

Ultimate Arizona bucket list: 25 things to do in Mesa



Sonja Haller, The Republic | azcentral.com 12:21 p.m. MST February 19, 2015



(Photo: The Republic)

Here is a list of things to do in Mesa you'll want to add to your bucket list.

Landmark Restaurant

809 West Main Street. 480-962-4652.

The Landmark Restaurant began in 1908 as a Mormon church, then became an insurance Community College's first campus. With all its historical photos, it's like dining in a museum. Take out-of-town guests to savor some home comfort foods. Order what the regulars get: crab cakes and beef stroganoff, with chocolate mousse for dessert.

DETAILS: landmarkrestaurant.com (<http://landmarkrestaurant.com/>)

Orange Patch

2717 E. Lehi Road. 480-962-4490.

Pluck oranges yourself at the Orange Patch. Founded in the 1960s, the orchard and store offers acres of citrus including navels, pink grapefruit, Rio Red grapefruit, Arizona Sweets, Valencias and tangerines. The country store stocks locally made preserves, pickled produce and a candy counter.

DETAILS: [orangepatch.com](http://www.orangepatch.com) (<http://www.orangepatch.com/>)

Arizona Celebration of Freedom

480-644-2432.

Get the jump on fireworks with the Arizona Celebration of Freedom, held the week before July 4. Classic cars, motorcycles, beer gardens, an art walk, music, street performers and inflatable replicas of America's greatest monuments are part of the fun.

DETAILS: [arizonacelebrationoffreedom.com](http://www.arizonacelebrationoffreedom.com) (<http://www.arizonacelebrationoffreedom.com/>)



- **Big list: 48 things to do in the Valley** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/arizona-bucket-list/23363587/>)
- **25 things to do in Ahwatukee** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/ahwatukee/arizona-bucket-list-25-things-to-do/23231371/>)
- **10 things to do in Chandler** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/chandler/arizona-bucket-list-10-things-to-do/23234405/>)
- **10 things to do in Peoria** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/peoria/arizona-bucket-list-10-things-to-do/22596777/>)
- **10 things to do in Gilbert** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/gilbert/arizona-bucket-list-10-things-to-do/23236897/>)
- **15 things to do in Glendale** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/glendale/arizona-bucket-list-15-things-to-do/23253277/>)
- **25 things to do in Mesa** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/mesa/2/arizona-bucket-list-25-things-to-do/23252387/>)
- **10 things to do in Peoria** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/peoria/arizona-bucket-list-10-things-to-do/22596777/>)
- **10 things to do in Pinal** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/pinal/2/county-arizona-bucket-list-10-things-to-do/23251689/>)
- **25 things to do in Phoenix** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/arizona-bucket-list-25-things-to-do/22876733/>)
- **25 things to do in Scottsdale** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/scottsdale/arizona-bucket-list-25-things-to-do/22876725/>)
- **10 things to do in SW Valley** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/southwest-valley/2015/02/11/sw-valley-arizona-bucket-list-10-things-to-do/23241771/>)
- **15 things to do in Surprise** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/surprise/arizona-bucket-list-15-things-to-do/23498549/>)
- **14 things to do in Tempe** (<http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/tempe/arizona-bucket-list-14-things-to-do/23245837/>)

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC
azcentral.com



Get Your First

3 MONTHS
FOR THE PRICE OF 1

Click below to unlock your offer

GET MY 3 FOR 1 OFFER



The Wind Cave Trail in the Usery Mountains. (Photo: Roger Naylor/Special for the Republic)

Wind Cave Trail

3939 N. Usery Pass Road. 480-984-0032.

The Wind Cave Trail at Usery Mountain Regional Park is a hike that toddlers to octogenarians can enjoy. The 1.6-mile trail offers easy, lower stretches and the upper half is steeper but not too challenging. The cave is a wind-carved hollow at the base of a cliff, an ideal spot for lunch and expansive views.

DETAILS: [maricopa.gov \(http://www.maricopa.gov/parks/usery/\)](http://www.maricopa.gov/parks/usery/)

Commemorative Air Force Aviation Museum

2017 N. Greenfield Road. 480-924-1940.

Gain respect for the sacrifices of those in the armed forces by visiting the Commemorative Air Force Aviation Museum. See aircraft from World War II and other military memorabilia from World War I to the present. The museum, at Falcon Field, has exhibits on the B-17 Flying Fortress "Chowhound," the Tuskegee Airmen and enemy artifacts.

DETAILS: [azcaf.org \(http://www.azcaf.org/\)](http://www.azcaf.org/)

Buckhorn Baths

5900 E. Main St.

While waiting for the Mesa icon that is the Buckhorn Baths to be restored, peek inside the windows. You can still spy the once extensive taxidermy collection. Buckhorn opened as a trading post in 1935 in the pristine desert. It later became Buckhorn Baths when mineral water was discovered while a well was being dug. It is now considered an early example of motor court motels.

DETAILS: [Mesa close to buying historic Buckhorn Baths Motel \(/story/news/local/mesa/2014/12/11/mesa-buying-historic-buckhorn-baths-motel/20217945/\)](http://www.azcaf.org/)

Mesa Historical Museum's historic-home tour

The Mesa Historical Museum's annual historic-home tour in the winter may be one of the most underrated Valley home tours. Among the highlights are the Evergreen Historic District with homes built between 1910 and 1940, which developers specified were just for Whites. Alston House (pictured), in an area for non-Whites only, was said to have belonged to Mesa's first Black doctor. The restored house is now the home of the Mesa Association of Hispanic Citizens and the Mesa Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Committee.

DETAILS: [mesamuseum.org \(http://www.mesamuseum.org/plan/events/hometour\)](http://www.mesamuseum.org/plan/events/hometour)

Mango's Mexican Cafe

44 W. Main St. 480-464-5700.

Devour the homemade crispy tortilla strips and fresh salsa at Mango's Mexican Cafe. When you can't get enough, eat them on the nachos with beans, cheese, meat and vegetables. Dine outside where you can do some people watching on Main Street.

DETAILS: [mangosmexicancafe.com \(http://www.mangosmexicancafe.com/\)](http://www.mangosmexicancafe.com/)

Mesa Grande ruins

1000 N. Date St. 480-644-3553.

Tour the Mesa Grande ruins. Mesa Grande is believed to have been the religious and administrative center of a large Hohokam village. The park showcases a 25-foot-tall mound that has been partly excavated over the years but most of whose contents still lie beneath, furthering the mystery of a people who disappeared about 1450.

DETAILS: [azmnh.org \(http://www.azmnh.org/arch/mesagrande.aspx\)](http://www.azmnh.org/arch/mesagrande.aspx)



A group of tubers forge the shallow rapids near the "Fox Tail" bend on the Salt River, during opening day weekend, on April 27, in Mesa, Ariz. (Photo: Photo: Erin O'Connor/The Republic)

Salt River Tubing

9200 N. Bush Highway. 480-984-3305.

Grab a giant inner tube and float the Salt River. Salt River Tubing celebrates water in the desert and over the years several events involving costumes and related activities have turned the river into a flowing party, including the Halloween Spooktacular, Mardi Gras Magic, Pirates on the Salt River and the Hawaiian Hula.

DETAILS: [saltrivertubing.com \(http://www.saltrivertubing.com/\)](http://www.saltrivertubing.com/)

Mormon Temple light displays

101 S. LeSueur. 480-833-1211.

Oooh and ahhh at the Mormon Temple at either its Easter or Christmas light displays. Tens of thousands of lights adorn the temple and 90 palm trees. The star over the nativity manger boasts 10,000 white lights.

DETAILS: [mesachristmaslights.com \(http://www.mesachristmaslights.com/\)](http://www.mesachristmaslights.com/)

Organ Stop Pizza

1149 E. Southern Ave. 480-813-5700.

Witness the mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ in action at Mesa's Organ Stop Pizza. After "talkies" took over cinema and the Great Depression hit, the Wurlitzer was rarely heard. This one was damaged in a fire but restored and purchased in 1975.

DETAILS: [organstoppizza.com \(http://www.organstoppizza.com/\)](http://www.organstoppizza.com/)

Mesa Community College rose garden

1833 W. Southern Ave. 480-461-7000.

Stop and adore the roses. In March and April, the 6-acre Mesa Community College rose garden is in bloom. About 9,000 bushes and 40 beds, tended by 400 volunteers, make it the largest rose garden in the Southwestern desert. In April, free tours are offered on Sundays.

DETAILS: rosegarden.mesacc.edu (<http://rosegarden.mesacc.edu/home.html>)

Park of the Canals

1710 N. Horne. 480-644-4271.

Take a walk through history at Park of the Canals. The preserved ruins illustrate the engineering feat of the Hohokam Indians who lived in the Salt River Valley between 300 BC and AD 1450 and grew beans, squash, agave and cotton. Mormon pioneers later used the canals to irrigate their crops in the desert.

DETAILS: www.mesaaz.gov (<http://www.mesaaz.gov/parksrec/Parks/ParkofCanals.aspx>)

T.C. Eggington

1660 S. Alma School Road. 480-345-9288.

Forget about limiting carbs and partake of the French toast at T.C. Eggington. The home-grown restaurant features homemade soups and sandwiches, but its signature dish is the English toast with a French flair. Three large pieces of cinnamon bread are dipped in rich batter and topped with honey butter and powdered sugar.

DETAILS: tcegg.com (<http://tcegg.com/>)



Farris Hammad, 2, and his mother, Becky Hammad, 40, both of Mesa, Ariz., play in the arts and crafts section of the Arizona Museum for Youth, now i.d.e.a Museum, in downtown Mesa, Ariz., (Photo: Photo: Danielle Gregory/The Republic)

i.d.e.a. Museum

35 N. Robson. 480-644-2467.

It may be a children's museum, but i.d.e.a. Museum (previously named the Arizona Museum for Youth) may cause some pushing and shoving among adults. Hands-on activities encourage art appreciation and three annual museum-quality exhibits seek to inspire creativity.

DETAILS: [ideamuseum.org](http://www.ideamuseum.org) (<http://www.ideamuseum.org/>)

Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World

1133 N. Dobson Road. 602-606-5600.

Visiting Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World is an air-conditioned adventure. In addition to the expansive fishing, boating and camping departments there are fish, bird and mammal displays. Frequent kids' events include an outdoor kids night featuring a live fish feed, archery target practice and laser arcade.

DETAILS: [basspro.com](http://www.basspro.com) (<http://www.basspro.com/>)

Fighter Combat International

5865 S. Sossaman Road. 480-279-1881.

Learn air-combat maneuvers at Fighter Combat International at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. No previous flying experience necessary for either combat or aerobatic flights. You'll fly with experienced pilots who let you handle the controls.

DETAILS: [fightercombat.com \(http://www.fightercombat.com/\)](http://www.fightercombat.com/)

Rockin' R Ranch

6136 E. Baseline Road. 480-832-1539.

Become a pioneer at Rockin' R Ranch. This replica of an 1880s western town features live music, panning for gold and a gunfight show. Stay for the all-you-can eat of barbecue beef, chicken, baked potatoes, baked beans, biscuits, applesauce, gingerbread cake, coffee and lemonade.

DETAILS: [rockinr.net \(http://www.rockinr.net/\)](http://www.rockinr.net/)

Spring-training game

1235 N. Center St. 480-644-4451.

Take in a spring-training game at a soon-to-be revamped Hohokam Stadium or the showcase facility of Mesa's Riverview Park Stadium. The Chicago Cubs move to the new Riverview, opening in March 2014. The Oakland Athletics move to a renovated Hohokam stadium in March 2015.

DETAILS: [cactusleague.com \(http://www.cactusleague.com/\)](http://www.cactusleague.com/)



Neon sign of the Fountain Motel on Main St. in Mesa June 9, 2008. (Photo: Michael Chow/The Republic)

Neon signs on U.S. 60

Roll down Main Street at night and take in the historic neon signs that lit the way for U.S. 60 travelers. The nostalgic signs feature the businesses of Watson Flowers, Fountain Motel, Deserama Mobile Ranch, the Starlight Motel with the famous "diving lady," and Circle RB Lodge and Hiway Host Motel.

Arizona Museum of Natural History

53 N. MacDonald. 480-644-2230.

Explore the history of the Southwest, from dinosaurs to territorial explorers, at the Arizona Museum of Natural History. View the creatures that swam in Arizona's Paleozoic seas — yes, there was once an ocean in these parts — and learn how rocks of the area were formed.

DETAILS: [azmnh.org \(http://azmnh.org/\)](http://azmnh.org/)

Public-art walking tour

Take a public-art walking tour through downtown Mesa. About 40 pieces can be viewed any time. A map can be found online and it's an easy walk to find your way to a satisfied looking "Humpty Dumpty" sitting on a wall, the 379-pound bronze pig sculpture of "Big Charlie Black," and "The Flowering Stiletto," a giant heel paired with an orange flower.

DETAILS: [downtownmesa.com \(http://www.downtownmesa.com/sculptures/\)](http://www.downtownmesa.com/sculptures/)

Mesa Ghost Tour and History Walk

53 N. MacDonald. 480-644-2230.

Spook yourself on the annual Mesa Ghost Tour and History Walk. Scary stories combine with an above- and below-ground tour of Mesa's oldest buildings. Solve the mystery of what those underground tunnels in Mesa were really all about.

DETAILS: [mesamuseum.org \(http://www.mesamuseum.org/plan/events/ghosttour\)](http://www.mesamuseum.org/plan/events/ghosttour)

Festival of Creativity

1 E. Main St. 480-644-6501.

Check out the Mesa Festival of Creativity. The annual spring event features five days of free fun at the Mesa Arts Center. Outdoor music, an indoor performing arts stage, interactive exhibits and loads of hand-on crafts are just some of its offerings.

DETAILS: [mesaartscenter.com](http://www.mesaartscenter.com) (<http://www.mesaartscenter.com/index.php/events/free-events/spark>)



The dinosaur petting zoo at Spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity at Mesa Arts Center. (Photo: Photo: Mesa Arts Center)

Read or Share this story: <http://azc.cc/1A6sRpn>

MORE STORIES



Mesa shooting: Victim recounts shattered hopes
[\(/story/news/local/best-reads/2015/03/25/mesa-shooting-fifth-victim-recounts-shattered-hopes/70455838/\)](http://story/news/local/best-reads/2015/03/25/mesa-shooting-fifth-victim-recounts-shattered-hopes/70455838/)
March 25, 2015, 3:40 p.m.

Police: Scottsdale yoga instructor abused kids

[hopes/70455838/](#)



[\(/story/news/local/scottsdale/2015/03/25/scottsdal](#)

[yoga-](#)

[instructor-sex-](#)

[abuse-](#)

[abr/70427542/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/local/scottsdale/2015/03/25/scottsdale-yoga-instructor-sex-abuse-abr/70427542/\)](#)

March 25, 2015, 10:20 p.m.



[Glendale apartment complex swarmed by bees](#)

[\(/story/news/local/glendale/2015/03/25/glendale-](#)

[apartment-bee-](#)

[swarm-](#)

[abr/70467782/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/local/glendale/2015/03/25/glendale-](#)

[apartment-bee-swarm-abr/70467782/\)](#)

March 25, 2015, 8:01 p.m.

Military History Master's

militaryhistory.norwich.edu

Study Military Events Over the Yrs. Online, Accredited, Learn More.