



Arizona's Spectacular Sports

From football to auto racing, Arizona is a sports playground

Looking for a sports lover's dream? You'd be hard-pressed to find a better location than Arizona, regular-season home to four major league teams, Spring Training baseball, record-breaking professional golf tournaments, three college football bowl games, four major NCAA universities, the 2015 [Super Bowl](#), the 2015 [NFL Pro Bowl](#), the 2016 [College Football Playoff Championship Game](#) and the 2017 [NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four](#). Arizona continues to prove itself as a sports destination and has been named as the chosen location for the 2023 Super Bowl and the 2024 Final Four.

The Big Four

When the Arizona Diamondbacks arrived on the scene in 1998, Phoenix joined the exclusive club of U.S. metropolitan areas with professional baseball, basketball, football and hockey franchises. Currently, there are just 13 such communities in America that can make that claim.

Baseball

Arizona fans fell in love with the National League's [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) right off the bat, and the team's 2001 World Series win over the New York Yankees still ranks as the most significant professional sports victory in state history. The D-backs' downtown Phoenix stadium, [Chase Field](#), has become a visitor attraction in itself.

Basketball

Arizona's original major league franchise, the [Phoenix Suns](#), started playing in the NBA in 1969 at Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum. Today, the Suns play at [Talking Stick Sports Arena](#) in downtown Phoenix.

Football

The nation's oldest continuously run NFL franchise (it got its start in 1898 as Morgan Athletic Club in Chicago) – the [Arizona Cardinals](#) began playing in Glendale's [State Farm Stadium](#), (formerly University of Phoenix Stadium) in 2006 after playing for nearly 20 years at Arizona State University's Sun Devil Stadium when the franchise relocated from St. Louis in 1988. The Cardinals were the 2015 NFC West Division champions.

Hockey

The former Winnipeg Jets moved from Canada and morphed into the National Hockey League's Phoenix Coyotes in 1996. The "Desert Dogs" played at Talking Stick Sports Arena from 1996 until [Gila River Arena](#) (formerly Jobing.com Arena) opened in Glendale in December 2003. In 2012, the Coyotes won the Pacific Division title. After the 2013-14 season the team became known as the [Arizona Coyotes](#).

More Professional Teams

In addition to hosting the Suns, Talking Stick Sports Arena is also home to the extremely popular Women's National Basketball Association's [Phoenix Mercury](#), 2014 WNBA champions, and the Arena Football League's [Arizona Rattlers](#), 2017 Arena Bowl Champion. Arizona is also home to soccer teams, including the [Tucson Saguaros](#), the 2016 champions of the Pecos League, that play at Reid Park Field and Phoenix Rising FC, which plays at the Phoenix Rising FC Soccer Complex.

Cactus League Baseball

Not only does Arizona have its own Major League Baseball team, every year from late February through early April, the state hosts 15 major league teams for [Cactus League](#) spring training. Cactus League baseball dates back to 1947 when the Cleveland Indians and New York Giants prepped for the rigors of the regular season in Arizona. Today, the 15 teams that comprise the Cactus League give the Phoenix metropolitan area the greatest concentration of professional baseball facilities found anywhere in the United States.

Fall Baseball

The Phoenix area also is home to the [Arizona Fall League](#), which runs from early October to late November. There are six teams in the Arizona Fall League: the Scottsdale Scorpions, Mesa Solar Sox, Salt River Rafters, Glendale Desert Dogs, Peoria Javelinas and Surprise Saguaros. Each August, Major League clubs hold a position draft to determine the players who will go to Arizona. Most are Double-A and Triple-A Minor League players.

College Athletics

Arizona is home to four NCAA major universities: the [Arizona State University Sun Devils](#) in Tempe, [University of Arizona Wildcats](#) in Tucson, [Northern Arizona University Lumberjacks](#) in Flagstaff and [Grand Canyon University Antelopes](#) in Phoenix. ASU and UofA are both members of the [Pac-12 Conference](#), while NAU competes in the [Big Sky Conference](#) and GCU in the [Western Athletic Conference](#).

College Bowl Games

Arizona is host to three college football bowl games, the [Fiesta Bowl](#) at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, the [Cheez-It® Bowl](#) (formerly the Cactus Bowl) at Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, and the [Arizona Bowl](#) in Tucson, which started in 2015. The Fiesta Bowl dates back to 1971 and was recently named part of the [College Football Playoff](#) that began in 2015.

NCAA Men's Final Four

The Men's [Final Four](#) made its first-ever visit to Arizona April 1-3, 2017 when State Farm Stadium (formerly the University of Phoenix Stadium) in Glendale played host to the event that crowned the NCAA Division 1 basketball national champion, North Carolina. Arizona became the first western state to host the Final Four since Seattle, WA hosted in 1995.

Golf

Arizona offers layouts of every configuration at more than 300 courses, making the state one of the world's premier golf destinations. And, professional golf recognizes Arizona as a great location for major tournaments.

Arizona features several major professional tour events including the [Waste Management Phoenix Open](#), the world's best-attended golf tournament, which takes place yearly at the end of January at TPC Stadium Course in Scottsdale. In 2018, it shattered PGA attendance records with 719,179 people in attendance.

Auto Racing

[The ISM Raceway](#), known as the Phoenix International Raceway before 2018, is located in Avondale, west of Phoenix and has hosted major auto races for more than 50 years. The Raceway staged its first professional race on March 22, 1964 when, in front of a crowd of 7,000 spectators, A.J. Foyt led every lap on his way to victory in the Phoenix 100. The race track has evolved many times over the ensuing 50 years and has hosted races for virtually every major sanctioning body in American motor sports, including USAC, CART, Indy Car, Motocross, IMSA, and NASCAR.

Today, ISM Raceway is most well-known as the host for two NASCAR race weekends and one Verizon Indycar Series annually. Along with the new name, ISM Raceway is getting a \$178 million makeover in 2018 to bring fans new amenities and a better experience than ever before.

Other Sports

The events and activities above merely scratch the surface of sports offerings to be found in Arizona. The state also hosts major triathlons, marathons, rodeos, cycling events, soccer tournaments and a wide array of other athletic events. A listing of events can be found at <http://visitarizona.com/events-calendar/sports>

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For More Information

For more information on this topic and others see the official Arizona travel and vacation guide from the Arizona Office of Tourism at www.visitarizona.com. Find in-depth AZ visitor information and videos about visiting the state of Arizona, including comprehensive directories of Arizona hotels, dining and shopping, as well as things to do and places to visit throughout the Grand Canyon State.