



The Frugal Joys of Car-Tripping: Sedona, Arizona

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By Jan Ross



The red-rock Sedona Mountains.

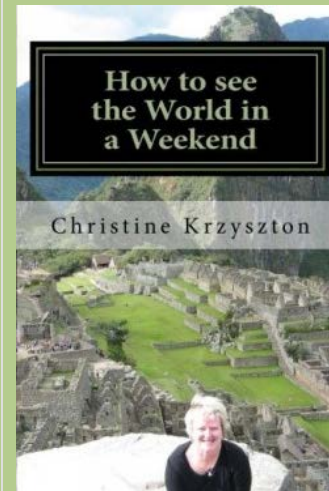
The problem with driving to [Sedona](#) is that the scenery is so incredible, so mind-boggling, so truly unique and mesmerizing that you better plan to just pull over and experience it at some point or you are going to run right off the road.

We had just spent a few days of our Arizona road trip in Lake Havasu, Arizona, and although we had a vague idea that the scenery in Sedona would be somewhat different from what we had just experienced, we truly had no idea that the red rock canyons and soaring mountains of Sedona would be one of the most unforgettable sights in all our travels in Arizona.

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Inside a Junipine Resort creekhouse

We managed to make it through the mountains and the town of Sedona and up to the wonderful [Junipine Resort](#), where we had booked a two-bedroom creekhouse. There are some wonderful hotels in Sedona but my advice is just to forget about them and book a stay at Junipine. It's

absolutely the perfect place for a couple, group, or a family. With a choice of one or two bedrooms, a fully furnished kitchen, and a large living room with a fireplace, you can really relax and enjoy your time in Sedona. All of the creekhouses have wonderful views and many have luxurious hot tubs so you may never want to leave! Stock your kitchen with snacks and drinks or even the makings of a full meal and you can really save money on your vacation. Convenient hiking trails are located right near the property. And if you don't feel like cooking, just stroll over to the Junipine Café for a delicious, home-cooked meal.



The view from our Junipine creekhouse.

When you can tear yourself away from the fabulous surroundings in your creekhouse (we especially enjoyed the fireplace), head for a day to the [Verde Canyon Railroad](#) in nearby Clarkdale, Arizona. Only about half an hour from Sedona, it's well worth the drive. If you can, spring for first-class tickets so you can travel in the first class train where a very nice spread of free food awaits you. There are also very comfortable, cushy seats as well as love seats you can spread out on as you consume all the free brownies you can eat.



The Verde Canyon railroad

If you are not in the first class train, don't despair because they have really good food at the café in the depot. We grabbed lunch there, before we knew about the free food in first class (!) and it was very good. Whichever car you are in, there will be an adjoining, open car where you can get out in the fresh air and take lots of photos of the incredible scenery you will pass. The trip is about four hours total, running from Clarkdale to Perkinsville and back. The train rolls through beautiful desert landscapes with soaring mountains and rivers running under the bridges the train passes over.

When your train trip is over, you can spend some time visiting the area attractions, like [Montezuma Castle National Monument](#), then have dinner and an evening of entertainment at the [Blazin' M Ranch](#), where you'll enjoy some of the best barbecued ribs you will ever eat. After dinner and a drive back to Junipine, hop in your hot tub and enjoy the gorgeous view of the mountains and the creek winding through the property.

After a leisurely morning relaxing the next day, head into town for lunch at [The Cowboy Club](#). If the weather is nice, sit out on the patio and people-watch as you eat one of their signature buffalo burgers, which are delicious. Now it's time to spend the afternoon shopping at the dozens of shops and galleries, as well as [Tlaquepaque Village](#) (get a local to help you pronounce it!) where you can pick up some interesting arts and crafts to take home. Also, take some time to taste some wine at [The Art of Wine](#), which features Arizona wines and wine-inspired artwork and is open for tastings seven days a week.

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Now that you've had a couple of days of relaxation, it's time to really see the landscapes of Sedona. One of the best ways to do this is with an off-road jeep tour via [Pink Jeep Tours](#). We chose the Broken Arrow Tour and had a great time. I assumed we would be up in the mountains, following some sort of trail, but I could not have been more wrong! At times, we were practically vertical as we climbed huge, rounded boulders that I didn't believe our jeeps would climb – but they did!

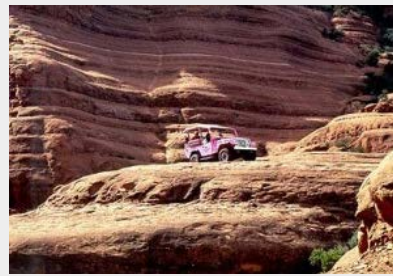


One of many hiking trails in Sedona.

Even though you can see the incredible views around Sedona in a jeep, there's nothing like

hiking to really see everything up close, and Sedona has plenty of hiking trails. One of the most popular hiking destinations is Sedona's majestic Red Rock State Park. A 286-acre preserve, the park also has an environmental education center and offers breathtaking views of the ubiquitous red rock and beautiful streams. Unusual rock formations — like Devil's Bridge, which is considered the largest natural arch in the Sedona area — are great hiking destinations. The trail to Devil's Bridge utilizes natural rocks as stairs to the top of the arch, making the trail suitable for hikers of most abilities and a great spot for memorable photos.

We didn't have nearly enough time to spend in Sedona. I would have loved to check out the area spas, do more shopping, eat at more wonderful restaurants, and hike every single trail that winds through those incredible red rock canyons. Maybe next time!



Rambling over the red rocks in a pink jeep!

Have you been to Sedona? What impressed you the most? Share your memories with us in the Comments section.

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