



Desert Botanical Garden

Urban Arizona

Discover
can't-miss
statewide
attractions
and hot spots

BY SAM LOWE

ARIZONA'S 100TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION is rapidly approaching, and to commemorate that monumental occasion, *Highroads* magazine asked readers to submit their favorites — the places they enjoy, things they like to do, and the scenic wonders that thrill them. The response was excellent, and we thank all those who took the time to write us. From those suggestions, we have selected the top 100 things readers like about the state.

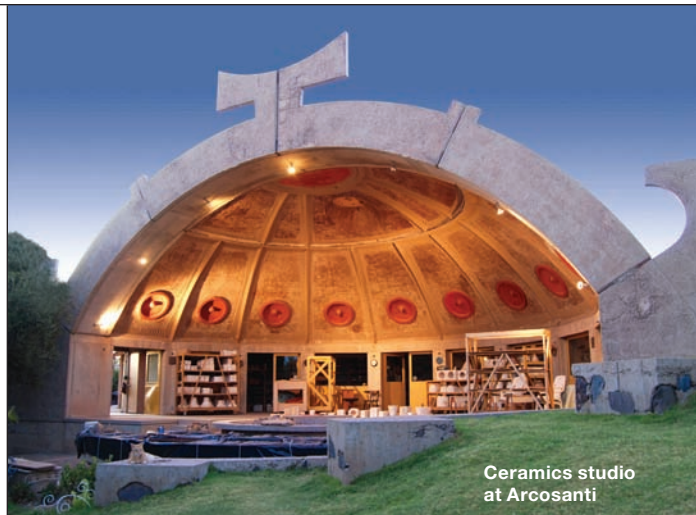
This is the second installment of a four-part series celebrating the Arizona Centennial. In our last issue, we featured the 25 attractions that best personify Quintessential Arizona. This time around, we shine the spotlight on 25 urban favorites, listed in no particular order. Future issues will feature Historical Arizona and Festive Arizona.

1 Desert Botanical Garden
Every year, more than 640,000 visitors wander the garden, nestled among the red rocks of Papago Park in Phoenix. The enclosure features about 50,000 displays of plants common to the deserts of the Southwest. Now in its 70th year, it is one of only 44 botanical gardens in the nation accredited by the American Association of Museums.



Desert Botanical Garden

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN; COURTESY OF ARCOSANTI; COURTESY OF TEMPE CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU



Ceramics studio at Arcosanti

2 Arcosanti
Since 1970, visionary architect Paolo Soleri has been working on his futuristic city in the desert north of Cordes Junction. The project may not be finished in this generation, or even the next, but when it's complete, it will be home to about 7,000 people living and working in a close-knit environment. There will be no cars allowed inside the complex and solar power will be the norm.



Tempe Town Lake

3 Tempe Town Lake
Both an economic boon and a major tourist destination, the lake is a man-made impoundment on the Salt River. The lake is a popular site for boaters, sun-seekers, triathletes, and picnickers.

4 The Zoos

Arizona is home to an excellent assortment of places where the wild things are on display. The Phoenix Zoo covers a huge area in Papago Park and was voted one of the top five zoos for kids in the nation; the World Wildlife Zoo on the west side of Phoenix features white tigers; Tucson's Reid Park Zoo has 500 exotic animals, including a giant anteater; and Out of Africa in Camp Verde offers safari and tram tours, swimming tigers and opportunities to feed the giraffes.



Reid Park Zoo



Orpheum Theater

5 Orpheum Theater
Originally built in the 1920s as a movie theater, the Orpheum almost became a victim of urban renewal until a citizens group rallied to save it from the wrecking ball. Then it took time (12 years), money (\$14 million), and perseverance by hundreds of volunteers to restore the venerable house to its original condition. The Orpheum now serves as a venue for a variety of first-class theatrical offerings.

6 Taliesin West
Famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright fell in love with Arizona on his first visit in 1933. Four years later, he had designed and built Taliesin West on 600 acres purchased for \$3.50 per acre on the southern slope of the McDowell Mountains in north Scottsdale. It was his winter home until his death at age 91 in 1959. Wright used desert stone, wooden frames, and concrete to create the complex, which is now open for tours.

7 Valley of the Moon
If there are such beings as trolls and hobbits, some of them must surely live in the Valley of the Moon, a small and peaceful oasis in Tucson. George Phar Legler, a mailman with a huge imagination, used rocks and stones to build towers, castles, and houses for his "little people." Legler often put on a hobbit costume and led children through the park. Years after his death, Legler's work is carried on by a volunteer society.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF REID PARK ZOO; COURTESY OF PHOENIX CONVENTION CENTER AND VENUES

8 Chapel of the Holy Cross
Perched over Sedona, the chapel was commissioned by Marguerite Brunswig Staude and completed in 1956 at a cost of \$300,000. The church holds regular services and has been voted one of *The Arizona Republic's* Seven Wonders of Arizona. It's open daily, except on major religious holidays.

9 Urban Mountains and Peaks
Three popular Phoenix climbing spots drew multiple votes, led by Camelback Mountain, rising 2,700 feet above the Phoenix metropolitan area and resembling a camel at rest. Piestewa Peak, named for Lori Ann Piestewa, the first Native American woman to die in U.S. military combat, is 2,608 feet above sea level and is the second highest mountain in the area. South Mountain Park, the nation's largest municipal park, has 58 miles of hiking trails ranging from one to 14 miles.



Chapel of the Holy Cross

10 Whiskey Row
Back in Prescott's rip-roarin' days, bars and saloons filled an entire block in the heart of downtown. It was called Whiskey Row then and now, but gift shops and restaurants have replaced most of the original beer-and-booze dispensaries. However, a couple of the oldies still offer beer that lunges from the tap with a curse, and a dark atmosphere that conveys patrons back to that wild and woolly time of yore.

12 Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area
Native Americans were the first inhabitants of Yuma Crossing, followed by Spanish explorers, fur traders, mountain men, riverboat crews, and the U.S. military, which established the outpost that now denotes the area. Not far away, the newly renovated Yuma Territorial Prison State Park affords a look inside what was once the most feared penal institution in the Southwest. Both are open to the public.

11 Museums
Those most frequently mentioned by readers include the Heard Museum in Phoenix, the Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott, the Musical Instrument Museum in Scottsdale, and the Fort Huachuca Museums in Sierra Vista. Voters also gave high marks to three Tucson institutions: the Mini-Time Machine Museum of Miniatures, the Sonoran Desert Museum, and the Pima Air & Space Museum.



Lowell Observatory

13 Skywatchers
Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff achieved a niche in astrological history when Clyde Tombaugh used its telescopes to discover the dwarf planet Pluto in 1930. The observatory was built in 1894 by Sir Percival Lowell and is now a National Historic Landmark. The Mount Graham International Observatory sits atop 10,700-foot Mount Graham near Safford. Kitt Peak National Observatory operates three telescopes and is connected to facilities that offer 19 other scopes. It's on the Tohono O'odham Nation, about 56 miles southwest of Tucson. All three observatories are open to the public.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF LOWELL OBSERVATORY/MIKE THOMPSON; ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK



Winslow

16 Pro Sports

Fans who live by professional sports teams cast votes for a full slate. The Arizona Cardinals of the National Football League play in the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale; the Phoenix Coyotes compete against other National Hockey League teams in Glendale's Jobing.com Arena; and in downtown Phoenix, the Phoenix Suns and the Phoenix Mercury make jump shots in America West Arena and the Arizona Diamondbacks try for another World Series title in Chase Field.

17 Arts and Culture

The selections are plentiful, and include Ballet Arizona; Arizona Theater Company, performing in Phoenix and Tucson; the Phoenix Opera, performing in Phoenix and Tucson; the Phoenix Symphony, which offers both classical and pops concerts; and Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium in Tempe, which offers Broadway shows and grand operas.

14 Standin' On the Corner Park

For years, fans of the hit Eagles' tune "Take It Easy" would go to Winslow to stand on the corner. Today, there's an official Standin' On the Corner in Winslow Arizona Park, where corner-standers can stand without fear of standin' in the wrong place. There's just room enough for a mural, trees, and a life-size bronze statue of the young man holding his guitar. It's open 24 hours a day and there's no charge for picture-taking or just standin'.

Shady Dell Trailer Park



18 Shady Dell Trailer Park

It's neither shady nor a dell, but this trailer park in Bisbee is popular with folks who like things the way they used to be. The park has an assortment of those aluminum-bodied trailers from as long ago as the 1930s. It offers overnight housing in old travel trailers that have been meticulously restored, right down to the Melmac dishes in the cupboards and pink flamingos in the front yard.

15 For the Kids

Those playgrounds most frequently mentioned by readers include Big Surf in Tempe, site of the first wave pool in the nation. The wave pool is gone but many splashing activities remain. Golfland Sunsplash in Mesa features lagoon bumper boats, mini golf, video games, laser tag, and family nights.

19 Fun in the Snow

Sunrise Park Resort in the White Mountains near Greer offers 65 runs on three different mountains, a special snowboarding area with a snow half-pipe and implanted wood and metal rails, and cross-country ski trails. The Snow Bowl, located on the slopes of the San Francisco Peaks north of Flagstaff, is open an average of 110 days a year. It has 32 trails and five lifts.

PHOTOS: KERRICK JAMES



We-Ko-Pa Cholla Golf Course

22 Golf Courses

Arizona boasts 421 public and private golf courses from Ajo to Yuma. They range from upscale Troon in north Scottsdale, to the Snake Hole Course in Apache Junction, where the greens are sand and distances are in feet, not yards. Arizona also hosts PGA-sanctioned tournaments: the Waste Management Phoenix Open at the Desert TPC in north Scottsdale, where Tiger Woods once made a hole-in-one, and the World Golf Championships-Accenture Match Play event in Marana.

20 Gilbert Riparian Preserve

Located in the heart of downtown Gilbert, the Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch is an oasis where wildlife flourishes and flowers provide a colorful backdrop for any activity. With a large fishing pool and adjacent library, the park is ideal for fishing, reading, meditating or bird watching.



Tempe Marketplace

23 Shopping

Urban shopping centers cover large areas and can accommodate thousands of customers at the same time. Popular metropolitan Phoenix-area malls include Scottsdale Fashion Square; Biltmore Fashion Park; Chandler Fashion Center; Paradise Valley Mall; Arrowhead Towne Center in Peoria; Metrocenter Mall in Phoenix; Tempe Marketplace; and Scottsdale's Fifth Avenue.

21 City Parks

Encanto Park is one of the oldest recreation areas in Phoenix; Steele Indian School Park is one of the newest. Encanto Park covers 222 acres and has been named one of the Top 12 Best City Parks by *Forbes* magazine. Visitors can ride the carousel or propel a paddle boat across the fish-filled lagoon at its Enchanted Island. Steele Indian School Park was once the site of the Phoenix Indian School. The city acquired it in 1996 and opened it as a park in 2001. Some of the buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places.

24 Dining

Mexican food dominates in the Southwest, but eateries cater to every palate because Arizona is also a melting pot of ethnic tastes. The voter choices range from upscale steak houses to fast food outlets. The Farm at South Mountain in Phoenix drew high praise, as did the Turquoise Room at La Posada in Winslow, the Sweet Grace Restaurant and Emporium in Camp Verde, and El Encanto Restaurant in Cave Creek. Off-beat suggestions included Organ Stop Pizza in Mesa, the Sugar Bowl in Scottsdale, and Rock Springs Cafe in Rock Springs.

25 Night Life

It gets cooler when the sun goes down in Arizona, but that's when the night life heats up. Many voted Tempe's Mill Avenue, the popular gathering spot for ASU students and itinerant musicians, the top hot spot. Others mentioned the Scottsdale scene from Old Town to the more recent additions in the north. In Tucson, it's the downtown area, Fourth Avenue and Main Gate Square.

We're halfway through our Centennial countdown. Join us for the third installment in the next issue of *Highroads*, which will feature Historic Arizona.

Runners-up

Several well-known urban Arizona sites received enough votes to garner honorable mentions. Among them were: Slide Rock State Park near Sedona, Sunset Crater National Monument near Flagstaff, the town of Greer, Weavers Needle in the Superstition Mountains, and Rooster Cogburn Ostrich Ranch near Picacho Peak.

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PHOTOS: LONNA TUCKER, COURTESY OF WE-KO-PA CHOLLA GOLF COURSE; MICHAEL BAXTER, BAXTER IMAGING, LLC; COURTESY OF TEMPE MARKETPLACE