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## A Grand Finale

**Once you've seen the Grand Canyon, visit Flagstaff, Arizona, a city steeped in Route 66 nostalgia, Old West legacy and rich Native American culture**

By Josephine Matyas



One of the many artifacts at the Museum of Northern Arizona

Flagstaff is often called a gateway to Grand Canyon National Park, and summer is peak season. Here are five spots to get the most out of a visit to Arizona's all-season mountain town, about a 90-minute drive from the Canyon.

### **Museum of Northern Arizona**

3101 North Fort Valley Road

To really appreciate the landscape and people of the Colorado Plateau, begin with a visit to this excellent museum tucked into a stand of fragrant ponderosa pine on the edge of Flagstaff. It's a space dedicated to the tribes who shaped the rich culture and the geological forces that created the dramatic landscape.

### **Lowell Observatory**

1400 West Mars Hill Road

Only a very short drive from downtown and located over 2,000 metres high on Mars Hill, this observatory is where astronomers discovered the dwarf planet Pluto in 1930. Visit night or day; peer through a night telescope (including the photographic telescope used for the discovery) or the solar telescope. Then tour the exhibits, catch a live presentation and be sure to check out their impressive immersive space theatre.

### **Museum Club**

3404 East Route 66

There are tree trunks in the middle of the wooden dance floor at this music lover's honky-tonk on Route 66. That's just one of the quirky touches at the historic landmark that began as a taxidermist museum and became a popular roadhouse for touring musicians like Willie Nelson and Tanya Tucker. Look for Nelson's 1968 contract —it shares wall space with mounted deer heads and stuffed owls.

### **Walnut Canyon National Monument**

I-40 at Exit 204 (16 kilometres east of Flagstaff)

Around 800 years ago, Walnut Canyon was home to the ancient Sinagua people who built their cliff dwellings under vast rock overhangs. Hike the steep Island Trail to the dozen preserved cliff dwellings with superb views over the piñon, cacti and ponderosa pine-covered slopes.

### **Wupatki National Monument**

Highway 89 (53 kilometres north of Flagstaff)

The 800-year-old remains at Wupatki were once home to an ancient people who made a life dry farming this challenging desert. Take the short trail leading to a blowhole in the rock surface where air rushes in and out at velocities of up to about 50 kilometres per hour. According to Native legend, this geologic curiosity is where the Earth breathes. A short drive along the scenic loop road is the otherworldly, black lava landscape at Sunset Crater, created in a dramatic eruption 900 years ago.

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- Plan a relaxing beach getaway
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- See more of Canada's natural beauty

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