

Written by Melissa Larsen

---



Any Phoenician knows the splendor of Sedona and the awe of Antelope Canyon. But our fair state is home to many other—and perhaps little-known—weekend travel opportunities. Just in time for National Travel & Tourism Week (May 7-13), *Arizona Foothills Magazine* checked in with Scott Dunn, Arizona Office of Tourism's senior director of communications, about four weekend escapes that are practically in your own backyard. Happy travels!

---



## A Grand Plan

It is one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, providing endless opportunities for hiking, rafting and, of course, endless picture-taking. But did you know that you can skydive at the Grand Canyon? Adventure-seekers can book a tandem skydiving experience at Grand Canyon National Park Airport, about seven miles from the South Rim.

The experience is what bucket-list dreams are made of—and not for the faint of heart. Jumpers may travel at speeds in excess of 120 miles per hour from 15,000 feet. Once the parachute opens, it is time for a peaceful decent, taking in the Grand Canyon's grandeur and gorgeousness. "It's so beautiful and expansive from up there. The colors and size of it...it's very impressive," says Rachel Pohl, an artist from Montana who made the jump several times during the making of a virtual-reality video for the Arizona Office of Tourism. "I can see why people come from all over the world to see [the Grand Canyon]. And then to be able to fly over that? That's maybe one of the coolest things I've ever done."

Paragon Skydive offers the first and only skydiving experience over the Grand Canyon, and all of its instructors are certified through the United States Parachute Association. Within an hour of walking in the door, skydivers of all experience levels can be certified to skydive (must be at least 18 years old and in good physical shape). The tandem jump is \$299, not including add-ons. [paragon-skydive.com](http://paragon-skydive.com).

---



## Bowled Over

Though it is a popular hot spot in the winter for skiing, snowboarding and general powder play, Arizona Snowbowl offers sweet relief from scorching temps in the summer. (In Flagstaff, summertime highs are 30 to 40 degrees cooler than in the Valley!)

Written by Melissa Larsen

---

One way to soak up 80-degree days is via Snowbowl's Scenic Chairlift, which rides to the 11,500-ft. flank of Agassiz Peak. Riders can take in panoramas of Flagstaff, Sedona and, if you look closely, even the Grand Canyon during the 25-minute voyage. Once you have made it to the pinnacle, dig into a burger and ice cream at Agassiz Lodge.

For a more active way to spend the day, Snowbowl is home to the start of three major trails—including the 4.5-mile trail to Arizona's highest peak, 12,633-ft. Mount Humphreys—and is a perfect setting for disc golf. An 18-hole course spans 1.8 miles at elevations as high as 10,000 feet. Discs are available for rent at Agassiz Lodge. [arizonasnowbowl.com](http://arizonasnowbowl.com).

---



### You've Goot to See This

Tuzigoot National Monument isn't just fun to say; it is fun to visit, as well. Tuzigoot is a community that was built on a hilltop by a farming culture known as the Sinagua and is located just below the Mogollon Rim. Nowadays, its preserved ruins are accessible by a short path, and the on-site museum allows the perfect opportunity to learn about the people who once lived there. (Plus, walking to the peak of the hilltop gives visitors a top-notch view of Verde Valley.)

Traveling with your little ones? The Junior Ranger Program encourages kids to complete activities that focus on archeology and historical preservation, earning a badge and certificate in the process. Though the program was developed for children, there is no age limit so parents are also invited to join in the fun. [nps.gov/tuzi](http://nps.gov/tuzi).

---



### Star Light, Star Bright

At Oracle State Park, you'll be seeing stars—quite literally. Located at the northeastern foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains, Oracle is an International Dark Sky Park, meaning it is a must-visit for exquisite stargazing.

For daytime pursuits, the 4,000-acre wildlife refuge has more than 15 miles of trails for use by hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians; birdwatching and wildlife/landscape photography are also popular outdoor activities.

Oracle visitors can also take a self-guided tour through the Kannally family home. Though the home, built 1929 to 1933, has an exhibit of impressionist-style oil paintings by cowboy artist Lee Kannally, the house itself is quite the sight: the Mediterranean-Revival-style ranch is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. [azstateparks.com/oracle](http://azstateparks.com/oracle).

### To Learn More

Arizona Office of Tourism [visitarizona.com](http://visitarizona.com).