

{ DESTINATION }

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THE SPLENDORS OF SEDONA

BY TERESA K. TRAVERSE

Absorbing the aura of
Capitol Butte, one of
Sedona's most notable
red rock formations



EXPANSIVE BLUE SKIES, striking red rocks, and near-perfect weather make Sedona, Arizona, a captivating place. The kind of place that makes people like me, a resident of Phoenix, return to again and again. We're drawn to this northern Arizona city because it's a haven for recreation, a spiritual destination, and a small town with a sophisticated vibe. Here's how to experience this enchanting oasis in Red Rock Country—one neighborhood at a time.

WEST SEDONA

One of Sedona's most notable red rock formations, Capitol Butte (or Thunder Mountain) is on full display from the Sedona Airport Scenic Lookout at the top of Airport Road. Pay three dollars to park in the lot across the street from the lookout and enjoy the breathtaking vistas. Nearby Airport Mesa is also one of Sedona's famed vortexes (centers of energy) that are thought to be healing and energizing. Even if you don't feel the vortex, you'll love the scenery. From here, you also can access multiple hiking trails. The Airport Loop Trail is a 3.2-mile relatively flat jaunt offering jaw-dropping views of all the major red rock formations in town. If you've worked up an appetite, Chef Mercer Mohr's Mesa Grill is nearby. Dig into a White Cheddar Burger or a Vegan Burger Bowl at this American spot.

If you're in the mood for more hiking, you can get up close to Capitol Butte on the relatively easy, 1.9-mile Sugarloaf Loop Trail. The Devil's Bridge sandstone arch has become a social media star and is one popular 4.2-mile out and back hike. Crescent Moon Ranch or Red Rock Crossing offer beautiful views of Cathedral Rock—the most photographed red rock in Sedona.



Hiking near Bell Rock



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Crescent Moon Ranch



Che Ah Chi Restaurant at Enchantment Resort's Roasted Cauliflower

Additional restaurants include local gem Judi's Restaurant & Lounge, which has been in business for more than 30 years. Feast on fine food with Native American influences at Enchantment Resort's Che Ah Chi.

CENTRAL SEDONA OR SOUTH OF THE "Y"

In the heart of Sedona, Tlaquepaque (pronounced "Ta-la-key-pa-key") Arts & Shopping Village is a must-visit Sedona institution. Modeled after a Mexican village with sand-colored buildings and fountains, it features more than 50 boutiques and restaurants. Spend an afternoon window shopping. Food highlights include the French fine dining restaurant Rene, the vegetarian spot, The Secret Garden, and the creative desserts at Sedona Cake Couture. Sedona is an artistic town, and home to many art galleries. Find modern art and jewelry at Renee Taylor's three galleries, wildlife sculpture and art at Rowe Gallery (complete with a tree that runs through the ceiling), and stunning landscape photography at Eclectic Image Gallery.

Just across the street from Tlaquepaque is Creekside Coffee. Perk up here, enjoy a decadent pastry, and gaze out the windows showcasing red rocks.

UPTOWN SEDONA

Lively Uptown Sedona is dominated by shops and restaurants. Don't miss Touchtone Gallery, filled with natural treasures like amethyst bookends and body products from Body Bliss. Sedona is also famous for its Jeep tours. One of the most prominent operators, Pink Jeep Tours, has an office in Uptown where many tours begin.

To learn more about Sedona's early pioneers, its filmmaking heyday (close to 100 pictures were shot in the city), and its thriving past as a peach and apple producer, check out the Sedona Heritage



Creekside Coffee

ENCHANTMENT RESORT

DELA MOON PHOTOS

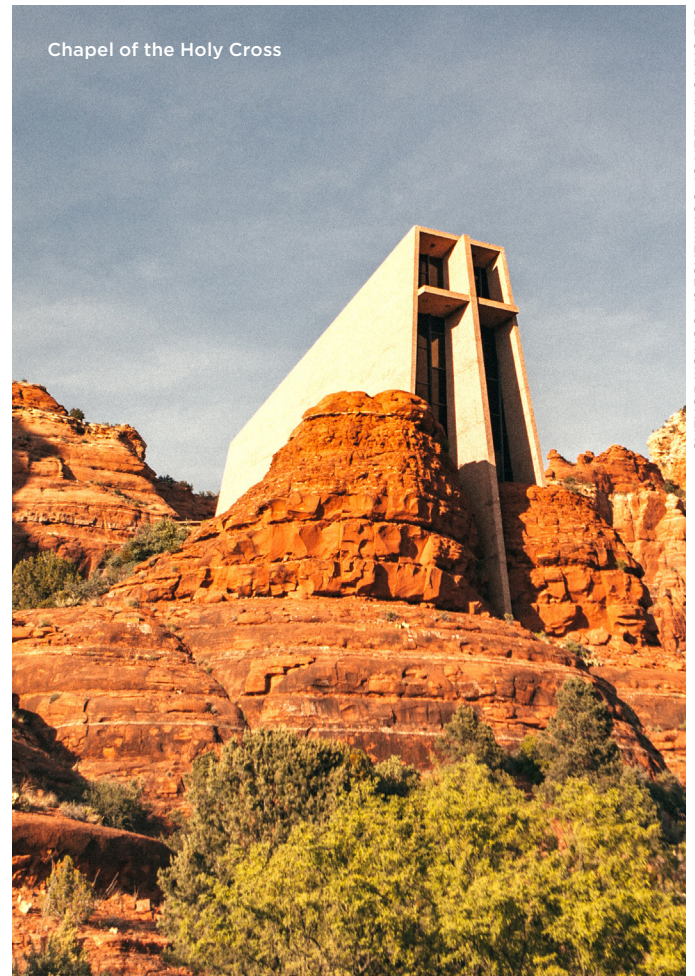




Elote Café



Village of Oak Creek



Chapel of the Holy Cross

SEDONA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & TOURISM BUREAU

CHARLES LEWIS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Museum. Modern Mexican restaurant, Elote Café, is notable. The margaritas and signature elote or Mexican corn appetizer are stellar. Reservations are required. All of the red meat at Cowboy Club is fantastic. The old school steakhouse vibe is fun, and the cactus fries are a must.

OAK CREEK CANYON

Forgive the pun, but Oak Creek Canyon gorge is a gorgeous place. Drive down this scenic two-lane road that follows Sedona's main tributary, Oak Creek, in an unforgettable setting of lush green trees and towering red rocks. Pull over at designated spots to soak up the beauty. You can hike, picnic, and fish here. Indian Gardens Café & Market, the oldest continually operated general store in the neighborhood, is a great place to fuel up. Inside, there's coffee and fresh Southwestern food like Sourdough Chilaquiles at the counter and local products for sale. The trailhead for one of Sedona's most iconic and magical trails, West Fork, is in this canyon. Hike for three miles one way alongside Oak Creek and towering red rocks. It's a beautiful sight.

VILLAGE OF OAK CREEK

About 20 minutes from Central Sedona, the Village of Oak Creek is home to the popular site, the Chapel of the Holy Cross. Completed in 1956, the stunning chapel is built directly into the red rock.

The village also is home to some of Sedona's well-known hiking trails. Hike Bell Rock Trail 1.1 miles out and back to get a close-up view of this aptly named red rock. For a tough climb and stunning views, hike 1.2 miles to Cathedral Rock. To see all of the major red rock formations in the village, hike the 3.9-mile Courthouse Butte Loop Trail. Post-hike, head to the chic lounge Butterfly Burger that's helmed by noteworthy Chef Lisa Dahl for its titular food and boozy milkshakes.

Sedona is an International Dark Sky City, meaning the city has taken steps to preserve the night sky. Be sure to look up when the sun has gone down to see the sky blanketed with twinkling stars. If you'd like a guided experience, consider booking a tour with Sedona Stargazing. Professional astronomers will give you an overview of major constellations.

For more information, see visitsedona.com. ✨

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Keep in mind that Sedona is at an elevation of 4,350 feet, and you may feel the effects. Be sure to contact tour companies, attractions, restaurants, and other businesses to confirm hours of operations.

GETTING THERE

By Air

There are several daily flights from San Diego to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. From Phoenix, it's a two-hour drive to Sedona. In Black Canyon City, don't drive past the exit for Rock Spring Café, a legendary restaurant famous for homemade pie. If you have time, Arcosanti is an architectural gem and worth a stop.

By Car

From San Diego to Sedona, it's an eight-hour drive on Interstate 8. Break up the trip with a stop at Yuma and visit Castle Dome Mines Museum & Ghost Town, or Dateland, renowned for its date palm trees, date shakes, and other date delicacies.

WHERE TO STAY

Sky Ranch Lodge

Charming accommodations with a stunning viewing area near Airport Mesa

Enchantment Resort

Casitas and suites nestled in the dramatic red rocks of Boynton Canyon

L'Auberge de Sedona

Beautifully appointed cottages, suites, and rooms alongside tranquil Oak Creek