

# Sedona

## Arizona's Red Rock Country

Sedona is a visual feast, it serves up gorgeous weather—even during 90-degree summer days—and it has a sweet aftertaste that encourages more than one visit.

As with all the outstanding vacation destinations that we feature in *Pathfinder Newsletter*, Sedona offers 1) beautiful scenery, 2) plenty to do, and 3) opportunities to get some exercise while enjoying 1 and 2. It can also be used as a base from which to take day trips to the Grand Canyon and other close-by attractions.

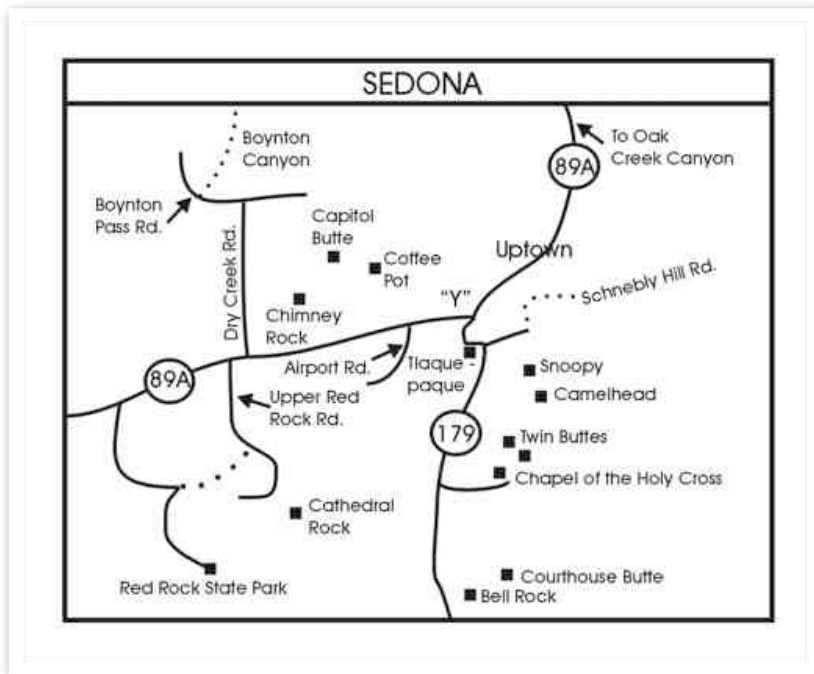
Only a two-hour drive north of Phoenix, Sedona is situated in high desert at a comfortable 4,600-feet above sea level, making it a place to visit any time from spring through fall. Within Arizona, it is second only to the Grand Canyon for number of visitors each year: four million. Arizonans love Sedona; so try to avoid weekends.

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Guided Tours of Cities, Towns, and National Parks in the American West

by the Authors of *Seven Perfect Days in Colorado* and *Seven Perfect Days in Northern California*



Let's get you geographically prepared to enjoy the Sedona area: Arizona Highways 179 and 89A intersect at the "Y" in the heart of town. Immediately northeast of the "Y" is Uptown; it's there that you'll find shops, galleries, restaurants, and jeep tours. Oak Creek Canyon begins just past Uptown: more on that later.

West of the "Y," you'll find residential shopping and services, restaurants, lodgings, access to the airport, and West Red Rock Country. Even farther west is Red Rock

State Park, and the area's most famous landmark, photogenic Cathedral Rock.

South of the "Y," are the upscale galleries and shops of Tlaquepaque, Schnebly Hill Road, Chapel of the Holy Cross, and five of Sedona's most-photographed red rock formations. Here is what we would do with three days in the area:

## *Day One*

Check the sky. If it's sunny, we recommend that you follow our Day One itinerary. It presents the area's most spectacular scenery, and the colors are best on a clear day. If it's cloudy, we recommend the activities in forested Oak Creek Canyon as described in Day Two. For best picture-taking, you should drive Schnebly Hill Road during mid- to late-morning (or late afternoon), when the colors are most vibrant.

Three tenths of a mile south of the "Y," you'll cross over Oak Creek and come to the bend in Highway 179. Note the entrance to Schnebly Hill Road on your left, but pass it by and begin looking at the scenery on the left side of the car. As you drive south on Highway 179, you'll see the **Snoopy, Camelhead, Twin Buttes, Bell Rock, and Courthouse Butte** formations on your left. They are the result of ocean sedimentation that has been compressed, uplifted as sandstone, and then eroded into rounded shapes by water and wind over millions of years. They, and other landmarks in the area, served as backdrops for nearly 50 cowboy movies that were filmed here in the 1940s and 1950s.

Next, reverse direction on Highway 179, travel north about 2-1/2 miles, and turn right on Chapel Lane. Within a mile, you'll see the **Chapel of the Cross** on your left. Drive up to the parking lot and enjoy both the view and this unique beauty from the inside. The Chapel is essentially a sculpture, designed by Marguerite Brunswick Staude and erected in 1959. There are no services held here.

Next, return to **Schnebly Hill Road** and drive uphill, about a mile, to where the pavement ends. There is a scenic view on the left at this point, but we suggest proceeding another half mile to the wide bend in the road. The road is very rough, but the views are well worth the effort. Don't forget your camera and a sweater. The road is closed in winter.

Then, we recommend that you drive to **Uptown**, get your reservation for a jeep tour ride if you haven't already done so (see "To Learn More," below), browse the shops, and have a sandwich at the tiny **Sedona Memories Bakery Café** or **Mesquite Grill and BBQ** on Jordan Rd. If Mexican food and spaciousness appeals to you more, head to the Oaxaca Restaurant at 321 Hwy. 89A.

The **Pink Jeep Tour** is great fun. There may be times when you'll be uneasy about what your driver does with his jeep on the rocks that you'll traverse. But remember, his or her life also hangs in the balance; so the driver is not likely to push it too far.

You'll notice that we've gone from passively admiring the scenery this morning, to active involvement in it during the jeep ride. Now, we're going to complete your mental picture of Arizona's red rock country with an overview of the area, by viewing an Arizona icon, and by taking a hike through the red rocks.

As you drive west from the "Y" on Hwy. 89A, you'll see **Coffee Pot Rock, Capitol Butte, and Chimney Rock** on your right. About one mile from the "Y," turn left onto Airport Road and drive up to the scenic overlook where you'll enjoy a magnificent view of Sedona.

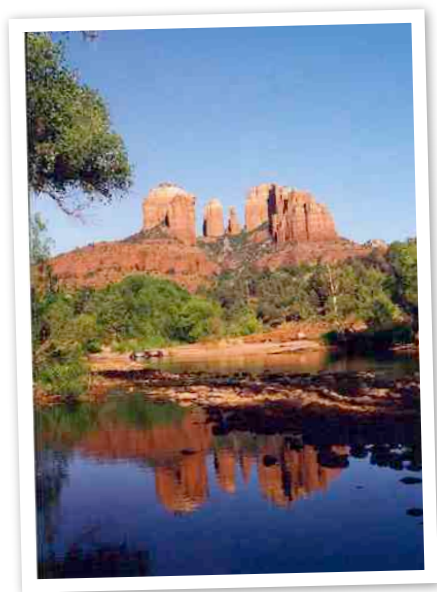
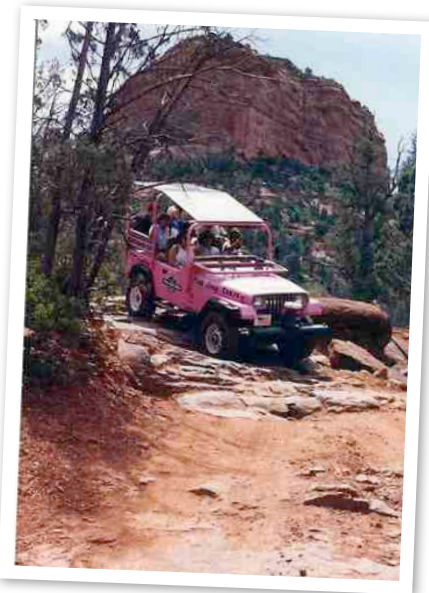
Another three miles farther west on 89A, turn left onto Upper Red Rock Loop Road.

Three miles and two hairpin curves later, you'll come to the **Crescent Moon Recreation Area** (a great place for a picnic) and the Arizona icon that we referred to. You'll find a great spot for admiring and photographing it by following the paved path to the right, to its end; then, go a little farther to the water's edge.

**Cathedral Rock** rises almost 1,000-feet above its reflection in Oak Creek. You may see a professional photographer here, trying to take the perfect picture in the afternoon light.

Now, return to Upper Red Rock Road, turn left, and drive two miles to our next activity. Part of this road is gravel.

If you have even the slightest interest in learning about the habitat, wildlife and plants along Oak Creek, you'll enjoy the visitor center at **Red Rock State Park**. (See "To Learn More," below, for hours.) After that, get out onto a trail and see red rock country as an informed hiker. There is a five-mile





network of interconnecting loops in this beautiful 286-acre park that's nearly surrounded by red cliffs. But watch the weather; late afternoon showers are common in July and August, so you may need to carry rain gear.

For dinner, consider **The Cowboy Club** for steak, seafood and game (in Uptown at 241 N. Hwy. 89A, 928-282-4200), **Pizza Picazzo** for gourmet pizza (in West Sedona at 1855 W. Hwy. 89A, 928-282-4140), or **El Rincon** for Mexican food (in Tlaquepaque, 928-282-4648).

## Day Two

This is Oak Creek Canyon day. However, if you're not interested in the activities that we suggest, you can drive Oak Creek Canyon both ways, and then head to Jerome and Tuzigoot, or to the Camp Verde sites described in Day Three.

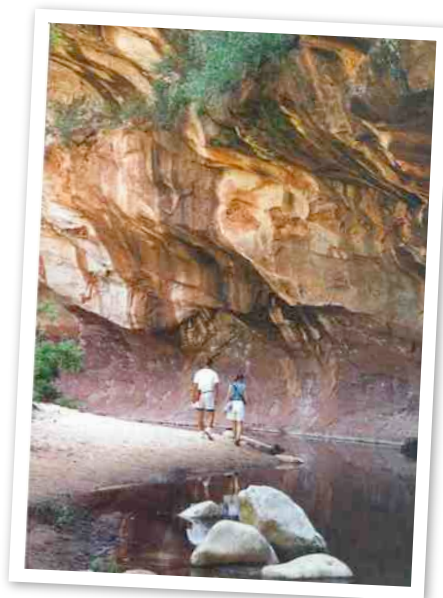
We strongly suggest that you carry plenty of water if you hike today. Any exertion in this high desert climate causes unrealized, rapid evaporation from the body, and too much of that could lead to heatstroke.

**Oak Creek Canyon** is Arizona's first officially designated scenic highway. It's 15 miles of oak, juniper and pine trees which start at 4,600 feet elevation just northeast of Uptown, and end at 6,500 feet on the Mogolon Rim. You'll think that you're driving up into the mountains, but in reality, at the top of your drive, you'll arrive at the southwestern boundary of the Colorado Plateau—which extends to five other states. Soon after you clear the rim, turn right into the parking area to enjoy the view from the overlook, and to peruse the jewelry offered for sale by local Native Americans. If you expect to find water cascading off the rim into Oak Creek Canyon, you'll be disappointed; Oak Creek is spring-fed for all of its 40 miles.

Next, drive 5.3 miles back down the canyon to the West Fork Day Use Area on your right. From the parking area, follow the path to West Fork Trail which runs through **West Fork Canyon**. You can take a two-hour hike (a stroll is better) that criss-crosses the shallow stream and is virtually flat. The canyon's thousand-foot-high walls, dramatically undercut by rushing water in many places, provide the framework for a visually exciting hike. Western writer, Zane Grey, had a hunting cabin in the canyon, and reportedly wrote *Call of the Canyon* while in residence here.

Two miles south of West Fork, you'll come upon the Junipine Resort on your right. The **Junipine Café** serves a delicious turkey sandwich for lunch, and the outside deck is delightful.

Just a mile farther south, you'll see the **Slide Rock State Park**, a great place for kids to wear out bathing suits while...what else...sliding down slippery rocks. Four and a half miles later, turn left onto the short road that leads to **Grasshopper Point**. If you happened to read this article before leaving home, you may have your bathing suit on and be ready to cavort in the wonderful swimming hole that's below the parking lot.



Then, you'll have a choice: browsing the galleries and shops at Tlaquepaque, or another hike. And there's a choice of hikes as well.

About 1/2 mile south of Grasshopper Point, you'll arrive at Midgley Bridge. Just before the bridge, turn right into the unpaved parking area. From there, choose either the easy, 1.5 mile **Wilson Canyon Trail**, or the more difficult **Wilson Mountain Trail**, which involves up to five miles of strenuous hiking. Don't forget your water and raingear!

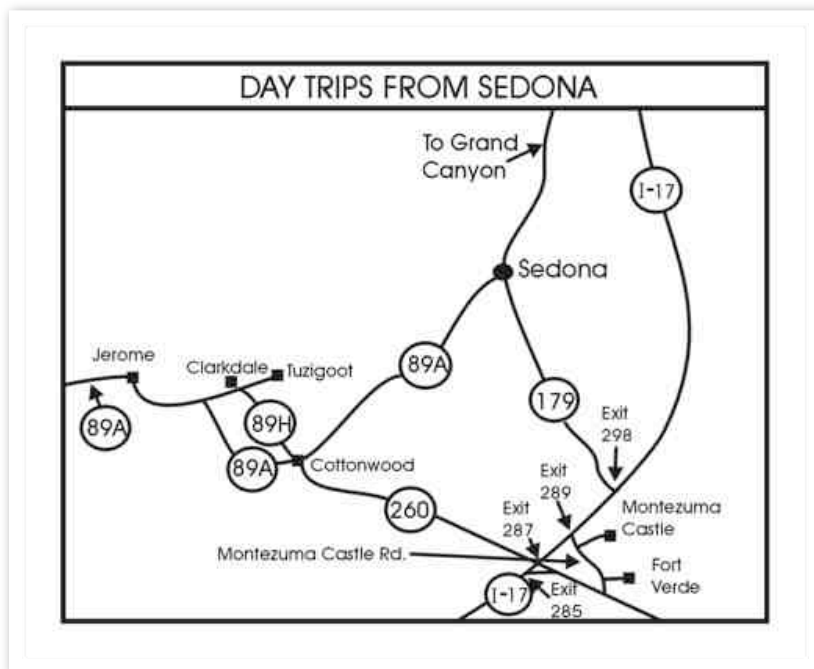
Another great hike is the **Boynton Canyon Trail**, which will lead you deep into the red rocks (see the map on page 2). Just past the black fence at the end of the Enchantment Resort, you'll come to a clearing. Look up to the right at the cave in the rocks. With binoculars, you can see the remnants of prehistoric structures at the face and to the right of the cave mouth.

If you've chosen **Tlaquepaque** (pronounced "tla-keh-pah-keh") instead of a hike, drive on to the "Y," turn left onto Highway 179, and then right into the complex after two-tenths of a mile. This is a class operation, with art and sculpture galleries abounding with beautiful original work. There are also fine shops to explore, a beautiful courtyard to enjoy, and restaurants to scout for later eating—40 businesses, all together, in a very attractive, simulated Mexican village.

While there, check out **René of Tlaquepaque** for a special continental dinner (928-282-9225).

## Day Three

This is a day-trip day. We offer two alternatives: 1) a full day devoted to the Grand Canyon, or, 2) Tuzigoot and Jerome in the morning, and Fort Verde State Historic Park and Montezuma Castle National Monument in the afternoon.



If you've never seen the Grand Canyon, and are not likely to travel there at another time, by all means drive the 115 miles (Highway 89A to Flagstaff, then US 180 to the South Rim) and see this great natural wonder. Better still, make it a two-day trip and bask awhile in the canyon's aura.

The first sight of the **Grand Canyon** at Mather Point is truly awesome; the enormity of the entire canyon cannot be grasped. From Mather Point (7,000 feet in elevation), only about one third of the canyon's length is visible. It's almost a mile deep, with the Colorado River running 277 miles through it. The North Rim is 10

miles distant and about 1,000 feet higher. After you've half-filled your Grand Canyon memory

bank, walk to the Canyon View Information Plaza to examine the displays and learn what you might do with the rest of your available time.

Then, we recommend that you have lunch at the historic **El Tovar Hotel** (first come, first served), that you take at least a 30-minute walk down the **Bright Angel Trail**, that you learn about the amazing Kolb brothers at the **Kolb Studio**, and take a walk or shuttle bus ride along the West Rim. After that, you'll have filled your memory bank, taken a lot of pictures, and will be ready for the drive back to Sedona.

Tuzigoot and Jerome are about 25 miles southwest of Sedona, through Cottonwood, via Highways 89A and Historic 89. At Clarkdale, turn right for Tuzigoot and left for Jerome.

The **Tuzigoot National Monument's** purpose is to present and explain an ancient hilltop pueblo of 110 rooms that was occupied by some 150 Sinaguan Indians from 1000 to 1400 AD and was unearthed in the 1930s. The loop trail around the ruins provides a close-up look at the structures, and the museum contains interesting interpretive displays and artifacts.

**Jerome** was active as a copper mining town from 1876 to 1953 and had 15,000 residents in its boom days. Today, it's a popular tourist site. We recommend that you walk both shopping streets of the hilly downtown historic district and look in on the town's shops and galleries.

**Haunted Hamburger** is a good choice for lunch. (The "Haunted Burger" is full of goodies and downright delicious.) Two streets downhill, at 241 Hull St., you'll find the Raku Gallery, with its quality art pieces, glass-blowing studio, and floor-to-ceiling windows that provide an excellent overview of the Verde Valley. The large, white, circa-1916 structure on the opposite hill was once the home and guesthouse of mining magnate, James S. Douglas. It's now the State Historic Park's primary museum, presenting the history of the area, a three-dimensional model of Jerome's underground mine shafts, and an interesting display of mineral specimens and mining equipment.

To get to the afternoon sites, return to Cottonwood and travel southeast on Highway 260 for about 17 miles to Interstate 17. Continue on 260 to the traffic light, turn left on Main St., then turn right on Hollamon St.

**Fort Verde State Historic Park** is the best-preserved U.S. Army fort from the 1865 to 1890 Indian Wars era in Arizona. It was the headquarters of General George Crook, and housed enlisted men, scouts, officers, doctors, and families. The administration building contains interesting interpretive displays and military artifacts. The commanding officer's, bachelor officer's and doctor's quarters are all furnished in the 1880 period and can be toured.

Then, return to Main St., turn right then bear right on Montezuma Castle Road, and follow the signs to our last attraction of the day.

**Montezuma Castle National Monument** is one of the best-preserved cliff dwellings in North America. It was occupied by Sinaguan Indians until about 1400 AD. Some 50 people lived in the five-level stone structure that was protected from above by a natural overhang and from below by unclimbable walls (necessitating ladders to enter it). Read the interpretive displays in the visitor center, then walk the ¼-mile trail to observe the dwelling from below.

To return to Sedona, drive north on I-17 to Exit 298, then 15 miles north on Highway 179.

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**Getting There:** From Flagstaff, drive south on Interstate 17 to the Sedona/Oak Creek exit, and then south on Hwy. 89A, through Oak Creek Canyon, to Sedona. From Phoenix, drive north on Interstate 17 to exit 298, then north on Hwy. 179 to Sedona.

**Where to Eat and Sleep:** Sedona's Chamber of Commerce website, [www.visitsedona.com](http://www.visitsedona.com), has full lists of restaurants, B&Bs, hotels, motels, resorts, RV parks, and other lodgings, with links to their websites. Or request the chamber's free 80-page "Experience Sedona Guide" (see address and telephone number below).

**To Learn More: Sedona Chamber of Commerce**, 331 Forest Rd., Sedona 86336, 800-288-7336, 928-282-7722, [www.visitsedona.com](http://www.visitsedona.com) (the website contains a large number of links to local attractions and businesses; request the chamber's "Experience Sedona Guide"), open Mon.-Sat. 8:30 am to 5 pm, Sun. & holidays 9 am to 3 pm. **Fort Verde State Historic Park**, PO Box 397, Camp Verde 86332, 928-567-3275; [www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/fortverde.html](http://www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/fortverde.html); open 8 am to 5 pm. **Grand Canyon National Park**, PO Box 129, Grand Canyon, 86023; 928-638-7888; [www.nps.gov/grca](http://www.nps.gov/grca); visitor center open 8 am to 5 pm. **Jerome State Historic Park**, PO Box D, Jerome 86331; 928-634-5381; [www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/jerome.html](http://www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/jerome.html); visitor center is open 8 am to 5 pm. **Montezuma Castle National Monument**, PO Box 219, Camp Verde, 86332; 928-567-3322; [www.nps.gov/moca](http://www.nps.gov/moca); 8 am to 6 pm summer, 8 am to 5 pm rest of the year. **Pink Jeep Tours**, 204 N. Hwy. 89A; 800-873-3662, 928-282-5000; [www.pinkjeep.com](http://www.pinkjeep.com). **Red Rock State Park**, 4050 Red Rock Loop Road, Sedona 86336; 928-282-6907; [www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/redrock.html](http://www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/redrock.html); visitor center is open 9am to 5pm Sept.-Apr. and 9 am to 6 pm May-Aug. **Tlaquepaque**, 336 Hwy. 179; 928-282-4838; [www.tlaq.com](http://www.tlaq.com); galleries and shops open 10 am to 5 pm, some restaurants later. **Tuzigoot National Monument**, PO Box 219, Camp Verde 86322; 928-634-5564; [www.nps.gov/tuzi](http://www.nps.gov/tuzi); 8 am to 6 pm summer, 8 am to 5 pm rest of the year. **Books:** *The Insider's Guide to Sedona*, by Dennis Andres; *Guide to the Wonders of Sedona and the Verde Valley*, by Bob and Suzanne Clemenz; *Sedona Guide: Day Hiking & Sightseeing Arizona's Red Rock Country*, by Steve Krause & Teresa Henkle; *Arizona & the Grand Canyon*, by Fodor's, pages 187-207 (all are available on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)).

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