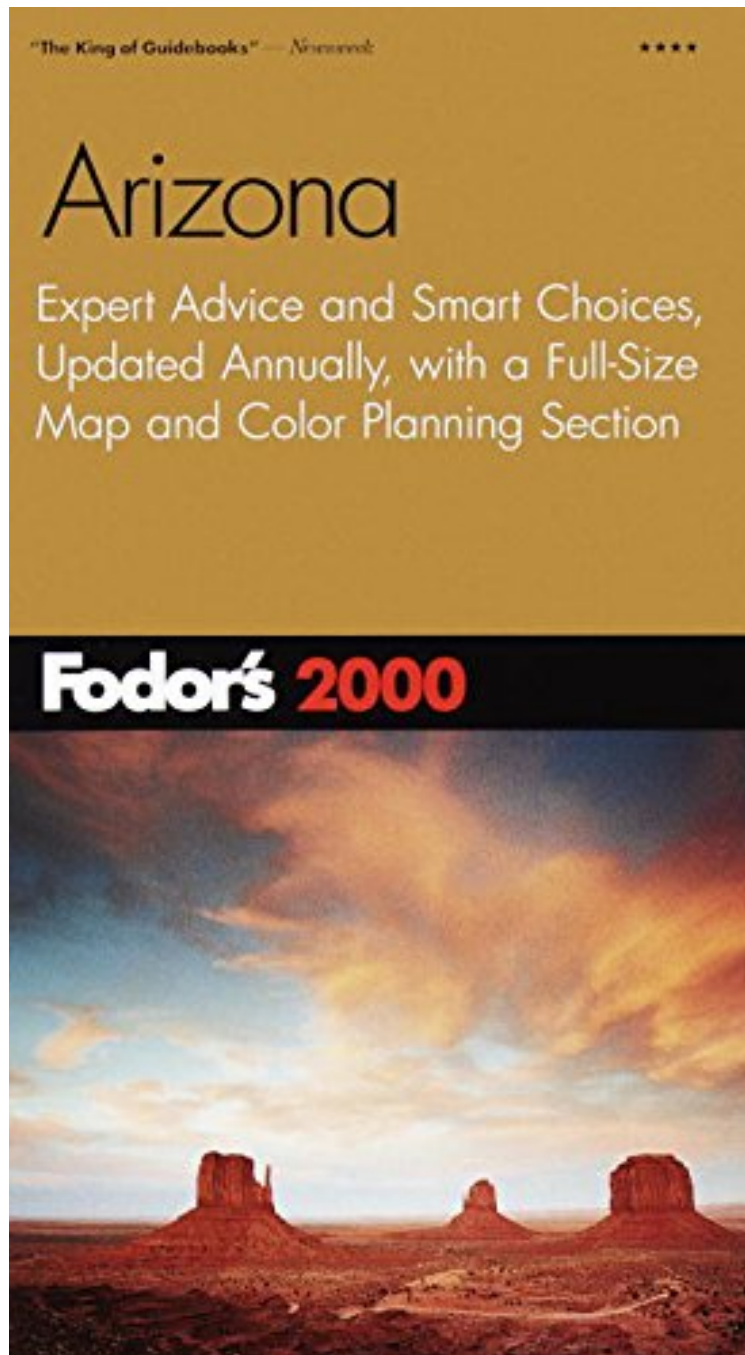


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Destination Arizona
The splendor of Arizona's natural landmarks is reason enough to visit. But there is more to the state than beautiful vistas. Traces of a rich, layered history mark the awesome terrain and inspire artists, artisans, and the discerning shoppers who buy their work. Arizona's cuisines are captivating; its brilliant skies enthrall lovers of the outdoors. Take time to absorb the calming lessons of the heat and the majestic landscape -- on the still waters of a magnificent lake at sunset or beside a fountain on an awning-shaded patio over lunch -- and a bit of Arizona will stay with you forever.
The Grand Canyon and Northwest Arizona
The Grand Canyon, one of nature's longest-running works in progress, both exalts and humbles the human spirit. It all started some 65 million years ago when massive upheavals created a tableland known as the Colorado Plateau. Later, the Colorado River, which arrived a mere 10 million years ago, started scouring down the plateau and in the process laid bare aeons of geological history encoded in stone that itself dates back as much as 1.3 billion years -- a quarter of the age of the earth. These days, a fine time of sightseeing can be had just by setting up a lawn chair and staying put: As the sun moves across the sky, the play of light and shadow on the vividly colored buttes, monuments, and canyon walls changes the hues of the landscape before your very eyes. But except for painters and photographers, few visitors stay rooted -- in the Grand Canyon National Park, which preserves this fabulous landscape, there are simply too many other options. You can view the spectacle not only from the South Rim, the most popular vantage point, but also from the air. Or, astride a mule, you might ride along 19th-century miners' trails descending deep into the canyon's Inner Gorge for an overnight at

Phantom Ranch, at the bottom. Or you could travel aboard an inflatable rubber raft along the Colorado River, whose placid reaches alternate with rapids to create one of the world's most outrageous thrill rides. Soothing body and soul at day's end is the log-and-stone El Tovar Hotel, nearing the century mark itself. The handsome Cameron Trading Post, a study in southwestern style, also makes a fine base for canyon forays. You can buy some of the region's finest Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, and Pueblo jewelry, rugs, and craftwork here and admire some of the very finest pieces at the superb gallery. It's a perfect way to get back in touch with the grandeur of human endeavor.

Phoenix and Central Arizona One of America's fastest-growing metropolitan areas, Phoenix started booming in the mid-19th century, when it rose atop the ancient Hohokam civilization's ruins, now partially excavated at Pueblo Grande Museum and Cultural Park. Easterners flooded Phoenix in the 1920s in search of clean air; celebrities, including every president except Herbert Hoover, stayed at posh resorts such as the fabled Arizona Biltmore. The wonderful and equally famous Heard Museum illuminates other facets of local culture. Its architecture reflects Arizona's Spanish Colonial heritage; the collections (and events like the Hoop Dancing Competition) showcase the traditions of Native American artists from ancient times to the present. Also worth noting are the Arizona Science Center, the Phoenix Art Museum, and vibrant international dining. Nature surrounds you: you can hike within minutes of downtown -- in 17,000-acre South Mountain Park or to Squaw Peak, a local landmark with a splendid view.

Tucson With its 700,000 residents augmented by legions of "snowbirds" who come for the winter, Tucson isn't that much smaller than Phoenix. Yet while Phoenix revels in its status as a modern American metropolis, Tucson retains the feel of a small southwestern town. Claiming that Phoenix has paved over the desert in its sprawl, Tucsonians say the serenity of their mostly arid land imparts an easygoing personality to their city. A walk in verdant Sabino Canyon, a favorite of hikers that's within the city limits, does nothing to dispel that notion. Neither does a stroll among the towering cacti of Saguaro National Park. The desert may seem empty of life as you walk through it, but the superb zoo and botanical garden known as the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum demonstrates otherwise by showing you rattlesnakes, prairie dogs, the American kestrel, and other wildlife. To get a look at the kind of wild life that was lived in Tucson a century ago -- if Hollywood's version of the truth is to be trusted -- stop at the Old Tucson Studios, where that quick-draw past is theatrically re-created.

Southern Arizona Deep in southern Arizona, there is a town called Why. Though the name is simply a phonetic rendition of the town's original name -- Y -- the label anticipates doubts that travelers might have about the area ("Why bother?"). Mountain-and-desert scenery as splendid as any in Arizona is one reason, starting with the remarkable fauna and rock formations at Chiricahua National Monument. Enduring pockets of the Old West in the form of ghost towns are another. Pearce died in the 1930s, when gold deposits ran dry, and remains as photogenic as they come. Douglas is also a time capsule, home to the palatial Gadsden Hotel, where local ranchers meet for drinks and Tiffany skylights recall the town's glorious heyday. Once-notorious Tombstone, not in the least ghostly, hums with commerce and reenactments of gunfights, most notably the confrontation in which the Earps and Doc Holliday shot it out with the Stantons at the OK Corral. Participants with slow reflexes often ended up in Boot Hill Graveyard, sometimes with a peculiar epitaph. In southern Arizona, the old frontier is not the only frontier: At Kitt Peak National Observatory, astronomers gaze into the universe, joined by more than a few travelers who have made the stunning drive through the Tohono O'odham Reservation to behold the world's final frontier.