands National Park** (p421), watch the sunset in **Arches National Park** (p436) or mountain bike sick slickrock outside **Moab** (p428). Drive one of the most spectacular stretches of pavement, **Highway 12** (p448), west until it hooks up with I-15 and takes you back to Las Vegas.

This 1000-mile loop takes you to the Southwest's most iconic landmarks, including Sin City and the Grand Canyon. And with scenery straight out of a John Wayne flick – think crumbling buttes, crimson arches and painted rainbow deserts – it offers enough outdoor diversions to keep you from getting carsick.



GRAND TOUR**Three Weeks to One Month**

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 on the **Las Vegas Strip** (p107) before receiving some kicks on **Route 66** (p255) between **Kingman** (p257) and **Williams** (p260). Kick back in funky **Flagstaff** (p189), before venturing deep into the **Grand Canyon National Park** (p198). Shine your spirit in **Sedona** (p181) before getting in touch with your shabby-chic side in **Jerome** (p178). Visit the Heard Museum in **Phoenix** (p153), mellow out at **Saguaro National Park** (p238), and hang out in collegiate **Tucson** (p234). Fancy yourself a gunslinger in **Tombstone** (p250) before settling into charming **Bisbee** (p252). Head east for wild camping in remote **White Sands National Monument** (p369), with sprawling dunes as pure as driven snow. Watch bats swoop from caves at **Carlsbad Caverns National Park** (p378). Ponder little green men landing near **Roswell** (p373) before sinking into **Santa Fe** (p306), a foodie haven and magnet for art mavens. Feel tomorrow's science at **Los Alamos** (p304) and yesterday's civilization at **Bandelier National Monument** (p304). Hang with hippies and ski with bums in **Taos** (p332), before driving the luscious **Enchanted Circle** (p344). Chill out in laid-back **Durango** (p386), then explore ancient civilizations at **Mesa Verde National Park** (p391). Scoot through **Monument Valley** (p224), then head to the most stunning collection of national parks in the US. Visit a park a day or spend a few days in two or three parks, including **Canyonlands National Park** (p421) and **Arches National Park** (p436), for which **Moab** (p426) serves as a staging area. From Moab follow **Highway 12** (p448) back to Las Vegas, stopping at **Capitol Reef National Park** (p443), **Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument** (p450), the spires of **Bryce Canyon National Park** (p453) and the sheer red rock walls at **Zion National Park** (p463) along the way.



Gas up the car, crank up the stereo and get ready for the best road trip in the entire USA. From the wildest national parks and the swankiest art colonies, to the most ancient Native American cultures and woolly Western folklore, it's all here, connected by dozens of scenic byways. Expect to drive about 2750 miles.

FOUR CORNERS/NATIVE AMERICAN JOURNEY**10 Days**

Start in **Durango** (p386) and spend a day exploring the historic old mining town. Ride the narrow-gauge railway to **Silverton** (p405) the next day, returning to spend the evening eating and drinking in one of Durango's pleasant microbreweries. Next head to the haunting ruins at **Mesa Verde National Park** (p391), where you can hike and learn about the region's fascinating history. From Mesa Verde head toward Arizona and stop at the **Four Corners Monument** (p226) to snap a picture with your hands and feet in four different states. Head into New Mexico to ogle at **Shiprock** (p353), a stunning, ragged red rock formation. Spend your fourth night here. Begin the dusty and rutted drive to isolated **Chaco Culture National Historical Park** (p348), arguably the most notable architectural sight in the entire region. Sleep near **Window Rock** (p226), the capital of the **Navajo Reservation** (p221), where you can visit the Navajo Nation Museum and its tribal library. Stop at the old-world commercial hub of the region, the **Hubbell Trading Post** (p226), which served as the reservation's lifeline when it was established in the 1870s. Detour (65 miles each way) over to Second Mesa and the heart of the **Hopi Reservation** (p227), where you will find artisans and the Hopi Cultural Center. Make your way into the relatively verdant **Canyon de Chelly National Monument** (p224), an inhabited and cultivated canyon complete with hogans and herds of sheep. Hold onto your hat and lift your jaw off the floor as you approach the out-of-this-world beautiful **Monument Valley** (p224). Continue driving north to **Mexican Hat** (p418) in Utah to drink in the grandeur.

Take a photo of Four Corners then hightail it out to beautiful buttes and majestic mesas, ride narrow-gauge railways, explore ancient Native American ruins, shop for turquoise jewels at trading posts or hike some great trails. This trip is 725 miles.



HISTORIC ROUTE 66

One Week

Route 66 aficionados will love driving the Mother Road through Arizona and New Mexico, with long uninterrupted stretches where you can still get a real taste of old-school motoring. Start in little **Topock** (p256) on the California border. Stop and check out the gorge – a dramatic walled canyon and one of the prettiest cut by the Colorado River. The highway runs uninterrupted from Topock to Seligman, which at about 125 miles is the longest remaining stretch in the country. First up is gunslinging **Oatman** (p257), where you can relive wilder days dancing in an old saloon. Cruise through the mining settlement of **Kingman** (p257), the route's main hub. Detour to the little outpost of **Chloride** (p259) for an almost ghost-town experience before heading to **Seligman** (p260), home to 1950s billboards and old motor court hotels. You'll find another vintage 1950s downtown in **Williams** (p260), along with a railroad that goes to **Grand Canyon National Park** (p198) – this makes a great driving break and is an easy way to see the Grand Canyon if you don't have ages of time to drive. From Williams continue down 'America's Main St' to the college town of **Flagstaff** (p189), where the heart of the old west still ticks, and on toward windblown **Winslow** (p263). Pass through **Holbrook** (p263) – there's not much to see – and detour to the **Petrified Forest National Park** (p264), home to 225-million-year-old giant fossilized trees. Next, it's onward to New Mexico. Stop in **Gallup** (p270), the trading epicenter for the Zuni and Navajo Reservations, which also has some sick mountain biking. Then head to feisty **Albuquerque** (p288): the state's largest city and most underrated attraction. Cruise east to **Santa Rosa** (p279), home to the state's best scuba-diving site and the classic Route 66 Auto Museum. The last stop, **Tucumcari** (p280), upholds the mythology of Route 66 with perfection.



A trip along Route 66 – the 'Mother Road' – reveals Americana at its most iconic and nostalgic. And with about 750 miles of pavement between them, Arizona and New Mexico dish up the longest uninterrupted stretches of the country's most famous old east-west highway.

ROADS LESS TRAVELED

WILD WEST TOWNS & OPEN ROADS

Following the outlaw trail from the bottom of Arizona to the heartland of Nevada is one hell of an off-the-grid road trip as long as you don't mind lots of time behind the wheel. Start your journey in **Bisbee** (p252), a perfectly preserved Wild West town. Take a day trip to remote and hauntingly beautiful **Chiricahua National Monument** (p226) for a bit of hiking, before hitting touristy **Tombstone** (p250), home of the famous shoot-out at the OK Corral. From here it's a long haul – although the scenery is mesmerizing for much of the way – northwest on Hwy 10 through **Tucson** (p234) and **Phoenix** (p153) to Hwy 89 north. Follow the scenic byway through ragged mountains to charming **Jerome** (p178), a rough-and-tumble mining town turned artists enclave. Spend the night in a funky B&B, then drive gorgeous Hwy 89A north to New Age **Sedona** (p181) to channel some of the earth's energy and soak up the red rock scenery. When you've had your fill, continue north on Hwy 89 and follow it through Grand Canyon and Navajo country into Utah. Stop at the spectacularly scenic **Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument** (p450), then continue north until you reach US Hwy 50. Dubbed the 'Loneliest Road in America' for good reason, US Hwy 50 traverses wild, mostly empty, landscape of rolling brown hills and arid valleys – it's the kind of place where the road goes on forever. Stop at **Great Basin National Park** (p140) for awesome hiking before continuing west to **Virginia City** (p146). Once a rip-roaring Wild West boomtown, today it's a charming place of wooden sidewalks and Victorian buildings that makes a great ending point for this epic road trip.

The heart of the Wild West still beats strong along this 960-mile trail that once served as a footpath for the wickedest criminals in the land. Here lonely highways thread through big country, passing a number of charming old mining towns along the way.



TAILORED TRIPS

PARKS & NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

The crown jewel of all American parks, **Grand Canyon National Park** (p198) simply must not be missed. And anyone with more than a passing interest in Native American history should head to **Mesa Verde National Park** (p391) to explore ancient cliff dwellings and ponder why and how an entire civilization disappeared in AD 1300. For naturalists, **Saguaro National Park** (p238) features classic scenery: majestic, towering cacti and sandy deserts as far as the eye can see. For the region's best nightlife, visit **Carlsbad Caverns National Park** (p378) at dusk, when thousands of bats swoop from their bat caves. **Bandelier National Monument** (p304) boasts accessible cliff dwellings and hiking near hip Santa Fe. Pick your method of ascension for **Sandia Crest** (p295), which guards Albuquerque. Southern Utah could occupy hikers and road-trippers for a month all by itself. At **Arches National Park** (p436), sweeping sandstone arches frame million-dollar vistas of sky-punching mountain peaks and vast rugged desert. At **Canyonlands National Park** (p421), Utah's biggest and least-visited national park unfurls in a rugged expanse of serpentine canyons, rock fins and red-and-gray striped spires. At **Capitol Reef National Park** (p443), giant yellow sandstone domes cap the top of Waterpocket Fold, a 100-mile-long buckle in the earth's crust.



SOUTHWEST WITH KIDS

Fly into Phoenix, where you can immediately escape the heat and amuse the little ones at one of the city's numerous water parks. Try **Waterworld Safari** (p163), which boasts a six-story-high waterslide. In Tucson, the educational **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum** (p237) is home to local desert animals thriving in their natural habitat. Kids also love **Old Tucson Studios** (p238), once an actual film set and now featuring shoot-outs and Wild West events galore. In **Tombstone** (p250), kids delight at OK Corral shoot-outs and outrageous Boothill Graveyard tombstones. Culture reigns in New Mexico, beginning at Santa Fe's festive **Museum of International Folk Art** (p310), where learning and history are fun. And science has never been more interactive or relevant than at **Explora! Science Center** (p296) in Albuquerque. In Las Vegas, Mandalay Bay's **Shark Reef** (p109) is both exciting and educational for your younger ones, and likely also yourself! Family values are exalted in Mormon culture, which makes Utah a great spot for kids, especially **Salt Lake City** (p485). Or keep them entertained in the great outdoors. Go rafting down the **Colorado River** (p439) or mountain biking around **Moab** (p428). The Olympic town of **Park City** (p500) is attractive for nature walks and horseback rides through meadows of wildflowers, as well as skiing at some of America's best ski resorts.



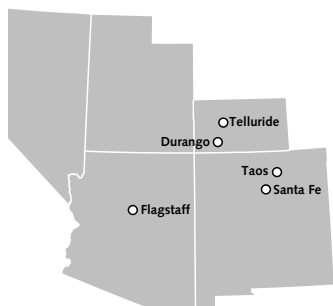
BOTTOMS UP – BREWPUB TOUR

Beer aficionados on the quest for the perfect microbrew can plan an entire holiday around sampling the best of the Southwest's brewpubs. From Wild West saloons to industrial-style warehouses, this region is packed with home-grown breweries where the stouts, lagers, ales and barley wines – which can be as high as 12% alcohol (watch out!) – are made on the premises.

Start your beer tour in **Durango** (p387), the unofficial microbrew capital of the Four Corners region and home to four breweries. Don't miss an afternoon tasting at **Ska Brewing Company** (p389), known for making big, flavorful dark beers. Colorado is known for its microbrews, and Durango is far from the only mountain beer town in this portion of the state. **Smugglers Brewpub & Grille** (p401) in scenic Telluride is another good option.

In Arizona you'll want to visit the college town of Flagstaff, where there are multiple breweries, including **Flagstaff Brewing Company** (p196), known for handcrafted brews and live music in a rustic skilodge atmosphere. The **Mogollon Brewing Company** (p196) is another long-standing favorite.

Northern New Mexico is the state's brew mecca, with the best beers coming out of Santa Fe and Taos. The **Second Street Brewery** (p324) in Santa Fe is our favorite place to drink – head to the patio and sample its beer of the month. Or take the high road to Taos and head to cozy **Eske's Brew Pub & Eatery** (p340) for a bottle of green chile beer – now that's a unique-tasting brew!



SOUTHWEST WITH DOGS

The Southwest is a good place to travel with a four-legged friend. There are many pet-friendly cities and wide open spaces in which to play.

Santa Fe is home to one of the most unexpectedly pet-friendly hotels around, the **Ten Thousand Waves** (p321) spa. Your canine companion can choose from various-sized doggie beds, treats and bones, and you can choose from Thai or hot stone massages. In Colorado, **Durango** (p386) was our oversized bulldog Duke's top choice for dog-friendly towns – he couldn't believe how many shops let him take a research break in their air-conditioned interiors (some even provided treats!). Also check out the nearby mountain paradise of **Silverton** (p405), where local dogs patrol the unpaved streets and there are plenty of hiking, fly-fishing, swimming and camping opportunities for you and your pet. Speaking of spectacular scenery, your furry friend will also appreciate the fabulous views and wide open spaces of **Monument Valley** (p224).

In Arizona, **Kaibab National Forest** (p211) is akin to a giant dog park, with plenty of off-leash trails and good scents to follow. While in the area, check out mystical **Sedona** (p181) – the energy towards pets is as positive as it is towards people, and several of the top-end resorts vie for your business with outrageous pet pampering packages.

Kanab (p472), in Utah, is possibly the most pet-friendly town in the Southwest. Virtually all the hotels welcome dogs and offer treats upon check-in. The town is home to the Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, which is featured on the TV show *Dogtown*, and also known for adopting Michael Vick's abused pit bulls.



On the Road



BECCA BLOND Coordinating Author

My bulldog Duke and I are diligently researching Silverton, CO, here. We've detoured to this spot by the river to check out the stupendous views and sage scents. Duke ranks Silverton as his favorite town for its liberal attitude towards his canine kinfolk.



SARA BENSON Ah, the joys of being a guidebook writer. When it's blusteringly bad weather outside, all you can do is hole up in your hotel room, or if you're lucky enough to be researching Nevada, the nearest casino to play some poker or blackjack until the storm rolls by.



LISA DUNFORD Dangling from a rope above a 50ft drop is something I've always wanted to do. Canyoneering rappels, down-climbing and squeezing through narrow slot canyons north of Zion National Park proved easy to learn from my apt guide. What I had trouble with was climbing up to start!



ANDREA SCHULTE-PEEVERS

There's something intensely spiritual about the Southwest. The haunting beauty of rock formations. Silent desert where only the unseen wind moves. Cliff villages built by peoples who vanished long ago. Forests where the Apaches hid and hunted. It's a land of ancient murmurings, and if you sit very still, they will speak to you.

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