



The Best Things to Do in Phoenix

Tour a Historic Home at Heritage Square

Heritage Square dates back to the late 1800s and is a charming reminder of the city's vibrant Victorian past.

The restored Rosson House Museum is located here, on Block 14 of the original townsite. The former home of Dr. Roland Lee Rosson is open for tours, and it is fascinating to catch a glimpse inside. You'll even see the room that once served as his doctor's office.

There are several other historic buildings in the square that have since been repurposed into shops and restaurants. Our favorite is Pizzeria Bianco, housed in the old Baird Machine Shop.

For more restaurant recommendations, see our guide, [The Best Places to Eat in Phoenix!](#)

Stroll Through the Desert Botanical Gardens

The Desert Botanical Gardens is the largest botanical garden in the southwest and one of the most popular tourist spots in Phoenix.

They offer several different events and activities that are fun for the whole family, such as their Flashlight Tours or the Light & Sound Display of the Electric Desert.

Gertrude's is the on-site farm-to-table restaurant that offers a unique dining experience. Enjoy dinner under the string lights on the outdoor patio while surrounded by the beautiful desert landscape.

Watch a Performance at the Orpheum Theater

The Orpheum Theater is a gorgeous historic baroque-style theater in downtown Phoenix. It was built in 1929 and still maintains many of the original ornate features.

They host a variety of [performances and events](#) throughout the year. We love watching *The Nutcracker* ballet performance each Christmas, and it's fun to catch a screening of an old movie inside this beautiful theater.

Visit a Speakeasy

Phoenix has a few hidden speakeasies, and they are so fun for a night out! Even if you don't drink, they serve virgin mocktails and many of them have a food menu as well.

The Rough Rider Bar is one of our favorites. Take the middle elevator down to the basement at the 1001 building on Roosevelt and Central. When you step out, you'll feel like you've stepped back in time to the days of Roosevelt and the Rough Riders.

Ziggy's Magic Pizza Shop is another fun spot. From the outside, it looks like an unassuming pizza shop. However, look for the swinging doors to the right when you walk in. Walk through the doors, past the bathrooms, and enter what looks like the walk-in refrigerator door, and you'll discover the Stardust Pinbar, an 80s-themed speakeasy.

For more speakeasies and hidden spots, see our guide [10 Secret Spots and Hidden Gems in Phoenix](#).

Check out the Murals on Roosevelt Row

Roosevelt Row is Phoenix's walkable arts district located in the heart of downtown Phoenix. The one-mile stretch is filled with trendy restaurants, live music, art galleries, local boutiques, and colorful murals, creating an outdoor museum of sorts.

The most popular street murals can be found in an alley behind The Churchill, known as 1 1/2 Street. Melinda's Alley is also worth a visit.

Many events are also held in Roosevelt Row, such as First Friday, Pie Social, Sidewalk Saturday, and the Chile Pepper Festival.

Hike Piestewa Peak

Piestewa Peak has been ranked as the No. 1 hike in Phoenix by AllTrails. It is a challenging hike, but worth it for the views!

The hike is a short 2.4 miles out and back, but it has an elevation gain of 1,148 feet, and it's an uphill climb most of the way.

The summit trail offers incredible views of the valley, and it's especially beautiful at sunset.

For more details about this trail, see our [Piestewa Peak Hiking Guide](#).

Spend the Afternoon at Papago Park

Papago Park isn't your typical city park. Instead of grassy fields, this 1,500-acre municipal park consists mainly of large red sandstone buttes.

It offers great hiking trails, including the 2.3-mile Double Butte Loop. The short Hole-in-the-Rock trail is also a popular one, and is a great place to watch the sunset.

Papago Park is also home to the Phoenix Zoo, the Desert Botanical Gardens, the Hall of Flame Museum, and a 7-acre stocked fishing lake.

This area also has an interesting history. It was once a reservation for indigenous tribes, and later served as a fish hatchery during the Great Depression. During World War II, it even housed a POW camp called Camp Papago Park.

Visit the Children's Museum of Phoenix

The Children's Museum of Phoenix was my kids' favorite museum when they were younger. It is a fun and educational museum located in the beautiful historic Monroe school building in downtown Phoenix.

My kids would spend hours getting lost in their imaginations while creating robots out of recycled products, playing cashier at the grocery store, making sandcastles at the outdoor “beach”, exploring the tunnels of the large play structure, and playing hide-and-seek in the noodle forest.

Reserve a Pool Day Pass

Several resorts in Phoenix offer amazing water parks, perfect for staycations or out-of-town guests. Even if you aren't spending the night, you can still purchase a day pass to access the pools.

One of our favorite resorts for families is the [Arizona Grand](#). Their Oasis Waterpark features a lazy river, a wave pool, 3 water slides, and multiple swimming pools and hot tubs.

For more recommendations, see our guide for the [Best Resorts in Phoenix](#).

Explore South Mountain

South Mountain is a short drive from downtown and is the perfect place to escape the bustling city streets. This 16,000-acre nature preserve is one of the largest municipal parks in the country and offers over 100 miles of multi-use trails.

One of our favorite hikes is the [Hidden Valley via Mormon Trail](#). This 3.4-mile trail features a narrow slot, a natural rock slide, a rock tunnel, and panoramic views of the city skyline.

Another recommendation is the 4.6-mile Holbert Trail that leads to Dobbins Lookout. It's one of the best places in the valley to watch the sunset.

The Lost Ranch Ruins Trail to Lost Ranch Mines is a unique hike that leads to the crumbling remains of an abandoned structure. Legend has it that it was once a bordello or an outlaw hideout, but most likely it was an old miner's home. Either way, it's still cool to see the old fireplace and foundation.

For more trail recommendations, see our guide [The Best Hikes in Phoenix](#).

You can also rent a [mountain e-bike](#) to ride on the trails, or go on a [guided horseback ride](#).

While you're in the area, stop by The Farm at South Mountain to enjoy a farm-to-table meal and lawn games.

Pick Up a Plant at Pueblo

Pueblo is the cutest neighborhood plant shop located inside an old historic warehouse. You'll find floor-to-ceiling windows, a sun-filled greenhouse, and an outdoor patio and coffee bar.

This shop is every plant lady's dream! Every square inch of this space is draped with greenery, and you can find a large selection of houseplants to purchase.

Shop and Dine at The Vintage Arcadia

The Vintage Arcadia is an ultra-cute neighborhood market and diner located in the trendy Arcadia district.

Here you'll find curated collections of home decor, unique gifts, clothing, and artisan jewelry, as well as vintage antiques.

The Chestnut restaurant is also located in the same space and serves fresh dishes using local ingredients. Try the Lemon Ricotta Waffles!

Watch a Sporting Event

One of our favorite things to do as a family is watch a professional sports game. We especially love cheering on the Arizona Diamondbacks and the Phoenix Suns.

Both stadiums are located in downtown Phoenix, and we like to grab dinner at one of the local restaurants before the game. The Arrogant Butcher is one of our favorites.

If you're visiting in the spring, you don't want to miss one of the Cactus League's [spring training games](#)!

Shop the Downtown Phoenix Farmers Market

Browse the stalls at the Downtown Phoenix Farmers Market and pick up fresh produce, handmade gifts, local foods, and artisan treasures.

The market is held every Saturday, rain or shine, at 455 N 3rd St in downtown Phoenix. It is open from 8 am until 1 pm from the end of October through the beginning of May, and 7:30 am until 11:30 am from the beginning of May through mid-October.

Hang Out at The Pemberton

[The Pemberton](#) is a vibrant and funky hangout in downtown Phoenix. It is a unique venue that features the historic Sarah H. Pemberton home, and even has a free pool that you can hang out at!

It also features over 15 shops, food trucks, and the Black Flamingo Lounge located on the 2nd floor of the historic Pemberton House.

Browse Unique Collections at Curious Nature

Curious Nature lives up to its name, and indeed it is the strangest store I've ever been to!

You can purchase oddities like a real human skull, human teeth, casket plates, vintage funeral flags, a taxidermied peacock, preserved fetal pigs, sheep testicles, and sheep hearts.

I'm pretty sure you can also find every ingredient you would need for a witch's spell here! It's such an interesting shop, and is worth stopping by to see all of the bizarre things they have for sale.

Visit the Museum of Musical Instruments

The Museum of Musical Instruments is ranked as the No. 1 thing to do in Phoenix on TripAdvisor, and it is rated as one of the top 20 museums in the US.

This unique museum features almost 7,000 instruments from around the world. Visitors can take a self-guided audio tour to learn the sounds and history of each instrument.

Some of the instruments on display include an Amati violin from a royal wedding, the oldest guitar in existence, a shell trumpet originating from the Maya civilization, and even Jimi Hendrix's Black Widow guitar.

There is even a hands-on room where you can experiment with different instruments, which is always my kids' favorite!

Attend a Candlelight Concert

Candlelight Concerts are held in over 100 cities around the world, including here in Phoenix. The event is held at the Phoenix Zoo amphitheater, where you'll find the venue lit by thousands of electric candles.

The concert we attended featured instrumental music by Coldplay and Imagine Dragons, and it was so beautiful!

They offer a variety of performances, including everything from classical music to 90s Hip Hop on Strings. I fear my life will not be complete until I hear Snoop Dogg played on the violin!

Enjoy Date Night at CityScape

CityScape is a fun entertainment hub in the heart of Phoenix. For a fun date night, grab dinner at the Arrogant Butcher and dessert at The Yard Milkshake Bar, then head to the 810 Billiards & Bowling or catch a show at the Stand Up Live comedy theater.

The Kimpton Hotel Palomar is also located here, and they offer day passes to their rooftop pool.

CityScape also hosts different events throughout the year. During the holidays, the central plaza transforms into an [ice skating rink](#) with a giant Christmas tree in the center.

Go Bowling at Châm Pang Lanes

Châm Pang Lanes is one of the coolest bowling alleys we've ever been to! This retro-glam alley features swanky decor, a cocktail bar, and 6-lane duckpin bowling.

They also serve food, and are known for their sushi and fried chicken.

This is the perfect spot for a girls' night out or a birthday celebration. Just plan to arrive early, because they don't take reservations, and it gets really busy on the weekends.

Geek Out at the Arizona Science Center

You could easily spend a full day at the Arizona Science Center. The 4-level museum is filled with educational exhibits, hands-on activities, interactive demonstrations, and immersive experiences.

One of the main highlights is watching a show in the massive Dorrance DOME Theater. We especially love the outer space shows! The Forces of Nature permanent exhibit is also one of my kids' favorites.

For more recommendations for kids, see our guide [101 Things to Do in the Phoenix East Valley With Kids](#).

See the Animals at the Phoenix Zoo

The Phoenix Zoo is one of the largest non-profit zoos in the US. The 125-acre zoo is home to over 3,000 animals from around the world!

Some of the highlights include the Harmony Farm petting zoo, the walk-thru Monkey Village, Stingray Bay, camel rides, giraffe feedings, animal presentations, a carousel, playgrounds, and splashpads.

Different events are also held throughout the year. The most popular is the annual Zoo Lights during the holidays.