



Southwest

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Best Places to Eat

- Elote Cafe (p347)
- Hell's Backbone (p380)
- Love Apple (p400)
- Cafe Roka (p364)
- Raku (p323)

Best Places to Stay

- Ellis Store Country Inn (p407)
- El Tovar Hotel (p352)
- Motor Lodge (p348)
- St Regis Deer Valley (p372)
- Vdara (p320)

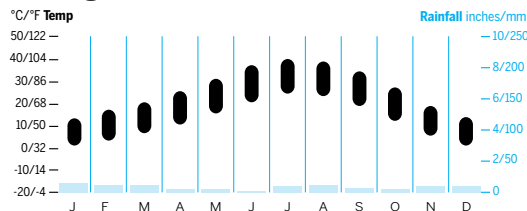
Why Go?

The Southwest is America's untamed backyard, where life plays out before a stunning backdrop of red rocks, lofty peaks, shimmering lakes and deserts dotted with saguaros (cacti). Reminders of the region's multicultural beginnings and hardscrabble past dot the landscape, from curious pictographs and abandoned cliff dwellings to crumbling missions and rusty mining towns. Today, history-making continues, with astronomers and rocket builders peering into star-filled skies while artists and entrepreneurs flock to urban centers and quirky mountain towns, energizing the region.

The best part for travelers? A splendid network of scenic drives linking the most beautiful and iconic sites. But remember: it's not just iconic, larger-than-life landscapes that make a trip through the Southwest memorable. Study that saguaro up close. Ask a Hopi artist about his craft. Savor some green-chile stew. It's the tap-you-on-the-shoulder moments you may just cherish the most.

When to Go

Las Vegas



Jan Ski near Taos and Flagstaff. In Park City, hit the slopes and the Sundance Film Festival.

Jun–Aug High season for exploring national parks in New Mexico, Utah and northern Arizona.

Sep–Nov Hike to the bottom of the Grand Canyon or gaze at bright leaves in northern New Mexico.

DON'T MISS

A hike in the desert. Your choices? The Sonoran, Chihuahuan and Great Basin.

Fast Facts

➔ **Hub cities** Las Vegas (population 596,400), Phoenix (population 1.4 million), Salt Lake City (population 189,314)

➔ **Las Vegas to Grand Canyon National Park South Rim** 280 miles

➔ **Los Angeles to Albuquerque** 670 miles

➔ **Time zones** Nevada (Pacific), Arizona (Mountain, does not observe DST), Utah (Mountain), New Mexico (Mountain)

Did You Know?

Flash floods can occur from mid-July to early September. Avoid camping on sandy washes and canyon bottoms; don't drive across flooded roads. If hiking, move quickly to higher ground.

Resources

➔ **Public Lands Information Center**

(www.publiclands.org) Descriptions, maps and book recommendations.

➔ **Grand Canyon Association** (www.grandcanyon.org) Extensive online bookstore.

➔ **Recreation.gov** (www.recreation.gov) Reservations for camping and activities at nationally run outdoor areas.

Getting There & Around

Las Vegas' McCarran International Airport and Phoenix' Sky Harbor International Airport are the region's busiest airports, followed by the airports serving Salt Lake City, Albuquerque and Tucson.

Greyhound stops at major points within the region but doesn't serve all national parks or off-the-beaten-path towns such as Moab. In larger cities, bus terminals can be in less-safe areas of town. Private vehicles are often the only means to reach out-of-the-way towns, trailheads and swimming spots.

Amtrak train service is much more limited than the bus system, although it does link many major cities and offers bus connections to others (including Santa Fe and Phoenix). The *California Zephyr* crosses Utah and Nevada; the *Southwest Chief* stops in Arizona and New Mexico; and the *Sunset Limited* traverses southern Arizona and New Mexico.

NATIONAL & STATE PARKS

Containing 50 national parks and monuments, the Southwest is a scenic and cultural jackpot. Add several stunning state parks, and, well, you might need to extend your trip.

One of the most deservedly popular national parks is Arizona's Grand Canyon National Park (p348). Other Arizona parks include Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park (p357), a desert basin with towering sandstone pillars and buttes; Canyon de Chelly National Monument (p356), with ancient cliff dwellings; Petrified Forest National Park (p357), with its odd mix of Painted Desert and fossilized logs; and Saguaro National Park (p359), with pristine desert and giant cacti.

The southern red-rock Canyon Country in Utah includes five national parks: Arches (p377), Canyonlands (p378), Zion (p382), Bryce Canyon (p381) and Capitol Reef (p379), which offers exceptional wilderness solitude. Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (p380) is a mighty region of undeveloped desert. New Mexico boasts Carlsbad Caverns National Park (p407) and the mysterious Chaco Culture National Historic Park (p401). In Nevada, Great Basin National Park (p332) is a rugged, remote mountain oasis. For more information, check out the National Park Service website (www.nps.gov).

Top Five Day Hikes

- ➔ **Angels Landing** Zion National Park, UT
- ➔ **Winsor Trail** Santa Fe, NM
- ➔ **Navajo Loop** Bryce Canyon National Park, UT
- ➔ **South Kaibab Trail to Cedar Ridge** (p349) South Rim, Grand Canyon, AZ
- ➔ **Cape Final** North Rim, Grand Canyon, AZ