

Maricopa County Board of Supervisors invests in chilled water fountains at McDowell Mountain Regional Park

The project costs \$73,732 and is expected to be completed on June 17.

Staff Reports | Digital Free Press
May 31, 2024

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors has approved a community solutions funding measure for the purchase and installation of three chilled water fountains found on hiking trails at McDowell Mountain Regional Park, which is in District 2.

“These three water fountains, which include pet bowls, will provide additional sources of water for Maricopa County residents and their dogs,” said Vice Chairman Thomas Galvin, District 2, in a prepared statement. “The availability of clean drinking water at Trailhead Staging Area will benefit hikers and their dogs, and will enhance their outdoor experiences at the park.”

The Board of Supervisor community solutions funding is primarily intended to cover the cost of initiatives that carry the potential of advancing Maricopa County’s Strategic Goals and provide a clear public benefit for Maricopa County residents, county officials tell the Digital Free Press.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park has seen attendance increase over the last several years. Clean drinking water will be accessible at the Trailhead Staging Area, where three trailheads are located, including McDowell’s longest and most difficult trail, Pemberton.

The project costs \$73,732 and is expected to be completed on June 17, according to a press release.

The best restaurants with waterfront views in metro Phoenix. Yes, really

Endia Fontanez
Arizona Republic
May 21, 2021

Summer is fast approaching, and as the weather heats up, Arizonans flock to the water. While some people might think this only means backyard swimming pools or road trips to the beaches of California and Mexico, that isn’t all Arizona has to offer. While most of our lakes are man-made, they still offer a ton of summer fun, from boat parties to fishing to the simple pleasure of thermal cooling.

Arizona also has its fair share of restaurants with waterfront views, from romantic lakeside dinners to a Mexican restaurant with its own turtle pond.

From Peoria to Mesa, here are five waterfront restaurants in metro Phoenix.

Dillon's Bayou at Pleasant Harbor

Dillon's Bayou is located right on the water at Lake Pleasant in Peoria. Dine on the patio and you can watch boats go by mere yards away from your table. The menu is focused on Kansas City barbecue and seafood, with highlights like wild cod or catfish platters, fish tacos, burnt ends and build-your-own barbecue platters. Worth noting, there is a \$9 entrance fee per vehicle to access Pleasant Harbor Marina.

Need a break? Play the USA TODAY Daily Crossword Puzzle.

Details: 40202 N. 87th Ave., Peoria. 928-501-2227, dillonsrestaurant.com/dillons-bayou.

El Encanto

El Encanto in Cave Creek is not your typical waterfront restaurant. Rather than being situated on a lake, El Encanto Mexican restaurant is built around a large, outdoor pond that welcomes wildlife such as turtles, fish and ducks. Menu highlights include shrimp cocktails, chicken and mole enchiladas, chile relleno with chicken, fajitas and seafood tacos.

Details: 6248 E. Cave Creek Road, Cave Creek. 480-488-1752, elencantorestaurants.com.

Pier 54

Pier 54 is Tempe's lakeside restaurant, but it's not where you might think — the restaurant isn't located on Tempe Town Lake, but overlooking a small lake in South Tempe's The Lakes neighborhood. The

family-owned restaurant enjoys a stunning backdrop of the Arizona sunset over the water. Menu options include tacos, burgers, salads and items from the grill such as bacon wrapped shrimp skewers, ahi tuna steak and grilled salmon. There are also several gluten-free options available.

Details: 5394 S. Lakeshore Dr., Tempe. 480-820-0660, pier54az.com.

Scorpion Bay Grill

Scorpion Bay Grill at Lake Pleasant in Peoria offers casual fare with beautiful lake views. Menu highlights include a blackened chicken wrap, pesto chicken ciabatta and Phoenician hot chicken. Other options include salads, flatbreads and all-day breakfast boats. The menu also features several gluten-free options. There is a \$7 per vehicle fee to enter **Lake Pleasant Regional Park**.

Details: 10970 W. Peninsula Blvd., Peoria. 928-501-3440, scorpionbayaz.com/food-drink/scorpion-bay-grill.

Lakeside Grill Estrella

Dine on the patio at Lakeside Grill for a laidback view of the fountain at Goodyear's manmade lake. Menu highlights include creamy lemon garlic pasta, cauliflower steak, grilled ribeye and a shrimp po'boy.

Lakeside Grill also offers brunch on the weekends, including omelets or scrambles, chicken fried steak and breakfast cocktails.

Details: 17665 W. Elliot Road, Goodyear. 623-236-3047, lakesidegrillestrella.com.

Doughnuts, pizza and Korean BBQ: 37 new restaurants are now open in metro Phoenix.

From beaches to water parks, these fun summer activities will help you beat Arizona's heat

Kaely Monahan
Arizona Republic
May 27, 2027

When the heat rises, Phoenicians know it's time to stay cool. And Arizona has a lot to offer to help you enjoy your summer.

From tubing on the Salt River to boat rentals and water sports at Tempe Town Lake and Park, there are plenty of options for Arizonians to get outside and have fun during the summer. Discounts are also available at some of these popular attractions.

The Republic's podcast team surveyed some of the best spots to beat the heat. We came up with five must-visit water attractions in the Valley.

Here are our top recommendations for where you can keep cool this summer.

Salt River Tubing

The river is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, with tube rentals ending at 2 p.m.

Salt River Tubing offers fast passes and online reservations

through September. You can purchase your Salt River Tubing tickets online or in person. Here's the cost breakdown:

- Tube rental and shuttle: \$25.
- Shuttle pass for those with their own tubes: \$18.
- Bucket/cooler tube, to hold your cooler: \$20.
- Season passes (includes one tube rental per day): \$199.
- VIP group passes (for groups of 20 or more; includes tube, private shuttle and skip-the-line privileges): \$30 per person.

Discounts are available for military members and first responders when purchased in person only.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park

Park hours from May 1 to Oct. 31 are 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. Then from Nov. 1 to April 30, 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park is anticipating temporary closures into the summer. The decision to temporarily close sections of the park will be based on:

- Increased holiday/weekend traffic.
- Parking lot and shoreline limits exceeding capacity and/or high water levels seasonally limiting shoreline availability.

Keep up to date with any changes on the Park Updates page. Ticket prices vary depending on which activity you plan to do at the park. See all the ticket prices.

Tempe Town Lake and Beach Park

Get out on the water with these boating options.

Vintage Phoenix: Pools for public lured residents in the good old summertime Boat Rentals of America Located on the south shore at Tempe Beach Park. This rental offers all kinds of watercraft for rent. Boats of all types can be rented here for one-hour or two-hour segments. Watercraft options available to rent include donut boats, kayaks, stand-up paddle boards, pontoon boats, pedal boats and electric boats. Find pricing, hours and availability on Boats 4 Rent.

Northshore Watersport Rentals Northshore Watersport Rentals is located on the north shore of Tempe Town Lake, near the Tempe Town Lake Marina Boat Launch. Available watercraft options to rent include kayaks, double kayaks or paddle boards to explore the water. Find pricing, hours and availability on their website.

Tempe Beach Park is open daily from 5 a.m. to 12 a.m.

Make sure to check out all the amenities and their locations. Mesa Golf and Sunsplash Sunsplash hours are 11 a.m.-5 p.m., with Night Splash from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Ticket prices vary on age and on the day and time. For adults, general admission tickets are \$55 with discounts if you buy online. Junior tickets are for children ages 3 to kids who are under 48 inches in height and cost \$52. Parking is free. Take a glimpse at ticket and package prices.

Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Park hours are 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. most days. Check their website for the most current hours.

Ticket prices vary depending on age and the day and time of your visit. Single-day general passes can be as low as \$35 if purchased online. Season passes start at \$55. Parking is \$20 for general and \$30 for premium. Passholders can get free parking. Check out all of the ticket pricing.

New attractions: Biggest hotel openings and renos in Arizona in 2023: VAI Resort, a Sam Fox hotel and more

Curious about the Valley?

Rock climber reportedly falls over 30 feet near Toms Thumb Trailhead

May 27, 2024, 10:56 AM
BY KTAR.COM

PHOENIX – Scottsdale and Phoenix technical rescue teams are responding to a report of a rock climber falling 30-40 feet near Toms Thumb Trailhead, authorities said.

The 34-year-old climber is reported to be in serious condition, according to authorities. Rescuers say she was wearing a helmet when climbing close to **McDowell Mountain Regional Park**.

An aircraft rescue technician has been called. Rescue personnel will assist the injured climber into a helicopter to be taken to a hospital.

County leaders invest in chilled water fountains at McDowell Mountain Regional Park

May 27, 2024, 7:15 AM
BY KTAR.COM

PHOENIX – Three chilled water fountains will be installed surrounding the hiking trails at **McDowell Mountain Regional Park**.

Last week, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors approved Community Solutions Funding for the purchase and installation of the fountains.

The water fountains will be planted at Trailhead Staging Area, where three hiking trailheads are located. The project is expected to be completed by June 17 and will cost nearly \$74,000.

“These three water fountains, which include pet bowls, will provide additional sources of water for Maricopa County residents and their dogs,” Vice Chairman Thomas Galvin said in a press release. “The availability of clean drinking water at Trailhead Staging Area will benefit hikers and their dogs, and will enhance their outdoor experiences at the park.”

The park has seen an increase in attendance over the past

several years, according to county officials.

County offers lake, trail safety tips for Memorial Day weekend

Maricopa County is reminding the public to keep safety top of mind while enjoying outdoor activities like swimming, boating, and hiking.

Posted Friday, May 24, 2024
9:00 am

Peoria Independent

With Memorial Day Weekend right around the corner, Maricopa County is reminding the public to keep safety top of mind while enjoying outdoor activities like swimming, boating, and hiking.

"If you're planning to visit one of our beautiful county parks or lakes over Memorial Day weekend, please enjoy responsibly and safely," said Vice Chairman Thomas Galvin, who represents District 2 in Maricopa County.

"Even the most experienced boaters, swimmers, and hikers can fall victim to fatal boating accidents on our lakes or heat-related illnesses on our trails. These incidents can be prevented if we work together to put safety first," he said.

Nearly 1.2 million people visited Lake Pleasant Regional Park in 2023, making it the county's most visited park. Memorial Day Weekend marks peak visiting season, with cars lined up for miles along Carefree Highway, waiting for their chance to enjoy

the lake. While most County park visitors are vigilant about safety, there were nine drownings in Maricopa County last year alone. The sheriff's office was also called to assist with 149 search and rescue missions, 44 more than the year prior.

"The lakes and rivers within Maricopa County are one of the most utilized areas in the nation for watercraft recreation. Accidents on the water can happen when you least expect them," said Sheriff Russ Skinner. "To ensure a safe outing, please avoid swimming alone, wear a personal floatation device, refrain from or limit the consumption of alcohol, stay hydrated, and never leave children unattended near water. If you're new to operating a watercraft, I strongly encourage taking an operator safety class prior to hitting the water. While lake patrol deputies and volunteers are trained to quickly respond to calls for help, proactively taking these steps can prevent tragic situations and better protect you and your loved ones."

As you're making plans for Memorial Day Weekend, please remember these key safety tips:

On the lake:

- Avoid swimming alone when possible.
- Never leave young kids unattended near water.
- Stay attentive and avoid distractions while supervising.
- If a child goes missing, always check the water first.

- Wear a life jacket, even if you're an experienced swimmer.
- Protect yourself from the sun with sunblock, sunglasses, and a hat.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and heat exhaustion.

On the trail:

- Research trails ahead of time.
- Avoid hiking alone when possible.
- Hydrate before and throughout your hike.
- Wear appropriate footwear, clothing, eye protection, and sunscreen.
- Bring plenty of water, snacks, a cell phone, and a portable cell phone charger.
- Tell someone where you will be hiking in case you lose service.
- Assess whether it may be too hot to bring your canine friends.
- When your water is half gone, turn around and return to the trailhead.
- Make sure to stay on the trail.
- And if you see wildlife, don't get too close.

If you experience symptoms like a throbbing headache, a fever of over 103 degrees, or nausea and vomiting, please call 9-1-1 and take immediate action to cool down.

To plan your visit to one of Maricopa County's 12 regional parks, visit maricopacountyparks.net.

Board Invests in Chilled Water

Fountains at McDowell Mountain Regional Park

Maricopa.gov
May 22, 2024



The Board of Supervisors today approved Community Solutions Funding for the purchase and installation of three chilled water fountains located on hiking trails at **McDowell Mountain Regional Park**, which is in District 2.

"These three water fountains, which include pet bowls, will provide additional sources of water for Maricopa County residents and their dogs," said Vice Chairman Thomas Galvin, District 2. "The availability of clean drinking water at Trailhead Staging Area will benefit hikers and their dogs, and will enhance their outdoor experiences at the park."

The Board of Supervisors' Community Solutions Funding is primarily intended to cover the cost of initiatives that carry the potential of advancing Maricopa County's Strategic Goals and provide a clear public benefit for Maricopa County residents.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park has seen attendance increase over the last several years. Clean drinking water will be accessible at the Trailhead Staging Area, where three trailheads are located, including McDowell's longest and most difficult trail, Pemberton. The project costs \$73,732 and is expected to be completed on June 17, 2024.

Maricopa County Officials Urge Safety Measures for Lake Pleasant Visitors During Memorial Day Festivities

By Aisha Khan
Hoodline Phoenix
Published on May 21, 2024



Source: Maricopa County

Memorial Day weekend is a time for BBQs and pool parties, but Maricopa County is putting the spotlight on safety for those hitting the lakes and trails. In anticipation of the holiday crowd, officials including Vice Chairman Thomas Galvin gathered at **Lake Pleasant Regional Park** to dish out a serving of safety measures for visitors planning to take a dip or hike in the desert. "Even the most experienced boaters, swimmers, and hikers can fall victim to fatal boating accidents

on our lakes or heat-related illnesses on our trails," Galvin told locals, urging everyone to play it safe during the festivities, as per the briefing that aired on May 16.

Last year, the allure of Lake Pleasant drew a whopping 1.2 million souls and, with the holiday weekend ahead, visitors are expected to flock in droves, traffic inching along Carefree Highway, itching for a slice of paradise; however, with nine drownings and a spike in backcountry search and rescue missions, authorities are doubling down, reminding merry-makers of the high stakes of carelessness. "The lakes and rivers within Maricopa County are one of the most utilized areas in the nation for watercraft recreation. Accidents on the water can happen when you least expect them," Sheriff Russ Skinner said in a statement obtained by Maricopa County, emphasizing the importance of life jackets, sobriety, and vigilance, especially around water and children.

Officials are bracing for a surge in heat-related incidents as the mercury climbs, a grim reminder that the desert doesn't coddle the unprepared or the careless. "Serious heat-related incidents happen every summer when people are recreating outdoors," R.J. Cardin, Parks & Recreation Director of Maricopa County, commented in a recent briefing. He advised wannabe adventurers to plan ahead, know their limits, and understand that the desert sun is an unforgiving companion to those who don't pay heed to its might.

For those seeking the sanctuary of nature this Memorial Day, the county's safety tips list is straightforward: on the water, don't swim solo if you can help it, keep a hawk-eye on kids near water, and gear up with life jackets and sunscreen; on land, research your trails, load up on water, and be mindful of hiking with pets in scorching weather. Incumbent with this is the stark reality that the wilderness is no playground and the price of neglect could be dire, visitors should check out MaricopaCountyParks.net to plan a safe holiday outing.

County Partners Share Safety Tips for Memorial Day Weekend at Lake & Trail Safety Event

Maricopa County
May 21, 2024

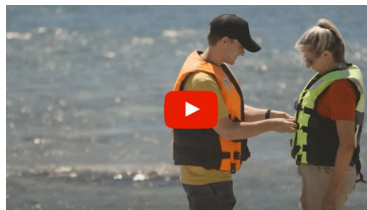


With Memorial Day Weekend right around the corner, Maricopa County is reminding the public to keep safety top of mind while enjoying outdoor activities like swimming, boating, and hiking. Today at Lake Pleasant Regional Park, Maricopa County Vice Chairman

Thomas Galvin was joined by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, and Arizona Game and Fish to share critical safety information with residents and visitors.

"If you're planning to visit one of our beautiful County parks or lakes over Memorial Day Weekend, please enjoy responsibly and safely," said Vice Chairman Galvin, who represents District 2. "Even the most experienced boaters, swimmers, and hikers can fall victim to fatal boating accidents on our lakes or heat-related illnesses on our trails. These incidents can be prevented if we work together to put safety first."

Nearly 1.2 million people visited Lake Pleasant Regional Park in 2023, making it the County's most visited park. Memorial Day Weekend marks peak visiting season, with cars lined up for miles along Carefree Highway, waiting for their chance to enjoy the lake. While most County park visitors are vigilant about safety, there were 9 drownings in Maricopa County last year alone. The Sheriff's Office was also called to assist with 149 search and rescue missions, 44 more than the year prior.



Maricopa County officials held a press conference on May 16, 2024 to remind the public to

stay safe on lakes and trails. This video provides a few highlights from the event.

"The lakes and rivers within Maricopa County are one of the most utilized areas in the nation for watercraft recreation. Accidents on the water can happen when you least expect them," said Sheriff Russ Skinner. "To ensure a safe outing, please avoid swimming alone, wear a personal floatation device, refrain from or limit the consumption of alcohol, stay hydrated, and never leave children unattended near water. If you're new to operating a watercraft, I strongly encourage taking an operator safety class prior to hitting the water. While Lake Patrol deputies and volunteers are trained to quickly respond to calls for help, proactively taking these steps can prevent tragic situations and better protect you and your loved ones."

"As temperatures continue to rise, the number of heat-related incidents on the trails will rise as well. Serious heat-related incidents happen every summer when people are recreating outdoors. Know your limits and develop a plan before you head out to help keep you stay safe on the trails," added R.J. Cardin, Maricopa County Parks & Recreation Director.

As you're making plans for Memorial Day Weekend, please remember these key safety tips:

On the lake:

- Avoid swimming alone when possible.
- Never leave young kids unattended near water.

- Stay attentive and avoid distractions while supervising.
- If a child goes missing, always check the water first.
- Wear a life jacket, even if you're an experienced swimmer.
- Protect yourself from the sun with sunblock, sunglasses, and a hat.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and heat exhaustion.

On the trail:

- Research trails ahead of time.
- Avoid hiking alone when possible.
- Hydrate before and throughout your hike.
- Wear appropriate footwear, clothing, eye protection, and sunscreen.
- Bring plenty of water, snacks, a cell phone, and a portable cell phone charger.
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America's Top Destinations For Stargazing In 2024

By Maria Bou Ink
Published May 20, 2024

Stargazing in Castle Valley offers exceptionally dark skies, free from light pollution, providing clear views of celestial bodies.

Big Park/Village of Oak Creek in Arizona maintains strict light pollution controls for serene and clear views of the night sky.

Flagstaff, Arizona, is the first International Dark Sky City, abiding by stringent light pollution regulations to improve star visibility.

The U.S. has one of the highest concentrations of stars inside its boundaries among all the places on Earth. Numerous locales across the U.S. provide opportunities to gaze up into the sky, both easily accessible and earned. These spots range from world-renowned observatories that give the best views into space to national parks and untamed areas that have been classified as Dark Sky Places.

Furthermore, some of the greatest spots for stargazing in the U.S. are close to some of the nation's most well-known landmarks, cities, and scenery. Here are seven of America's top destinations for stargazing in 2024 according to Home to Go.

Five factors were considered to rank these places: search volume, size and population, cloud cover, accommodation availability, and median nightly price. Scores were calculated using a formula, with a perfect score being 50.

Additionally, exclusive HomeToGo data was used to determine under-the-radar demand, affordability, and availability scores, while historical weather data and population density were considered for clear skies and solitude scores, respectively.

Discover top stargazing hotels in the US for unforgettable nights under the clearest skies.

7 Town Of Castle Valley, Utah Total score: 42.5

The fourth International Dark Sky Community in Utah is currently the Town of Castle Valley, which advertises this with pride. Utah boasts the largest number of International Dark Sky Place designations globally, with 23 recognized locations, including the well-known Arches, Natural Bridges, and Canyonlands national park sites.

Situated in the southeastern region of Utah, Castle Valley is bounded by the Colorado River, the La Sal Mountains, and the red rock mesas of the southeast. There is no business zoning in the town, making it a residential and agricultural community. Castle Valley is encircled by breathtaking high desert terrain, with magnificent starry nights above.

Since its incorporation in 1985, its citizens have cherished the town's dark skies as a fundamental aspect of its identity. Stargazing in Castle Valley offers exceptionally dark skies, free from light pollution, providing clear and stunning views of celestial bodies. Additionally, its high desert terrain enhances the visibility of stars and constellations, making it one of America's top destinations for stargazing in 2024 for both amateur and professional astronomers.

Price Score	7.1
Best Stargazing Points	Castle Valley Overlook, Fisher Towers Trailhead, Big Bend Campground
Best Time For Stargazing	Between March and May

6 Big Park/Village of Oak Creek, Arizona

Total score: 42.5

Big Park, often referred to as the Village of Oak Creek, is an unincorporated area in Arizona's far northeastern Yavapai County. With a population of just over 6,000, the Village is considered a "bedroom community" or an outlying area of nearby Sedona, which was designated an IDA International Dark Sky Community in 2014.

Stargazing in Big Park offers a serene and immersive experience due to its status as an International Dark Sky Community. This designation ensures that the area maintains strict light pollution controls, allowing for exceptionally clear views of the night sky. The

Village's countryside environment, away from the commercial lights of Sedona, provides an ideal setting for observing celestial phenomena.

Visitors and residents can enjoy a variety of stargazing events organized by the Big Park Council's Dark Sky Committee. These events often include guided tours of the night sky, telescope viewing sessions, and educational talks about astronomy and light pollution. The high desert climate and relatively high elevation contribute to the clarity of the sky, making it easier to spot constellations, planets, and even the Milky Way on a clear night.

Price Score	7.5
Best Stargazing Points	Red Rock State Park, Bell Rock Pathway / Vista, Crescent Moon Picnic Site
Best Time For Stargazing	Between December and March

5 Cottonwood, Arizona

Total score: 42.7

There are 60 International Dark Sky Communities in the U.S., and Cottonwood is among the newest. Located in a section of the valley 2 hours north of Phoenix, Cottonwood is a top U.S. destination for stargazing. It's the kind of place most travelers pass through on their way to Sedona or Jerome, an old mining town.

The finest views from Cottonwood, which features undulating hills without any true high points, are the red rock

strata that emerge at dawn and dusk and, on clear days, the San Francisco Peaks of Flagstaff. It provides a stunning natural backdrop that enhances the night sky's beauty. Stargazing in Cottonwood offers a breathtaking experience with its clear, dark skies.

Price Score	9
Best Stargazing Points	Dead Horse Ranch State Park, Mingus Mountain, Verde River Greenway State Natural Area
Best Time For Stargazing	Between January and May

If you're headed to Moab, we're here to help you find the best spots for stargazing and enjoying the natural beauty of the red rocks.

4 Dripping Springs-Wimberley, Texas

Total score: 42.9

Dark Sky Communities, like Dripping Springs, are gaining popularity among both nature lovers and stargazers. These localities are committed to reducing light pollution to maintain the night sky's natural darkness.

Dripping Springs, the first town in Texas to get the designation of International Dark Sky Community, has put a lot of effort into creating a sense of community with the natural world. The area has gained popularity as a place to see animals and bird migrations in their native habitats throughout the spring and summer, when people can also enjoy stargazing at night.

Price Score	7.6
Best Stargazing Points	Jacob's Well Natural Area, Pedernales Falls State Park, Wimberley Valley Winery
Best Time For Stargazing	Between February and October

3 Flagstaff, Arizona

Total score: 43

In 2001, Flagstaff was named the first International Dark Sky City in history. This designation indicates that the city abides by extremely stringent light pollution regulations to improve star visibility. Additionally, this endeavor safeguards the survival of nocturnal creatures.

In 1958, Flagstaff passed the first outdoor lighting code in the world, requiring all street lamps and petrol stations to have lower lights than those in neighboring communities to preserve visibility of the night sky. Clearly, stargazing is important in this top American destination for observing celestial wonders. People shouldn't be shocked to witness this amazing display of constellations and nocturnal wonders when they glance up at the night sky.

Price Score	9
Best Stargazing Points	Walnut Canyon National Monument, Buffalo Park, Lowell Observatory
Best Time For Stargazing	Between July and September

The good news is that no special equipment is needed for stargazing, but there are some easy ways to make the experience unforgettable.

2 Fountain Hills, Arizona

Total score: 43.8

Fountain Hills is a U.S. destination known for its iconic fountain, picturesque surroundings, charming small-town atmosphere, and its status as the 17th International Dark Sky Community globally. The town now proudly celebrates its recognition as one of the nation's top stargazing destinations. Fountain Hills considers itself fortunate to be the Valley of the Sun's dark sky sanctuary.

Located in the extreme northeast corner of the Phoenix metropolitan area, it boasts dark skies and the prestigious status of an International Dark Sky Community. Surrounded by mountains, parks, national forests, and tribal territories, it offers an exceptional stargazing environment. Every March, the town hosts a Dark Sky Festival, celebrating its commitment to preserving the night sky.

Price Score	8.1
Best Stargazing Points	McDowell Mountain Regional Park , Fountain Park, McDowell Sonoran Preserve
Best Time For Stargazing	May, June, September, and October

1 Borrego Springs, California

Total score: 44.2

Borrego Springs is the first International Dark Sky town in California, situated in the heart of the scenic Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Every day, people gather in their backyards for stargazing parties, aiming to preserve the night sky from light pollution. Known as Southern California's best chance to observe the night sky with others, the annual Night Fall Star Party invites guests to experience the area's natural and cultural attractions.

RVers camping at The Springs at Borrego can participate in an organized star party, or use their own telescopes to observe the night sky. Renowned astronomers like Dennis Mammana lead guests through the mysteries of the cosmos at night. Borrego Springs is one of the few Dark Sky Communities in the country to receive recognition on a global scale.

Price Score	8.9
Best Stargazing Points	Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, Borrego Springs Resort and Spa
Best Time For Stargazing	Between late October and May

Maricopa County leaders, agencies come together to reduce lake drownings

May 17, 2024, 4:35 AM
BY [BALIN OVERSTOLZ MCNAIR](#)
KTAR.com

PHOENIX – Maricopa County leaders from several departments and agencies want Arizonans to stay safe as they celebrate Memorial Day weekend.

The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office, **Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department** and Arizona Game and Fish all shared safety tips for people who want to celebrate with in the water.

Nine people drowned in Lake Pleasant last year, according to County Supervisor Thomas Galvin. “Also of concern to me was a 50% increase in search and rescue operations by the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office,” he added.

Search and rescue operations describe situations in which authorities try to rescue someone whose life isn’t in danger. They can range from check-ins at shore to searches for people who have gone missing.

In contrast, fatal situations are designated as “search and recovery” efforts.

Memorial Day weekend safety tips Arizonans should follow
Galvin shared these safety tips for people who want to celebrate on Arizona’s many bodies of water:

- Keep constant watch of children near water
- When exiting the water do a headcount to make sure no one is left behind
- Do not operate a boat while drinking alcohol
- Generally, limit alcohol use when recreating

Arizona authorities often patrol bodies of water to look out for people in need of help.

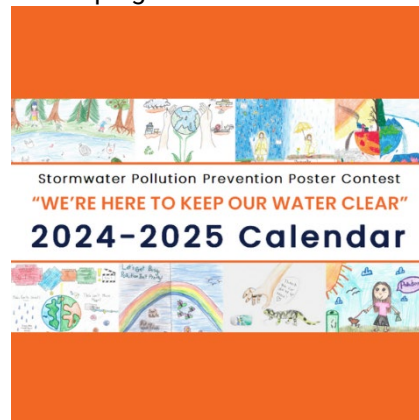
One of them is MCSO Deputy Brice Allmon, who spends much of his time on a patrol boat.

On his slow days, Allmon helps people stranded on cheap innertubes who get blown away by the wind. However, once temperatures rise and holidays come around, the lake gets busier.

For Memorial Day weekend, MCSO lake patrol will likely have two boats at Lake Pleasant and will be working from the shoreline.

Maricopa County Stormwater Poster Contest Winners

May 16, 2024
Maricopa.gov



Maricopa County Environmental Services Department Stormwater Quality Program is proud to announce the results of the 2024 Stormwater Pollution Prevention Poster Contest.

"We're Here to Keep Our Water Clear!"

Maricopa County Environmental Services Department Stormwater Quality Program is proud to announce the results of the 2024 Stormwater Pollution Prevention Poster Contest.

Stormwater runoff is one of the leading causes of water pollution in the United States. To bring awareness to this problem, elementary students in Maricopa County were encouraged to submit posters supporting the message “We’re Here to Keep Our Water Clear!” A total of 543 entries from twenty-one schools and three homeschoolers were received and judged based on artwork, originality, and message delivery.

With the support of Arizona State Parks, Maricopa County Flood Control, Maricopa County Library District, **Maricopa County Parks and Recreation**, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix Herpetological Sanctuary, Liberty Wildlife, City of Avondale, and Bearizona prizes were awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in two categories: 3rd /4th grade and 5th/6th grade.

10 Best Places to Live in Arizona in 2024, Report

By Savannah Leedy
May 14, 2024

There is much to see and explore in Arizona. From the vast rock formations and abundant wildlife of the state’s

parks and preserves to the award-winning resorts, world-class dining and urban lifestyle of metro areas, Arizona is a one-of-a-kind place to call home for outdoor and city enthusiasts alike.

To help those who are considering moving to the Grand Canyon State, Redfin has listed the 10 Best Places to Live in Arizona, ranking each of the state's metro areas with a population of 20,000 or more across several key factors, including access to healthcare, open outdoor space, navigability, housing trends, employment statistics, income and travel time to work.

Here are the 10 best places to live in Arizona, found across its northern, mountainous region and southern desert area.

1. Tucson

Tucson's gorgeous weather and nearby mountains and attractions make it the best place to live in Arizona, according to Redfin's rankings. Four mountain ranges surround the southern Arizona city, ideally located near Saguaro National Park and Catalina State Park, giving residents access to an abundance of outdoor recreational activities. Tucson is also home to the University of Arizona and a world-renowned cycling race, providing athletic enthusiasts with many games and events to enjoy. As a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, Tucson also offers remarkable cuisine that honors Indigenous, Hispanic and immigrant food heritage. Tucson is also affordable, having the second lowest median sale price of \$340,000, after Yuma.

2. Phoenix

As the hub of the Southwest and Arizona's capital, Phoenix is the second best place to live in Arizona. Residents have access to a plethora of amenities, attractions and landmarks, including nearly 200 golf courses, 186 parks and 200 miles of trails. In addition to offering top outdoor recreation options, Phoenix is home to world-famous museums like the Heard Museum and Phoenix Art Museum, along with many sports events, including the Phoenix Suns and Arizona Diamondbacks home games and Cactus League Spring Training. Phoenix's sunny weather and affordable housing continue to make it a popular destination for new residents.

3. Tempe

Tempe is Redfin's third-best place to live in Arizona. Primarily known for its parks, shopping, events and outdoor recreation, Tempe offers an array of entertainment and experiences for residents and is just a short drive from Phoenix. From the rock art and desert flora at Hayden Butte Preserve Park to the large selection of outdoor shopping and dining at Tempe Marketplace and outdoor festivals and riverside activities at Tempe Beach Park, there are many exciting opportunities for Tempe residents.

4. Mesa

Known for its unique culture, cuisines, history and arts, Mesa lands as the fourth-best place to live on Redfin's list. The city is home to the popular Mesa Arts Center, which hosts a variety of exhibitions and attractions

throughout the year, as well as the historic Mesa Grande Cultural Park, where residents can view history of the region's Hohokam people. As a suburb of Phoenix, Mesa experiences hotter summers and mild winters, allowing residents to enjoy outdoor recreational activities during most times of the year.

5. Scottsdale

At No. 5 on Redfin's Best Places to Live is Scottsdale, which makes a name for itself with luxury living, shopping and experiences. Scottsdale's cost of living is nearly double that of Phoenix yet residents enjoy many upscale amenities, including The Fifth Avenue Shopping District, spas, resorts and high-end dining. Scottsdale is also known for its golf courses, most notably TPC Scottsdale, which hosts the WM Phoenix Open.

6. Flagstaff

Located in northern Arizona at an elevation of 7,000 feet, Flagstaff is No. 6 on Redfin's Best Places to Live in Arizona. Flagstaff's mountainous location provides a cooler climate with snowy winters and mild summers, which residents can take advantage of while enjoying the vast array of outdoor activities, including skiing, hiking, climbing, cycling and more at the nearby Coconino National Forest and surrounding rivers, peaks and canyons. While ski resorts, nordic ski trails and sledding hills come alive during the winter, residents also enjoy festivals, markets, events and more in the summer.

7. Chandler

At No. 7 on Redfin’s Best Places to Live in Arizona is Chandler. Just 30 minutes southeast of downtown Phoenix, Chandler offers a great mix of urban amenities and laid-back living. The city has a strong agricultural and industrial history, which residents can explore at the Chandler Museum and the Arizona Railway Museum. Chandler is also home to two massive Intel campuses, as well as other electronic engineering firms, and provides sports fans with easy access to major games and events in Phoenix and surrounding cities. There are many master-planned communities in Chandler, including The Ocotillo, which is integrated into a luxurious golf club.

8. Gilbert

Gilbert lands as No. 8 on Redfin’s list of best places to live in Arizona. Located just east of Chandler, Gilbert is home to a lively downtown called the Heritage District, where residents can explore restaurants, bars and local shops, and features many outdoor parks, including Freestone District Park and the Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch. The cost of living in Gilbert is a little more expensive than that of Chandler and Mesa while the commute from Gilbert to Phoenix is also a little longer.

9. Yuma

Yuma lands at No. 9 on Redfin’s list of best places to live in Arizona. Located in the far southwest of Arizona, Yuma boasts a hot, sunny climate that attracts a lot of snowbird homeowners in the winter. The region’s dry and sunny climate

and easy access to the Colorado River have made Yuma ideal for year-round agriculture. While water scarcity has become a primary issue in Yuma, the state government and local institutions are continuing to innovate water conservation efforts that support crop yields. As for recreational activities, Yuma residents enjoy hiking, canoeing, cycling and exploring the historic downtown, Old Yuma Territorial Prison and nearby national wildlife refuges.

10. Peoria

Peoria completes Redfin’s list of the 10 best places to live in Arizona. Located in northwest metro Phoenix, Peoria offers a suburban lifestyle surrounded by natural beauty, including the Bradshaw Mountains and nearby **Lake Pleasant Regional Park**. Residents enjoy local attractions, such as The Peoria Sports Complex and Challenger Space Center, as well as annual events like the Peoria Arts & Cultural Festival. Peoria is also home to 36 neighborhood parks and 60 miles of trails. Redfin notes that—like all cities in this region—Peoria is prone to droughts, extreme heat and flash flooding during monsoon season.

7 Popular U.S. Cities With Warm Weather Year-Round

By Matthew Sherdan
May 14, 2024

If you’re from a cold northern or midwestern city, you understand the misery that comes with the winter months. Fighting the

cold, battling the snow, and dreading the freezing weather gets old fast. Navigating winter gets even worse when you see it’s 75 degrees and sunny in other parts of the country. Wouldn’t it be nice to live in a city with warm weather year-round? We’re breaking down some of the best U.S. cities with warm weather year-round to help plan your next move or give you some ideas for your next winter vacation. Our list comprises the seven most frequently listed locations from across eight travel experts. Did we leave out one of your favorite warm-weather locations? Feel free to share your thoughts with us in the comments section below!

The List: Best Cities for Warm Weather Year-Round

1. Santa Barbara, California

Topping the list of the best cities in the U.S. for warm weather year-round is none other than Santa Barbara, California. As U.S. News and World Report explains, Santa Barbara is located just north of the city of Los Angeles, California. The city is situated just along the central coast of California and offers beautiful views of the ocean with mountains in the backdrop. Los Padres National Forest is located just north of the city, and those living in Santa Barbara also experience more than 350 days of temperatures above freezing but below 90.

Santa Barbara is a popular place to live for its clean and beautiful beaches, charming Ynez mountains, and Mediterranean-style architecture, explains Grillo. Santa Barbara is warm but not overly hot and humid

during the summer months. The city also experiences extremely mild winters with temps reaching the 60s and 70s during the day. The mild yet warm climate and limited rainfall are popular selling points for moving to this beautiful coastal California city.

Santa Barbara isn't the hottest climate in the U.S., but it's widely regarded as one of the best climates to live in. As World Atlas notes, the winter in Santa Barbara is pleasant, but the summer is extraordinarily beautiful. Residents and visitors can enjoy outdoor activities almost every day from mid-June to September, and the winter months offer plenty of time to go outside.

2. Miami, Florida

Miami is located at the southern tip of Florida, so this city gets super hot and humid. The humidity can be too much for anyone who isn't accustomed to South Florida's climate, and the summer months here can feel oppressive, explains AccuWeather. But, don't let that stop you from enjoying everything a great city like Miami has to offer. If you're looking to replace your cold northern climate with a year-round tropical oasis, then Miami is a great place to start.

As Holidu notes, Miami is statistically the hottest city in America. With an average daily temperature of nearly 80 degrees Fahrenheit and more than 340 hours of sunshine each month, Miami is the perfect place for sun-seeking tourists and retirees looking to trade in their snow shovels for shades and shorts. Miami itself

is a vibrant city full of fun outdoor activities at all times of the year. Enjoy the beaches during the day and a vibrant and fulfilling nightlife after the sun goes down.

As U.S. News and World Report explains, Miami does receive its fair share of rain. However, the rain tends to move fast through southern Florida, so a little afternoon rain shower doesn't mean you have to cancel your plans for the day. Simply wait it out and the sun will return. You might have to get used to the humidity levels but it's worth it to escape the cold and snow of the Northeast or Midwest in December.

3. Phoenix, Arizona

Break out the sunscreen – we're off to sunny Phoenix, Arizona. As Grillo notes, although Phoenix's summers are scorching hot, the city experiences little to no rain or humidity. Yes, Phoenix is a desert city, but it's perfect for anyone looking for lots of sunshine without the humidity of a place like Miami.

There are plenty of outdoor activities to enjoy in Phoenix, according to Holidu. Known as the "Valley of the Sun," Phoenix boasts plenty of sunshine to fuel your outdoor adventures. Hike the Waterfall Trail in **White Tank Mountain Regional Park** or enjoy the Phoenix Mountains Preserve. When you're finished soaking up the sun, head to downtown Phoenix to enjoy one of the many rooftop bars or explore the rich arts and cultural district.

As AccuWeather explains, Phoenix gets sizzling hot. With

temperatures regularly soaring above 100 degrees during the day, the evenings tend not to fall below 90 at times. Whether it's day or night, you can rest assured that you'll stay warm in Phoenix, Arizona. Factor in the abundance of outdoor activities and a thriving downtown area and it makes Phoenix an easy choice for anyone looking to escape the cold weather of northern cities while maintaining the lifestyle offered in those bustling metropolises.

4. Honolulu, Hawaii

Vacationing into the fourth spot on the list of the best cities for warm weather year-round is none other than Honolulu, Hawaii. Situated on the island of O'ahu, Honolulu is the capital of Hawaii and one of the most popular tourist destinations in the state. As Extra Space Storage notes, Honolulu experiences warm, tropical weather all year long as well as a thriving job market. If you're in the hospitality industry and looking for a warm-weather location to call home, Honolulu is a great place to start.

U.S. News and World Report raves about Honolulu's temperate climate throughout the year. Residents of Honolulu don't ever have to worry about snow, ice, or freezing temperatures. The rainy season lasts from March to November, but storms move quickly over the island and never completely ruin a beautiful afternoon outdoors. Simply wait out the rain and you'll be back to snorkeling, whale watching, or turtle gazing soon enough.

BuzzFeed calls Honolulu an "actual paradise" for its

abundance of warm weather without the thick humidity or overly high temperatures that plague some of the other popular warm weather locations. Honolulu is perfect for seeing humpback whales, surfing with friends, and exploring volcanoes. The coldest month in Honolulu is January when the average temperature is a pleasant 74 degrees while the hottest month is August when the temperature is 82 degrees. Regardless of the time of year, Honolulu is warm without being too hot – it just might just be paradise.

5. Los Angeles, California

Glitzing into the fifth spot on the list of the top cities in the U.S. for warm weather year-round is none other than Tinseltown itself, Los Angeles (L.A.), California. With little to no rainfall throughout the year and average temperatures ranging from the 50s to the mid-80s, L.A. is widely regarded as one of the best places to live for the weather, explains World Atlas. Within the continental United States, L.A. just might have the absolute best weather, it's never cold and never too hot.

BuzzFeed calls Los Angeles's weather the most "pleasant" in the contiguous United States. L.A. is the perfect place to hit the beach, try your hand at acting, or work and live while enjoying the gorgeous weather. The cool season in Los Angeles lasts from the end of November to the end of March with average temperatures hovering around 65-70 degrees while the warmest month is August. August sees a daily average of 84 degrees, so you won't have to worry about being chased

inside by scorching heat or humidity, even on the warmest of days.

As Hello Landing explains, Los Angeles sees more perfect weather days throughout the year than rainy or cold days. The moderate weather in L.A. makes it more bearable than some of the other, more popular, warm-weather locations such as Phoenix or Miami. With world-class restaurants, museums, and quick access to national and state parks, L.A. is filled with fun activities to enjoy and it's an outdoor enthusiast's dream.

6. Charleston, South Carolina

Situated south of the popular Myrtle Beach but north of Hilton Head, Charleston is often overlooked by northern travelers and tourists looking to escape the cold winter months. As Extra Space Storage notes, historic Charleston offers so much more beyond having some of the best weather for a coastal city in the U.S. Charleston is considered one of the top cities in the South to call home, offering an assortment of outdoor lifestyles mixed with an incredible restaurant scene and historic architecture.

Grillio describes Charleston as a city "bursting with beautiful landscapes and entertaining attractions championed by excellent weather." Charleston is located along the Atlantic Ocean, and it gets humid in the summer with temperatures averaging 85-90 degrees. Of course, the wet air can make it feel hotter than that. The temperature doesn't fluctuate much throughout the year with

highs in the winter months reaching the 50s and 60s.

As U.S. News and World Report notes, Charleston is prone to rain. Its southern, coastal location makes it prone to tropical storms and the occasional hurricane. However, not many days in Charleston can be considered too hot or too cold. The weather here stays fairly steady, and predictable, and offers plenty of time for outdoor activities and days at the beach.

7. Las Vegas, Nevada

Rounding out the list of the best cities in the U.S. for warm weather year-round is America's nightlife and casino capital – Las Vegas, Nevada. Sin City is located deep in the desert, so it's hot, very hot.

Summertime lasts from May to September and sees temps soaring well into the 100s, explains Grillio. Winter, on the other hand, brings Vegas beautiful weather with highs ranging from the 50s to the 70s and the occasional cold spell.

As AccuWeather explains, visitors in the summer months might want to find a place with air conditioning. Luckily, the city is filled with tons of air-conditioned buildings ready to welcome you, and your wallet, inside for some light refreshments, games, and entertainment. Fun aside, it's important to take the heat seriously in Las Vegas. Temperatures have been known to soar above 115 degrees in the summer, so it's critical to take precautions before enjoying any outdoor activities during the summer months.

However, if you're looking for a location that offers lots of sunshine, you might want to consider Vegas. On average, Vegas offers more than 300 sunshine-filled days per year, adds Hello Landing. Vegas experiences hardly any humidity or rainfall due to its desert location, so you can pretty much always guarantee the weather won't cancel your outdoor plans. If you're in the hospitality or tourism industry and value sunshine, warm weather, a thriving job market, and a bustling nightlife, then Vegas is perfect

Valley firefighters to construction crews: 'Please stop starting brush fires'

May 13, 2024, 11:00 AM
BY KEVIN STONE
KTAR.com



With the 2024 wildfire season underway, Phoenix-area fire officials are worried about brush fires starting at construction sites. (Scottsdale Fire Department and Pexels Photos)

PHOENIX — With the 2024 wildfire season underway, Phoenix-area firefighters are asking construction crews to take extra care to avoid sparking brush fires in dry desert areas.

The plea comes after firefighters stopped a fast-moving brush fire that started at a construction site near **McDowell Mountain Regional Park** in northeast Scottsdale over the weekend.

"We were lucky, and we were lucky last year," Scottsdale Fire Chief Tom Shannon told KTAR News 92.3 FM's Arizona's Morning News on Monday. "Every year, we put up brush patrols and our folks are at heightened alert and awareness for these types of fires. But we really do need to help citizens and construction workers and developers to really think this through before the season gets really going."

How do construction brush fires start?

Shannon said the risk for construction brush fires is especially high in what's known as the Wildland Urban Interface, the areas where homebuilders expand into open space beyond existing development.

He said construction work such as grinding and welding starts more than 100 brush fires each year.

"Just a small spark in these very, very dry fuels can really start what can ultimately be a significant fire," he said.

Shannon said the Valley's wildfire season seems to start earlier and end later each year. "The fuels that we're seeing are so brittle," he said. "They're ladder fuels, they're contributory to the larger fires that we all see on the news. It could be a simple chain dragging, and

certainly the carelessness of a cigarette butt out the window."

What can be done to prevent brush fires?

The Scottsdale Fire Department released a checklist of safety tips on social media Saturday in a post that reads: "Dear Construction workers, 'Please stop starting brush fires in our desert.'"

The list includes the following guidelines:

- Make sure vehicles don't block fire hydrants or emergency access at construction sites.
- Clear flammable materials such as dried grasses and weeds within 20-30 feet of buildings and maintain the clear zones.
- Clear flash fuels within 10-15 feet of driveways.
- Don't allow excessive combustible materials at construction sites.
- Restrict smoking at construction sites.
- Limit welding and metal cutting to cleared areas.
- Employ spotters to watch for fires during potentially risky operations.
- Make sure construction sites have working fire extinguishers and/or connected water hose lines.

If a fire does start, firefighters should be notified immediately.

"We want to be coming as soon as there's a problem. ... Don't delay calling 911, get us on our way," Shannon said. "And then if you can, safely try to apply

water with whatever source you have. But the key thing is a get us coming.”

A new plan would preserve pathways for wildlife near the White Tank Mountains

Hayleigh Evans
Arizona Republic
May 13, 2024

Before Phoenix pushed outward toward the **White Tank Mountains**, the range was a refuge for wildlife, whether they set up home territories or migrated between mountain ranges.

As central Phoenix became densely developed, the White Tank Mountains offered residents access to rugged peaks, vast stretches of saguaro cactuses and glimpses of wildlife amid the arid terrain, just 40 minutes from downtown.

But ready access to the White Tanks makes the area prime real estate, and now conservationists fear wildlife could be displaced again.

As urban sprawl spreads into the West Valley, traditional wildlife habitat around the White Tanks is becoming more fragmented as migratory pathways are cut off by master-planned communities and roadways.

The connections to other habitats in the Belmont Mountains are at risk, and once

those pathways are gone, animals are unable to roam, an instinct migratory species need to survive.

It's happened before: from Camelback to Piestewa, from South Mountain to the North Mountains, the areas have been nearly surrounded by roads, commercial areas and residential neighborhoods, with even some homes creeping up the mountainsides.

The areas have become land islands, fragmenting wildlife habitat and cutting off migration corridors.

To address those concerns, the White Tank Mountains Conservancy is creating a wildlife linkage plan to ensure development continues without trapping wildlife, hoping to prevent complete isolation.

The Conservancy has partnered with Buckeye developers and local government to ensure construction continues without isolating wildlife or diminishing recreational opportunities.

The corridor will connect the west side of the White Tank Mountains with the Belmont Mountains, ensuring animals can continue to disperse even as the area continues to develop.

“We have an opportunity to define a development urban pattern of growth here differently than we did on the floor of the valley,” said Laurel Arndt, program manager for the White Tank Mountains Conservancy.

“Let’s make sure we have a buffer to move animals around.

We don’t want to island them off and isolate them with subdivisions,” she said. “You can still have development in the area, it just needs to be strategic.”

Why are the White Tank Mountains important to wildlife?

The White Tank Mountains are home to a variety of wildlife, including mule deer, mountain lions, bobcats, javelinas, and, most recently, some bighorn sheep that have returned to the area.

About 615 native plant species and 521 animal species rely on the regional corridor, and conservationists want to protect these species while enabling development in the area.



The mountains are part of a natural corridor, and animals, especially migratory, large mammal species, rely on them for food, habitat, and movement.

Wildlife corridors, or linkages, help keep habitats connected. They allow animals to travel for resources and mates, individuals to disperse and breed to further gene flow, and animals to move seasonally and transition to areas more resilient to climate change and other stressors.

“Corridors allow them to move into farther areas, allow

biodiversity and strengthen the species,” Arndt said. “Ecological habitat needs to be shared. We just can’t have these islands. If you go to Camelback, you’ll see very limited species there.”

Land for wildlife:Funding to help repair habitat damaged by development, drought, wildfire

What is the wildlife linkage plan?

In December 2023, the White Tank Mountains Conservancy created the concept for the wildlife corridor. The plan was approved by developers in the area – including the builders behind Teravalis, the 37,000-acre master planned community under development – and Buckeye.

Organizers planned a pathway that would allow wildlife to travel from the west side of the White Tank Mountains farther west to the Belmont Mountains.

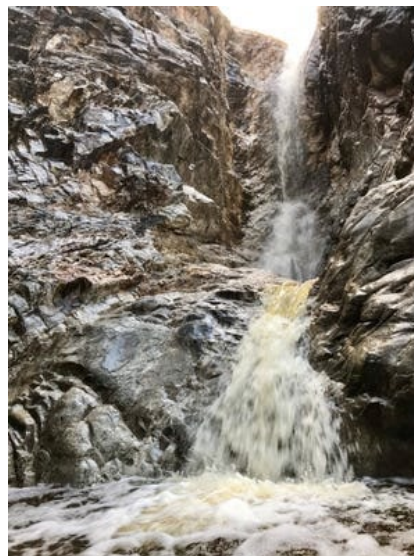
They hope to create a path connecting the 12 miles between the mountain ranges, navigating around topography and other roadblocks like the Central Arizona Project canal.

“While there is a footprint out there, and it is conceptual in nature, everybody agreed that we need to move these large mammal species from the west side of the White Tanks to the Belmonts,” Arndt said.

“How it gets through there is going to change and morph according to how development occurs. There are a lot of unknown things that could happen in the next five or 10 years,” she added.

The conservancy hopes to continue collaborating with developers and the local government to design the corridor conscientiously, allocating open space required for floodplain management as part of the corridor, for example, or giving open space credits to developers.

“Developers have to leave about 20% or so as open space anyway, so a lot of this can happen in that,” said Chris Judd, board chair of the White Tank Mountains Conservancy.



The corridor would be about 3,600 feet wide, just under seven-tenths of a mile, creating an area that is not too big or small for animals to recognize and move through. It would create habitat patches and built-in rest stops for animals to eat and rest.

“Animals are smart; they figure out where they need to go to get water and move around,” Arndt said. In fact, when we had trap cameras and collar work out there, we were able to validate

the path that they were taking was pretty much the path we had.”

Wildlife corridors:Wolves can't read maps, but wildlife managers say habitat borders are still effective
Balancing development with wildlife and recreation

While preserving wildlife corridors has an ecological benefit, the conservancy and developers acknowledge having access to the White Tanks is also an economic draw.

“Everybody out there recognizes that this is an amenity,” Arndt said. “We’re not talking about putting parks and trails in the middle of the corridor, but it’s going to be an open space amenity.”

“Developers, of all people, are coming to us saying how much they want to incorporate passive recreation and open space because they know that’s what sells,” she said. “Nature sells.”

Howard Hughes Corp., the developer of Teravalis, has dedicated at least 20% of its communities to parks, lakes, trails and nature preserves. They aim to continue these allocations in Buckeye and support the conservancy’s corridor to provide their residents access to natural landscapes.

Along with the wildlife corridors, the conservancy hopes to preserve recreational opportunities in the area. About 550,000 people visit the White Tanks and Skyline Regional Park

every year, according to the conservancy.

"Instead of telling people to go up to Sedona or the Grand Canyon, just go to the White Tanks," Arndt said. "It's right there, one of the most beautiful regional parks we have. It's an amenity everyone is interested in preserving and using as a jewel in their backyard."

Hayleigh Evans covers environmental issues for The Arizona Republic and azcentral. Send tips or questions to hayleigh.evans@arizonarepublic.com.

MCSO searching for missing diver at Lake Pleasant

By FOX 10 Staff
Published May 4, 2024 4:17pm MST

LAKE PLEASANT, Ariz. - Authorities at **Lake Pleasant** are searching for a man who did not resurface after diving into the water to retrieve his hat, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

Witnesses told deputies that the man dove into the water without a life vest.

Peoria Fire also responded to the possible drowning and were unable to locate a patient.

There is an ongoing investigation into the missing man.

Castle Hot Springs makes

international best hotels list

'Travel + Leisure' publication names resort for third consecutive year



Mark Boisclair
Castle Hot Springs has made an international best hotels list.
Posted Friday, May 3, 2024 9:40 am

"Travel + Leisure," a trusted source for travel guidance and inspiration around the globe, announced the 2024 winners of the annual T+L 500 Awards including Arizona's 1,100-acre luxury desert oasis, Castle Hot Springs.

The honor came from votes by readers in the annual World's Best Awards survey, and the 500 highest hotel scorers make up the list.

Each year, the discerning readers of Travel + Leisure vote for their favorite destinations, city hotels, resorts, and more in the World's Best Awards survey. Drawing from the 2023 results, the 2024 T+L 500 list recognizes the best hotels around the globe in a prestigious, non-ranked directory, categorized by geographic region and alphabetical order. The honorees are grouped into eight geographic regions: Africa and the Middle East; Asia; Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific; Canada; the Caribbean;

Europe; Mexico, Central America, and South America; and the United States. This roster of properties serves as a trusted resource for millions of enthusiastic travelers.

The full T+L 500 list is in Travel + Leisure's May 2024 "The Hotels" issue, currently out on newsstands, or digitally on Apple News+.

Tucked against the Bradshaw Mountains just 50 miles outside of central Phoenix, the sprawling Castle Hot Springs property is comprised of 30 cabins & bungalows and was once the wellness retreat of choice for America's titans of industry (The Cabots, Vanderbilts, Wrigleys, Roosevelts, Astors, etc.). Adjacent to **Lake Pleasant Regional Park**, the expansive nature-driven resort melds its natural surroundings with an array of adventure activities paired with restorative wellness programs designed to cater the traveler looking to experience the perfect combination of soft adventure and slow travel.

All visitors are encouraged to dive into natural tranquility in the three mineral-rich natural hot springs (85 – 106F) and participate in the Castle Hot Springs Soaking circuit, featuring a quick dip in the property's new cold-plunge pool (43-46F).

KB Home Announces the Grand Opening of Its Newest

Community in Desirable Buckeye, Arizona

FinancialTimes.com
May 04 2024 01:16 BST

Mystic Vista Enclaves offers personalized, spacious, new homes and planned family friendly amenities, priced from the \$360,000s.

BUCKEYE, Ariz.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 3, 2024-- KB Home (NYSE: KBH) today announced the grand opening of its newest community, Mystic Vista Enclaves, in desirable Buckeye, Arizona. The new homes are designed for the way people live today, with popular interior features like modern kitchens overlooking large great rooms, bedroom suites with walk-in closets, and ample storage space. Mystic Vista Enclaves' one- and two-story homes offer up to five bedrooms and three baths. Homeowners will appreciate the stunning mountain views and the planned family friendly amenities, which include open space with ramadas, picnic areas and barbeques as well as a parcourse and a children's playground.

What sets KB Home apart is the company's focus on building strong, personal relationships with every customer, so they have a real partner in the homebuying process. Every KB home is uniquely built for each customer, so no two KB homes are the same. Homebuyers have the ability to personalize their new home, from floor plans to exterior styles to where they live

in the community. Their home comes to life in the KB Home Design Studio, a one-of-a-kind experience where customers get both expert advice and the opportunity to select from a wide range of design choices that fit their style and their budget. Reflecting the company's commitment to creating an exceptional homebuying experience, KB Home is the #1 customer-ranked national homebuilder based on homebuyer satisfaction surveys from a leading third-party review site.

"We are pleased to offer Phoenix-area homebuyers spacious new homes in a prime Buckeye, Arizona location," said Kevin McAndrews, President of KB Home's Phoenix division. "Our new Mystic Vista Enclaves community offers beautiful mountain views and will host a number of planned amenities including open space with ramadas, picnic areas and barbeques as well as a children's playground and an outdoor track with several exercise stations. Our new homeowners will also appreciate the community's proximity to outdoor recreation and several area attractions, including Goodyear Park and Buckeye Aquatic Center. At KB Home, we're here to help you achieve your dream with a personalized new home built uniquely for you and your life."

Innovative design plays an essential role in every home KB builds. The company's floor plans inspire contemporary living, with a focus on roomy, light-filled spaces that have easy indoor/outdoor flow. KB homes are engineered to be

highly energy and water efficient and include features that support healthier indoor environments. They are also designed to be ENERGY STAR® certified – a standard that fewer than 10% of new homes nationwide meet – offering greater comfort, well-being and utility cost savings than new homes without certification.

Mystic Vista Traditions is situated in a commuter-friendly location that offers homebuyers an exceptional lifestyle. The new community is located at the corner of Kowalsky Lane and 245th Avenue just north of West Southern Avenue, providing easy access to Highway 85, Interstate 10, the Phoenix area's major employment centers, Phoenix Goodyear Airport and Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. The new neighborhood is convenient to shopping, dining and several area attractions, including Goodyear Ballpark, a 10,000-seat stadium that hosts Cactus League spring training games and year-round events, and Buckeye Aquatic Center, which features a lap pool, waterslide, diving boards and other water features. Mystic Vista Traditions is also just a short drive to outdoor recreation at Skyline Regional Park and **Estrella Mountain Regional Park**, both of which boast thousands of acres of hiking and biking trails as well as picnicking areas.

The Mystic Vista Enclaves sales office and model homes are open for walk-in visits and private in-person tours by appointment. Homebuyers also have the flexibility to arrange a live video tour with a sales

counselor. Pricing begins from the low \$360,000s.

For more information on KB Home, call 888-KB-HOMES or visit kbhome.com.

This majestic cactus grows Arizona's state flower. Here's how to spot the blooms

Laura Daniella Sepulveda
Arizona Republic
May 3, 2024

Cactuses are an integral part of the Arizona landscape – especially the tall saguaros that tower over swaths of the desert.

Each year in the late spring, white blossoms emerge in the desert, crowning the majestic saguaros that grow in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and Mexico.

Considered one of the most beautiful flower species of the Sonoran Desert, this striking natural jewel was named Arizona's state flower in 1931.

Here's everything you need to know about the saguaro flower, its meaning to Arizona and when and where to see it during the bloom season.

What is the Arizona state flower?

The saguaro cactus blossom is Arizona's state flower.

Why is the saguaro blossom Arizona's state flower?

Arizona has about 51 native cactus species, but the saguaro is likely the most well-known.

A desert icon, the imposing and inspiring saguaro and its flower can only be found in the diverse Sonoran Desert, which spans across Arizona, Mexico and some southeastern areas of California.

The saguaro is one of the most unique symbols of Arizona, where cactuses dominate the visual landscape just about anywhere you go. The bloom – a round flower nearly 3 inches in diameter and with lush, waxlike petals – was designated Arizona's state flower in 1931.

What time of the year do saguaros bloom?

The saguaro blossoms appear on the tips of the long arms of the cactus starting as early as late April, but peak flowering usually happens during May and June.

The red fruit that emerges from the flowers that get pollinated usually appears around July. The fruit was once used as a food source by the Tohono O'odham people and is still used today to make jelly and wine. Arizona's iconic saguaro cactus: How fast they grow, how big they get and can you cut one?

What does the saguaro blossom smell like?

The saguaro flower has a strong, sweet, melonlike scent, according to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

The blossom's smell attracts nocturnal pollinators, including

bats and moths. During the daytime, bees and birds continue to do the work.

How often do saguaros blossom?

Only once a year, and only for a few hours.

The saguaro flowers have an extremely short bloom period, opening at night and closing by evening the next day.

However, one saguaro could produce many blossoms throughout its arms and stems that bloom at different times during the late spring and early summer.

Saguaro flowering is triggered by winter rain, increased day length and warmer late spring temperatures.

Where can I see saguaro blooms?

Any time you take a hike or go on an outdoor activity in metro Phoenix, you'll likely see a saguaro nearly everywhere you go, but here are some of the most popular spots where you can catch large groups of saguaros and increase your chances of seeing the blossoms.

Make sure to take heat precautions, carry water at all times, and follow the safety guidelines suggested at each of these sites if you decide to pay them a visit.

- South Mountain Park and Preserve
- Phoenix Mountains Preserve
- Desert Botanical Garden
- McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- The Phoenician Cactus Garden
- Cave Creek Regional Park
- Four Peaks Wilderness
- White Tank Mountain Regional Park
- Lost Dutchman State Park
- Cactus Forest Drive
- Douglas Spring Trail

For bonus points, you can catch a saguaro in downtown Phoenix at the Arizona Center. The community has named the cactus "Prickles."

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**Discovery Station:
San Tan Critters**

SanTanValley.com
May, 3, 2024

Calendar: Family Friendly
Date: 05 04 2024 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Location: **San Tan Mountain Regional Park**

Description
Stop by the San Tan Nature Center to learn about the animal ambassadors on display, including snakes and lizards, during this drop-in education session presented by Ranger Nikki.

Meet Wally the Chuckwalla, Cleo the Kingsnake, Cherry the Tarantula and more. Informational handouts and coloring sheets will be available to take home. Restrooms and water are available at the Nature Center.

MEETING LOCATION: Nature Center Critter Room

No registration required. Stop by any time between 10am and 12pm!

Trail system

By Sonoran News
May 2, 2024

Hey Creekers, I need your help! I have always been a huge supporter of trails in the Town of Cave Creek. While on Council I supported the trails plan in the General Plan that was adopted by the citizens in 2021. I have also been involved in the construction and maintenance of some of the trails in town. Trails allow Creekers to walk or ride their horse or bike to the town core or visit friends across town. Over the years the town has been granted trail easements from property owners to help complete the trails plan. One such easement that is being offered to the town (at no cost) would extend the trail along Morning Star west across the creek. Eventually, when more easements are granted, this trail would connect with **Spur Cross Conservation area** and the **Cave Creek Regional Park**.

Unfortunately there is a small, but very vocal, group of folks that do not want this trail to be completed. They believe that if a public trail goes in then a public road is sure to follow. This is 100% false. A trail easement is for non-motorized use only. This trail is not on their property but they are opposed to the idea of fellow Creekers walking or riding in their neighborhood.

Please help me stop these misguided folks from destroying our trail system. Please send an email to the town council asking them to support the Cave Creek General Plan and accept the Morning Star trail easement. Do it! Do it now!! We need the council to know that the majority of Creekers support the

trails as shown in the General Plan.

Click this link to access the town email system. Your message will be sent to the entire town council.
cavecreekaz.gov/FormCenter/General-Forms-8/Contact-Town-Council-53

Thanks,
Paul Diefenderfer

PSA: Maricopa County fire ban and being Firewise

CITYSunTimes
Published on May 1, 2024



Photo courtesy of the town of Carefree

As we prepare for the hotter months ahead, it's crucial to prioritize fire safety, especially considering our proximity to vast desert land and regional parks in Maricopa County.

The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department will implement its annual fire ban starting Wednesday, May 1, within Area A, in accordance with the Air Quality Department's regulations, prohibiting outdoor recreational fires until September 30.

At parks the restrictions encompass activities such as using wood-burning chimneys, outdoor pits and any other open flames for warmth, recreational

purposes or branding of animals.

Maricopa County regional parks located within Area A's boundaries include:

- Adobe Dam Regional Park
- Buckeye Hills Regional Park
- Cave Creek Regional Park
- Estrella Mountain Regional Park
- Hassayampa River Preserve
- Lake Pleasant Regional Park
- Desert Outdoor Center
- McDowell Mountain Regional Park
- San Tan Mountain Regional Park
- Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area
- Usery Mountain Regional Park
- White Tank Mountain Regional Park

Though the fire ban traditionally ends on September 30, the ban may extend based on precipitation and vegetation conditions, monitored closely by park staff.

Given our proximity to nature preserves and parks, adherence to the fire ban and a Firewise mindset are crucial for home and community safety.

Research indicates that embers and small flames are the primary ignition sources for homes during wildfires. These embers, carried by the wind for miles, can spark spot fires and ignite homes, debris and other objects.

To safeguard our homes against ember attacks and minimize the risk of flames reaching our properties, homeowners can take proactive measures including:

- Creating defensible space
- Using fire-resistant materials
- Maintaining landscaping

Collectively adopting Firewise practices enhances community resilience and mitigates wildfire impact. Let's prioritize fire safety in our parks and safeguard our homes and neighborhoods.

Learn more about the Maricopa County Fire Ban at maricopacountyparks.net/projects/fire-ban-vs-no-burn-day.

To learn more about Firewise practices, visit nfpa.org/Education-and-Research/Wildfire/Firewise-USA#firewise-usa-sites.

Usery Seed Harvest

www.signalsaz.com
May 1, 2024

"Seed Collection Time!! The Desert Defender Team spent months removing Invasive species. It is time to collect native seeds, which will be used to make seed bombs this summer and then deployed in the parks, planted in areas where invasive species were treated earlier this year or in wildfire-impacted areas. We will be improving the park's native biodiversity and preventing more invasive species from invading.

Participants will learn to identify native plant species in seed form, proper and sustainable collection methods, and how to collect native seeds and bag and label them properly; the seed will then be saved in appropriate climate conditions until we host seed bomb workshops. Participants will physically cut, clip, or break off the seed from the entire plant (taking only a percentage from each plant/population) to ensure the plants are still dropping seeds in their current location.

Registration Required.

Meet at the Nature Center parking lot. FREE Desert Defender T-Shirts when you participate in four or more events (while supplies last) thanks to Arizona Master Naturalists and Central AZ Conservation Alliance.

Please bring gloves, water, a snack, and dress in long sleeves, pants, and closed-toed shoes. We will collect native seeds in the desert environment with many spiky plants using gloves and/or clippers to collect and bag the seeds by individual species.

To register, please click on the link <https://signup.com/go/aLSolSy>

JOIN US

NATIVE SEED HARVEST

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

MAY DATES:

- CAVE CREEK REGIONAL PARK**
MAY 7, 2024*
7:30 am - 10:30 am - ALL EVENTS
<https://www.maricopa.gov/2024/05/07/CAVE-CREEK-REGIONAL-PARK>
- ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK**
MAY 11, 18 & 25, 2024*
7:30 am - 10:30 am
<https://www.maricopa.gov/2024/05/11/ESTRELLA-MOUNTAIN-REGIONAL-PARK>
- SPUR CROSS RANCH CONSERVATION AREA**
MAY 11, 18 & 25, 2024*
7:30 am - 10:30 am
<https://www.maricopa.gov/2024/05/11/SPUR-CROSS-RANCH-CONSERVATION-AREA>
- USERY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK**
MAY 11, 18 & 25, 2024*
7:30 am - 10:30 am
<https://www.maricopa.gov/2024/05/11/USERY-MOUNTAIN-REGIONAL-PARK>
- WHITE TANK MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK**
MAY 7, 11, 17, 18 & 25, 2024*
7:30 am - 10:30 am
<https://www.maricopa.gov/2024/05/07/WHITE-TANK-MOUNTAIN-REGIONAL-PARK>

Seed Collection: The Desert Defender team has spent the last few months removing invasive species. We are now shifting gears and will collect native seeds, which will later be planted in invasive removal and wildlife-impacted areas.

Participants will learn to identify native plant species in seed form and how to collect native seeds properly and sustainably, including bagging and labeling. The seeds will be saved in appropriate climate conditions until we host seed bomb workshops this summer. Registration is required. Additional details are provided when registering.

FREE Desert Defender tee-shirts when you participate in four or more Desert Defender events (while supplies last). Thanks to Arizona Master Naturalists and Central AZ Conservation Alliance.

Meet in the nature center parking lot. Meet at the main parking lot. Meet at the Seed Garden.

MARICOPA COUNTY
PARKS & RECREATION
www.maricopa.gov/parks

Fire Ban in Phoenix Area Desert Parks and Preserves Begin May 1

By Staff
on May 1, 2024

The Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department will put into effect its annual ban of open fires in the City’s desert parks and mountain preserves starting Wednesday, May 1, 2024.



The annual ban of open fires in Phoenix desert parks and mountain preserves goes into effect May 1. (City of Phoenix Photo)

The **Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department’s** annual fire ban goes into effect the same day .

In consultation with the Phoenix Fire Department, smoking and charcoal fires are included in the ban due to the extreme fire danger that the combination of low humidity, increased temperatures, excessive dry vegetation, and frequent high winds create each spring.

The ban applies to Camelback Mountain, Deem Hills Recreation Area, Lookout Mountain, Papago Park, Phoenix Mountains Park and Recreation Area, Phoenix Mountains Preserve, Phoenix Sonoran

Preserve, North Mountain Park, Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area, and South Mountain Park/Preserve.

The ban does not apply to the City’s flatland parks.

For those using the City’s desert parks and preserve land, the fire ban stipulates the following:

- Open wood and charcoal fires are prohibited
- Propane or gas grills may be used, but only in established picnic areas
- The following activities continue to be prohibited year-round:
 - Smoking outside enclosed vehicles
 - Fireworks

Motorists traveling through or near Phoenix’s desert parks and mountain preserves should use extreme care with smoking materials and dispose of those only in their vehicle’s ash tray.

To protect their homes, residents whose property borders the City’s preserve land may remove dry shrubs, brush and grasses, and trim dead branches from trees within the 10-foot strip of land that borders their property. By creating this 10-foot “buffer zone” residents can help to protect their homes from potential brush fires in the adjacent preserve land.

Preserve neighbors also should check irrigation lines and pool back-flush hoses to ensure that water is not seeping into the preserve. Outside water sources encourage unnaturally dense

vegetation growth, which increases fire risk.

Cave Creek Mayor Bob Morris announces run for second term

By [Sonoran News](#)
May 1, 2024

"I want to finish the work I began 11 years ago to protect our Town, our residents, and businesses with capable and effective leadership in government. My work on behalf of our community has been a major factor in repairing our water infrastructure, increasing water supplies, prohibiting subsidies, enhancing open space at Spur Cross, correcting longstanding traffic and safety problems and, most importantly, saving lives with world class emergency and fire service," explained Mayor Morris.

"My second term will finish protecting water service with a Phoenix interconnection. The longstanding and severe risk of having a single, 12-mile water pipeline from Central Arizona Project (CAP) in Phoenix has taken 10 years of complex planning and negotiations to solve. It has endured challenges due to Covid, inflation, and delays but its cost is built into water rates and has been reduced by securing a \$2,000,000 federal infrastructure grant."

"Under my leadership, will see the completion of our fire station renovation and the construction of a second fire station shared with our partner,

Daisy Mountain, on the west side of town off Carefree Highway. We will see a dramatic increase in road repairs, resurfacing, new paving, pedestrian safety improvements in the Town Core, vastly increased speeding enforcement, and safer, lighted crosswalks," Morris emphasized.

"After recently protecting **Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area** with the acquisition of more than 30 acres of prime hillside, I look forward to saving thousands more scenic hills, native habitat, and washes from commercial development on the west side," said Morris.

"Due in large part to my business and professional engineering background, I have the proven ability to solve longstanding problems, ensure fiscal responsibility, well represent Cave Creek in Arizona government, and serve with dignity and integrity.



I ask for your continued support as Cave Creek voters to return me as Mayor of the

best town in Arizona!" concluded Mayor Morris.

PRESS RELEASES:

Maricopa County Parks Seek

Feedback on Park Master Plan Updates



The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department is working on a three-year park master plan project to complete comprehensive improvements and preservation efforts for nine parks across Maricopa County. The Park Master Plans will provide a road map for the future of the park's recreational facilities, open spaces, and opportunities over the next 10-15 years.

The goal is to develop master plans for three separate parks each year, and it's crucial to have community members' input to ensure that all voices are heard. Your input is invaluable as we strategically examine the community's vision, existing parks, services, facilities, and resources to assess future parks, recreation, and open space needs.

The Park Master Plans will provide a foundation for:

- Identifying capital improvement goals to evaluate fiscal requirements and funding needs

- Guiding critical decisions about parks, recreation facilities, open space, infrastructure, programs, and services
- Developing recommendations and an implementation strategy

The Park's Master Plans to be updated are as follows:

2024

- Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area
- Cave Creek Regional Park
- McDowell Mountain Regional Park

2025

- Estrella Mountain Regional Park
- Lake Pleasant Regional Park
- Buckeye Hills Regional Park

2026

- White Tank Mountain Regional Park
- Utery Mountain Regional Park
- San Tan Mountain Regional Park

To learn more about the project, park users can visit the master plan website, <https://engageberrydunn.mysocialpinpoint.com/maricopa-county-parks-and-recreation-parks-master-plan> to:

- complete an online survey,
- provide feedback on an interactive park map,
- comment on budget allocations for potential improvement projects and
- stay informed on upcoming meetings and milestones.

Feedback may also be provided electronically by emailing

maricopacountyparks@maricopa.gov and adding "Park Master Plan" to the subject line.

To learn more about Maricopa County's regional park system, visit www.maricopa.gov/parks.

ANNUAL FIRE BAN TO BE IMPLEMENTED ON MAY 1, 2024

The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department will initiate its annual fire ban on



Wednesday, May 1, 2024. The City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department's annual fire ban will go into effect the same day.

The annual fire ban dates align with the Air Quality Department's burn activity regulations. Under these regulations, outdoor recreational fires are prohibited within [Area A's boundaries](#) between May 1 and September 30. This area encompasses all of Maricopa County's regional parks.

"While this year's wildflower season was rather low-key, our team has noticed a significant amount of new vegetation growth within the parks from the spring showers. As the temperatures rise, this vegetation will dry out and quickly become an ideal source for wildfire ignition.

Implementing a fire ban limits the possibility of starting a brush fire, which could cause severe damage to park resources, threaten park visitor safety, and pose a danger to nearby homes," added R.J. Cardin, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department director.

It is also important to note that during this time of year, the National Weather Service often issues red flag warnings across central Arizona to alert land management agencies that conditions are ideal for wildfire ignition. Should this occur before the fire ban, park supervisors are authorized to issue temporary fire bans to ensure public safety and protect the park's resources.

When temporary fire bans are issued, the information is posted on the website, and visitors are notified upon entry to the park. The parks also stop selling firewood during this time.

The fire ban does not allow campfires, fire pits, and charcoal grills; however, using gas/propane grills in designated areas such as semi-developed and developed camping sites is still acceptable. Campfires along the shoreline at Lake Pleasant Regional Park are prohibited. Those who violate the fire ban may be fined under [Rule 314, Section 312](#).

Smoking in the parks is also discouraged due to wildfire danger. Please be responsible and ensure that all cigarettes are properly extinguished and placed in trash receptacles.

While September 30 is the traditional fire ban lift date, an extension is possible. Park staff will monitor precipitation levels and vegetation conditions throughout the summer to determine if an extension is necessary.

Contact the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department at (602) 506-2930, or visit www.maricopa.gov/parks for additional information.