



Simply Wander

THE LATEST TRAVEL GUIDE TO INSPIRE YOUR NEXT TRIP

## 18 of the Best Things to Do in Gilbert, AZ

### 1. Grab a Bite to Eat in the Heritage District

Downtown Gilbert's Heritage District encapsulates the town's rich history and early roots.

In the early 1900s, Gilbert's downtown area was the heartbeat of the community, featuring small local businesses and even a school.

The Heritage District has undergone revitalization efforts over the years to preserve its historical charm while still remaining the beating heart of the town.

Today, this lively district is a foodie's haven and home to over 30 restaurants, including some of the best restaurants in Gilbert.

A few of our favorites include Joe's Real BBQ which serves up mouthwatering, slow-cooked barbecue in a nostalgic setting.

Liberty Market is a trendy restaurant housed in an old grocery store. It is known for its artisan sandwiches, fresh salads, and wood-fired pizza.

Postino East is a wine café, situated in a rehabilitated 1940s post office. It features an extensive wine list paired with tasty bruschetta boards.

Caldwell County Mexi-Q is the perfect fusion of BBQ and Mexican food. Try the Brisket Birria Taco, Smoked Chili Verde Burrito, and the homemade mac & cheese.

You'll find several restaurants housed in historic buildings and homes, including The Farmhouse Restaurant, and The Gilbert House.

No visit to Downtown Gilbert is complete without a prickly pear ice cream cone from Topo!

For more restaurant recommendations, see our guide [16 Best Restaurants in Gilbert](#).

## 2. Spend the Afternoon at Freestone Park

Freestone Park was the town's first major city park. It first opened in 1988 and has since expanded to cover over 88 acres.

New amenities have also been added over years, including 3 playground areas, a 5-acre lake stocked with fish, sports courts and fields, shaded picnic tables with grills, and multi-use trails.

Another highlight is the Freestone Railroad where you can take a 3/4 mile ride around the park on a miniature train.

There is also an antique carousel, a mini Ferris Wheel, and a few other kiddie rides.

The Rip City Batting Cages is also a fun place for kids and adults alike where you can get 16 pitches for only \$1!

You'll also find an awesome 22,000-square-foot concrete skate park at Freestone, it's the largest skate park in Gilbert.

The [Freestone Rec Center](#) is the perfect place to get some energy out. Day passes are less than \$5 and you'll have access to the full facility, including the climbing wall and sports courts.

## 3. Explore Agritopia

Agritopia is an 11-acre urban farm and planned community gathering place.

Agritopia's humble farming roots began with a 1927 homestead and has since grown to encompass multiple farm-to-table restaurants, a friendly neighborhood, local shops, and a community garden.

Farming on this plot began almost a century ago and still grows USDA Certified Organic Crops today. Many of the fruits, vegetables, and herbs are harvested for use at Agritopia's onsite restaurants, including Joe's Farm Grill.

Joe's Farm Grill is a farm-to-table restaurant housed in the former Johnston family home. The home was originally built in 1966 and it still maintains the same modern mid-century charm.

The Coffee Shop is the neighborhood gathering spot for a cup of coffee and a pastry, or a

delicious lunch on the outdoor patio.

The Coffee Shop is also known for its award-winning cupcakes that were featured on The Food Network's *Cupcake Wars*.

Barnone is a collection of chef-driven restaurants and shops featuring some of the finest skilled craftsmen and makers in Gilbert.

Fire and Brimstone specializes in wood-fired pizza and is one of our favorite restaurants at Barnone. Garage East is also a popular micro-winery featuring locally made wine and an innovative food menu.

Be sure to also stop by the Agritopia Farm Store where you'll find fresh produce grown right at the farm, as well as gifts and products made by local artisans.

Farm Night is a mini farmer's market that is held every 2nd Wednesday of the month at Agritopia. The market runs September through May from 5-8 pm.

U-pick gardens and orchards are available seasonally, check their [social media page](#) for information on upcoming events. They also offer farm tours and scheduled field trips.

You'll also find walking paths through the community gardens where you can admire the individual garden plots cared for by neighbors. Be sure to stop by and say hi to the resident chickens at the community coop!

## 4. Go Swimming at Mesquite Grove's Aquatic Center

The Mesquite Grove's Aquatic Center is the perfect spot to cool off on a hot summer day!

This public city pool features a beach entry family play pool with an interactive water playground, a lazy river, 2 waterslides, a vortex whirlpool, a splash pad, a diving board and high dive, and an eight-lane competition pool.

Mesquite Groves is one of the best public pools in the East Valley and was even awarded the Arizona Republic Reader's Choice Runner-up for the "Best Kids Water Park or Pool" in 2010.

It also received the "Outstanding Facility" award in 2009 by the Arizona Parks and Recreation Department.

The best part is that admission is affordable for the whole family at only \$1 for kids and \$2.25 for adults. Just come early as it often reaches full capacity in the afternoon.

## 5. Go Shopping in Gilbert's Heritage District

Gilbert's Heritage District is filled with various boutique shops selling local merchandise and unique gifts.

A few of our favorite shops include C&J's Antique Garden which sells vintage jewelry and home decor inside of a 1930s bungalow. Flashback Antiques also sells an eclectic mix of antiques.

Joss & J is the most darling children's boutique. Whether you're shopping for your own child or a baby gift, you will want everything in this store!

You will also die over all of the baby clothes and products at Forever French!

Gilbert Greenhouse is a perfectly curated plant shop. You'll find everything from potted house plants, to floral arrangements, and one-of-a-kind gifts. Lily of the Valley is also a great place to go for your floral needs.

## 6. Play a Game at Top Golf

Top Golf is a fun entertainment destination for families, friends, and couples.

The climate-controlled hitting bays can hold up to 6 guests. The cost is per bay, so it's an affordable night out if you divide the cost between a group of friends or couples.

There are different games to choose from and all of the balls are microchipped with self-scoring technology so it's easy to keep track of the score. You don't need any experience to play, just show up and hit the ball!

Top Golf has a sports bar and restaurant, but you can also order food and have it delivered directly to your bay.

The food is surprisingly delicious! Try the burgers, buffalo wings, injectable donut holes, warm pretzel bites, nachos, and the sugar cookie skillet.

## 7. Watch a play at Hale Centre Theatre

The Hale Centre Theatre in downtown Gilbert's Heritage District is Arizona's premier family theatre.

In 1947, the Hale family opened the first Hale Centre Theatre in Glendale, California and it has been in continuous operation ever since.

Over the years, they expanded to include 5 theatres in 3 states, all owned and operated by

different family members.

David Hale Dietlein opened this location in Gilbert in 2003 and has continued the legacy as the "longest continuously running, privately owned and operated theatre company in America".

The intimate theatre seats 350 guests and the classy interior gives a nod to the 1940s era of the original Hale Centre Theatre.

Family-friendly productions are held throughout the year, with their Christmas production of A Christmas Carol being one of the most popular. Check the [calendar](#) to see a list of upcoming shows.

## 8. Take a Walking Mural Tour in Downtown Gilbert

There are dozens of murals and art installations around the town of Gilbert. Many of the murals can be found in Gilbert's Heritage District within walking distance of each other.

Check out [Gilbert's Art Map](#) to locate each piece of artwork. It also gives a brief description of who the artist is and what the artwork represents.

A few of our favorites include the American Legion Mural that depicts life in Gilbert in 1917 during WWI.

We also love the postcard-inspired artwork on the back of the O.H.S.O Brewery building and the Desert Dream Mural on the north side of The Porch.

The Sonoran Desert-themed mural at Topo is also a fun one, as well as the Gema Mural behind Flashback Antiques. The Vintage Bubbles and Angel Wings murals can both be found on the wall of Sushi Brokers.

## 9. Pay Your Respect at the 9/11 Memorial

Gilbert's 9/11 Memorial is a touching tribute to those who lost their lives during the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City.

The memorial is built around a steel beam that fell from the North Tower of the World Trade Center. The beam was gifted to the town of Gilbert by the New York Port Authority.

The memorial was dedicated on Sep 11, 2011, on the 10th anniversary of the attacks. It is located in a plaza adjacent to the Gilbert Civic Center and is open to the public 24 hours a day.

## 10. Enjoy Dinner and a Show at Majestic Gilbert 8

Majestic Gilbert 8 is a neighborhood cinema and grill. They feature the latest newly-released movies on the big screen, as well as a gourmet food and drink menu.

The food is not your typical movie theater concession stand fare. You'll find thoughtfully curated dishes that use quality locally sourced ingredients. We have loved everything we've ever ordered here!

Try the loaded fries, El Diablo Burger, Pork Hash, Snickerdoodle Skillet Cookie, and the bottomless bowl of popcorn with specialty seasonings!

After you order your food, it will be delivered right to your seat which is equipped with a table. You can then sit back and enjoy a delicious meal or snacks while watching the latest blockbuster hit.

All movies are only \$5 on Tuesdays, and they offer a \$5 food menu on Wednesdays. Kid-friendly movies are also available during select school breaks for \$3.

It's a fun alternative to a usual night at the movies and is perfect for a special occasion!

## 11. Visit the Gilbert Heritage Museum

The Gilbert Heritage Museum is housed inside of the original Gilbert Elementary School.

It was built in 1913 and is considered the oldest building in Gilbert that is still standing. Surprisingly, it is also the only building in Gilbert that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The original school had 4 classrooms, 2 offices, and an assembly room. There was no indoor plumbing, only two outside toilets.

When the school first opened, it had 85 pupils in attendance. The school continued to grow and over the years a north and south wing were built to accommodate the growing student body that reached 281 kids.

The school closed its doors in 1977 and opened as a museum in 1982.

It's a great place to stop by and learn some of the history of Gilbert's early beginnings. You'll find artifacts and interactive displays throughout the old classrooms. Admission is only \$6 for adults and \$3 for kids.

## 12. Play at Gilbert Regional Park

Gilbert unveiled its \$100 million 272-acre state-of-the-art regional park in 2019.

It features pickleball courts, basketball courts, tennis courts, and sand volleyball courts. It also has a 4,000-square-foot splash pad with 57 interactive water features.

You'll find a smaller tot playground, and a massive playground geared for older kids with a 3-story play structure, 7 different slides, a zipline, and swings.

The amphitheater and 10-acre event lawn hosts concert series, [outdoor movie nights](#), 4th of July fireworks, and a variety of other festivals and events throughout the year.

The 7-acre urban fishing lake is stocked year-round with catfish, bass, and bluegill. A fishing license is required for anyone 10 years and older.

Plans are also in the works for a future waterpark. Check the [Gilbert Parks & Rec website](#) for updated developments and a list of scheduled [events](#).

## 13. See the Animals at Carl's Damaged Pet Warehouse

Carl's Damaged Pet Warehouse is a free petting zoo in Gilbert. The owner has rescued and acquired a whole menagerie of animals over the past 10 years.

The collection of animals includes Highland Scottish cows, miniature donkeys, goats, pot belly pigs, sheep, a goose, turtles, golden retrievers, and the cutest basset hounds.

Visitors are welcome to bring their own food to feed the animals. There is a list posted of approved foods such as apples, bananas, lettuce, oranges, zucchini, and more.

There is also a list of foods not to bring, including corn on the cob, grapes, and anything with pits.

For an extra treat for the animals, microwave popcorn is available for \$1 and there is even an outdoor microwave where you can pop it.

Carl will sometimes come out and bring food for the animals and the visitors can help feed them.

It is so kind of Carl to allow the community to enjoy the animals. Always be respectful and clean up after yourselves.

See our guide [101 Things to Do in the East Valley With Kids](#) for more recommended family-friendly activities.

## 14. Visit the Shops and Restaurants at Epicenter

Epicenter is a modern urban development with loft apartments sitting above a collection of restaurants and shops.

It's the perfect spot for date night dinners, brunch with girlfriends, or to catch up on work at the local coffee shop.

Buck & Rider is a trendy sushi and cocktail bar and Belly Kitchen & Bar serves flavorful Asian-fusion dishes.

Matt's Big Breakfast has generous brunch portions, Spinatos serves fresh Italian dishes, and Source is a bakery and market that serves the best homemade bread.

Undertow is a fun nautical-themed bar and immersive experience, similar to a speakeasy.

Peixoto Coffee is a modern neighborhood coffee shop. It uses coffee beans that are harvested directly from the Peixoto family farm in Brazil which has been in the family for over 100 years.

Peixoto also has a great selection of freshly baked pastries and even hot chocolate if you're not a coffee drinker.

Epicenter also boasts some fabulous shops, like Vintage Home that has the cutest curated collection of vintage home decor.

Bunky Boutique offers a great selection of trendy clothes and goods from independent and local designers.

Manor is a cool sneaker boutique shop, and Urbana is an upscale boutique shop that sells home decor, gifts, and party hosting supplies.

Air Guitar is located on the corner of Epicenter and is the cutest neighborhood corner store.

You'll find convenience store staples, as well as gourmet to-go meals, fresh pizza slices, a coffee bar, and Scoopwells ice cream shop.

Scoopwells is known for its signature cotton candy burrito with scoops of ice cream and toppings rolled up in a blanket of cotton candy.

It even made our list of [17 Best Desserts in the Phoenix East Valley!](#)



## 15. Check out the Events at the Gilbert Water Tower Plaza

This historic Gilbert Water Tower stands in the center of downtown Gilbert as a symbol of Gilbert's early farming roots.

The tower was first erected in 1927 as a water source for the firefighters and to store drinking water for the Gilbert residents. An adobe pumphouse was also constructed next to the water tower and later served as Gilbert's first jail.

Today, the water tower is no longer in use, but a 0.7-acre park and plaza have been constructed around the historic water tower and pump house.

A splash pad can be found underneath the tower and is the perfect spot for kids to cool off in the summer.

Various events are held at the plaza throughout the year, including the Spring Downtown Concert Series, the holiday tower lighting, the Christmas Giving Machines, and other community events.

Every Saturday, a farmers market is held just west of the water tower. You'll find over 100 vendors selling produce, baked goods, meat and dairy products, and other handcrafted gifts. The market's summer hours are 7 am until 11 am, and winter hours are 8 am until 12 pm.

The Gilbert Days Parade also marches right by the water tower every November. Other [Gilbert Days](#) events include a rodeo, road races, softball tournaments, and a festival with live music.

## 16. Spend the Afternoon at the Riparian Preserve

The Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch is a 110-acre wetland wildlife preserve.

It features Water Ranch Lake, an urban fishing pond that is stocked with trout, bass, catfish, sunfish, and carp. An urban fishing license is required for ages 14 years and up.

There is a floating boardwalk on the north end of the lake where you can spot turtles and feed the ducks. Keep in mind that you can only feed the ducks birdseed, corn, or whole-grain cereal.

There are also 7 other ponds at the preserve that provide habitats for various wildlife and plant life. You'll find a network of trails between the ponds that are perfect for walking or jogging.

One of the highlights of the preserve is the Cactus Botanic Garden.

The dense cluster of saguaros makes the perfect backdrop for photoshoots. See our guide [12 Best Photoshoot Locations in the East Valley](#) for more recommendations.

The Gilbert Rotary Centennial Observatory is also a cool highlight. It is open to the public Friday and Saturday nights for stargazing.

The Dino Dig is a popular area for kids to dig for replica dinosaur fossils and learn about animal tracks. There is also a unique play area with concrete structures for kids to climb and play on.

A variety of [free events](#) are held at the preserve, including Family Bird Walks, Afterschool Adventures, and Parent/Tot Nature Classes.

The Preserve also features overnight camp spots. It truly is an oasis in the desert!

## 17. Visit the Pumpkin Patch at Mother Nature's Farm

Mother Nature's Farm is a family-owned and operated farm that has been around since 1968. It is known for its seasonal holiday farm activities.

Their fall pumpkin forest has even been voted "Arizona's Best Pumpkin Patch" by *Phoenix New Times*.

In addition to the pumpkin patch, the fall festival includes a hay ride, straw bale maze, petting zoo, bounce house, pumpkin decorating, pedal cars, a slide, and outdoor games.

All of the activities are included in the price of admission.

Mother Nature's Farm Christmas festival includes many of the same activities with the addition of a visit with Santa and a Christmas tree lot.

The farm's Home Sweet Home Animal Sanctuary is open on the weekends throughout the year. Visitors can stop by and see the farm animals, including donkeys, pigs, tortoises, goats, ducks, turkeys, cows, and more.

Check the [Mother Nature's Farm Facebook Page](#) for updated events including u-pick opportunities, food truck nights, and farm activities.

For more fall activity recommendations, see our guide [12 Places to Experience Fall in Arizona](#).

## 18. Ride on Gilbert's Bike Trails

Gilbert has been named a "Bicycle Friendly Community" with over 54 miles of designated bike trails.

The network of trails will take you past popular city parks, such as Freestone Park and the Riparian Preserve.

The mixture of paved and unpaved trails follow along the canal, past farmlands where you can see horses, and it even goes through the center of Gilbert's Heritage District.

Most of the trails are not along the road, but there is a stoplight in place whenever the trail does cross a road.

It's a fun way to get out and enjoy some fresh air while seeing different parts of the town!

A FEW MORE OF THE BEST THINGS TO DO IN GILBERT, AZ:

- **AZ Ice:** Come cool off at AZ Ice with two large indoor ice rinks. They also have a restaurant and bar as well as a variety of events held throughout the year.
- **Pure Esports:** Pure Esports is an epic indoor gaming center with over 50 gaming stations. Visitors can pay per hour or purchase an all-day gaming pass. It's also a great place for a birthday party!
- **Main Event:** Main Event is a family entertainment venue with bowling, laser tag, arcade games, billiards, mini-golf, escape rooms, a gravity ropes course, and other games and activities.
- **Goat Yoga:** Yes, [Goat Yoga](#) is a thing and it was even featured on *America's Got Talent*! Come join a class and see what all the hype is about!
- **Thrifting:** Thrifting is the latest trend, and Gilbert has some of the best vintage clothing shops in the East Valley. Check out Old Habits Vintage, The Garment District AZ, and the massive Deseret Industries on Val Vista and Williams Field.
- **St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church:** Stop in to visit one of the most beautiful churches in Gilbert. You'll even find a full-sized replica of Michelangelo's statue, *Pieta* inside of the chapel.
- **Peter Pipers Pizza:** Enjoy dozens of games and a pizza buffet complete with a salad bar and dessert pizzas. The cinnamon streusel pizza is our favorite!
- **Cosmo Dog Park:** If you have a furry friend, head to Cosmo Dog Park! The park features a large pond for swimming, different climbing obstacles, large grassy fields, and fenced-off areas for larger and smaller dogs.
- **Veteran's Oasis Park:** This park offers a community fishing lake and beautiful walking trails through native Sonoran Desert gardens.

- **Paradox Escape Room:** Bring the family or a group of friends and see if you can solve the clues to escape the room before the time runs out!
- **Right on Target:** Schedule a group outing to shoot clay pigeons. They even offer laser shooting as a safer alternative!

I hope this guide will help you discover the best things to do in Gilbert, AZ!