

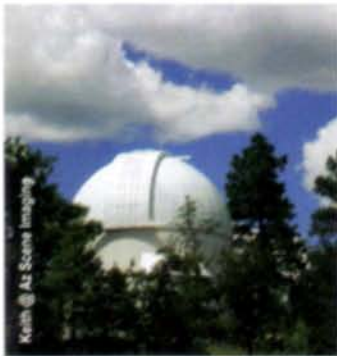
Nestled high above the desert valleys of Arizona lays a small, yet thriving community surrounded by ponderosa pine forests and glorious mountain ranges. Flagstaff is a medium sized town of more than 60,000 people and Arizona's third largest city. Unlike its two bigger siblings, this city offers many small town charms and big city amenities that the others can't compete with. On the east side of town is the only mall. However, there are big name stores inside the mall such as J.C. Penny, Sears, Dillard's and Ruby Tuesday's and local shops such as From the Heart. It contains one of Flagstaff's only two movie theaters

Quality of Life - Northern Arizona Style

as well. Restaurants and retail stores surround the remaining area offering shoppers a respectable selection of goods to choose from.

Traveling towards the west, along the historic Route 66 highway, mountain ranges form a protective barrier that stretches far into the distance. Train tracks running parallel to the road gives drivers a chance to see many of the locomotives and trailing cargo that come through town daily. In fact, it's not uncommon to hear the trains before you see them, especially near the combined Amtrak depot and Visitor's Center. Here travelers can head to Flagstaff or other destinations throughout the States.

On the west side of town, downtown Flagstaff starts to take shape with a different appearance and personality. Many of the buildings in the area at first glance look new yet many of the exteriors hide historical foundations from view. It's only after closer observation that the stories of some of the community's first buildings come to the surface.



Throughout downtown, many establishments don plaques on their walls outlining their history and people walking through the area can see signs of diverse cultures present throughout. Trading posts selling Native American rugs and jewelry are next to Irish pubs beaming with college crowds. New Age shops remind passer-bys of holistic healing and spiritual awakenings. Athletic apparel and sports gear wrap around other corners to meet coffee shops, music stores and southwestern art displays. It is a great place for people to sit in cafes enjoying the weather and good conversation.

NAU is further south, on the other side of the tracks, and trails to the southern edge of town. The white



Walkup Skydome, shaped like an upside down bowl and visible from a distance, hosts university football games, traveling conventions and concerts. Residents of the community often attend these ongoing events. Moreover, various speakers are brought to the campus' Cline Library, which is the biggest of the three libraries in town.

Another point of interest for residents and travelers alike is Lowell Observatory, which overlooks Flagstaff atop the western

mountain range. The planet Pluto was discovered there. Unfortunately, the original telescope is no longer in use, but guests still have the opportunity to observe it, look through similar telescopes on a nightly basis, and learn about astronomy in the process. Another historical event took place just outside of the city. It is known as Meteor Crater, and is the location of a giant meteor impact measuring 2.4 miles in diameter. The trip is a short one by vehicle, but worthwhile nonetheless. When not driving or utilizing public transportation for day to day activities many people opt to slow down the pace and walk or ride their bikes on the developing trails in town.

The Flagstaff Urban Trail System, as its known, meanders through downtown and NAU, ending and starting in different places. People often walk their dogs while taking an afternoon stroll through the cool, pine scented forests that reach far into the sky while others ride mountain bikes. The paths follow the outline of the land, so there are areas that have steep inclines, but overall the level of difficulty is suited for people of all ages. Some of the trails don't connect to each other yet, though the city plans on connecting all of the missing links within the next few years with the trails twisting, turning



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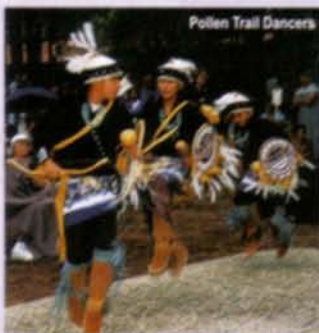
and looping around downtown Flagstaff, through Northern Arizona University, and along one of many streams in the area.

Lakes are also a common sight in and around the area. Lake Mary is located just outside of town. The lake is actually divided into sections, Lower Lake Mary, and Upper Lake Mary, with a dam separating the two parts.

Along the waters edge, picnic areas and grilling stations complement shaded picnic areas, giving water lovers a refreshing retreat from busy lifestyles. During the warmer months, boats can be seen towing inner tubes and skiers as they glide across the glass-like surface of the deep blue water. Campgrounds are also plentiful further from shore.

Parks are abundant around the city. Warm, sunny days bring people out by the dozens to the thick plots of grass, benches, swings and plant life. Whether going to Wheeler Park, located in downtown, or Thorpe Park located below Lowell Observatory, there is a wide variety of scenic get-a-ways within the city. Buffalo Park, which used to be a zoo, was later turned into a city park. The area has trails with

mile markers for bike riders, hikers, and runners. It's located just north of town. The entire area, with its acres of open land and bordering trees, makes for a perfect day outing. The park also offers visitors magnificent views of sunsets, which slowly disappear behind the western mountains.



At nightfall, Flagstaff springs to life with luminous lights that make the downtown area glow. Crowds of people mingle between stops at bars, restaurants, and cafes. Music can be heard from street corners as bands play throughout the evening. Of the many venues showcasing music, the Orpheum Theater, besides the walkup skydome, is the biggest. It is located right in the middle of downtown, close to Heritage Square, which has local artists playing during the day.

Overall, the people of Flagstaff enjoy the beautiful surroundings in which they live, while taking time to enjoy the small town life. Whether hiking through the many forests, riding bikes through the community, volunteering with one of the many non-profit organizations, or visiting with friends at local establishments; Flagstaff is an experience all its own. Then again, seeing is believing.

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