

Things to Do In and Around Tucson

Tucson Restaurants

- El Guero Canelo

In business since 1993, El Guero Canelo can make a legitimate claim to being the premiere place in Tucson for casual Mexican fare. It is unexaggeratedly world famous for its Sonoran hot dog, a unique southern Arizonan and northern Mexican interpretation of the hot dog that's made by wrapping the hot dog in bacon, putting it in a unique, pocket-like bun and topping it off with all manner of condiments, some with a Southwestern flair. A favorite of any and all Tucsonans, a Sonoran hot dog from Guero Canelo is definitely a must eat in 'Baja' Arizona, as the southern part of the state is called.

<http://elguerocanelo.com/>

- Mi Nidito

Perhaps the most famous Mexican restaurant in the Old Pueblo, Mi Nidito has a widespread and well-deserved reputation. Named 'my little nest' (the English translation of Mi Nidito) for its original small size, the restaurant was started in 1952 by a husband and wife team of Sonoran immigrants. The sight of many visits by celebrities, perhaps no famous person has left more of a mark on Mi Nidito than President Bill Clinton, who visited in 1992. Customers can still order the President's Plate, the surprisingly large order that Clinton himself placed when he ate there.

Check out their website to take a virtual tour before you go!

<http://www.minidito.net/>

- Poco and Mom's

Located a bit off the beaten path from U of A, and unabashedly a 'greasy spoon' experience, Poco and Mom's is nevertheless as excellent a source of wonderful Mexican food as any five star establishment. In the mold of many legendary holes-in-the-wall that all the locals 'in the know' frequent, Poco and Mom's serves New Mexican style Mexican food with red and green chiles imported from Hatch, NM, the 'Chile Capital of the World'. Also on their menu are American classics that are just as delicious (and in much the same style) as their Mexican counterparts. Though not exactly fine dining, Poco and Mom's certainly offers finer than fine food.

<http://www.pocoandmoms.com/>

- La Indita

Serving Tucson since 1983, La Indita sits right on the trendiest street in town, 4th Avenue. La Indita is known for serving an eclectic mix of Mexican and Native American inspired food and offering a large selection of vegetarian options without sacrificing any authenticity, or taste. Highly recommended at La Indita (or any place you can get them in the Baja) is the Indian Taco, a piece of fry bread (or popover, as it is known by the Tohono O'odham) filled with beans, beef, cheese, and red chile Tohono style. Tucson has a deeply rooted past and vibrant, living present

in our Mexican and Native American culture, and La Indita is a great place to start experiencing the culinary side of our heritage.

<https://lainditarestauranttucson.com/>

- Café Poca Cosa

Congress Street is the cultured older sibling of chic 4th Avenue, and Café Poca Cosa, which sits on Congress, is perhaps the finest Mexican dining experience in town. Run by Suzana Davila, a native of Guaymas, Café Poca Cosa is, much like Congress Street itself, a place that's always classy but never stuffy. Their menu changes twice daily, making the dining experience always a pleasant surprise. There's also Little Café Poca Cosa, a smaller venue located near the historic Tucson Presidio that offers an even more intimate experience.

<http://cafepocacosatucson.com/>

Things to Do

- San Xavier del Bac

Founded by Father Eusebio Kino in 1692, a Spanish missionary who was the first European to make contact with the Tohono O'odham tribe, San Xavier del Bac, or the 'White Dove of the Desert' is one of the most famous sites in the Tucson area. The current church was not completed until 1797, but that still makes it the oldest European structure in Arizona. The interior of the church still retains its beautiful artwork and iconography, and is open to the public for Catholic Mass on Sundays. Members of the Tohono tribe also make fry bread on the grounds, which is an absolute must for anyone wanting to experience southern Arizona cuisine.

<http://www.sanxaviermission.org/>

- Downtown

Nightlife in Tucson happens downtown. Excellent restaurants, artisan shops, performing arts venues and bars that range from the highest of high end to the lowest of dives, depending on one's mood, line 4th Avenue and Congress Street. Perhaps the most famous place downtown is Hotel Congress, a hotel, eatery, and bar built in 1919 and known for being the place where John Dillinger laid his head before his Tucson capture. All of downtown is wide open to anyone staying at or near the U of A thanks to the brand new Sun Link, a modern electric street car system that has just been installed! Check out the Downtown Tucson website for updated information on events.

<http://www.downtowntucson.org/>

- Air and Space Museum

Arizona has a surprisingly rich history when it comes to aviation, and the Pima Air and Space Museum is where that history is kept alive. From World War II aviation to spacecraft, the Air and Space Museum captures the whole history of flight. Right next to the Museum is the memorial

museum for the 390th Bomber Squadron, which fought in World War II, and Davis Monthan Air Force Base's airplane graveyard, where row upon row of retired aircraft rest.

<http://www.pimaair.org/>

- Presidio

The City of Tucson's official foundation is traced to the Presidio San Agustin del Tucson, and that history remains alive and well today. In the northwest corner of what was once the Presidio itself is a recreation that authentically captures what life was like for the Spanish soldiers and their families at the time. On certain days local volunteers dress in period costume and give demonstrations on Presidio, including food preparation, clothes and weapons repair, and other necessary skills for life on the border of the Spanish Empire. The Presidio is located right in the middle of downtown, within easy walking distance from the Sun Link streetcar stations.

<http://www.tucsonpresidio.com/>

- Old Tucson

Out past the edge of town and near the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum is Old Tucson Studios. Initially built in 1939 for the film *Arizona*, and having been the location for such films as *Rio Bravo*, *The Gunfight at the OK Corral*, and *Three Amigos*, Old Tucson is now a theme park with authentic Western sets and activities available to any interested traveler. From early September to October 31st, Old Tucson is also the home of the famous 'Nightfall', a haunted house of sorts that stretches across the park and is as certain to terrify at night as the Old Western spread is guaranteed to impress by day.

<http://oldtucson.com/>

- Titan Missile Museum

Though the possibility of nuclear war was ever present during the Cold War, few physical reminders remain. The Titan Missile Museum is one of the most impressive. The only one remaining out of fifty four original sites, the Titan Missile Museum was previously a top secret installation capable of launching the Titan II, an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of firing in one minute and delivering its 9 megaton payload more than 6,000 miles in less than half an hour. What was once one of the United States' most closely guarded secrets in its conflict against the Soviet Union is now available to the public as extremely well preserved and sobering history of a time when the world stood on the brink.

<http://www.titanmissilemuseum.org/>

Tombstone

In the latter half of the 19th century an Arizona prospector named Ed Schieffelin announced his intention to dig in a remote corner of Southeastern Arizona Territory, to which a friend replied that the only thing he'd find there was his tombstone. Instead, he found silver, and a town popped around the valuable mine that Ed named after the intended insult. Tombstone, 'The Town Too Tough To Die', survives today

as a tribute to the Old West in which it was founded. The dusty main street, through which you can take a stagecoach ride, is filled with shops, eateries, and other Western attractions. The streets are also populated by performers in period costume, who reenact such famous events as the Gunfight at the OK Corral every day (the Corral itself can also, of course, be visited, as well as Boot Hill, the infamous graveyard where the dead gunfighters are buried.)

<http://www.tombstoneweb.com/>

- Big Nose Kate's

Formerly owned and operated by Doc Holliday's favorite gal, Big Nose Kate's now offers a rollicking saloon time with good food and live performances of music and Old West reenactments. Be sure to visit their sister establishment, the Longhorn Restaurant, for a bite to eat, as well!

<http://www.bignosekates.info/index.html>

- Crystal Palace

Serving the town of Tombstone since 1879, the Crystal Palace is a fine place to grab a drink and a bite to eat, especially if you think you might enjoy old fashioned décor and one of the most elegant bars in the state.

<http://www.crystalpalacesaloon.com/>

- Tombstone Grand

Priding itself on 'White Hat Service', the Tombstone Grand is the premier luxury establishment in the area. Sitting not far from the graveyard on Boot Hill, the Grand is an excellent gateway into Tombstone exploration and a fine place to lay one's head after a long day of Western adventure.

<http://tombstonegrand.com/index.html>

Bisbee

Though founded as a mining town in much the same way as Tombstone was (barring the fact that Bisbee's precious metal was copper), Bisbee has taken a somewhat different trajectory. Though it remains the seat of Cochise County as it has since territorial days, Bisbee is now a community more renowned for its modern artistic commitment than its Old Western authenticity. In addition to beautiful old buildings and its being nestled in the pristine Mule Mountains, Bisbee is home to numerous artisans, artists, and other creative individuals who keep shop in Old Bisbee, the city's bohemian uptown district. Bisbee is also famous for its steep hills and many accompanying stairs, which inspired the annual Bisbee 1000 Stair Climb, a marathon of sorts that involves climbing the nearly one thousand stairs around the town. For the physical fitness buffs out there, the Stair Climb is October 18th, and registration is open!

<http://www.discoverbisbee.com/>

<http://www.bisbee1000.org/>

- The Copper Queen

Bisbee itself was called 'The Copper Queen' in its heyday as a mining boomtown, and the Copper Queen Hotel is as authentic and elegant as anything in Bisbee. Built between 1898 and 1902, the Copper Queen offers Victorian meets Old West luxury in every room and its fine dining Café. The Copper Queen is also notorious for being haunted, so it is possible you may have to bunk with an otherworldly roommate if you stay there.

<http://www.copperqueen.com/>

- Café Roka

Fine dining at its absolute finest, Café Roka is the place to go not only in Bisbee, but between Tucson and the Mexican border, as well. Café Roka has an excellent drink selection, a large menu with many delicious options, and an elegant atmosphere.

<http://caferoka.com/>

Kartchner Caverns

Discovered almost accidentally in rural Cochise County in the 1970s, the pristine series of caves in Kartchner Caverns was kept secret for many years to prevent vandalism until the Arizona government was able to step in and keep it preserved. Thanks to the studious conservation efforts of the discoverers, the landowners, and the State of Arizona, Kartchner Caverns' well preserved and beautiful cave systems are open to the public. The Throne Room, named after the 60 foot tall column called Kublai Khan, also contains one of the world's longest soda straw formations. Perhaps southern Arizona's greatest natural wonder, Kartchner Caverns is definitely not to be missed.

<http://azstateparks.com/Parks/KACA/>

Amerind Foundation

Founded in 1937 as an archaeological research station, the Amerind Foundation has kept its focus on research but also developed into an excellent place for the public to become acquainted with southwestern Native American culture. The native history of the Baja is vast, layered, and essential to the lives of all modern southern Arizonans, and the Amerind Foundation, which also includes a research library and exquisite art gallery, is an excellent place to start learning about it. Consult their website to stay up to date on their many special events, as well!

<http://www.amerind.org/index.html>

And for more fun things to do and places to go, strike up a conversation with a local! The inhabitants of the beautiful Baja are always more than happy to share a few its secrets with interested parties.