

Main Street is filled with quaint boutiques and bars.
(Photo by Chuck Feil)



MINING INSPIRATION

Bisbee blossoms into a Bohemian burg

By Teresa K. Traverse

Bisbee is an old mining town turned hip and vibrant artistic community in Southern Arizona. You can wander Bisbee's winding and steep streets as you take in mountain views, quirky shops and hotels housed inside historical buildings and see some of the city's colorful street murals that pop up around every corner. From a ghost town to touring Bisbee's famed Queen Mine, discover what this historical yet modern city has to offer visitors.

Old Bisbee

To start your Bisbee journey, begin in the historic heart of town: Old Bisbee. Stroll

by old buildings that are now filled with a variety of charming boutiques. Highlights include **Optimo Custom Hatworks** (optimohatworks.com), established in 1972. Here, you can purchase or just admire handcrafted hats made using old world techniques. Shop owner S. Grant Sergot posts his latest creations on his Instagram feed ([instagram.com/optimohatworks/](https://www.instagram.com/optimohatworks/)), so you can see what's in store before you head inside. Watch glass blower Rich Creek practicing his craft at **Steel Creek Glass** and view his cooled finished works inside. When you open the door to **Bisbee Soap & Sundry** (bisbeesoapandsundry.com), you can look forward to inhaling the scent of everything from cedar to creosote. All of the

company's products are handmade on site. As you're smelling the different options, consider checking out the proprietary blend, Bisbee Blue Soap – a combination of juniper and florals with a light musk that's named after the famed turquoise found in Bisbee. You'll want to explore these shops early in the day, since many of them close around 5 p.m.

Brewery Gulch was notorious back in Bisbee's mining days as a spot where miners could head to roughly 50 saloons and it still retains some of its rough charms. You can literally smell the hops as you approach **Old Bisbee Brewing Company** (oldbisbeebrewingcompany.com). Enjoy the brewery's

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Fly-In VACATION

Bisbee is an old mining town turned hip and vibrant artistic community.
(Photo by Chuck Feil)



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own craft beer alongside a menu of gourmet bratwurst and vegetarian chili. Another notable haunt is **St. Elmo's Bar**. This dive bar was established in 1902 and may be the oldest bar in Arizona. Either way, anticipate a dark, laid-back atmosphere where you can cozy up to the bar and order a drink.

Thuy's Noodle Shop is not a place you'd expect to find in Bisbee, but you'd be glad if you did. Order a steaming bowl of pho (topped with choice of fish or beef) and spring rolls from this bustling, cozy Vietnamese shop that houses just four tables. Watch as the staff prepares your food from a lively, open kitchen.

Housed inside an old gas station that has been transformed into a restaurant, **Screaming Banshee Pizza** (screamingbansheepizza.net) slings notable wood-fired pies. The Screaming Banshee pizza features house-made fennel sausage, mozzarella fresco, house-roasted onion and shrooms. Customers can ask for it "bloody" with red sauce or even add meatballs. Guests also have the option of building their own pizzas and calzones.

Opened this past October, **Bathtub Coffee** (betterthanbathwater.com) is Bisbee's newest coffee shop. And yes, there's a real bathtub in the corner that's Instagram-ready. The light-filled space on Subway Street features cold and hot coffee drinks, smoothies and a food menu.

Queen Mine Tour

Don your hard hat, miner's headlamp and a bright mesh vest, and get ready to head inside Bisbee's **Queen Mine** (queenmine-tour.com). Once the economic powerhouse

of Bisbee and one of the world's most productive copper mines, the Queen Mine was in business from the 1800s until 1975. Former miners lead tours. Shine your flashlight on different minerals on the wall. See original equipment that was powered via compressed air. Walk across the tracks where carts once regularly rode through. Expect the miners to sprinkle fun insider-only tidbits on tour-goers, like this one: Although miners aren't technically supposed to remove materials from the mine, their lunchboxes aren't checked—giving them the opportunity to take home precious stones. A few notes for visitors: Bundle up because it's chilly inside. You must be wearing closed-toe shoes or you'll have to borrow a pair. This tour might not be right for you if you're claustrophobic.

The open copper mine, the **Lavender Pit**, is worth a stop to just take in the vast size of this former copper mine. You'll see it just off U.S. Route 80 past the Queen Mine. Head here at sunset and watch as the colors of the mine change in the sunlight.

Lowell

Just past the Lavender Pit, you'll want to turn right on Erie Street. Here's where you'll find a mostly abandoned ghost town, Lowell. Wander up and down this street to see scenes from the past. Take photos by a Shell station complete with vintage gas pumps, peer inside the dusty windows of an abandoned Greyhound bus and many vacant businesses including a hat shop, a Harley Davidson repair shop, karate business and even an eerie storefront full of mannequin doll pieces.

If you're searching for signs of modern



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life in Lowell, you'll find them at the **Bisbee Breakfast Club** (bisbeebreakfast-club.com). This local chain started in 2005 and serves breakfast all day. Highlights include huevos rancheros topped with your choice of red or green sauce and the eggs Benedict, which are only served on Mondays.

Where to Stay

Just 10 minutes from Old Bisbee, the pink bed and breakfast **Calumet & Arizona Guest House** (calumetaz.com) – named after a mining company and originally built for the chief clerk of said company—is a feast for the senses. Individually decorated rooms range from 150 to 500 square feet and

can feature clawfoot tubs and heirlooms of owner Joy Timber's maternal grandmother and are decked out in period wallpaper. Guests are encouraged to wander around the home to check out the period architecture and other details (some bathroom fixtures, door hardware and woods from

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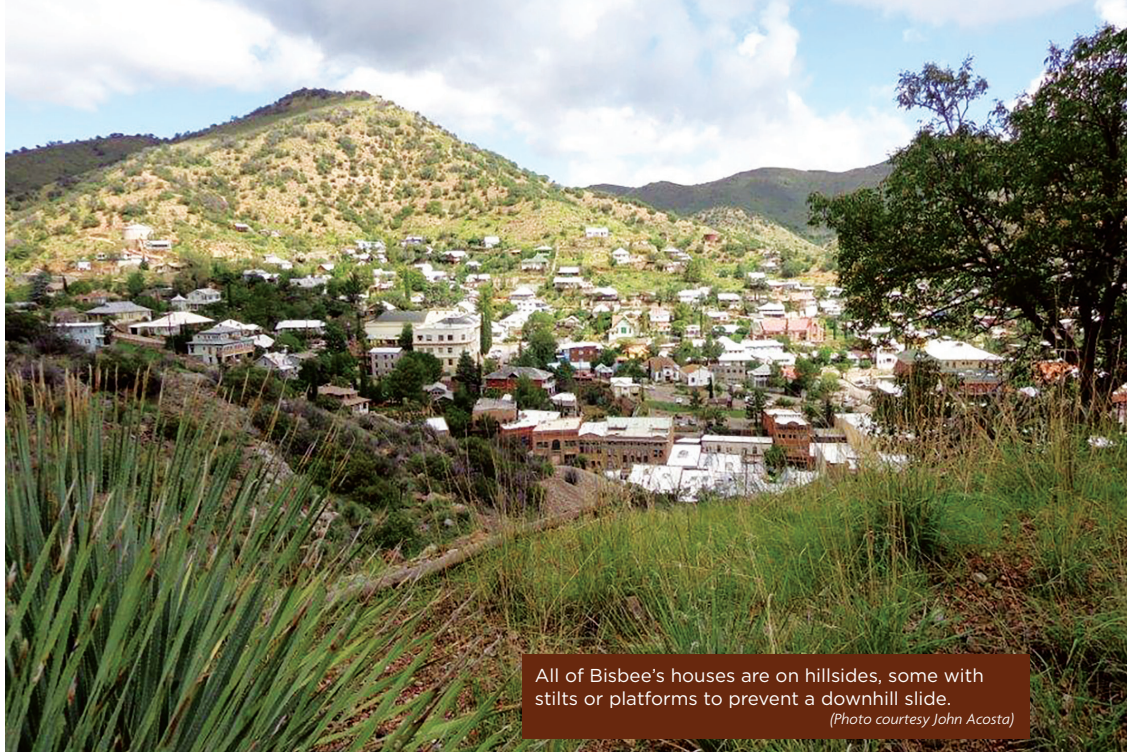
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Bisbee's historical era are used throughout the home as trim, flooring, wainscoting and cabinetry) and the beautifully landscaped garden featuring lush desert flora. Included in the rate, the home-cooked breakfast alone makes this place worth the money. Order off a menu and wait as the owner or one of the staff whips up an All-American breakfast featuring your choice of pancakes, cereal, French toast and eggs Benedict served on a long, communal table where you can mingle with other guests.

Located in the heart of downtown Bisbee, **Copper Queen Hotel** (copperqueen.com) touts itself as the longest continuously operating hotel in Arizona. The hotel originally opened in 1902 as a hotel for investors and dignitaries of Copper Queen Consolidated Mining Company. John Wayne, Julia

Roberts, Nancy Reagan and John McCain have stayed or visited. Guests check in at the lobby with a solid wood desk and get a real key upon check in. The Copper Queen hotel is also allegedly haunted. One of the hotel's guests that has never checked out? Julia Lowell. Lowell was an "employee" of the hotel's brothel and is said to have killed herself at the hotel after she confessed her

love to one of her clients and he did not return her feelings. The hotel also offers a Ghost Hunt package. The Ghost Hunt is every first and third Thursday night of the month. A trained ghost host from Old Bisbee Ghost Tours will teach how to use ghost-hunting equipment and then use your newfound skills to search for signs of paranormal activity. ■



All of Bisbee's houses are on hillsides, some with stilts or platforms to prevent a downhill slide.
(Photo courtesy John Acosta)

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