



CENTRAL ARIZONA

1 DAY ONE – SEDONA – SOUL-STIRRING. JAW-DROPPING. UNDENIABLY SEDONA.

Drive Phoenix ► Sedona 2hrs

What to do

In Sedona, the views show off, and you don't mind one bit. Towering red rock formations glow in shades of copper and crimson, shifting with the light as if they know you're watching. Cruise scenic **Oak Creek Canyon** (Hwy 89A), picnic or wander at **Red Rock State Park**, or cool off at **Slide Rock State Park** — Arizona's natural water slide (go early unless you enjoy a parking challenge). Then meander through cobblestone walkways at **Tlaquepaque Arts & Shopping Village**, discovering unique boutiques and art galleries.

visitarizona.com/places/cities/sedona

Where to stay

Enchantment Resort: Tucked into Boynton Canyon, Enchantment Resort delivers private casitas, sweeping red rock views, and a celebrity-worthy stay that feels effortlessly elevated. A true splurge, and one that earns it as the first and only Forbes Five-Star wellness resort in North America, complete with the newly reimagined Mii Amo spa. enchantmentresort.com

Ambiente: Stargaze on your own private rooftop terrace (complete with day bed and firepit) during your stay in one of Ambiente's 40 glass-walled atriums. This adults-only retreat was designed for unparalleled Red Rock views and features a restored ancient waterway that winds through the grounds. ambientesedona.com

Where to dine

Indian Gardens: Visiting Slide Rock State Park or taking the Highway 89 scenic route? This rustic little canyon gem is an ideal lunch spot that serves up sandwiches on freshly baked bread, inventive soups and salads, and craft coffee - all beneath shady sycamores that make it very easy to lose track of time.

indiangardens.com

Elote Cafe: You're in the heart of Sedona...and somehow also wandering the fragrant alleys of a Mexican street market. Helmed by a Oaxacan-trained chef, Elote Cafe combines farm-sourced southwestern flavors with Mexican cuisine. Don't miss sipping on their flights of fine tequilas and mezcals! elotecafe.com (also see Elote Cafe on the Luxury itinerary)

RED ROCK STATE PARK



TLAQUEPAQUE ARTS & SHOPPING VILLAGE



ELOTE CAFE



ENCHANTMENT RESORT



2 DAY TWO – JEROME & VERDE VALLEY – A GHOST TOWN WITH A VERY LIVELY SPIRIT

Drive Sedona ➤ Jerome 45 mins

Drive Jerome ➤ Cottonwood 20 mins

What to do

Head 5,000 feet up Mingus Mountain to **Jerome**, a former copper boomtown turned living ghost town. Start at **Jerome State Historic Park**, a 1916 mansion-turned-museum packed with mining history, then visit the **Jerome Grand Hotel**. Main Street and Hull Avenue twist through a vertical maze of old storefronts, steep stairways, and views that drop straight into the Verde Valley. Quirky and completely unforgettable. Wear comfortable shoes and note that this destination is not accessibility friendly.

Don't forget your binoculars — or your canoe: We're heading to **Dead Horse Ranch State Park** in Cottonwood next. Birders can spy their next lifer with more than a 100 species flocking to the Verde River. If you're more of a wine-drinker you can check out the tasting rooms in Cottonwood's Old Town, while strollers will love the Jail Trail River Walk's waterside views.

Just when you think Arizona can't surprise you, you land in the Verde Valley, where wine country, river adventures, and small-town charm share the same stretch of road. Sip your way through the Verde Valley Wine Trail (yes, Arizona wine is legit). Then hop aboard the **Verde Canyon Railroad** for a four-hour ride through canyon views only accessible by train. Feeling fancy? Book a private caboose with outside balcony access.

This is the kind of stop you plan as a quick break and end up talking about later. At **Montezuma Castle National Monument**, you're looking at a 700-year-old, 20-room cliff dwelling tucked 90 feet up a limestone wall. It's shockingly well preserved, and somehow even more impressive in person. Have a little extra time? Visit Montezuma Well, a natural sinkhole that pumps 1.5 million gallons of water a day, with ancient irrigation canals still visible and almost no crowds. Even better: it's home to five species found nowhere else on Earth, thriving in water so unusual that fish can't survive.

Where to stay:

The Tavern Inn (Cottonwood) is a charming Old Town boutique that offers "Sip & Stay Packages" for wine-trail adventurers, including complimentary tastings! Bring all your girls or the whole family: They have cozy cottages in addition to rooms and suites. Four-legged besties are welcome to chill as well in their specially decorated dog-friendly units. thetavernhotel.com

The **Iron Horse Inn** (Cottonwood) began as a motor court motel in the 1930s and is now a welcoming stay in the heart of Cottonwood's Old Town. It's a great spot to lay your head before heading out for early-morning birding hikes. ironhorseoldtown.com

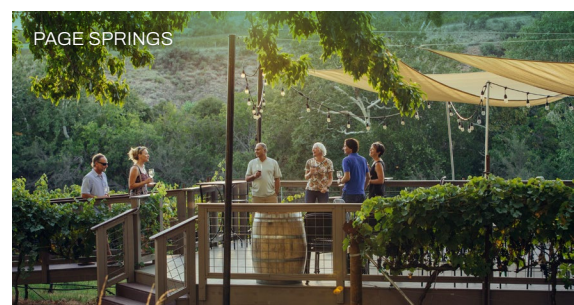
Where to dine:

Haunted Hamburger (Jerome): A little spooky, a lot delicious. This Jerome staple is in a historic building dating back to the town's mining era and serves up great burgers and killer views, with a side of ghost stories. thehauntedhamburger.com

Page Springs Cellars (Cornville): One of the most awarded wineries in the state, it has a tasting room that opens onto the banks of picturesque Oak Creek, where sipping a glass comes with flowing water, shaded tables, and zero urgency. pagespringscellars.com

Take the tram past terraced lines of grapevines to dine on the hilltop **Merkin Vineyards Trattoria** (Cottonwood). The restaurant shares grounds with their 9,500 square-foot production facility. The ultimate pairing: A farm-to-table Italian feast with a tour of their barrel room, greenhouse and vineyard. merkintrattoria.com

Committed brunch-goers will find patio bliss at **Crema Craft Kitchen & Bar** (Cottonwood). Old bootlegging tunnels run below the kitchen's historic locale, but their hefty Famous Haunted Hamburger Bloody Mary is surprisingly legal. Open every day until 2 p.m., with walk-up window service until 3 p.m. cremacottonwood.com



3 DAY THREE – PRESCOTT & WICKENBURG – WHERE THE OLD WEST NEVER REALLY LEFT

Drive Cottonwood ➤ Prescott 1 hr 45 mins

Drive Prescott ➤ Wickenburg 1 hr 25 mins

What to do

In **Prescott**, you get crisp, pine-scented air and a town that leans confidently into its past. At 5,400 feet (and Arizona's original capital), it blends Victorian charm with Wild West edge. Wander tree-lined streets and view beautifully restored historic homes, then head to **Whiskey Row**, where saloons have been pouring since the 1860s, and yes, some stories involve Wyatt Earp. Grab a seat at **The Palace Restaurant & Saloon** (est. 1877), then balance it out with fresh air — 400+ miles of trails or a visit to **Watson Lake**, where granite boulders rise from turquoise water. Or keep it simple: a courthouse square stroll and a bed-and-breakfast stay that feels like time travel...with better coffee. visitarizona.com/places/cities/prescott

Next head down to **Wickenburg** — aka the Dude Ranch Capital of the World. Just far enough from Phoenix to feel like you've stepped into a different century (in the best way). Out here, the West isn't a theme; it's the default. Think horseback trails over traffic, creosote-scented desert air, and a town that wears its history without over-polishing it. Stay awhile and lean into ranch life, slow mornings, open skies, zero rush. Or keep it casual with a dose of Western art and a walk through the cool, shady calm of the **Hassayampa River Preserve**, a birder's paradise.

visitarizona.com/places/cities/wickenburg or

visitarizona.com/directory/hassayampa-river-preserve-hiking-trails

Where to stay:

Hotel St. Michael (Prescott): Set in the heart of Whiskey Row, Hotel St. Michael blends turn-of-the-century charm with front-row access to Prescott's dining, nightlife, and Courthouse Plaza. stmichaelhotel.com

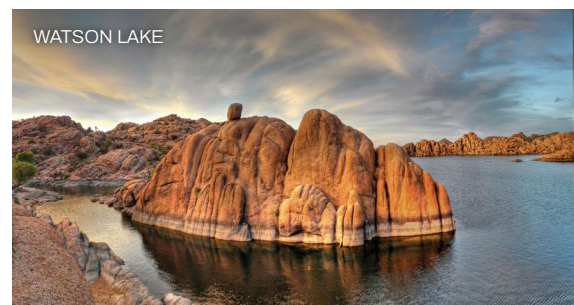
Rancho de los Caballeros (Wickenburg): Saddle up for a stay where horseback riding, golf, spa days, and ranch life all share the same wide-open horizon. www.ranchodeloscaballeros.com

Where to dine:

The Peacock Room (Prescott): Dine in style at The Peacock Room at Hassayampa Inn, a 1920s Art Deco gem tucked inside Prescott's historic 1927 hotel. With a hand-painted ceiling and a reputation as the city's top fine-dining spot, it's as much about the setting as it is the meal. hassayampainn.com/dining

Rancho Bar 7 (Wickenburg): You're not just grabbing a classic, craveable, and unapologetically hearty meal; you're stepping into one of Arizona's oldest continuously operating bars, dating back to the 1860s. The original wooden bar still stands, saddles double as seats, and the whole place gives off strong "this bar has stories" energy.

Facebook.com/RanchoBar7



WATSON LAKE



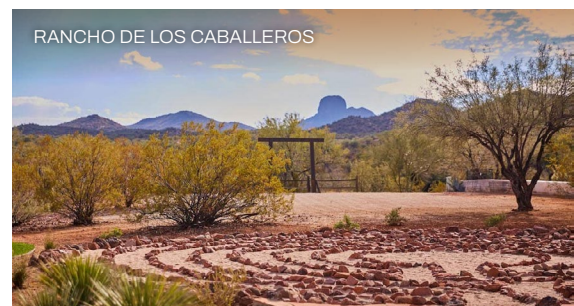
THE PALACE RESTAURANT & SALOON



DOWNTOWN WICKENBURG



HASSAYAMPA RIVER PRESERVE



RANCHO DE LOS CABALLEROS

4 DAY FOUR – PAYSON AND THE MOGOLLON RIM – HIGH COUNTRY COOL

Drive Wickenburg ➤ Payson 2 hrs 25 mins

Drive Payson ➤ Phoenix 1hr 45 mins

What to do

Just when you think Arizona is all red rocks and cactus, it flips the script. Head north to Payson, where cool mountain air and the world's largest ponderosa pine forest take over. This is also home to the **World's Oldest Continuous Rodeo**, so if the timing's right, you can lean fully into your inner cowboy.

From here, head to the Mogollon Rim, where sweeping, 2,000-foot drop-offs seem to go on forever. Stop at **Tonto Natural Bridge State Park**, home to a massive travertine bridge tucked into a canyon that still feels like a hidden find (hike it or drive down if you're pacing yourself). Or swap in a different kind of adventure at **Woods Canyon Lake**, perfect for hiking, fishing, or paddleboarding.

visitarizona.com/places/cities/payson

paysonprorodeo.com

azstateparks.com/tonto

woodscanyonlakeaz.com

Where to stay:

Situated at the base of the Mogollon Rim, the **Majestic Mountain Inn** is surrounded by picture-perfect natural scenery with mountain trails, streams and canyons to explore. There's a reason it's called majestic. majesticmountaininn.com

Soak up the cool breezes and even better views at one of the Rim's many **campsites**. There are developed campgrounds with services or free, dispersed options for the pack-in-and-pack-out crowd. Either way, be on the lookout for gorgeous sunsets ... and a black bear here and there! Visit AppreciateAZ.com before your trip to make sure you are prepared. recreation.gov

Mogollon Rim visitors have been appreciating **Christopher Creek Lodge**'s tranquil location since 1953. The only hotel directly on Christopher Creek, the rustic rooms, cabins, and bunkhouses make a comfortable basecamp for hiking, fishing, or just relaxing fireside. christophercreeklodge.com

Where to dine:

If you like your cinnamon rolls giant and your pancakes stacked tall, look no further than **Pinon Cafe** (Payson). Pull off Beeline Highway to sate your appetite with Southern-style, from-scratch breakfast and lunch platters. pinoncafe.com

Arizona adventurers: Refuel on the sprawling patio at **Rim Country BBQ & Wood-Fired Pizza** (Payson). Payson's Main Street pitmasters have smoking down to a science — and the awards to prove it! rimcountrybbq.com

