



BEST OF AZ

31 THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU KICK THE BUCKET

Everyone needs to see the Grand Canyon before he dies, but it's not enough to just see it. It needs to be experienced, away from the crowds, at a place like Toroweap. Or under a cottonwood at Indian Garden. Or in a raft on the Colorado River. In fact, we suggest putting all three on your bucket list, along with the other 28 things in the next 10 pages.

BY KATHY MONTGOMERY



John Ford Point, Monument Valley | DAVE DROST

BEST OF AZ

“Every man dies. Not every man really lives.” That quote, attributed to William Wallace, comes from the movie *Braveheart*, but it underlies the premise of that other popular movie. The one starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman. The one that got us thinking about our lives, and what we’d like to look back on someday. Most of us want our time on Earth to have some kind of meaning. We want a challenge, a purpose, and to make some great memories. With that in mind, we’ve put together an Arizona-based bucket list that combines a little of each. Some of these things you may have done already; others, probably not. Take a look and hit the road. The clock is ticking.

CAMP WITH MOTHER NATURE

1 MITTEN VIEW CAMPGROUND

Longtimers mourn Monument Valley’s Mitten View campground, which was replaced in 2008 by the 90-room resort The View. But the new campground, just north of the visitors center, still overlooks some of the most stunning landscape in the West. And there are some things a resort can’t deliver, like the feeling of pitching your tent directly on hallowed ground. The campground is currently closed for renovations but will reopen in 2013. Though it will be updated, the price of admission will remain low. And watching the sun rise over the legendary Mittens? That’s priceless. *Information:* 435-727-5870, www.monumentvalley.org/camping

EXPERIENCE SOMETHING MONUMENTAL

2 JOHN FORD POINT

Monument Valley has been the setting for movies as diverse as *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Easy Rider* and *Forrest Gump*. But it was John Ford who first made it famous. In 1939, *Stagecoach* made stars of John Wayne and Northern Arizona’s dramatic buttes. It’s fitting, then, that John Ford Point occupies the best overlook in Monument Valley Tribal Park, with views of Sentinel Mesa, Big Indian and the Castle Rock-Stagecoach group. A Navajo man in traditional dress often appears on a well-groomed horse to the delight of visitors. And, for a small fee, guests may also mount a horse and be pho-

tographed against the iconic backdrop. *Information:* 928-871-6647, www.navajonationparks.org

CRASH AT THE ICONIC REST STOPS

3 EL TOVAR, PHANTOM RANCH, INDIAN GARDEN CAMPGROUND

The Grand Canyon is home to some of the state’s most famous lodging, and everyone should experience them at least once. Begin at El Tovar (Suite 6492 if you can get it), which the Santa

Fe Railway built on the edge of the South Rim in 1905, and watch the sun set over the Canyon from the bar’s outdoor patio. Spend your second night at Phantom Ranch, designed in 1922 by Mary Jane Colter. There’s no happier place than the air-conditioned cantina after the long hike down. On your last night, climb to the oasis at Indian Garden and unroll your sleeping bag under the canopy of a cottonwood. *Information:* 888-297-2757, www.grandcanyonlodges.com (lodges); 928-638-7875, www.nps.gov/grca (Indian Garden)



Phantom Ranch, Grand Canyon | TOM BROWNOLO



GET A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

4

STATEWIDE

There are many benefits to exploring Arizona from the ground. Hiking, biking, horseback-riding and road-tripping are great ways to experience the state's varied landscape. But there's something particularly spectacular about surveying the state from 700 feet in the air. Thanks to Maria Langer and her R44 Raven II helicopter, it's possible to soar over Prescott, Sedona and Lake Powell, then capture a bird's-eye view of Monument Valley, all within a few hours. As Langer says, "When you're flying, you can see things that are forgotten," but you won't soon forget an aerial tour of Arizona. *Information: Flying M Air, 928-231-0196, www.flyingmair.com*

Aerial view of Sedona
| TED GRUSSING

BEST OF AZ

GET PEPPERED BY SALT WATER

6

SALT RIVER CANYON

If the Salt River Canyon is called the mini-Grand Canyon for its stunning, striated walls, then rafting the Upper Salt might be the *Cliffs Notes* of canyon rafting. But white-water season here is as fleeting as desert wildflowers. From March through May, melting snow-pack swells the Salt's course leading into Salt River Canyon Wilderness, turning this undammed stretch of river into the ultimate E-ticket ride. The 52-mile bridge-to-bridge trip from U.S. Route 60 to State Route 188 near Roosevelt Dam takes three

to five days, passing nesting eagles, ancient cliff dwellings and blooming desert landscapes along the way.
Information: www.azroa.org

CELEBRATE THE SOLSTICE

7

PETRIFIED FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Nearly every ancient culture observed the solstice, and solstice markers are found throughout the Southwest. The Petrified Forest has dozens. The most accessible is a small, spiral petroglyph at Puerco Pueblo that marks the summer solstice. Each year around the solstice, rangers admit the public to watch a finger of light strike

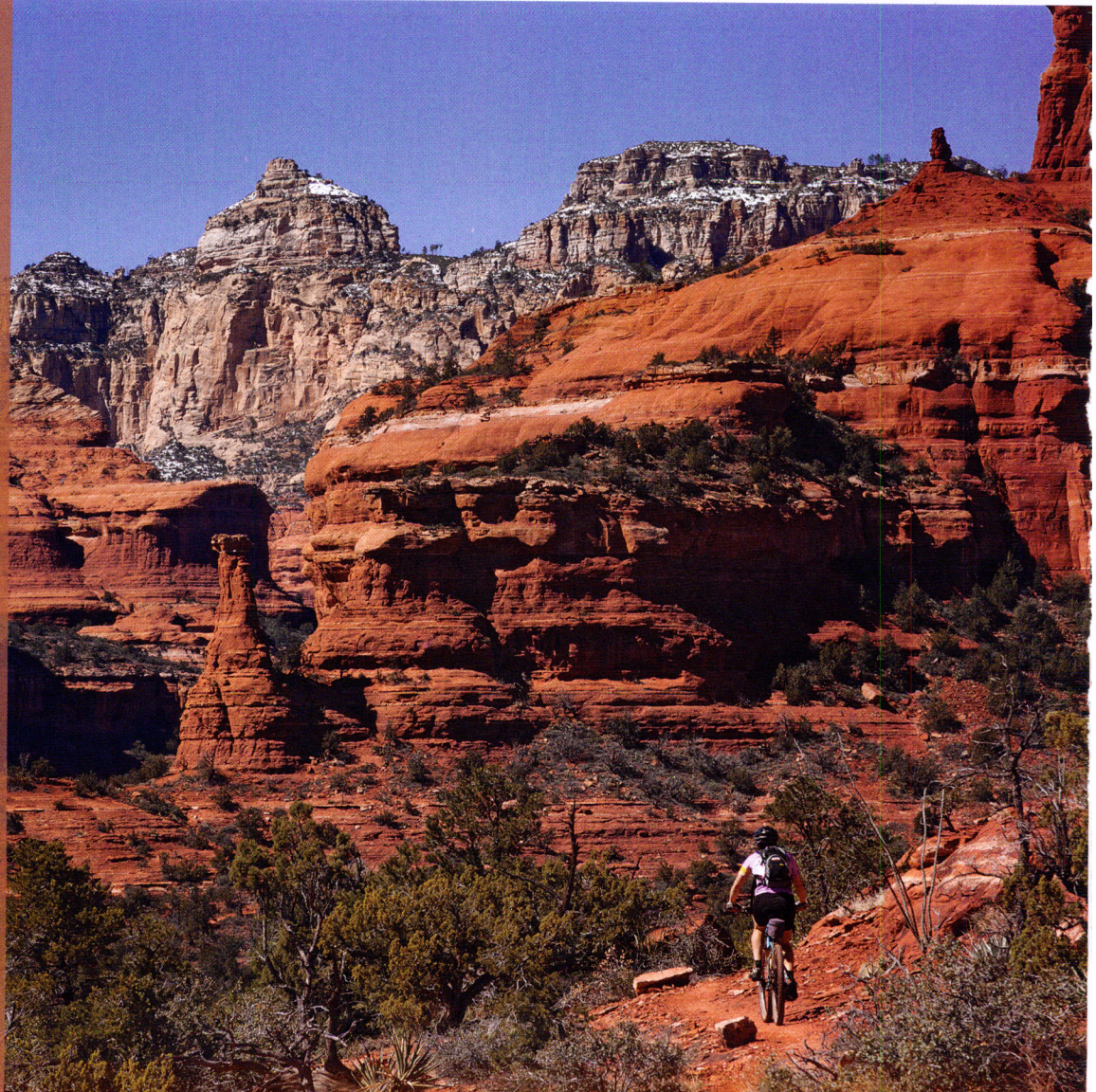
ABOVE: White-water-rafting, Salt River Canyon | JEFF KIDA
BELOW: Mountain-biking, Sedona | T.C. BADALATO

GET ON YOUR BIKE AND RIDE

5

SEDONA

Sedona is a great place to mountain bike (some say it's even better than Moab) for the same reason it's popular with four-wheelers. Sedona's famous red rocks are both beautiful and varied, with easy trails for casual riders and technical trails to test the mettle of the most experienced bikers. Head first to the Bike & Bean in Oak Creek Village. This unusual bike shop is as serious about its coffee as it is about its bikes. Here, you'll find fellowship, rentals and customized guided tours. And it's across the street from Bell Rock Pathway, which connects to some of the area's best trails. Order up a jolt of java, then get on your bike and ride.
Information: 6020 State Route 179, 928-284-0210, www.bike-bean.com



the petroglyph. The event marks the longest day of the year. But it's also the point at which the days begin to grow shorter — a reminder that our days are waning, and to value each one. *Information: 928-524-6228, www.nps.gov/pefo*

EMBARK ON AN EPIC JOURNEY

8

ARIZONA TRAIL

This National Scenic Trail, which extends more than 800 miles across the state from Mexico to Utah, was the dream of a Flagstaff schoolteacher. Dale Shewalter first walked the distance, then quit work for

a year to lobby for his life's dream. Although he didn't live long enough to see the trail's completion in 2011, many have followed in his footsteps, traveling the trail on foot, mountain bike and horseback. Some have tackled a segment at a time, taking years, and one man hiked it in 31 days. But all describe it as a life-changing experience. *Information: 602-252-4794, www.aztrail.org*

FLOCK TO THE BIRDS

9

WILLCOX

Each winter, nearly 40,000 sandhill cranes inhabit Southern Arizona's Sulphur Springs Valley. The undulating clouds of 5-foot-tall birds heading out in search of food each morning are a magnificent sight. In the evenings, they return to the wetlands around Willcox, where couples sing in synchronized duets and dance their running, jumping, flapping jig. Watching them reminds us that there's a time for work, a time to play, and for everything a season. *Information: 800-200-2272, www.wingsoverwillcox.com*

COUNTDOWN TO TAKEOFF

10

VERMILION CLIFFS NATIONAL MONUMENT

For 100,000 years or more, California condors made the Vermilion Cliffs their home. But by the time Europeans arrived, these birds had mostly headed for the coast. By the 1980s, the entire species was headed for extinction, saved only by a successful captive-breeding program. Since 1996, scientists have been reintroducing condors to these cliffs every year on



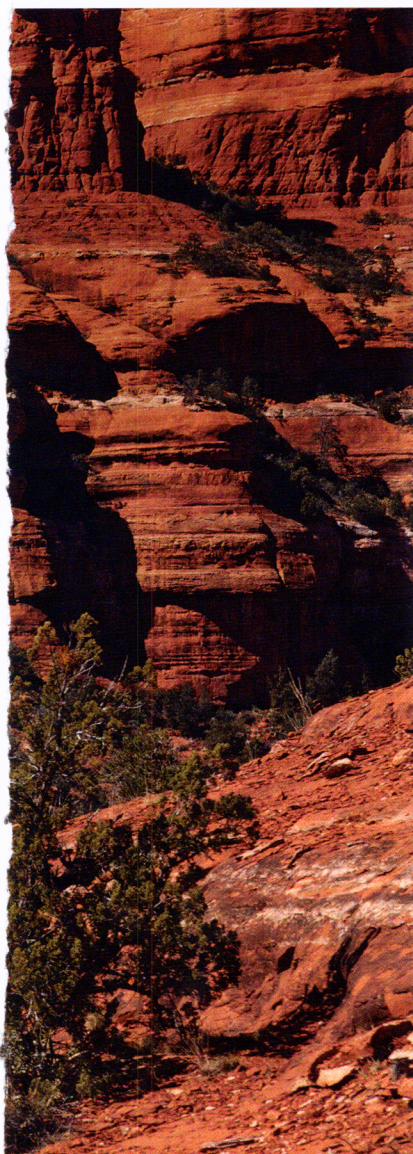
Arizona Trail, Walnut Canyon | TOM BEAN



Sandhill cranes, Willcox | BRUCE D. TAUBERT

the last Saturday in September. Soaring on their 9.5-foot wingspan, the enormous, prehistoric-looking creatures

are large enough to see without an assist from a pair of binoculars. *Information: 435-688-3200, www.blm.gov/az*



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RIDE AN ANCIENT HIGHWAY

11 CANYON DE CHELLY NATIONAL MONUMENT

Most national parks have long been emptied of their Native inhabitants, but Canyon de Chelly is a rare exception. The 900-year-old ruins belonged to the Anasazi, but their ancient petroglyphs mix with more contemporary contributions from the Navajos, who have lived there for 300 years — it's still home to some 80 Navajo families. Take a Jeep tour led by a guide who grew up in the interconnected series of canyons. It's an intimate, cultural experience that transcends history. *Information: 928-674-5500, www.nps.gov/cach*

HUG A VERY BIG TREE

13 CIRCLE Z RANCH

In the Southwest, cottonwoods are precious. The sight of their bright-green leaves signals water, and the western yellow-billed cuckoo, northern flicker and turkey vulture depend on cottonwoods for survival. A cottonwood on the Circle Z Ranch in Patagonia is considered the largest in North America. It's certainly the most magnificent. Nearly 100 feet tall, with a circumference of 42 feet, it would take seven adults touching fingers to circle it. The fortunate guests at this historic ranch get to ride out to this gentle giant on Sonoita Creek and picnic under its 108-foot spread. *Information: 1476 State Route 82, Patagonia, 520-394-2525, www.circlez.com*

SEE GREEN

12 EMERALD CAVE, BLACK CANYON

Sometimes, timing is everything. So it is with this unexpected jewel, located 2 miles from Willow Beach, below Hoover Dam on the Colorado River. For just a few minutes each afternoon, the light fills this tiny grotto at just the right angle to bounce off the volcanic rock beneath the water, creating the feeling that you're suspended over a giant, glowing emerald. The magical, mystical experience is a good reminder of the ephemeral nature of beauty and how fleeting is life itself. *Information: www.squidoo.com/hoover-dam-float-trips*

FEED YOUR SOUL

14 GARLAND'S LODGE

Dinner is a highlight at this beautiful, historic lodge in Oak Creek Canyon. Each menu is assembled with the care of a guest list for a dinner party, with attention to how each dish will contribute to the whole. Dinner always starts with warm, oven-fresh bread, paired with the day's soup. In the spring and early summer, salads take advantage of fresh greens from Garland's gardens. The main course might be

ABOVE: California condor, Vermilion Cliffs | JOHN CANCALOSI
RIGHT: Jeep tour, Canyon de Chelly | ANN COLLINS
BELOW: Fremont cottonwood, Circle Z Ranch, Patagonia | DAVE BLY





Kayaking Emerald Cave, Black Canyon | KERRICK JAMES

apple-glazed stuffed pork or salmon with ancho-lime glaze followed by sumptuous, house-made pies and cobblers incorporating heirloom fruits from Garland's orchards. In the background are the rippling sounds of Oak Creek, from which all this goodness flows. *Information: 8067 N. State Route 89A, Sedona, 928-282-3343, www.garlandslodge.com*

HOOK UP IN THE RIVER

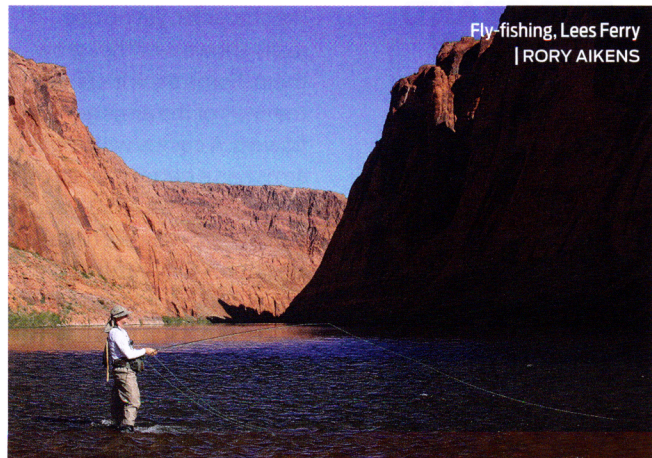
15

LEES FERRY, GLEN CANYON

The famous stretch of the

Colorado River between Glen Canyon Dam and the Grand Canyon is one of the best trout fisheries in North America, with more trout per mile than any other American river. The water flows

clear and cold along this 15.5-mile stretch, where 12- to 24-inch rainbow trout are common. An added bonus is the beauty of Glen Canyon, with its towering sandstone cliffs and redbud trees that



Fly-fishing, Lees Ferry | RORY AIKENS

bloom in spring. *Information: Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, 928-608-6200, www.nps.gov/gcra; Lee's Ferry Anglers, 800-962-9755, www.leesferry.com*

GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY

16

GRAND CANYON FIELD INSTITUTE

Studies show that service contributes to our happiness. Lucky for us, the non-profit Grand Canyon Field Institute offers a whole roster of service-based classes where students can make a difference by restoring the Canyon's habitat, conducting botanical or hydrological surveys, or investigating archaeological ruins. In last year's hands-on archaeology class, a small group worked with National Park Service scientists to excavate a historic site. All of which goes to show you can learn to be happy. *Information: 866-471-4435, www.grandcanyon.org/fieldinstitute*

QUENCH YOUR THIRST AT A OASIS

17

NELLIE E. SALOON

If you see a caravan of cars driving into the desert north of Parker, chances are they're headed to the Nellie E., a.k.a. the Desert Bar. When you see a copper steeple atop a chapel welded from steel plates, you'll know you've arrived. The Nellie E. opened on an old mining claim in 1983. There's a bar with glass refrigerator doors for windows, a music stage and sheet-metal cooling towers. It's a funky, jostling, happy place, but it's only open weekends from Labor Day through Memorial

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Hart Prairie, near Flagstaff | TOM BEAN

Day. In the summer, it shuts up tighter than a desert tortoise. *Information: Cienega Springs Road, Parker, www.thedesertbar.com*

TAKE THE SCENIC ROUTES

18

OAK CREEK CANYON, KAIBAB PLATEAU, HART PRAIRIE, SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK

Life is too short to spend it stuck in traffic when Arizona has such spectacular back roads. Crank up Springsteen and head out on a drive, one for each of the four seasons. Start with State Route 89A through Oak Creek Canyon in spring, when the creek's cottonwoods sprout their first vibrant leaves and the apple orchards are in bloom. Take the high road in the summer on the North Rim Parkway, with its cool, wildflower-strewn meadows and vanilla-scented pines.

In the fall, you'll love Hart Prairie Road, its shimmering aspens carpeting the gravel road with golden leaves. And where better to appreciate winter than the desert? Pose in short sleeves with one of the stately giants at Saguaro National Park and send it to friends back East. *Information: Oak Creek: 928-203-2900, www.fs.usda.gov/coconino; Kaibab Plateau: 928-643-7395, www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab; Hart Prairie: 928-526-0866, www.fs.usda.gov/coconino; Saguaro NP: 520-733-5153, www.nps.gov/sagu*

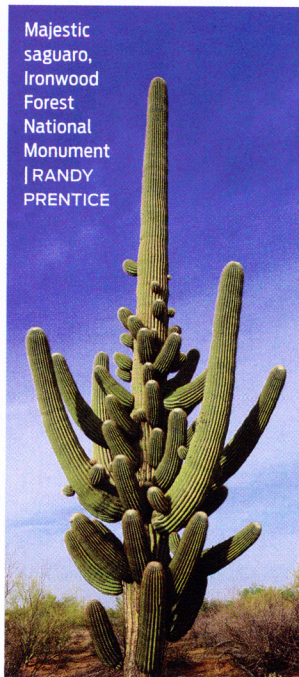
WALK OVER THE GRAND CANYON

19

NAVAJO BRIDGE

On U.S. Route 89A, two nearly identical bridges span the Colorado River. The narrower one, built in 1927 to accommodate automobiles, replaced the boat crossing at Lees Ferry. At the time, it was the highest steel-arch

bridge in the world. But by the mid-1990s, it couldn't support modern-day traffic, so a wider bridge was built just downriver. The historic bridge is now a pedestrian crossing, with panoramic views of the Colorado River 470 feet below and California condors wheeling above. *Information: 928-355-2319, www.nps.gov/glca*



Majestic saguaro, Ironwood Forest National Monument | RANDY PRENTICE

FIND AND PHOTOGRAPH THIS INCREDIBLE SAGUARO

20

NEAR IRONWOOD FOREST NATIONAL MONUMENT

It's the arms that give saguaros their engaging, human-like character, yet no one really knows why they grow them. Some think it's because the ends of the arms grow flowers. A cactus with more arms has a better chance of reproducing. Yet a 150-year-old saguaro may not have a single arm. On the other hand, one in Southern Arizona has 75. We're not going to tell you exactly where it is, but

it's worth finding so you can see it for yourself. *Information: Ironwood Forest National Monument, 520-258-7200, www.blm.gov/az; Saguaro National Park, 520-733-5158, www.nps.gov/sagu*

LOOK TO THE SKY

21

GRAND CANYON LODGE

To properly enjoy meteor showers, the most important element is a dark sky. That's why the Grand Canyon's North Rim makes such a wonderful place to view them. Add the quiet, the spectacular setting and an unobstructed view of the horizon, and you've got a front-row seat to two of nature's most impressive displays. In August, the Perseids take center stage, and this year's waning crescent moon won't outshine the stars of the show. *Information: 928-638-7888, www.grandcanyonlodgenorth.com*

RUN THE COLORADO

22

LEES FERRY TO DIAMOND CREEK

You can take a day trip on the Colorado River, and you even can take it in a motorized boat. But to paddle all 277 miles through the Grand Canyon is to glide through some 2 billion years of geologic time and see fern-covered grottoes, ancient granaries and 100-foot waterfalls. It is to test yourself against the rapids and experience the profound quiet of the canyons. It is to remember what it means to work toward a common goal, to travel lightly, test your limits and, sometimes, surprise yourself. *Information: 800-959-9164, www.nps.gov/grca*



Rafting the Colorado River, Grand Canyon | KERRICK JAMES

TAKE A RIM-TO-RIM- TO-RIM SHOT

23

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

In Arizona, a rim-to-rim-to-

rim hike of the Grand Canyon is a rite of passage. It's a 44-mile challenge, one that *National Geographic* writer Peter Potterfield ranks as one of the 15 best hikes in the world. The National Park

Service, however, frowns upon long hikes like that. Taking it slow, over the course of four to six days, has its own rewards. Like escaping the heat of the day at Ribbon Falls, enjoying a cold

beer at Phantom Ranch and watching sunset at Plateau Point. *Information: 928-638-7875, www.nps.gov/grca*

TRAVEL BACK IN TIME

24

WALPI

Perched on the high, narrow finger of First Mesa, this ancient Hopi village is the mother of the 11 present-day Hopi settlements. The Hopis have occupied this defensive location, built from hand-plastered sandstone, since the 17th century. Its residents still live as their ancestors have for centuries, without electricity and running water, selling the pottery for which First Mesa is known. *Information: State Route 264, Milepost 392, 928-737-2262, www.experiencehopi.com/walpi*



Hiking rim-to-rim-to-rim, Grand Canyon
| TOM BROWNOLD



Backpacking, Hellsgate Wilderness
| NICK BEREZENKO

GO TO HELLSGATE AND BACK

25 HELLSGATE WILDERNESS

Prepare well for this three- to five-day backpack, or you'll feel like you've entered the gates of Hell. The name refers to what pioneer settlers called the confluence of Tonto and Haigler creeks. In 1984, it became the name of the surrounding wilderness. If you follow Tonto Creek, plan on 10 to 12 swims per day, alternating with boulder scrambles to challenge the most avid hikers. Rewards include some of the most heavenly scenery in Arizona and a sense of accomplishment that feels out of this world. *Information:* 928-474-7900, www.fs.usda.gov/tonto

HIT THE TRAILS

26 SEVEN FALLS, WIDFORSS, INNER BASIN, HUMPHREYS PEAK

Hiking is supreme in Arizona. It's why many of us live here. Creeks flow in the spring, making that the best time for the Seven Falls Trail in Tucson's Bear Canyon. It's all cliffs and high canyon walls, with the ultimate payoff of an improbable desert water-

fall. In the summer, there's nothing grander than the Grand Canyon. The premier trail is Widforss, a beautiful, forested walk along the North Rim, culminating in views of formations named for kings and goddesses. The Inner Basin in Flagstaff is tops for fall color, when golden aspens punctuate its idyllic route into the heart of the San Francisco Peaks. Topping all of them, literally, is Humphreys Peak. At 12,633 feet in elevation, it's the highest point in the state. Lots of people hike it in the summer, but for the hike of a lifetime, tackle it in the winter with a pair of snowshoes. *Information:* *Seven Falls:* 520-749-8700, www.fs.usda.gov/coronado; *Widforss:* 928-638-7875, www.nps.gov/grca; *Inner Basin and Humphreys Peak:* 928-526-0866, www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

LISTEN TO THE BLUES

27 HAVASU CANYON

As Havasu Creek rushes toward the Colorado River, its famously turquoise waters cascade over a series of waterfalls and feed a ribbon of greenery that some have

compared to Shangri-La. Over time, minerals in the creek have formed travertine benches and natural dams, creating resort-like swimming holes that remain a near-constant 70 degrees. The most famous, of course, is Havasu Falls. Located 2 miles from the remote Havasupai village of Supai, Havasu Falls plunges nearly 100 feet into a clear, wide



Havasupai Falls, Grand Canyon | DAVID ELMS

swimming hole, surrounded by tall, shady cottonwoods. Call it Paradise Found. *Information:* 928-448-2121, www.havasupaitribe.com



Snow-hiking, Humphreys Peak | DAVID WALLACE



For more great Arizona adventures, scan this QR code or visit www.arizona-highways.com/travel.asp.



Toroweap Overlook, Grand Canyon | MARK LAVERMAN

GO TO THE FLOW

28

TOROWEAP OVERLOOK

This remote spot is prized for its rugged, undeveloped character and solitude, and getting there takes temerity, perseverance and a high-clearance vehicle. But the rewards include one of the most unique and dramatic views of the Grand Canyon. The remnants of lava flows that spilled over the canyon rim are visible here, at one of the narrowest and deepest parts of the gorge. It's a sheer, 3,000-foot drop to the Colorado River, with a view of its most dramatic rapids. For the truly adventurous, take the nearby hike down, but beware. The 1.5-mile Lava Falls Route is extremely exposed and crosses steep, treacherous talus slopes on its 2,500-foot plummet to the river at Lava Falls Rapid. The route, marked in only a few locations, descends one of the hottest, scariest chutes in

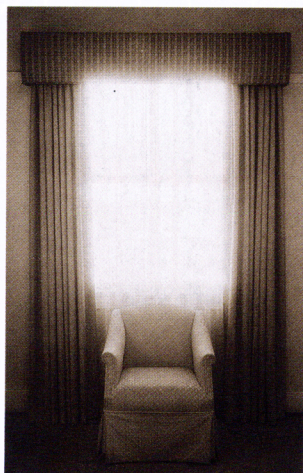
the Canyon. This route is life-threatening in the summer due to the extreme heat and lack of water. *Information:* 928-638-7888, www.nps.gov/grca

GET INTO THE SPIRIT

29

ROOM 426, HASSAYAMPA INN

One of the first guests at this historic hotel in Prescott was a young bride named Faith whose husband left



Room 426, Hassayampa Inn | RICHARD MAACK

on their honeymoon to buy cigarettes and never came back. Three days later, Faith hung herself in despair. Since then, visitors periodically encounter Faith in Room 426. Guests report waking up to find the TV blaring, the lights on or their toothbrushes missing. The inn's spirited Halloween bash makes it the perfect occasion for a rendezvous with Faith. *Information:* 122 E. Gurley Street, Prescott, 928-778-9434, www.hassayampainn.com

SETTLE IN FOR SUNSET

30

HANNAGAN MEADOW

Located at the edge of a remote wilderness area, the historic lodge and campground at Hannagan Meadow offer unspoiled, peaceful, high-mountain retreats. Sunset is magical. Elk, turkeys, bobcats and bears emerge from the surrounding forest of spruce and firs. Crickets

chirp, coyotes yip. You might even hear the howl of a wolf as the light shimmering on aspen leaves gives way to the glitter of stars as bountiful as sand on a beach. *Information:* 928-339-4370, www.hannaganmeadow.com (lodge); 928-339-5000, www.fs.usda.gov/asnf (campground)

CRAWL INTO A CAVE

31

KARTCHNER CAVERNS

A soda straw lives in Kartchner Caverns — not the kind you'd expect to find in a fountain drink, but an amazing, 21-foot-long limestone stalactite. It hangs from the ceiling in the Throne Room, one of many remarkable areas visitors to the caverns can explore. The cave, discovered by Randy Tufts and Gary Tenen in 1974, is now part of Kartchner Caverns State Park, and it's open for tours most days. *Information:* 520-586-2283, www.azstateparks.com/parks/kaca **AH**