





Current Issue  
**July/August 2009**  
[Table of Contents »](#)



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HOME
PLACES
PHOTOGRAPHY
BLOG
COLUMNS
NATIONAL PARKS
SPECIALS
DRIVES
QUIZ
GEOTOURISM
INDEX
SUBSCRIBE

Long Weekends

- Intro
- Northeast: Colonial Connecticut
- More Northeast Weekends
- Southeast: Virginia
- Town+Country
- More Southeast Weekends
- Midwest: Good-time Kansas City
- More Midwest Weekends
- Southwest: Flagstaff's Many Faces
- More Southwest Weekends
- West: Coastal Bellingham Beckons
- More West Weekends

## Flagstaff's Many Faces

Published: July 2009



Northeast of Flagstaff, Wupatki National Monument attracts many visitors each year.

By Anne Z. Cooke  
Photo by George H. H. Huey

### A new ethic infuses Southwest escapes. Prime example: Flagstaff, Arizona.

Flagstaff, shaded by pine forests and embraced by rolling ranch land at the foot of the mighty San Francisco Peaks, has long been the hub of northern Arizona's fabled natural and historical attractions.

But in recent years, a flourishing environmental ethic has infused the local cowboy and Native American cultures, making this southwestern pioneer town of 60,000 more compelling than ever.

In the historic downtown, cowboy garb and Pueblo Indian artwork share restored 1900s brick storefronts with high-end adventure gear and vegetarian cafés. Try on boots at Gene's Western Wear, dating to 1948, or shop for a kachina doll at the Winter Sun Trading Company.

At lunchtime, choose sandwiches and salads at the Mountain Oasis, or Middle Eastern, Asian, or vegetarian fare. Later, dine by candlelight at top-rated Brix, whose menu pleases cowboys and conservationists alike. Try such seasonal offerings as bison tenderloin with organic potatoes and locally grown asparagus, or, for a meatless treat, the roasted beet ravioli stuffed with onion and blue cheese.

Three miles north of downtown is the Museum of Northern Arizona. Its

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small but select collection of pre-European and contemporary Native American art echoes nature's forms: gold and orange sunsets, lightning bolts, and red-rock canyons.

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[Table of Contents >>](#)

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HOME
PLACES
PHOTOGRAPHY
BLOG
COLUMNS
NATIONAL PARKS
SPECIALS
DRIVES
QUIZ
GEOTOURISM
INDEX
SUBSCRIBE

- Long Weekends
- Intro
  - Northeast: Colonial Connecticut
  - More Northeast Weekends
  - Southeast: Virginia
  - Town+Country
  - More Southeast Weekends
  - Midwest: Good-time Kansas City
  - More Midwest Weekends
  - Southwest: Flagstaff's Many Faces
  - More Southwest Weekends
  - West: Coastal Bellingham Beckons
  - More West Weekends

## Flagstaff's Many Faces ✉

PAGE [ 2 ] OF 2 « PREV |

To the northeast, at the Wupatki National Monument, the ancestors of today's Hopi, Zuni, and other Pueblo peoples lived what we might call a green lifestyle some 850 years ago.

The centerpiece of the park is a hundred-room pueblo, where terraced compartments face south and east to catch the winter sun; sandstone walls moderate temperature extremes; flat roofs funneled rain into clay storage jars; and corn, beans, and squash were planted together to conserve water.

"Some visitors see only a harsh struggle to survive," said Ranger Mike Koltunak. "But I think the inhabitants lived pretty well. These people knew how to manage nature's gifts."

"Wupatki reminds me how little we really need to be happy," says Gordon Watkins, owner of the Inn at 410, an 1894 bungalow at 410 N. Leroux back in Flagstaff. Guests who stay in the ten themed rooms at this sumptuous B&B certainly don't do without. Breakfasts on the shady patio include hot frittatas, fresh breads, seasonal fruits, and yogurt.

To the east of town, see how another ancient community thrived in the high desert at Walnut Canyon National Monument. Here, the Sinagua people built homes in the cliffs. The scenic but strenuous Island Trail passes by 25 different rooms while descending 185 feet in elevation. Then you climb back out.

Finally, consider a 30-mile drive due west from Flagstaff to Williams, a gateway community to Grand Canyon National Park. Here you can catch a vintage train on the Grand Canyon Railway, which offers one-to three-night trips to the South Rim and back, some including additional bus tours along the rim.

"The train is an environmentally friendly and historically appealing way to visit one of the nation's great national parks," says Jonathan Tourtellot, director of the National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations.

•**LOGISTICS:** Gene's Western Wear, [www.geneswesternwear.com](http://www.geneswesternwear.com). Winter Sun Trading Company, [www.wintersun.com](http://www.wintersun.com). Museum of Northern Arizona

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Sun Trading Company, [www.wintersun.com](http://www.wintersun.com). Museum of Northern Arizona, [www.musnaz.org](http://www.musnaz.org). Mountain Oasis, 928-214-9270. Brix Restaurant, [www.brixflagstaff.com](http://www.brixflagstaff.com). Wupatki National Monument, [www.nps.gov/archive/wupa/home.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/wupa/home.htm). Walnut Canyon National Monument, [www.nps.gov/waca](http://www.nps.gov/waca). Flagstaff Visitors Center, [www.flagstaffarizona.org](http://www.flagstaffarizona.org). The Inn at 410, [www.inn410.com](http://www.inn410.com). Grand Canyon Railway, [www.thetrain.com](http://www.thetrain.com).

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PAGE [ 2 ] OF 2

[« PREV](#) |

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