

Stadiums, Sweets and Saddles

Greater Phoenix's West Valley

Glendale and Wickenburg

Recently, Phoenix's West Valley has been front and center with the addition of new sports arenas and as the host to some of the biggest bowl games. The University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale opened in 2006 and since then has hosted college bowl games and even the Super Bowl. For the western part of Phoenix and the Valley of the Sun, this is great news. The boom of construction has brought visitors and residents alike to the West Valley for "The Big Game", concerts and award-winning festivals. Sports fans, families, and history buffs alike will experience southwestern hospitality and find out "how the west was won" when they visit Glendale and Wickenburg.

DAY ONE Begin your day exploring Historic Downtown Glendale. This retro-chic destination incorporates two distinct neighborhoods that are home to more than 90 specialty and antique shops, all of which can be easily traveled to on foot. Start at the Glendale Visitor Center right in the heart of Historic Downtown Glendale. Internet access is available for visitors to "stay connected." Explore The Bead Museum, home of more than 100,000 beads, beadwork pieces and beaded artifacts. A museum store, gift shop and classes are available. Sample the sweet life at Cerreta Candy Company. For more than 70 years, the Cerreta family has prepared their candy the old fashioned way - by hand. Located in Historic Downtown Glendale the Cerreta family offers free factory tours where sampling is encouraged! At this point you might be craving a burger at a tailgate party, but Lenny's Burgers may just do the trick. Later, shop at many of the area's antique stores and then dine in downtown as well. That is unless you've got a game to go to! Overnight in Glendale.

DAY TWO Tour the University of Phoenix Stadium, the coolest national sports facility around. A perfect marriage of liquid and steel, this one-of-a-kind sporting facility is the first on the continent to feature both a retractable roof and retractable playing field. World-renowned architect Peter Eisenman designed the stadium to mimic the sections of the native barrel cactus. Call ahead for tour schedule and reservations. After the tour, head to Wickenburg for a dose of Old West culture and natural beauty. Located about 45 minutes northwest of Glendale, Wickenburg was established in 1863 and was once the "Dude Ranch Capital of the World." It is also the oldest Arizona town north of Tucson. First visit the Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Center, which is housed in the 113-year old Santa Fe Depot on Frontier Street in the historic downtown. You'll be transported to yesteryear as you take a leisurely stroll through their historic downtown. Home to many unique shops with a broad selection of Southwestern arts and crafts, Native American jewelry, Mexican furniture, rugs, antiques, curios, pottery, western gear, tack and clothing, you'll be sure to find a perfect gift for a loved-one back home. For dinner, dine at the largest dude ranch in Wickenburg, Rancho de los Caballeros. Overnight in Wickenburg.

DAY THREE Rise early this morning to visit the Hassayampa River Preserve, owned by the Nature Conservancy. The lush streamside habitat of the Hassayampa is home to 280 species of birds including falcons, hawks, flycatchers, raptors and hummingbirds. Spend the morning bird watching and finding sanctuary in the shade of the rare Fremont Cottonwood-Willow riparian forest. Don't forget your binoculars! Next, is a visit to the Desert Caballeros Western Museum, Arizona's most Western museum. The museum celebrates the art, history and culture of the desert southwest, and features well-known cowboy artists such as Remington and Russell. For the mine enthusiasts or rock hounds, visit the Historic Vulture Mine. There was once a lot of gold in "them there hills," and you can walk through the remaining buildings and mine site (good for groups, too). Tonight, stay at one of the ranches or head back to Phoenix for the game.