INTRODUCTION

to Tucson's History and Culture

Welcome to Tucson, one of the longest continually inhabited places in the United States! Here in Tucson and the Santa Cruz River Valley you can experience a nationally distinctive combination of Native American, Spanish Colonial, Mexican, and American Territorial heritage and traditions intersecting with the natural landscape.

Beautiful Native American baskets are made from wild plant fibers and natural dyes.

Native American Roots

The cultural achievements of prehistoric cultures in the Tucson region include one of the earliest adoptions of agriculture north of Mexico, and the first canals, pottery, and villages in the Southwest. This valley has been part of the territory of the Tohono O'odham tribe since prehistoric times, and some members of the Yaqui tribe of western Mexico arrived in the 1700s, and larger Yaqui groups migrated here in several waves beginning in the early 19th century. Today, the cultural traditions of the Tohono O'odham and the Pascua Yaqui (Yoemem) are celebrated at several annual festivals and craft fairs, and the artifacts of their predecessors are displayed and interpreted in numerous museums and archaeological parks throughout Tucson.

Spanish and Mexican Frontier Outpost

Spanish colonists founded cattle ranches in the upper Santa Cruz Valley in the 1680s, and during the 1690s Jesuit missionaries established a chain of missions in native villages in the upper and middle valley.

Mission San Xavier del bac is a National Historic Landmark and is the oldest intact European structure in Arizona.

The northernmost Spanish settlements along the Santa Cruz River were the dual communities of the San Agustín Mission and the Presidio in Tucson. The mission was on the west side of the river, while the presidio was across the river, in what is now downtown Tucson. Remnants of both the mission and the presidio are preserved as archaeological sites. While none of the original Tucson Presidio is visible, archaeological excavations have revealed that its foundations and other archaeological traces are present beneath streets, parking lots, sidewalks, lawns, and even buildings. These have provided the basis for a historically accurate reconstruction of the northwest corner of the presidio at the corner of Washington Street and Church Avenue.

When independence from Spain was achieved in 1821, Tucson became part of the new country of Mexico. For a time in the 1840s, Tucson was one of the only occupied Mexican settlements in what is now southern Arizona. The discovery of gold in California resulted in increased travel through southern Arizona in 1849 and 1850. Many of the forty-niners brought trade goods to exchange for food, and Tucson residents were eager to barter.

Southern Arizona south of the Gila River, including Tucson, became part of the United States with the completion of the Gadsden Purchase in 1854; however, it was not until 1856 that American forces formally took control. Many Mexican residents of Tucson remained behind and became American citizens. Thousands of modern-day Arizonans are descendents of people who lived in the region when it was the frontier of New Spain, and then Mexico.

Territorial Capital

Federal troops departed at the onset of the Civil War, and Apache raiding intensified. The town had many Confederate sympathizers and was occupied by Confederate soldiers in 1862, but a column of federal troops from California quickly reestablished federal control. Arizona received territorial status in 1863, and Tucson served as the territorial capital from 1867 to 1877. Fort Lowell was established in 1873 and served as the base of operations during the long army campaign to subjugate the Apaches. Tucson grew slowly, and acquired many of the institutions of a settled community.

The Mormon Battalion Monument in downtown Tucson's El Presidio Park.

The arrival of the railroad in 1880 connected Tucson to Victorian America and the Industrial Age, and brought Chinese railroad workers and a rush of newcomers from the eastern U.S. and California. The Americanization of Tucson transformed its architecture, character, and ethnic balance. The University of Arizona opened in 1891, its first buildings constructed of bricks from the first local brick factory.

Modern Metropolis

Arizona finally received statehood status in 1912, and Tucson became a real city during the 20th century. In the first decades, the transition between the Old West and the Modern Age was symbolized by the juxtaposition of horse-drawn carriages, electric streetcars, and gasoline-powered automobiles on the same streets. Civic leaders marketed Tucson's climate, clean air, and sunshine to health seekers and tourists. Sanatoria and tent cities of tuberculosis sufferers sprang up on the outskirts, and winter visitors found accommodations at motor courts, guest ranches, and fashionable hotels. During the 1920s, the popularity of regional revival styles of architecture—Spanish Colonial, Mission, Pueblo—connected Tucson to a romanticized image of the Southwest.

The Great Depression hit locals hard, while wealthy easterners continued to visit. Federal programs generated jobs and built a number of the City's current landmarks. Tucson was an important pilot training center during World War II. A post-war population boom was fostered by air conditioning and new urban infrastructure. During the 1960s the heart of Tucson's oldest neighborhood and commercial district was leveled in the name of Urban Renewal, but this loss galvanized the beginning of local historic preservation efforts.

The Tucson Rodeo Parade has "celebrated the cowboy" every February since 1925.

Tucson Today

The City of Tucson is the second largest city in Arizona, with a population of approximately 520,100. The greater metropolitan Tucson region, which includes the Town's of Oro Valley, Marana and Sahuarita, has a population of nearly one million.

Some of the interesting titles held by Tucson include:

- Best Places To Live The Simple Life, by AARP.
- One of the Best Places to Raise Kids, by Business Week magazine.
- Best Place to Bring Children of All Ages, AOL Travel.
- Time Magazine's Top Intelligent Cities.
- In 2007, Tucson was named one of 13 Solar Cities in the United States, and awarded a half-million-dollar grant to better implement solar energy.
- In May 2008, Washington DC think-tank The Brookings Institution ranked Tucson the 17th-lowest carbon emitter among the 100 largest metro cities in the country.
- The American Lung Association's 2010 State of the Air report ranks Tucson as 6th in the Top 25 for cleanest year-round particle pollution.

Native American, Spanish, and Mexican heritage combine in many regional traditions.

Natural Environment

Situated in the Sonoran Desert and surrounded on all sides by mountain ranges (known as sky islands), Tucson offers a unique combination of outdoor recreational opportunities. A trip from the desert valley floor to the Mt. Lemmon summit in the Santa Catalina Mountains is more than a vertical mile in elevation change, and is comparable to driving from Mexico to Canada and traversing seven of the world's nine life zones. With an average 350 sunny days a year, Tucson's climate is ideal for year-round outdoor recreation.

The southwestern sky island "archipelago" is unique on the planet, and is the only sky island complex extending from subtropical to temperate latitudes with a globally unprecedented array of plant and animal species of northern and southern origins.

These mountain islands are among the most diverse ecosystems in North America due to their great topographic relief and location at the meeting point of major desert and forest biomes. This uniqueness results from several factors, including the region's wide range of elevations, the convergence of the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts, the north-south trending mountain ranges that contain a mingling of species from the Rocky Mountains to the north and the Sierra Madre Occidental to the south, and two rainy seasons.

Saguaro National Park is one of many local, state, and national parks in the greater Tucson region. Photo by Murray Bolesta/CactusHuggers.com

Southeastern Arizona, including Tucson, is unsurpassed among North American bird watching regions. The diversity and rarity of bird species in southeastern Arizona owes to the range of elevations and habitats that are available.

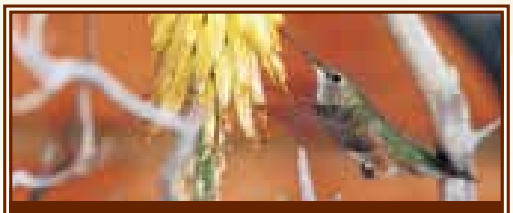

Photo by Fred Hood © Metropolitan Tucson Convention & Visitors Bureau.

General Criteria

The businesses and events included in the Discover Tucson's Heritage tourism guide are located in the region of eastern Pima County identified on the map below, and meet the specific criteria described in each of the individual sections:

Annual Events
Crafts
Destinations
Downtown
Food
Lodging
Music

A "heritage business or event" should highlight one of the ten distinctive themes of the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Area by encouraging the preservation, promotion and education of the theme in the daily business operations. There should be a clear and obvious connection to the theme.

The ten distinctive themes of the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Area:

- Sky Islands and Desert Seas
- Streams in the Desert
- Bird Habitats and Migration Routes
- Native American Lifeways
- Desert Farming
- Ranching Traditions
- Spanish and Mexican Frontier
- Mining Booms
- U.S. Military Posts on the U.S. Mexico Border
- U.S. Mexico Border Culture

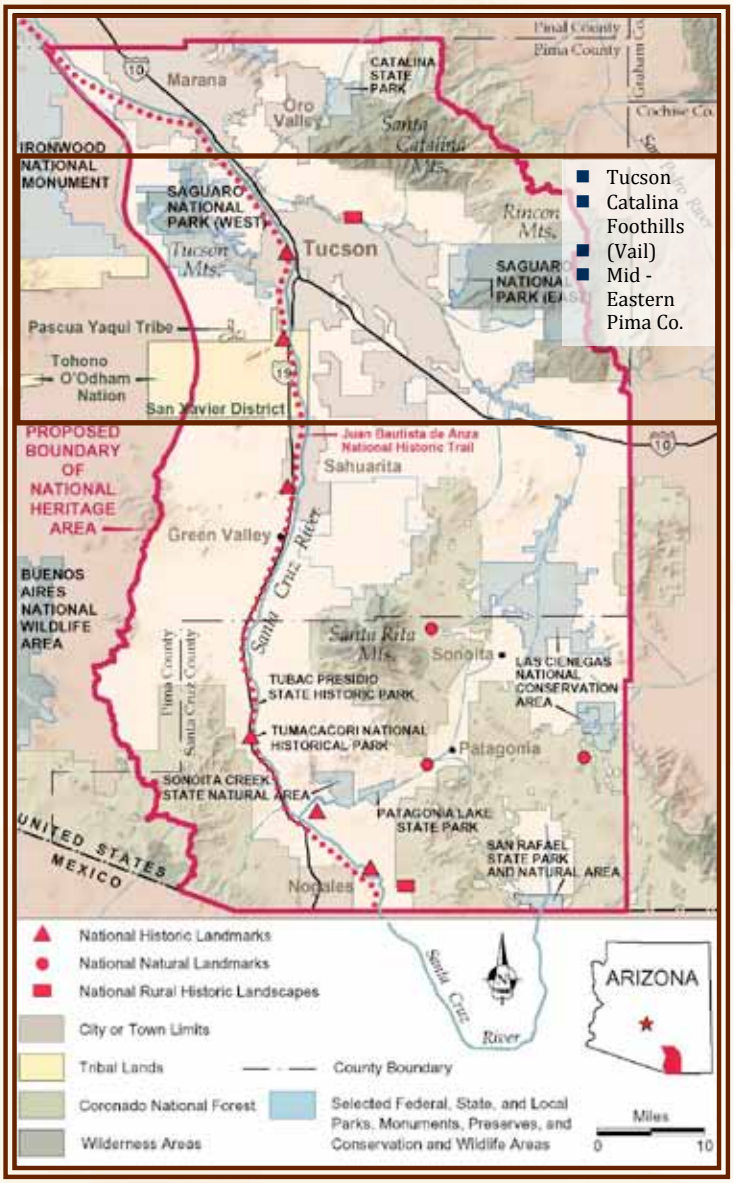

Photo by Fred Hood © Metropolitan Tucson Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Sources: City of Tucson website (2011); Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau website (2011); Feasibility Study for the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area (2005); Winter Training Capital website (2011).

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