

Arizona Mountains: Best Mountain Destinations, Towns, and Travel Guide



Arizona is widely known for its deserts, red rock landscapes, and sunny climate. Many travelers are surprised to learn that Arizona is one of the [US destinations](#) that are also home to beautiful mountain ranges that offer forests, alpine scenery, and cooler temperatures. The Arizona mountains provide a refreshing contrast to the desert environment and attract visitors looking for outdoor adventure, scenic views, and peaceful nature escapes.

Several mountain regions across the state offer unique landscapes and experiences. The towering peaks of the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff include the highest point in the state, Humphreys Peak. In southern Arizona, the scenic slopes of the Santa Catalina Mountains rise above the desert near Tucson and provide cool pine forests and panoramic viewpoints. Eastern Arizona is home to the lush forests of the White Mountains, a favorite destination for hiking, fishing, and summer retreats.

These mountain regions create some of the most diverse landscapes in the American Southwest. Visitors can hike high elevation trails, enjoy scenic drives through pine forests, explore wildlife habitats, or relax in charming mountain towns. During winter months, snow even transforms parts of northern Arizona into popular skiing destinations.

This guide explores the most beautiful Arizona mountains, the best places to visit, and the outdoor activities travelers can enjoy throughout the year. Whether you are planning a hiking adventure, a scenic road trip, or a cool mountain getaway, the mountains of Arizona offer unforgettable landscapes and experiences.

Where Are the Mountains in Arizona?

Many travelers think [Arizona](#) is only desert. In reality, the state has dozens of mountain ranges spread across different regions. These mountains create cooler climates, forest landscapes, and excellent outdoor recreation areas. Most Arizona mountain ranges are located in three major regions.



Northern Arizona Mountains

Northern Arizona is home to the highest and most famous peaks in the state. These mountains sit at high elevations and are surrounded by pine forests and scenic hiking trails.

Important ranges in this region include:

- San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff
- Mogollon Rim which stretches across central and northern Arizona
- White Mountains in eastern Arizona

These areas are popular for hiking, camping, skiing, and summer escapes from desert heat.

Southern Arizona Mountains

Southern Arizona has several mountain ranges that rise sharply above the desert. These mountains are known for dramatic elevation changes and scenic viewpoints.

Notable ranges include:

- Santa Catalina Mountains near Tucson
- Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona
- Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson

Many travelers drive the scenic road to Mount Lemmon to experience cooler temperatures and mountain forests.

Central Arizona Mountains

Central Arizona also has rugged mountain landscapes that sit between the desert valleys and northern forests.

Some of the best known ranges include:

- Superstition Mountains east of Phoenix
- Bradshaw Mountains near Prescott
- Mazatzal Mountains north of Phoenix

These mountains offer excellent hiking trails, scenic viewpoints, and historic mining areas. Together, these regions show that Arizona has far more mountain scenery than most visitors expect.

Highest Mountains in Arizona

Arizona is home to several high elevation peaks that rise far above the surrounding desert landscape. These mountains provide alpine forests, cool temperatures, and incredible panoramic views.



1. Humphreys Peak

- **Height:** about 12,633 feet
- **Location:** San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff

Humphreys Peak is the highest mountain in Arizona. It is a popular hiking destination for experienced hikers. The trail climbs through pine forests and alpine

terrain before reaching the summit. From the top, visitors can see vast landscapes across northern Arizona.

2. Agassiz Peak

- **Height:** about 12,356 feet
- **Location:** San Francisco Peaks

Agassiz Peak is the second highest mountain in Arizona. It forms a dramatic part of the skyline above Flagstaff. The peak is visible from the nearby ski resort at Arizona Snowbowl. Access to the summit is limited in order to protect local wildlife habitat.

3. Mount Baldy

- **Height:** about 11,400 feet
- **Location:** White Mountains

Mount Baldy is one of the most scenic mountains in eastern Arizona. The surrounding forests and wilderness areas offer beautiful hiking trails and wildlife viewing opportunities.

4. Mount Ord

- **Height:** about 7,128 feet
- **Location:** near Phoenix

Mount Ord rises above the desert landscapes of central Arizona. It offers scenic views and hiking opportunities within the Tonto National Forest.

5. Mount Lemmon

- **Height:** about 9,159 feet
- **Location:** Santa Catalina Mountains

Mount Lemmon is one of the most accessible mountains in southern Arizona. A scenic highway from Tucson leads to the summit area. Visitors enjoy cooler temperatures, hiking trails, forests, and even skiing during winter.

Best Mountain Destinations in Arizona

Arizona is home to many impressive mountain ranges that offer cooler climates, scenic views, and outdoor adventure. From high volcanic peaks to rugged desert mountains, these destinations attract hikers, photographers, and travelers looking to experience Arizona beyond the desert landscapes. Below are some of the best mountain destinations in Arizona that visitors should explore.



San Francisco Peaks

The San Francisco Peaks are the highest mountains in Arizona and one of the most famous mountain destinations in the state. Located near Flagstaff, this volcanic mountain range dominates the skyline of northern Arizona and offers some of the most scenic alpine landscapes in the region.

The peaks include several high elevation summits, including the tallest mountain in the state, Humphreys Peak. Visitors travel here for hiking, scenic drives, wildlife

viewing, and winter sports. During summer months, the surrounding forests provide cool temperatures and beautiful hiking trails. In winter, the nearby Arizona Snowbowl ski resort attracts visitors who want to enjoy skiing and snowboarding.

The combination of high elevation forests, volcanic peaks, and outdoor recreation makes the San Francisco Peaks one of the most beautiful mountain destinations in Arizona.

White Mountains

The forested landscapes of the White Mountains in eastern Arizona offer a peaceful escape from the desert heat. This region is known for its cool summer temperatures, alpine lakes, and dense pine forests.

Popular towns in the area include Show Low and Pinetop-Lakeside, both of which serve as gateways to hiking trails, fishing spots, and camping areas. Outdoor enthusiasts often visit the White Mountains to enjoy boating, fishing, wildlife watching, and scenic drives through forested landscapes.

The area also includes beautiful wilderness regions and high elevation peaks such as Mount Baldy. With its peaceful environment and cooler climate, the White Mountains remain one of the most popular summer mountain destinations in Arizona.

Superstition Mountains

The rugged Superstition Mountains are one of the most iconic mountain landscapes in central Arizona. Located east of Phoenix, this dramatic desert range is known for its sharp rock formations, deep canyons, and legendary stories about the Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine.

Visitors explore the mountains through hiking trails within the Superstition Wilderness Area. Trails such as the famous Peralta Trail lead hikers to scenic viewpoints and historic landmarks. The desert scenery here is especially beautiful

during sunrise and sunset when the cliffs glow in shades of orange and red. Despite being located near a major city, the Superstition Mountains offer a remote wilderness experience that attracts hikers, photographers, and adventure travelers.

Santa Catalina Mountains

The Santa Catalina Mountains rise dramatically above the desert landscape near Tucson. This mountain range is famous for its dramatic elevation change from desert cactus landscapes to cool pine forests.

One of the most popular attractions in the range is Mount Lemmon. Visitors can drive the scenic Mount Lemmon Highway from Tucson to the summit area. Along the way, travelers pass through several different climate zones and enjoy spectacular views.

The mountain offers hiking trails, camping areas, scenic overlooks, and even skiing during winter months. Mount Lemmon Ski Valley becomes a small winter sports destination when snow falls in the region.

Chiricahua Mountains

The remote Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona are known for their unusual rock formations and dramatic wilderness scenery. Much of the region is protected within Chiricahua National Monument.

Visitors often describe this area as a hidden gem because it receives fewer tourists compared to other mountain destinations in Arizona. The landscape features towering rock spires, rugged canyons, and scenic hiking trails.

Wildlife is abundant in this region, making it a favorite destination for bird watchers and nature enthusiasts. The peaceful environment and unique geology make the Chiricahua Mountains one of the most fascinating mountain destinations in Arizona.

Bradshaw Mountains

The Bradshaw Mountains are located in central Arizona near Prescott. This mountain range has a rich mining history and offers scenic landscapes with forests, streams, and historic towns.

Outdoor travelers visit the Bradshaw Mountains for hiking, off road driving, camping, and exploring historic mining areas. The nearby town of Prescott provides a convenient base for travelers exploring the region.

The mountains also offer cooler temperatures compared to the surrounding desert valleys, making them a popular weekend escape for residents of Phoenix and nearby cities.

Mazatzal Mountains

The rugged Mazatzal Mountains are located north of Phoenix and form part of the large wilderness areas within the Tonto National Forest. These mountains feature steep ridges, remote canyons, and scenic desert landscapes.

The region is known for its wilderness character and limited development. Many hiking trails lead through remote terrain where visitors can experience quiet nature and stunning views. The Mazatzal Mountains are ideal for experienced hikers and backpackers who want to explore less crowded mountain areas in Arizona.

Santa Rita Mountains

The Santa Rita Mountains lie south of Tucson and include one of the highest peaks in southern Arizona, Mount Wrightson. This mountain range features forests, grasslands, and rugged hiking trails.

Mount Wrightson is a popular hiking destination that rewards visitors with panoramic views of the surrounding valleys and desert landscapes. The region is

also famous for bird watching, as many unique species live in the diverse habitats of the mountains. The Santa Rita Mountains provide a beautiful natural environment for outdoor exploration.

Huachuca Mountains

The Huachuca Mountains are located in southeastern Arizona near Sierra Vista. These mountains form part of the Coronado National Forest and offer scenic forests, wildlife habitats, and peaceful hiking trails.

Nature lovers often visit the Huachuca Mountains for bird watching because the region attracts many rare bird species. The famous Ramsey Canyon Preserve sits within the mountain range and is well known for hummingbird viewing. The Huachuca Mountains offer a quieter and less crowded alternative to some of Arizona's more popular mountain destinations.

Mogollon Rim

The dramatic cliffs of the Mogollon Rim stretch for hundreds of miles across central Arizona. This geological feature forms the southern edge of the Colorado Plateau and creates one of the most impressive landscapes in the state.

The rim rises sharply above the desert and offers breathtaking viewpoints overlooking forests, valleys, and distant mountains. The region is part of the Coconino National Forest and provides excellent opportunities for camping, hiking, and scenic drives. During summer months, many travelers visit the Mogollon Rim to escape the heat of lower desert areas and enjoy cooler mountain temperatures.

Best Mountain Towns in Arizona

Arizona's mountain regions are home to several charming towns that offer cooler weather, scenic surroundings, and easy access to outdoor recreation. These towns serve as great base locations for travelers exploring the Arizona mountains.



Flagstaff

Flagstaff is one of the most popular mountain towns in Arizona. Located near the San Francisco Peaks, the town sits at a high elevation surrounded by pine forests and scenic landscapes. Visitors come here for hiking, skiing, and exploring nearby natural attractions. The town also has a lively downtown area with restaurants, breweries, and cultural events. During winter, many travelers visit the nearby Arizona Snowbowl ski resort for snow sports.

Prescott

Prescott is another well known mountain town located in central Arizona. Surrounded by the scenic Bradshaw Mountains, the town offers forests, lakes, and hiking trails. Prescott's historic downtown and famous Whiskey Row attract

visitors interested in history and culture. The nearby Prescott National Forest provides excellent opportunities for hiking, camping, and outdoor exploration.

Show Low

Show Low is a peaceful mountain town located in the White Mountains. The town is known for its cool summer temperatures and beautiful natural surroundings. Visitors enjoy fishing, boating, and camping at nearby lakes. The area also offers scenic hiking trails and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Pinetop-Lakeside

Pinetop-Lakeside is a quiet mountain community surrounded by forests and alpine lakes. Located in the White Mountains region, it is a popular summer retreat for travelers escaping the desert heat. Visitors enjoy hiking, fishing, and relaxing in nature. The peaceful environment and cooler climate make this town a favorite destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

Greer

Greer is a small mountain village located near Mount Baldy. This charming town sits along a scenic river and is surrounded by forests and mountain views. Travelers visit Greer for fishing, hiking, wildlife watching, and relaxing getaways in nature.

Things to Do in Arizona Mountains



The Arizona mountains offer a wide range of outdoor activities throughout the year. Visitors can explore forests, hike scenic trails, and enjoy breathtaking mountain landscapes. Popular activities include:

- **Hiking and backpacking:** Mountain trails across Arizona offer incredible scenery. Popular hiking areas include the Superstition Mountains, the San Francisco Peaks, and the scenic trails around Mount Lemmon.
- **Scenic drives:** Many mountain areas feature beautiful scenic roads. The drive to Mount Lemmon in the Santa Catalina Mountains is one of the most famous in Arizona.
- **Camping and outdoor recreation:** National forests such as Coconino National Forest and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests offer excellent camping areas surrounded by forests and lakes.
- **Wildlife and bird watching:**
- Mountain ecosystems support a variety of wildlife species. Areas like the Huachuca Mountains are especially popular for bird watching.

- **Winter sports:** Northern Arizona receives snowfall during winter months. The ski slopes at Arizona Snowbowl near Flagstaff offer skiing and snowboarding.
 - **Photography and sightseeing:** Mountain landscapes provide some of the most beautiful photography locations in the Southwest. Sunrise and sunset views across the Mogollon Rim are especially spectacular.
-

Best Time to Visit Arizona Mountains

The best time to visit the Arizona mountains depends on the activities you want to experience. Each season offers different scenery and outdoor opportunities.



Spring (March to May)

Spring is a pleasant time to visit many mountain areas. Temperatures begin to warm up, and wildflowers appear in some regions. Hiking conditions are often

comfortable, especially in places like the Superstition Mountains and the Santa Catalina Mountains.

Summer (June to August)

Summer is one of the most popular times to visit the Arizona mountains. Travelers often escape the intense desert heat by visiting higher elevations such as Flagstaff or the forests of the White Mountains. Temperatures remain cooler, making it ideal for hiking, camping, and fishing.

Fall (September to November)

Fall offers comfortable temperatures and beautiful landscapes. Some mountain areas experience seasonal color changes, especially near Flagstaff and along the Mogollon Rim. This season is perfect for scenic drives and outdoor photography.

Winter (December to February)

Winter transforms northern Arizona into a snowy mountain destination. Skiing and snowboarding become popular at Arizona Snowbowl. Visitors who enjoy winter scenery often travel to higher elevation areas around the San Francisco Peaks.

Travel Tips for Visiting Arizona Mountains



Exploring the mountains of Arizona can be an unforgettable experience. However, proper planning helps travelers enjoy the scenery safely and comfortably. Weather conditions, elevation changes, and remote wilderness areas require a bit of preparation. Helpful travel tips for visiting Arizona mountains:

- **Prepare for elevation changes:** Many Arizona mountain destinations sit at high elevations. Places like Flagstaff near the San Francisco Peaks are more than 7,000 feet above sea level. Some visitors may feel mild altitude effects, so staying hydrated and taking things slowly on the first day is recommended.
- **Check weather conditions before traveling:** Mountain weather can change quickly. Even during summer, temperatures in higher elevations such as the White Mountains can be much cooler than nearby desert cities.
- **Carry enough water and supplies:** Arizona's dry climate makes hydration very important. Visitors planning to hike in areas like the Superstition Mountains or along the Mogollon Rim should bring plenty of water, snacks, and sun protection.

- **Start outdoor activities early:** Morning hours are often the best time for hiking and sightseeing. Temperatures remain cooler, and lighting conditions are ideal for photography in mountain areas such as the Santa Catalina Mountains.
 - **Respect wildlife and nature:** Arizona mountain ecosystems are home to many animals and bird species. Visitors exploring places like the Huachuca Mountains should keep a safe distance from wildlife and stay on marked trails.
 - **Prepare for limited cell service:** Some remote mountain areas have little or no cell phone coverage. Download maps in advance or carry a printed map when exploring remote regions such as the Chiricahua Mountains.
-

Conclusion

The Arizona mountains reveal a completely different side of the state. Cool pine forests, scenic alpine landscapes, and dramatic desert ranges create some of the most diverse outdoor environments in the American Southwest. From the volcanic peaks near Flagstaff to the quiet wilderness of the Chiricahua Mountains, these destinations offer unforgettable experiences for travelers who love nature and adventure.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the highest mountains in Arizona?

The highest mountains in Arizona are the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff. The tallest summit in the state is Humphreys Peak, which rises more than 12,600 feet above sea level.

Which Arizona mountain town is best for travelers?

Flagstaff is one of the best mountain towns in Arizona. It offers cool temperatures, forest scenery, outdoor recreation, and easy access to nearby mountains and national parks.

Do the Arizona mountains get snow?

Yes, several mountain regions in northern Arizona receive snowfall during winter. Skiing and snowboarding are popular at Arizona Snowbowl, located near the San Francisco Peaks.

What is the best time to visit the Arizona mountains?

Summer and fall are very popular seasons because temperatures remain cooler at higher elevations. Areas like the White Mountains and the Mogollon Rim are especially pleasant during these months.

Are Arizona mountains good for hiking?

Yes. Arizona has many excellent hiking destinations, including trails in the Superstition Mountains, the Santa Catalina Mountains, and the scenic landscapes of Chiricahua National Monument. These areas offer trails for beginners and experienced hikers alike.