



## Peru

Fly to Lima via Mexico City with two daily flights.



aeromexico.com

# TIME TO ROUND UP THE KIDS FOR AN ARIZONA ROAD TRIP

From outdoor activities to child-centric museums, state boasts plenty of star attractions

MHAIRRI WOODHALL

As our procession of horses slowly meanders through the desert shrub, I can hear my daughter's excited chattering escalate. Within minutes of leaving the stable she has peppered the guide ponying her mare with a flurry of questions about ranching, animal husbandry and desert wildlife.

Thankfully, our amiable lead embodies Tucson's laidback southwestern charm and indulges her perpetual musings. An hour later, he's certainly earned my deep appreciation and a generous tip.

Truth be told, I was hesitant about bringing a six-year-old on a group trail ride. My doubts intensified when the early-January temperature plummeted to a wet and breezy 3 C. However, our horseback adventure at Hacienda del Sol Guest Ranch became a highlight in our weeklong road trip between Phoenix and Tucson.

From family friendly outdoor activities to imaginative kid-centric museums, here are the star attractions we discovered in southern Arizona.

For kids ages four and up, Tucson's quirky Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures is a must. Before exploring the three whimsical galleries, grab a Find Fairy Caitlin scavenger hunt from the lobby to keep the little ones engaged.

Our daughter loved searching for the mischievous winged pixie hidden amid the treasures. We spent almost two hours examining the more than 400 miniature houses, room boxes, the magical snow villages, fairy castles and woodland creatures found in the Enchanted Realm and playing with the 1930s miniature doll house.

The Arizona Sonora Desert Museum is another entertaining play-based learning experience near Tucson; and driving through Saguaro National Park to get there is half the fun. You'll want to bring your camera and stop at one of the viewpoints to capture the countless century-old cacti rising from the rocky, arid landscape. Wear your walking shoes to explore the museum's sprawling grounds, as most of the exhibits are outdoors.

We loved inspecting the creepy creatures housed in the Reptile, Invertebrates and Amphibian Hall



Hiking the waterfall trail at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson is just one of many adventures to be had in Arizona. PHOTOS: CURT WOODHALL

and learning about the Sonoran saurus in Ancient Arizona. However, it was the Packrat Playhouse that stole our daughter's imagination, with its giant scorpion, rattlesnake and tarantula play structures, oversized climbing centre and larger than life pack rat nest.

For a family friendly hike, head to Sabino Canyon. The popular recreation area offers a round trip hop on, hop off tram service. We took the tram to the top of the trail and enjoyed a relaxed hike back down, with plenty of breaks at the various picnic and rest stops.

Another easy exploration is the waterfall hike at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson. The gentle trail includes a couple of unique lookouts and cool signage about desert birds, wildlife, flora and fauna. Our daughter also loved the outdoor pool, which was warm enough to swim in, even though the surrounding hills were dusted with snow. The Coyote Kids Club and incredible southwest cuisine at Flying V elevate the resort to star status for families.

The greater Phoenix-Mesa area offers an even wider assortment of family fun. To explore the sights, we used the newly reno-



The writer's daughter enjoyed a horse ride at Hacienda Del Sol in Tucson.

ated Phoenician Scottsdale as our base. Travel in the off-season (just before or after Christmas) for reduced room rates. The property's six pools, 50-metre water slide and toddler splash pad promise to impress.

The Funicions Club offers some of the best kids programming we've experienced and allowed us to enjoy an adult-only dinner

of whole roasted sea bass and craft cocktails at Mowry and Cotton, the resort's signature restaurant. The only downside to staying at The Phoenician was trying to convince our daughter to explore off-resort sights, as the pool and kids club activities were simply too enticing.

In downtown Phoenix, the Arizona Science Center and neigh-

bouring Children's Museum are a draw for every age group. In the former, we spent an hour building a miniature city in the Many Hands Make A Home gallery, and another hour getting soaked in the outdoor Water Spheres and Gears atrium.

At the Children's Museum, our daughter had a blast stocking shelves and checking out customers at the mini market and performing her one-person musical on stage.

If your kids are mad about building with bricks, they'll be thrilled with the ingenious interactive exhibits and rides at Legoland Discovery Center in Tempe; about a 30-minute drive from The Phoenician. My daughter enjoyed saving the princess from trolls in Kingdom Quest and examining state landmarks recreated from more than one-million Lego pieces in Miniland, Arizona.

To encourage your children's imagination, spend a few hours at the i.d.e.a. Museum in Mesa. In addition to the interactive Hub gallery showcasing creative art projects, i.d.e.a. welcomes a variety of travelling exhibitions throughout the year.

**sunwing**

Elect to Vacation Better

**Save \$1200** up to per couple on top-rated resorts

Final Week! Book by Oct 18

**Vacation Better Tip #598**

Can't agree on politics? Agree on an excursion instead!

**Riviera Maya, Mexico**  
**Platinum Yucatan Princess All Suites Resort & Spa** ★★★★★ Top-rated Adult resort  
 Adults Only 18+

Junior Suite Deluxe  
 Nov 21, 27, 28, Dec 4, 5, 11, 12, 2019 for 7 nights  
 7 Nts - All Inclusive **\$1395** taxes included

---

**Jamaica**  
**Royalton White Sands Montego Bay** ★★★★★ sunwing favourite

Luxury Room  
 Nov 4, 25, Dec 9, 2019 for 7 nights  
 7 Nts - All Inclusive **\$1545** taxes included

---

**Punta Cana, D.R.**  
**Royalton Punta Cana Resort & Casino** ★★★★★ Top-rated Luxury resort

Luxury Room  
 Jan 13, 20, 2020 for 7 nights  
 7 Nts - All Inclusive **\$1895** taxes included

Vancouver departures. "Elect to Vacation Better" is a limited time offer applicable to new bookings while supplies last for select packages and departure dates. All prices above are per person based on double occupancy for 7 nights on all inclusive vacations (unless otherwise specified) and include taxes and transportation fees. Savings of \$1200 per couple were calculated comparing current price to originally published rate applicable to Platinum Yucatan Princess All Suites Resort & Spa in Riviera Maya, Mexico for departures Nov 21, 27, 28, Dec 4, 5, 11, 12, 2019 for 7 nights. All savings are reflected in advertised prices and were available at the time of printing. Seats are subject to availability and are capacity controlled. Local taxes payable at the destination are extra (D.R. \$20US). Flights are with Sunwing Airlines, Travel Service or TUI Airways. Offer is subject to change or can be withdrawn at any time without prior notice. For details on Best Price Guarantee and full booking terms and conditions visit Sunwing.ca.15957 84th Avenue, Unit #305, Surrey BC, V4N 0W7. British Columbia License #39606 | #4276176. 10122019

**Selloff vacations**  
 Book with the experts at  
**604 708 5028**