

Sedona, Arizona — Visitor Guide

Red rocks, vortexes, and high-desert trails in the heart of northern Arizona.

Getting There & Getting Around

- **Nearest major airport:** Phoenix Sky Harbor (PHX), about 2 hours south by car. Flagstaff (FLG) is smaller and closer (~45 min) but has fewer flights.
- **Driving in:** Sedona sits along Highway 89A/179, flanked by Oak Creek Canyon to the north (Flagstaff direction) and the Village of Oak Creek to the south (I-17 direction).
- **Parking:** Uptown Sedona and popular trailheads fill up fast, especially mid-morning. A free shuttle now serves several high-demand trailheads (including Soldier Pass) on peak days, when their lots close to private cars.
- **Red Rock Pass:** Required at most Coconino National Forest trailheads (Devil's Bridge, Cathedral Rock, Bell Rock, Fay Canyon, Boynton Canyon, etc.). \$5/day, \$15/week, \$20/year. Buy at trailhead kiosks (card only), the visitor center, or via Recreation.gov. Not needed if you hold an "America the Beautiful" interagency pass. Some sites (Slide Rock State Park, Red Rock State Park, West Fork, Crescent Moon/Red Rock Crossing) charge their own separate entry fee instead.

When to Go

- **Spring (Mar-May) and Fall (Sep-Nov):** The sweet spot — mild temps, clear skies. Most crowded.
- **Summer (Jun-Aug):** Hot (often 95-105°F), but mornings are pleasant; afternoon monsoon storms roll through July-August.
- **Winter (Dec-Feb):** Cool and quiet, occasional light snow dusting the red rocks — dramatic photos, thinner crowds.

Top Hikes

Trail	Distance	Difficulty	Highlight
Devil's Bridge	~4.2 mi RT	Moderate	Iconic sandstone arch; go early to beat crowds/heat
Cathedral Rock	~1.5 mi RT	Hard (steep scramble)	Best sunset views in Sedona
Bell Rock / Courthouse Butte Loop	~4 mi loop	Easy-Moderate	Classic red-rock scenery, well-trodden
Boynton Canyon	~5 mi RT	Moderate	Shaded canyon walk, vortex site at the end
Soldier Pass (Seven Sacred Pools)	~4.5 mi RT	Moderate	Rock pools, Devil's Kitchen sinkhole; shuttle-only Thu-Sun
Fay Canyon	~2.5 mi RT	Easy	Family-friendly, natural arch side trail
West Fork Trail (Oak Creek Canyon)	~7 mi RT	Easy-Moderate	Creek crossings through a lush canyon (separate entry fee)

Start early — by 7–9 AM if possible — both to avoid heat and to snag parking.

"Vortex" Sites

Sedona is known for four energy vortex sites believed by some to have spiritually charged energy: **Airport Mesa**, **Cathedral Rock**, **Bell Rock**, and **Boynton Canyon**. Whether or not that resonates with you, all four also happen to be excellent short hikes with terrific views — worth visiting either way.

Beyond Hiking

- **Jeep/off-road tours:** Pink Jeep Tours' Broken Arrow route and similar operators run guided rides over slickrock terrain to spots like Chicken Point and Submarine Rock — a fun option if you want the scenery without the hike.
- **Slide Rock State Park:** Natural water slide in Oak Creek Canyon — great for cooling off in summer.
- **Chapel of the Holy Cross:** Striking chapel built into the red rocks, open to visitors.
- **Uptown Sedona:** Galleries, shops, and restaurants along the main strip — good for an evening stroll.
- **Stargazing:** Sedona is an International Dark Sky Community; clear desert nights make for excellent stargazing outside town.
- **Wine tasting:** The Verde Valley (Cottonwood/Page Springs, a short drive south) has a small but growing wine trail.

Where to Stay

- **Uptown Sedona:** Walkable, close to shops/restaurants, can be noisy/touristy.
- **West Sedona:** More local, good restaurants, still close to trailheads.
- **Village of Oak Creek (south):** Quieter, closer to Bell Rock and Courthouse Butte trails.
- **Oak Creek Canyon (north, toward Flagstaff):** Cabins and lodges among the trees along the creek — more remote and scenic.

Practical Tips

- **Sun & hydration:** High desert elevation (~4,300 ft) plus intense sun — bring more water than you think you need, wear sunscreen, and start hikes early.
- **Cell service:** Spotty on trails and in Oak Creek Canyon — download offline maps beforehand.
- **Book ahead:** Popular restaurants and jeep tours fill up, especially in spring/fall — reserve a few days out if you can.
- **Leave No Trace:** Stay on marked trails to protect the fragile desert soil (cryptobiotic crust) and cultural sites.

Want me to build this into a day-by-day itinerary based on how many days you'll be there?