



## Top 8 Things to Do in Prescott, Arizona

### 1. Courthouse Plaza

Start your visit at the Courthouse Plaza, a historic square that serves as the heart of Prescott's downtown area.

Prescott was founded as the Territorial Capital of Arizona in 1864 and this two block city square was set aside for government use. Three years later the Yavapai County Courthouse was built in the center of the square.

Over the years, the Courthouse underwent several renovations and expansions to accommodate the growing needs of the community.

The Classical Revival-style courthouse that stands today was constructed in 1916 and is considered one of the oldest public buildings in Arizona.

Visitors are free to enter the building during operating hours and you'll find historical exhibits on the first floor.

The Courthouse Plaza that surrounds the Yavapai County Courthouse is a beautiful community space that was even named one of the Ten Great Public Spaces of 2008 by The American Planning Association.

The plaza is a central gathering place and hosts a variety of events throughout the year, such as the Courthouse Christmas Lighting Ceremony, arts & crafts shows, music festivals, cultural celebrations, and the Frontier Days festivities.

While you're walking around the plaza, be sure to stop and see the Statehood Tree. This Deodar Cedar tree was planted on February 14, 1912, the same day Arizona became the 48th

state of the United States.

You will also find a Centennial Tree that was planted on Arizona's 100-year anniversary.

The Courthouse Plaza also features several statues of noteworthy citizens who impacted Prescott's history.

The Bucky O'Neill statue is dedicated to William "Bucky" O'Neill, a Rough Rider and one of the first to volunteer for Theodore Roosevelt's famous regiment during the Spanish-American War.

The Thomas J. Butler statue honors a prominent early pioneer and businessman in Prescott who played a crucial role in the development of the community.

You'll also find the Yavapai County Fallen Officer Memorial dedicated to officers who lost their lives in the line of duty.

The Veteran's Memorial is dedicated to the veterans of Yavapai county for their sacrifice while in the service of their country in WWI.

## 2. Whiskey Row

Whiskey Row is a historic district located on Montezuma Street right across from Courthouse Plaza.

During the gold rush and mining boom in the late 19th century, it became famous for its Wild West atmosphere and the rowdy, adventurous spirit that defined the area.

At its peak, it was home to over 40 saloons and gambling halls, which is how it earned the nickname "Whiskey Row".

The Palace Saloon is the most famous establishment on Whiskey Row with a history that dates back to 1877 and was one of Doc Holliday's favorite watering holes.

The original building was destroyed in the devastating fire of 1900 that was started by a miner's candle. Fortunately, the saloon was quickly rebuilt in the same location.

The Palace Saloon is recognized as Arizona's oldest frontier saloon and has named one of the 10 Best Historic Bars in America by *USA Today*.

Today, visitors can step back in time while enjoying a drink at the historic bar surrounded by memorabilia and artifacts. You'll even find the original carved wooden bar.

If you're hungry, try the Palace Pulled Pork Sliders, Whiskey Row Street Tacos, or Rough Rider Ribeye.

Another historic saloon on Whiskey Row, The Bird Cage Saloon, has a colorful past and offers a lively atmosphere with live music and entertainment.

The Rusty Spur Saloon is known for its country-western vibe, featuring live music and a dance floor.

A few other notable places to visit on Whiskey Row include St. Michaels Alley which houses a collection of independent shops that contribute to the eclectic charm of the district.

[Hotel St. Michael](#) also stands as a historic cornerstone. The ornate hotel was built in 1901 and was the finest hotel in town.

It even boasted the first elevator in Prescott. Guests can spend the night in this historic hotel, or enjoy a meal at Bistro St. Michael.

If you're looking for more accommodations, [Hotel Vedome](#) is a charming boutique hotel housed in an old historic home.

The [Grand Highland Hotel](#) is an eclectic boutique hotel that is centrally located across from the Courthouse Plaza.

While you're on Whiskey Row, stop by some of the shops, like the Prescott Trading Co. for Western souvenirs.

The Treat Center on Whiskey Row also has homemade fudge, candy apples, salt water taffys, kettle corn popcorn, and more.

If you walk a little further north on Montezuma Street, you'll find "Love Locks" where lovers add a lock to the chain link fence and throw away the key.

The original Love Lock Bridge is located in Paris, France, but over the years they have popped up around the world. You can even find one here in Prescott!

If you are fascinated by the history of old frontier towns, be sure to visit the nearby town of [Jerome](#) and [Cottonwood](#), as well as [Bisbee](#), and [Tombstone](#).

We also have a guide that includes [7 of the Coolest Ghost Towns in Arizona!](#)

### 3. Sharlot Hall Museum

The [Sharlot Hall Museum](#) is an open-air historical complex spread across 4 acres and includes 8 different historic buildings.

It provides a treasure trove of artifacts, documents, and exhibits that narrate the story of Prescott and its early settlers.

The museum is named after Sharlot M. Hall, a prominent figure in Arizona's territorial history. She was a poet, journalist, and territorial historian whose efforts played a significant role in preserving the heritage of the area.

The museum encompasses several historic buildings, each with its own unique story and significance.

The Governor's Mansion is a two-story log and frame house that was constructed in 1864 as a home for the first two territorial governors.

Today, it stands in the same location where it was originally built and houses exhibits, artifacts, and furnishings that offers visitors a glimpse into the history of Prescott and Arizona.

The Fremont House was built in 1875 and was the home of the 5th territorial governor and his family.

The relocated home has been lovingly restored and furnished with period pieces to reflect what the home would have looked like when the Fremont family lived here.

The Bashford House was built in 1877 and is an elegant Victorian home that belonged to one of Prescott's early merchants, Samuel L. Bashford. Today, it houses exhibits and the museum store.

You'll also find a replica of Prescott's first one-room schoolhouse in the museum complex. The schoolhouse is equipped with authentic furnishings to look as it did in the late 1800s.

The Ranch House was built in 1936 as a tribute to early ranchers and represents a glimpse into what everyday life looked like for the early settlers.

Fort Misery dates back to 1863 and is considered the oldest log cabin in the state.

The crude cabin was built by a trader from New Mexico where he lived and sold his goods. It later served as a boarding house, store, and law office.

The Transportation Building houses a collection of carriages, wagons, and early automobiles.

The Lawler Exhibit Center hosts changing exhibits that focus on various aspects of Arizona's history and culture.

Be sure to also take a moment to walk through the Territorial Women's Memorial Rose Garden.

The first rose bush in the garden was planted in 1948. Today, hundreds of bushes bloom in remembrance of the brave frontier women who helped settle Arizona.

A visit to the Sharlot Hall Museum really is one of the best things to do in Prescott and one of our favorite spots on an [Arizona Road Trip](#).

## 4. Go Shopping on Antique Row

Prescott is known as a haven for antique shoppers. Spend the afternoon shopping for one-of-a-kind finds, from vintage treasures to locally crafted goods.

Antique Row can be found on Cortez Street between Willis Street and Gurley Street.

It is lined with antique shops such as Prescott Downtown Antiques, A Step in Time Antiques & Collectibles, Scarlett's Curated Collection, and more.

There are also other antique shops and boutique stores that dot the town, such as Lost in Sports Antiques where you can find vintage sports cards and toys.

Modern Day Forager Mercantile offers a collection of vintage treasures, modern-day finds, and even a selection of home-baked goods.

Gray Dog Guitars has a curated collection of new and vintage instruments, as well as a selection of old vinyl records.

Speaking of dogs, if you are traveling with your pup, you won't want to miss Whiskers Barkery. This cute bakery sells homemade doggie treats and toys that your pup is sure to love!

## 5. Take a Walk on the Granite Creek Trail

The Granite Creek Trail is a 2.6-mile out-and-back riverside trail that is easily accessible from the center of town.

This urban trail follows along Granite Creek with access points at all of the major East-West streets.

One of the easiest access points is just a few blocks behind Whiskey Row. There is a parking garage on Granite Street and paved steps leading down to the trail right next to El Gato Azul Cafe.

The cafe has a beautiful outdoor deck that overlooks Granite Creek if you want to enjoy some empanadas and tacos before walking along the trail.

Casa Alvarez and Dinner Bell Café also have dining tables that overlook the creek.

Although it is only steps from town, the scenic shaded trail feels a world away. You'll even find wooden sculptures and colorful murals thoughtfully placed along the trail.

## 6. Spend the Afternoon at Watson Lake

Head out of town to enjoy a day out in nature at Watson Lake, a man-made reservoir that was formed in the early 1900s.

Watson Lake is such a unique and beautiful lake surrounded by a high concentration of granite dells. They are so photogenic and also provide a fun place to climb and explore. It's one of our favorite [Underrated Spots in Arizona!](#)

Swimming is prohibited at Watson Lake due to pollution from an old mercury strip mine that is located upstream.

However, you can rent paddle boards, kayaks, canoes, and pedal boats from [Born To Be Wild Adventures](#) that are open year-round. It's one of the most fun things to do in Prescott!

The Peavine National Recreation Trail is a 6-mile Rails to Trails project located by Watson Lake.

It is a multi-use trail for hiking, biking, and horseback riding that skirts along the shore of Watson Lake and cuts through the Granite Dells.

The trail follows along the abandoned bed of the Old Santa Fe Railway line that was built in 1893 and even crosses an old railroad trestle over Granite Creek.

I would highly recommend [renting e-bikes](#) to ride along the Peavine Trail to experience the beauty in a shorter amount of time.

## 7. Hike the Badger Springs Trail

The Badger Springs Trail is about an hour from Prescott. However, it is located on the way

back to the Valley just off I-17 and is worth the detour.

This is a great family-friendly trail with ease of access and a short hike with water to play in.

The 1.5-mile round-trip trail meanders along a small stream that empties into a river at the end of the trail.

You'll find grassy banks for a picnic, rocks to hop across, crawdads and tadpoles to catch, and a sandy shore to bury your toes in.

Ancient petroglyphs can even be found carved into the basalt rock cliffs on the left where the stream enters the river.

This trail is a favorite among locals, but you'll most likely have this relatively unknown oasis to yourself!

Be sure to keep an eye out for rattlesnakes along the trail, particularly in the warmer months.

The Badger Springs Trail is located within the Agua Fria National Monument recreation area just off I-17. You'll need to take a narrow 1-mile unpaved road to reach the trailhead, but the road is passable with most vehicles.

I would also highly recommend visiting the Fossil Creek Falls while you're in the area.

You'll need to take a long dirt road to reach the trail and you will also need to reserve a permit, but it is totally worth it! See our [Fossil Creek Falls Guide](#) for more information.

## 8. Grab a Bite to Eat

Palace Saloon is arguably the most popular and touristy place to eat in Prescott as visitors want to get a taste of the Old West.

However, there are plenty of delicious restaurants around town that you won't want to miss.

Rosa's Pizzeria is a solid dinner choice with authentic Sicilian dishes. Try Rosa's Specialty Dumplings filled with ricotta and spinach then pan-fried and drizzled with pomodoro sauce. All of their pasta dishes and pizza are amazing, try the Chicken Parmesan and the Godfather Pizza.

FARM Provisions adds an elevated twist to simple dishes and the result is a culinary masterpiece. Try the Deep-Fried Deviled AZ Eggs or the Smoked Gouda Chorizo Fondue as an appetizer. For the main dish, try the Not Your Mom's Chicken Pot Pie or the Bleu Collar Burger.

The County Seat is a cute breakfast and lunch cafe located on the top floor of the Burmister Building right across from the Courthouse Plaza.

Try Tony's Rueben with corned beef, bacon, swiss, saurkraut, caramelized onion, and a secret sauce served between two slices of toasted rye bread.

Park Plaza Liquor & Deli is an unassuming spot, but they have the best burgers and wood-fired pizza. They also have wood-fired mac & cheese and wood-fired pretzels that are delicious!

The Lone Spur Café is the place to go for a hearty breakfast plate. Try the Brisket Benedict, Denver Omelette, or one of the Cowboy Skillet Breakfasts.

The Founding Fathers Collective is a neighborhood gathering space. You'll find a self-serve brewery with Arizona's largest self-serve tap wall, the Merchant Coffee Shop, and a variety of food trucks.

There is a nice outdoor patio space with tables and lawn games. It's a great space to meet up with friends at the end of the day.

Marino's Mob is a favorite among families. It's a great place to go for All-American burgers, fries and milkshakes. It is housed in a historic building that was built in 1887 and survived the 1900 fire.

## A few more of the best things to do in Prescott:

- **World's Oldest Rodeo:** Another of Prescott's claims to fame is that it is the birthplace of professional rodeos. A "cowboy tournament" was organized on July 4, 1888, and it has since grown into a multi-million dollar industry. The [World's Oldest Rodeo](#) has been a Prescott tradition for over 130 years and is held every year around the 4th of July.
- **Heritage Park Zoological Sanctuary:** The Heritage Park Zoological Sanctuary is home to rescued and endangered animals. It offers a more intimate zoo experience where you can view the animals up close and have interactive experiences.
- **Ghost Tour:** As with any old mining town, Prescott has its fair share of ghosts and tales of hauntings. Learn about Prescott's dark history on this chilling [ghost tour](#).
- **Museum of Indigenous People:** Formerly known as the "Smoki Museum", this museum is devoted to sharing history and instilling respect for the Native people and their culture. You'll find exhibits with historical artifacts and cultural displays.
- **Granite Mountain Hot Shots Memorial State Park:** The Granite Mountain Hotshots were an elite group of wilderness firefighters. Tragically, 19 out of the 20 firefighters lost their



lives while battling the Yarnell Hill Fire on June 30, 2013. At the [memorial park](#), you can hike the same trail that they did and visit the memorial at the spot where their bodies were recovered. It's a somber place where you can pay your respects to these brave men.

- **Giant Alligator Juniper Trail:** You can also hike to what is believed to be the world's oldest and largest giant alligator juniper tree. The same Granite Mountain Hotshots were able to save this tree during the Doce Fire. The 4.8-mile [Giant Alligator Juniper Trail](#) leads to the tree and a memorial for the firefighters.
- **Horseback Riding:** Get in touch with your inner cowboy and channel the Wild West on this [horseback riding tour](#) through Central Arizona's sprawling landscape.
- **Thumb Butte Trail:** The 2.5-mile Thumb Butte Trail is one of the most popular hiking trails in the Prescott National Forest. The trail is steep but offers sweeping views over the valley.
- **Mortimer Family Farms:** [Mortimer Family Farms](#) is located in Dewey, about 15 miles outside of Prescott. You'll pass it on your way to Prescott if you're coming from the Valley. They are open year-round and feature a farm park, u-pick fruits & vegetables, and seasonal activities such as a pumpkin patch and fall festival.